



reconcile

MINISTRY OVERVIEW

Engaging and Resolving Marriage Conflicts God's Way

Married couples struggling with conflict should strive to resolve their conflict, reconcile their relationship, and pursue a plan to heal and rebuild their marriage in a manner that pleases and honors Jesus. RECONCILE is a gospel-centered, scripture-based marriage intervention ministry that helps spouses and couples in conflict achieve these outcomes. We want you to understand how RECONCILE may serve you. We also want you to know what RECONCILE needs to help you effectively. This is how RECONCILE works at Alliance.

Referral to RECONCILE

RECONCILE serves couples who are referred by one of our pastors. When you contact one of our pastors for help, you will receive a RECONCILE Referral Request form to complete and return to the pastor. If the pastor determines that RECONCILE might help you, your RECONCILE Referral Request will be forwarded to the RECONCILE Director.

RECONCILE Overview and Procedures, Service Agreement, and Initial Party Information

Based on your RECONCILE Referral Request, the Director will determine which RECONCILE intervention service fits your situation. The Director will send you our Ministry Overview and our RECONCILE Intervention Procedures (which govern the services provided by RECONCILE) to review, a RECONCILE Intervention Services Agreement to sign, and an Initial Party Information form to complete and return.

It is very important that you and your spouse carefully read and understand the Ministry Overview and the RECONCILE Intervention Procedures provided by the Director. After reviewing this information, we encourage you to call the Director with any questions. Once the Director has answered your questions, please sign the RECONCILE Intervention Services Agreement, complete the Initial Party Information form, and return both to the Director. We cannot proceed until we have received a signed agreement and the completed form from each party.

Intake Interview with the RECONCILE Director

After receiving the signed RECONCILE Intervention Services Agreement and the completed Initial Party Information Form, the Director will schedule a Zoom intake interview with each party to ensure we have all the information needed to begin our work together and to answer any questions you may have.

Assignment of a Peace Advocate

After the intake interview, the Director will assign one or two Peace Advocates to your case and provide you with the name and contact information of the Peace Advocate(s) assigned to serve you.

Intervention Services

RECONCILE provides Coaching and Mediation intervention services depending on whether one or both agree to participate in RECONCILE. If one spouse is not willing to participate, we can provide **Coaching**. If both spouses are willing to participate, we can provide **Mediation**.

In **Coaching**, your Peace Advocate will guide and help you take steps to promote reconciliation and resolve disputes with your spouse on your own. Your Peace Advocate will also help you encourage your spouse to participate so that you can pursue reconciliation and resolution together in mediation. Coaching services are provided through telephone and video conferences. Your Peace Advocate may assign “heartwork” to help you better understand and apply biblical peacemaking principles in your situation. Your conscientious completion of assigned heartwork will position you to prepare a written peacemaking plan, which will provide you with a roadmap and reminders for promoting reconciliation and pursuing peace in the future. Your Peace Advocate will notify you when further coaching will not be helpful. You may terminate coaching at any time you wish by emailing your Peace Advocate and the Director. The target timeframe for the completion of coaching is 4 months.

In **Mediation**, your Peace Advocates will assist and guide you in resolving your conflict, reconciling your relationship, and pursuing a plan to heal and rebuild your marriage in a manner that pleases and honors Jesus. The Peace Advocates have no authority to decide anything. For anything to be decided, both spouses must agree. The spouses retain control over whether agreement is reached on some or all the issues. There are three parts to the mediation process.

