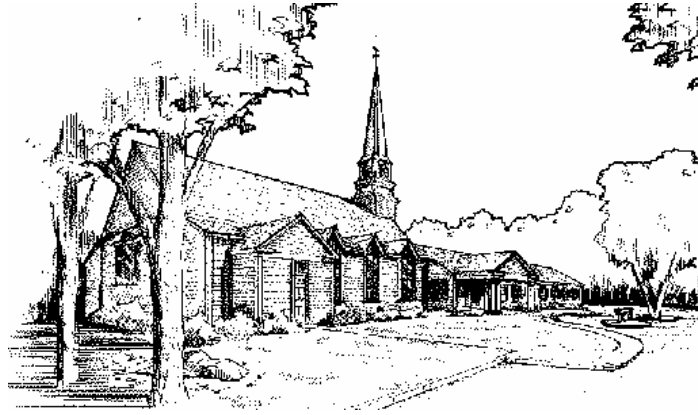


CARLISLE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH



Discipline Policy

INTRODUCTION

The entirety of this document represents the elements of the current Discipline Policy of the Carlisle Congregational Church last edited 11/10/06. It is intended for use primarily by the Board of Elders, but its content is also applicable to each member of this body, being instructive in dealing with conflict and providing tools for personal growth as reconciling people.

THE POLICY CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING COMPLEMENTARY COMPONENTS

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Resources consulted in producing this policy include materials developed by Jim Van Yperen of Metanoia Ministries, Washington, NH; Richard Germaine of the First Congregational Church in Hopkinton, MA; Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, former Senior Pastor of East Lansing Trinity Church, East Lansing, MI, & founder of Love & Respect Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI; and Peace Maker Ministries, Billings, Montana.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

For purposes of this policy, church discipline may be defined as the confrontive and corrective measures taken by an individual, church leaders, or the congregation regarding a matter of sin in the life of a believer.

The primary role of leadership is to invite the sinner into a pathway of reconciliation, and to discern the fruit of his/her response.

Discipline in the church is not punishment. It is discipline and discipline is designed to train and restore.

The idea of church discipline is totally consistent with the basic purposes of the church - evangelism and edification. Evangelism ministers to those outside the church who are in bondage to sin to bring them to faith in Christ where the transformation process begins. Edification is designed to build up believers so they can be conformed to the image and character of Christ. Church discipline as a part of the edification process ministers to those within the body of Christ who are dominated by some area of sin so they can experience liberation from its power through fellowship with Christ.

WHAT A PROPER RESPONSE TO AWARENESS OF SIN LOOKS LIKE

(Scripture only allows two possible responses to awareness of sin)

REDEMPTIVE RESPONSE	NON-REDEMPTIVE RESPONSE
<p>Upon conviction of the Holy Spirit, the believer discloses his or her own sin by going to the one offended to confess and ask forgiveness; or when confronted with sin, the believer submits to a process of listening and agreement that will lead to restored fellowship.</p> <p>This means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Listening and agreeing about the sin, affirming guilt with steps toward repentance and restoration. <p>Or</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">2. Listening and agreeing about the need for greater understanding and reconciliation. <p><i>As long as there is willingness to take the next step, there is grace, grace, grace!</i></p>	<p>Upon conviction of the Holy Spirit, the believer denies or attempts to cover-up his or her sin; or when confronted with sin, the believer refuses to listen, submit to or agree with fellow believers to work out reconciliation. Scripture calls this a “stiff-necked” response that leads to broken fellowship.</p> <p>This means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A believer refuses to examine his or her life.2. When convicted, the believer covers-up the sin.3. When confronted he/she refuses to listen or to agree with any need for reconciliation, using unbiblical responses, such as: <p><u>Refusing</u> to speak about the problem.</p> <p><u>Lies</u> about sin.</p> <p><u>Denies</u> there is a problem.</p> <p><u>Leaving</u> the church, running away, refusing to meet.</p> <p><u>Smoothing</u> the problem, portraying sin as something neutral.</p> <p><u>Minimizing</u> hurt or harm.</p> <p><u>Shifting</u> the blame to others, excusing self.</p> <p>Claiming <u>privacy</u> “none of your business.”</p> <p>Claiming <u>conspiracy</u>, questioning motives of others.</p> <p><u>Defending</u> self.</p> <p>Using <u>power</u> to intimidate or attack.</p> <p><u>Threatening</u> lawsuits.</p> <p><u>Refusing</u> any process of reconciliation.</p>

STEPS OF DISCIPLINE

(At whatever point an offending party repents and changes conduct, the following process shall be terminated, the purpose of discipline having been attained.)

