CONFLICT IN THE BIBLE
Some Initial Reflections

1. **THE BIBLE CONTAINS A GREAT DEAL OF CONFLICT – GOD'S PEOPLE ARE NEVER WITHOUT CONFLICT**

2. **CONFLICT IN THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVES TAUGHT NEW THINGS ABOUT GOD AND HIS PURPOSES**
   i. The Exodus – introduces liberation theme which recurs throughout Bible.
   ii. Life, ministry, teaching, crucifixion, death and resurrection of Jesus – these conflicts continue to teach us.
   iii. Acts (esp. 1-15) – a story of conflict in the early church, as God opens up the church to the Gentiles.
   iv. Letters of Paul – mostly written in response to conflicts.

3. **CONFLICT RESOLUTION IS PRACTISED AND ENCOURAGED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**
   i. Exodus 18 – Moses' need for multiple arbitrators to resolve conflicts.
   ii. Deuteronomy 17-19 – roles of priests, prophets and judges – particular care for the powerless.
   iii. Matthew 18:15-20 – need for a process to restore fellowship, including a mediation-like step.
   iv. 2 Corinthians 5:18, 19 – Christ as mediator.
   v. 1 Corinthians 6:1ff – the need for wise persons to help resolve conflict in the church.
   vi. Philippians 4:2 – Euodia and Syntyche, two leaders need help in conflict resolution.

4. **CONFLICT SOMETIMES POINTS OUT THE NEED TO MAKE IMPORTANT CHANGES**
   i. Acts 6:1-7 – redefined priorities and new structures in response to conflict over widows' needs.
   ii. Acts 15 – inclusive Gospel in response to question of Gentiles in the church.
   iii. Galatians 2:11-14 – Paul confronts Peter and thereby protects Gentile inclusion.

5. **NOT ALL CONFLICTS ARE NEATLY RESOLVED BUT THEY DON'T NEED TO BE DESTRUCTIVE**
   i. Acts 15:37-39 – split over John Mark does not break relationships forever (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Timothy 4:11).
   ii. Matt. 5:38-48; Luke 6:27-36; Matt. 18:15-20; Luke 22:39-53; Ephesians 2:12-20 – even if conflict leads to feeling like enemies, we need to remember the call to love enemies, not destroy them.

6. **THE NEW TESTAMENT PROVIDES SOME INSTRUCTION IN HOW TO HANDLE CONFLICTS**
   i. Matthew 5:24, 25 – initiate reconciliation.
   ii. Matthew 18:15-20 – actively seek restoration, be disciplined in listening.
   iii. Ephesians 4; 1 Corinthians 12, 14; Romans 12 – respect each other's gifts and differences.
   iv. 1 Corinthians 6:1ff – avoid adversarial roles as required by court systems; seek wisdom from within the faith community.

7. **THE BIBLE NARRATES AND PROMISES TRANSFORMATION, RESURRECTION, AND REBIRTH ON THE JOURNEY THROUGH CONFLICT AND TOWARDS RECONCILIATION**