- Preparation for Mediation - Coaching Conferences and Heartwork. Adequate preparation by both spouses is the key to obtaining the best possible outcomes. You cannot apply biblical peacemaking principles to your situation unless you are familiar with those principles. Your Peace Advocates will assign “heartwork” to help you with this preparation. That heartwork may involve reading an article or a book, answering questions, watching a video, preparing a list, writing a letter or essay, or completing other activities your Peace Advocates believe will help you prepare. Each spouse is responsible for completing all assigned heartwork. The heartwork assigned to each spouse might be different. Your Peace Advocates may request a telephone or online video conference with one spouse or the other to discuss the heartwork assigned. The amount of time necessary for both spouses to adequately prepare for mediation meetings varies depending on the facts and circumstances of the case. Preparation may take a few weeks. It may take as long as two to three months. Your Peace Advocates will determine when both spouses have adequately prepared for joint mediation meetings. If your Peace Advocates determine that one or both spouses are unwilling or unable to sufficiently prepare, your Peace Advocates may suspend mediation and notify the Director. The Director will determine the conditions under which mediation may resume, whether to offer coaching to one spouse or the other, or whether the case will be terminated.
- Pre-Meeting Conference with Peace Advocates. Once both spouses have adequately prepared, a separate pre-meeting conference with your Peace Advocates will be scheduled with each spouse. During this conference, your Peace Advocates will review the processes and procedures that apply to mediation meetings and help each spouse prepare for them. Typically, these pre-meeting conferences are conducted by telephone or video conference.
- Mediation Meetings. Because of its biblical nature, mediation encourages spouses to communicate openly and candidly. Mediation provides an environment where spouses may speak freely to each other without fear. Most mediation meetings are held in person. Meetings may occasionally be conducted by video conference. At the first mediation meeting, the ground rules will be established, and each party can make a brief opening statement. After this, your Peace Advocates will allow each spouse to share the facts and circumstances they believe are important and their perspectives, concerns, and objectives. Your Peace Advocates will work to ensure that each spouse hears the views and concerns of the other spouse, as this is essential to a full and fair resolution of the issues. While you will spend most of your time in mediation meetings together, your Peace Advocates may ask to speak with one spouse privately to address a particular point of concern that deserves individual attention or consideration. Your Peace Advocates will work diligently to identify all the critical issues and explore all potential solutions. While the outcome can never be guaranteed, your Peace Advocates will help you walk with the Lord, reach reconciliation, and resolve all the issues you face to the fullest extent possible.

The goal of mediation is to help couples, with the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit, apply biblical truth in their marriage and make commitments to each other that honor and please the Lord. Depending upon the nature of the conflict and the issues involved, this may take several meetings. Understandings reached, promises made, and plans agreed to by the couple are memorialized in a written Memorandum of Understanding, which provides the couple with a roadmap and reminders for their marriage in the future. The target timeframe for the completion of mediation is 6 months.

Services RECONCILE DOESN'T Provide

All persons serving in RECONCILE are volunteers. They serve because they love Jesus and desire to support, assist, and encourage married couples experiencing difficult times. Because of this, you must understand that there are limitations on the services provided by RECONCILE and its Peace Advocates.

1. Peace Advocates are not professional counselors or marriage mentors. While Peace Advocates will offer guidance and direction during Coaching and Mediation, their counsel is based on biblical principles and focuses on the attitudes or actions the spouses should thoughtfully examine and prayerfully consider concerning the conflicts and issues to be addressed. A commitment to more comprehensive professional counseling or marriage mentoring may be part of the spouses' final understanding. Peace Advocates, however, are not counselors or mentors. The role of the Peace Advocate is to help couples address their conflicts and disputes in a biblically faithful manner.
2. Peace Advocates cannot and do not provide legal advice. Ethical rules prohibit a Peace Advocate from giving legal advice or preparing legally binding documents, even if the Advocate is an attorney. Attorneys are not permitted to participate in RECONCILE. If either spouse feels they need legal advice, they must seek it from an independent attorney outside the RECONCILE process.
3. Coaching and mediation provided through RECONCILE address relational conflict and minor disputes. RECONCILE does not assist spouses with the resolution of legal issues such as divorce, spousal support, child custody, child support, or property division and distribution. If help with these legal issues is needed, RECONCILE will refer the couple to others positioned to assist them with these matters.
4. Each Memorandum of Understanding prepared during mediation is intended to memorialize the understandings reached and commitments made by the spouses and their agreed plan for future healing and rebuilding. The Memorandum provides a roadmap and reminders for their marriage in the future. It is not a legally binding agreement or document enforceable in a court of law. If any understandings reached or commitments made need to be incorporated into legally binding documents, the parties must work with an attorney or attorneys of their choice to prepare those documents.

Intervention Timeframe

It is not possible to provide a specific timeframe for every intervention. Each case and each couple are unique. Spouses respond differently, and scheduling can prove challenging. The purpose of every intervention, however, is to help the conflicted spouses break the destructive cycle of conflict, reach reconciliation through confession and forgiveness, and agree upon a plan to promote further healing and rebuild their marriage. Because of the focused nature of RECONCILE interventions, they are relatively short-term engagements, with most being completed within six months after the Peace Advocate is assigned.

Final Conference and Evaluations

After coaching or mediation, we ask that evaluation forms be completed and returned. These evaluations ask for feedback on RECONCILE services and the Peace Advocate providing those services. The information we obtain from these evaluations is invaluable as we seek to serve married couples well in our congregation. We may also schedule a telephone or video conference with you to discuss the responses we receive or if either spouse requests a conference to discuss their experience or to address any concerns or questions they may have.