Personal & Private

1. Upon discovery of sin in your life or the life of a fellow believer; if the offense is of a private nature, go promptly, humbly, and lovingly to confess or confront the offended or offending party privately. If the offending party shows acceptable evidence of sincere repentance, listening and renouncing sin, grant forgiveness and drop the matter with nothing further being said.
Matthew 5:23; 18:15, 21-35
2. If the sin has been deemed to be a public offense, one elder shall go to the offending party and show him/her his/her fault. If the offending party shows acceptable evidence of sincere repentance, listening and renouncing sin, grant forgiveness and drop the matter with nothing further being said.
Matthew 5:23; 18:15, 21-35
3. If the offender refuses to hear the individual who has come to him/her, then one or two witnesses go with that individual in a second attempt to present the case. If the offending party shows acceptable evidence of sincere repentance, listening and renouncing sin, grant forgiveness and drop the matter with nothing further being said.
Matthew 18:16 –

Matthew 18 allows for two (and only two) possible responses to a confrontation or confession: To listen, or to refuse to listen. To refuse to listen creates an issue / problem which is greater than the presenting offense. Refusing to listen is an affront to the cross.

There are only two acceptable responses to listening: (1) either to agree about the sin, with steps toward repentance and restoration, or (2) to agree about the need for greater understanding and reconciliation.

Elder/Overseer Involvement *

4. If the offending party still refuses to repent and seek reconciliation, three elders shall be assigned as overseers to meet with the offender. The overseers should investigate the matter carefully and thoroughly, discussing the specific charges with the offender, and invite the offender into a pathway of reconciliation, discerning the fruit of his/her response.
Matthew 18:17 –

The central issue now is not the presenting sin but the refusal of one or both to be reconciled!
5. If there is no evidence of repentance, or if the believer refuses to cooperate in a process of reconciliation, the congregation shall be notified of the situation and all actions taken to date. The name of the party is withheld at this point.
Matthew 18:17 –

6. If the offending party still refuses to repent and cooperate in a process of reconciliation, the offender is now barred from communion and active involvement in the business meetings of the church. The name of the party is still withheld at this point.
7. If the offending party still refuses to repent and cooperate in a process of reconciliation, thirty days (30) after step #5 above a second public notification is given the congregation and the name of the offender is revealed and the members of the congregation are to withhold intimate fellowship through the process and procedure of group disapproval and social ostracism. This action has a two-fold objective:
 - It is to indicate to the offender that his/her action has dishonored the Lord and has caused a rupture in the harmony of the body. Refusing reconciliation is the only sin intolerable for the church to bear as it denies the power of the cross. The goal is always restoration and the person is still to be counted as a brother/sister.
 - It is to create Godly fear in the rest of the flock as a warning against sin.
8. If the offender remains unrepentant for a further thirty days (30) a third announcement is made to the congregation stating that the offender shall be removed from fellowship on the 31st. day following this announcement and his/her name stricken from the church record of members in accord with Matt. 18:17. See also 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; 1 Corinthians 5:11; Titus 3:10-11.

Members should be encouraged to love and pray for the sinner, but may not enjoy common worship or Christian fellowship with the offender after this point in time.

Overseers must hold open the invitation for repentance!

EVALUATION & FACILITATION TOOLS

BOARD OF ELDERS OVERSEER REPENTANCE EVALUATION WORKSHEET
(Genuine repentance will make itself evident by its deeds and attitudes)

Reflection	Yes/True	No/False	Don't Know
Does the evidence suggest the charge(s) to be true or false?			
Does the fruit of response reveal relational, spiritual or character issues that suggest weakness or flaws that need further exploration?			

Questions for Thought?	Yes	No	Not Observed
Since the offense took place, have you personally witnessed a good confession of saving faith?			
Have you witnessed a free acknowledgment (ownership) of sin?			
Has the activity for which discipline is being considered/entered into ceased?			
Has the offending party sought help to cease an activity especially in regard to cases of life dominating patterns of sin?			
Has the offending party began the process of making restitution and/or asking forgiveness from those hurt as applicable?			
Have you observed demonstration of a genuine change of heart; meaning a real concern and godly sorrow over his/her actions, not in order to be forgiven, but because of the harm caused to the glory of God and the hurt caused others?			
Have you observed evidence of the fruit of the Spirit and a concern for the things of Christ and His body?			
Have you witnessed an acceptance of the consequences resulting from the offense?			
Have you witnessed actions and attitudes consistent with that committed to in the Church Covenant?			

Instructions:

- Please use the questions above as thought provokers to help you critically evaluate the person(s) involved.
- It is important each question be answered with first hand knowledge, either yes, no, or not observed.

EXAMINING ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS

Thinking about how you have responded to conflict in your life (in your personal life and at church), read the verses below, then honestly examine the attitudes and actions you have used. *Put a check in the box next to the behavior that you need to own. Use this exercise to discern how you have sinned, and what you need to confess to God and others in order to be reconciled.*

