

Justice is "making things right." But because there is so much confusion about what we mean when we say "justice" we have to add modifiers to help people know what we really mean. Retributive Justice is when we inflict pain (punishment) on the offender because they inflicted pain on a victim. We do this hoping somehow that this will balance the scales and prevent reoccurrence of the offense. While in the short range punishment appears very effective, the long range result with most offenders is one or more of the following: 1. Resentment (this is unfair), 2. Revenge (they are winning now, but I'll get even), 3. Rebellion (I'll do it just the opposite to prove I don't have to do it their way) or 4. Retreat (sneakiness - I won't get caught next time, or reduced self-esteem - I am a bad person). None of these results is the desired result. Restorative Justice is when the needs of both the victim and offender are considered and steps are taken to make things as right as possible.

VORP mediators invite victims and offenders to consider resolving the conflict directly between them but with the help of the community representative(s). VORP mediators are trained to invite the offender and victim to individually decide if they are willing to look for a constructive resolution to the conflict and then if they are willing, to lead them in a forgiveness/reconciliation process: they recognize the injustices (discuss the facts and feelings in the violation), restore the equity or balance between them (they agree on what can be done to make things as right as possible now - realizing that to some extent this is always symbolic), and establish future commitments (to give assurances and take steps to prevent the injustice(s) from happening again).

The primary support and initiative for VORP has come from churches and individuals who understand and care that God's desire is for people to experience shalom, right relations between individuals and with God.

A new initiative last year was to launch our "Sustaining Friends with VORP" program. Churches are responding to this mutually beneficial program. Church members get conflict management and mediation (peacemaking - "Blessed are the Peacemakers") training and an opportunity to be involved in a reconciliation service/ministry. VORP receives support (volunteers, prayer and financial) and becomes accountable to continue working at reconciliation. Together we serve and educate the community to the idea of restorative justice. Contact has been made with at least 30 churches and to date several have already responded positively. Our "Sustaining Friends of VORP" are: Downtown Church, Campus Baptist, College Community MB Church, Memorial United Methodist Church, Peoples Church, Valley Christian Center, Peace Community Church-Mennonite, St. Anthonys, Mennonite Community Church, Northwest Church, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church. If your church is not yet listed, please help us.

**Mr. James Rowland**, (a Presbyterian, presently retired from 35 years of work in corrections, former Fresno County Chief Probation Officer, former California Youth Authority Director, and former Director of the California Department of Corrections) volunteered to host pastors in small groups to tell them from his perspective why they should be supportive of VORP. We have now had several of these meetings and will be scheduling more throughout the next year. If your pastor has not yet met Mr. Rowland, you can help arrange this by calling Shannon at 453-2064. We have been truly blessed by having a man of his experience and stature advocating for VORP and especially for the need for Church involvement.

**Staff transition** is part of our lives at VORP because we rely on short-term volunteers. Although they are short term they come with energy and enthusiasm combined with high quality skills and competency. This combination and their willingness to serve for a subsistence monetary allowance is what makes it possible for the Fresno VORP to provide so much service at such a low cost. From the Mennonite Voluntary Service program: Beth Holck served until her term ended in August, Elaine Enns extended her term again and served until December, Mark Bakker joined us in

## 1991 Report

August. I am now employed full-time by the Fresno Pacific College Center for Conflict Studies and Peacemaking but 2 days per week are contracted back to VORP (no change in paid VORP time).

Criminal Justice Officials estimate that we are currently handling only about 10% of the appropriate cases. In the light of this need for VORP to handle more cases, our Board of Directors has decided that it is time to increase our permanent staff time beyond just my two days per week. We have asked Elaine to continue/join our staff on a half time basis while she attends Seminary part-time. Enclosed is a brochure describing how we intend to fund this position. Our goal is to find 24 corporate sponsors who will commit \$500 for three years. By that time we project that based on increased interest our individual and church contributions will cover the increase. Elaine's time will be used to increase our volunteer mediator and volunteer staff help so that more cases can be handled. Our goal is to improve our already efficient program.

**Our Board of Directors** assume both financial and policy responsibility for VORP. VORP is organized as a non-profit, public benefit corporation which is guided by a Board of Directors who come from a wide range of churches in the area. Denise Jackson, President; Mark Hill, Secretary/Treasurer; Russell Templeton; Dianna Fain; Richard Unruh; Ron Claassen; Joby Dupuis; and David Janzen. Mark Hill will not be renewing his term. He has served on the Board since 1987 and has made a major contribution in many areas. Thanks Mark for a job well done. The commitment and dedication of each board member is a vital part of what makes VORP work.