- Anger:** I have lost my temper, become agitated and allowed anger to fester, causing strife.
Prov 29:22 An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.
Eph 4:26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.
- Backbiting:** I have been sly, cunning and revengeful in my language.
Prov 25:23 As a north wind brings rain, so a sly tongue brings angry looks.
Gal 5:15 If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.
- Bitterness:** I have allowed a harshness and bitterness to creep into my heart.
Eph 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
Heb 12:15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.
- Falsehood:** I have exaggerated or used deceit, telling partial or distorted truths.
Eph 4:25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.
- Following people, not God:** I have made loyalty to a person or group the issue, rather than the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
1 Cor 3:1-9 Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly — mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe — as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building.
- Gossip:** I have talked about others behind their backs; betraying a confidence; or stirred up dissension.
Prov 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.
Prov 20:19 A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.
Prov 26:20 Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.
- Grumbling & Complaining:** I have murmured or muttered, harbored secret displeasure; complained, been negative or whined about circumstances.
James 5:9 Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!
Phil 2:14 Do everything without complaining or arguing.
- Judging motives:** I have attributed evil intention to others based upon my assumptions; claiming to know the purpose or motivations of another's action or words.
Luke 6:37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."
Rom 14:10-13 You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. It is written: "As surely as I live," says the Lord, "every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God." So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God. Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.
1 Cor 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.
- Malice:** I have harbored ill-will and/or a desire to injure those against me.
Col 3:8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.
1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.
- Misuse of authority:** I have used power, manipulation or control to gain advantage.
Mark 10:42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them."
1 Peter 5:2-3 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers — not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.
- Not submitting:** I have refused to honor my brothers and sisters or refused to follow those in authority over me.
Rom 8:7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.
Eph 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

☐ **Pride:** I have made myself, my position or my reputation, the object and subject of the issue rather than the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

☐ **Reckless words:** I have used hurtful and destructive words aimed at another.

Prov 12:18 Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

☐ **Selfish ambition:** I have been looking out for my own interests first.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

James 3:16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

☐ **Sexual impurity:** I have engaged in sexual fantasies, impure thought-life or behavior such as adultery, pornography or sexual immorality.

Eph 5:3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

Col 3:5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

☐ **Slander:** I have used malicious words, engaging in backbiting, and telling tales to harm.

Matt 15:19-20 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

James 4:11 Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it.

1 Peter 2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind.

☐ **Stubbornness:** I have resisted change or correction and stood firm on my position.

Ps 81:12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices.

Prov 29:1 A man who remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed — without remedy.

☐ **Unforgiving:** I have been slow to forgive, or I have stated that I have forgiven while holding on to anger and hurt. I have failed to forgive others as Christ has forgiven me.

Col 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Matt 18:32-33 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'

☐ **Unreconciling:** I have refused to meet with a brother or sister to be reconciled, claiming I am too hurt or do not trust the person - effectively choosing not to be reconciled.

Mark 9:50 "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

Rom 12:18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

☐ **Worthless talk:** I have used unwholesome, or "rotten" words that put people down.

Eph 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

Ephesians 4:25

"Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.

1 Peter 3:10

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you — unless, of course, you fail the test?

2 Corinthians 13:5

GUIDELINES FOR A PROCESS OF CONFESSION
(the 7 A's of Confession)
Matthew 7:3-5; 1 John 1:8-9; Proverbs 28:13

<u>A</u>DDRESS everyone involved
<u>A</u>VOID if, but, and maybe statements
<u>A</u>DMIT specifically
<u>A</u>CKNOWLEDGE the hurt
<u>A</u>CCEPT the consequences
<u>A</u>LTER your behavior
<u>A</u>SK for forgiveness

SUGGESTIONS FOR A PROCESS OF FORGIVENESS
(the 3 R's of Forgiveness)
Matthew 6:12; 1 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 4:32

Give up the right to RESENT	1/3
Give up the right to REVILE	1/3
Give up the right to RETALIATE	1/3

Make the following commitments
(The Four Promises of Forgiveness)

I will not dwell on this incident.
I will not bring this incident up and use it against you.
I will not talk to others about this incident.
I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

**MAKING RESTITUTION AND
RECONSTITUTING CHARACTER**

MAKING RESTITUTION AND RECONSTITUTING CHARACTER

The sinner is provided a specific pathway to reconstitute character and rebuild broken trust the completion of which will result in reconciliation and restored fellowship. Elders must create a sensitive, just, and biblical pathway for restoration. This includes a pathway for the sinner to explore, own, and reconstitute habits of character under the guidance of God's Word, His Spirit, and the community of believers.

Reconstituting character requires:

1. Acceptance of need.
2. Broken-ness and courage.
3. Submission to a process of change under God's Word, His Spirit, and the community of believers.
4. Time (the greater history of character/habit, the longer the formation process will take)

The discipline process should be designed to examine and address the specific habits of thinking and acting found to be sinful, while discovering and addressing underlying causes of the sin.

Reconciliation does not stop with verbal assent, it must be accompanied by restitution. Therefore we will ask you to submit to a process - we will ask you to submit to doing the following ... This will be an observable process that is designed to be a context in which you may grow spiritually, and those observing may see evidence of the genuineness of your words.

Restoration follows repentance and restitution. Restitution demonstrates the proof of repentance - a changed mind, direction and actions - by making every effort to repay debt, rebuild trust, and restore fellowship.

Upon completion of a just reconciliation process, leaders of the church should publicly welcome and receive the sinner to fellowship.