**VORP Mediators** are people who put their values and faith into action. They give up personal time to help victims and offenders find the opportunity in what otherwise seems like a totally negative experience. 1991 VORP mediators were: Mark Bakker, Ed Barton, John Bergey (VORG), Ellie Bluestein, Mark Bollwinkel, Cheryl Brandt, Ken Braun, Pete Cabiness, Cynthia Callaghan, Roxanne Claassen, Ron Claassen, Ryan Claassen, Jinny Daily, Betty Damron, Edward Deines, Carol Dice, Liz Dodds, Joby Dupuis, Dave Dupuis (VORG), Elaine Enns, Kim Fuller, Laura Fultz, Susan George, Beth Holck, Sara Hedgpeth-Harris, Jeffrey Higginbotham, Liz Iwahashi, Denise Jackson, David and Shannon Janzen, Viktor Janzen, Beverly Jim, Peter Johnston, Becky Kelly, Laurie Labbitt, Cardace Laütt, Fran Loewen, Shauna Loewen, Linda Mack, Mike Manghera, Matthew Markarian, Mike Martin, George McCormick, Dale McNeil,

Dora Mugica, Simone Ostrander, Deborah Owdom, Rosa Palacios, Bob Pankratz, Ross Penner, Uyen Pham, Linda Pearcey, Greg Pozovich, Brent Pries, Galen Quenzer, Mary Quinones, Bruce Reimer, David and Karen Ryburn, Larry Schmidt, Wesley Schmidt, Brenda Sears, Richard Shaffer, Patti Silva, Delores Valenzuela, Susan Vasquez, Mary Vollman, Alicia Vomsteeg, Wendy Watson, Aimee Westgate, Sharon Weymouth, Sherri Williams, Ed Willms, Carol Winchester, Greg Zegarowski. "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

**Referrals** are received from the Police Probation Team and Juvenile Probation Intake as a diversion from the court system for some juvenile offenders who are first or second time offenders. We also receive referrals from the court system when restitution has been ordered and VORP is recommended. Occasionally we work with a self referral, either victim or offender. We received 275 referrals in 1991 which brings our total number worked with since we started in 1983 to 2,823. Special thanks to all of the criminal justice officials who made referrals or in some other way helped us to do our job. VORP couldn't work without your support. And thanks to Judge Austin, Presiding Juvenile Judge; Verne Speirs, Chief Probation Officer, Roger Palomino, Juvenile Probation Director. We recognize the wealth of experience among you. We appreciate your willingness to give advice and counsel to help make VORP possible.

**Financial Contributors** are those silent partners who faithfully and without recognition give of their hard earned money because they support reconciliation and want to see both victims and offenders restored. Without your financial support VORP would not exist in Fresno. Contributions in 1991 totaled \$37,043.98: 8.6% from board members, 71.4% from individuals, 16.4% from churches, and 3.6% other. Thanks again to College Community Church for donating space for our office and Pacific Printing Press for continuing to provide brochures, letterhead, business cards, etc. Because of your generous giving, we ended the year with all expenses paid and \$1,200 to begin 1991.

**Tulare County VORP** is now up and running again. I say again because of a change in the system in Tulare County (termination of their diversion unit) our referral source ended. Bill Jost, Program Manager, has worked hard with the Board of Directors and the probation department to establish a new referral system with the

Juvenile Court. Tulare County VORP is a program of VORP of the Central Valley, Inc. and guided by their own Board of Directors: Dan Neufeld (President), George Nord (Sec/Treas), Stan Isaac, Henry Peters, Gordon Wiebe, Bryan Goossen, Lyle Willems, and Jerry Reed.

**VORP continues to expand** throughout California. I continue to work with our Expansion/Consultation Central Function now through the College CCSP. This activity is funded by a \$5,000 grant from Mennonite Central Committee-West Coast and some materials development assistance from the MCC Office of Criminal Justice. We arranged and hosted the Fourth Annual California VORP Gathering. Mr. James Rowland was our guest speaker. It was well attended and participants exchanged very helpful information and ideas. Following are those counties which have a VORP program either up and running or well along in the development stages, and director and/or other contact persons: Ventura County, Sallie Danenberg; Contra Costa and Alameda, Rick Mockler and Judy Gordon; Santa Clara (VOMP), Donna Ripps and Judy Hopkins; Monterey and San Luis Obispo, Connie White; Orange County, Mike Neimeyer; Tulare, Bill Jost; Fresno, Ron Claassen. Programs that are still in their early development stages include Sacramento, Dave Deleplane; Los Angeles; Kings County, Bill Smoyer; San Diego, Pearl Hartz.

#### **Looking Forward**

A research project is just beginning which is being directed by Dr. Ted Nickel from Fresno Pacific College. The study is intended to give us some hard data regarding victim and offender satisfaction and will attempt to compare recidivism of those who participate in VORP with those who don't.

If you haven't started actively supporting VORP yet with volunteer time, prayer, or financial support, we are praying that this will be the year you start.

Shalom

Ron Claassen



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## Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

**7th Annual VORP Gathering**

**March 17**

**Guest Speaker, Mr. James Rowland**

Former Director of the California Department of  
Corrections.