

What Is the Real Meaning Of Justice?

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. Restorative Justice is when the needs of the victim, community and offender are considered and steps are taken to make things as right as possible with the victim, the community and the offender (to prevent future offenses).

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 from happening again).

Summary of 1992

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, peace as a result of right relations between individuals and with God.

"SUSTAINING FRIENDS WITH VORP" are churches who have formalized their mutually supportive relationship with VORP. VORP "Sustaining Friends" in 1992 were: Apostolic Revival Tabernacle, Ashbrook Church, Bethel Temple, Butler Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church, Campus Baptist, College Church of Christ, College Community MB Church, Downtown Church, First Presbyterian Church, Fresno Christian Reformed Church, God's Family Church, Lord of All Nations Mission Church - Lutheran, Memorial United Methodist Church, Mennonite Community Church, Northwest Church, Peace Community Church - Mennonite, The Peoples Church, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church, St. Paul Newman Center, Valley Christian Center, Wesley United Methodist Church, Westside Church of God. If your church is not listed as a "Sustaining Friend," please call Elaine Enns at 291-1120.

STAFF TRANSITION is part of our lives because VORP relies heavily on short-term volunteers. Although they are short term they serve with energy and enthusiasm combined with high quality skills and competency.

This combination and their willingness to serve for a subsistence monetary allowance helps makes it possible for the Fresno VORP to provide so much service at such a low cost. From the Mennonite Voluntary Service program: Mark Bakker served until his term ended in July. Linda Olthoff and Barbara Toews joined us in August. Lachelle Hannickel, from Valley Christian Center, volunteered full time during the summer. Elaine Enns, who served 3 years as a volunteer, has been employed part-time while attending Seminary. Shannon Janzen assisted me and organized "Sustaining Friends." I continue to be employed full-time by the Fresno Pacific College Center for Conflict Studies and Peacemaking (CCSP) with VORP contracting for 2 days per week (no change in paid VORP time).

VORP 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; Joby Dupuis, Secretary/Treasurer; Deborah Odowm; Russell Templeton; Mike Manghera; Jim Parks; Richard Unruh; Ron Claassen; and David Janzen. 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.

County of
FRESNO

Probation Department

Verne L. Speirs
Chief Probation Officer

January 15, 1993

Mr. Ron Claassen, Director
Victim Offender Reconciliation Program
2529 Willow Avenue
Clovis, CA 93612

Dear Mr. Claassen:

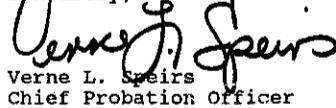
On this the 10th birthday of the Fresno County Probation Department's association with the VORP Program, I am writing to thank the VORP staff and volunteers for their willingness to work hand in hand with the Juvenile Justice System. Without the dedicated efforts of the VORP volunteers, there would be a major void in the system for dealing with juvenile offenders. The services VORP provides are invaluable to the victims and the offenders in our community. The Juvenile Justice System is certainly strengthened because this resource is available to the courts and the Probation Department.

The first VORP case was referred by the Probation Department in February, 1983, and since that time, the VORP program has served more than 3,000 clients. In many cases, services were provided to victims that otherwise would not have received the much needed attention they deserved. In addition, the program called on the offenders to be accountable while providing them with skilled assistance in "making things right" for the victim.

As we reflect on the program's success on this the 10th anniversary, I thank the current and past VORP volunteers for their dedication and strongly urge those who may be interested in becoming a volunteer to do so.

In any worthwhile program that provides a service to people, financial support is critical. I ask those who are concerned about our community, our youth and this program to convert their concern into a tangible contribution. An investment in this program will reap untold rewards for our youth and for our community.

Sincerely,


Verne L. Speirs
Chief Probation Officer

1992 VORP mediators were: Julie Apperson, Alma Ball, Mark Bakker, Ed Barton, Brian Bauman, Cal Bergen, John Bergey (VORG), Paul Binion, Ellie Bluestein, Mark Bollwinkel, Luis Borja, Judy Charbonneau, Roxanne Claassen, Ron Claassen, Jinny Daily, Ron Decker, Tracy Dexter, Jim Dice, Carol Dice, Liz Dodds, Jill Dunagan, Joby Dupuis, Marwood Dyck, Dave Dupuis (VORG), Joey Ellis, Boback Emod, Elaine Enns, Sue Ewert, Kim Fuller, Laura Fultz, Quentin "Garland, Rick Gaston, Joseph Gaxiola, George Gong, Scott Graber, Harlan Hansen, Sara Hedgepeth-Harris, David Heinrichs, Julie Hershey Bergen, Andrew Hershey Bergen, Jeffrey Higginbotham, Phil Hofer, Margeret Holahan, Doug Hood, Leon Indart, Denise Jackson, David Janzen, Shannon Jansen, Beverly Jim, Peter Johnston, Nancy Jorgenson, Rebecca Kelly, David Kleshold, Laura Koostra, Michael Kunz, Jerry Linscheid, Gail Levin, Linda Mack, Mike Manghera, Elmer Martins, Duane McAlister, George McCormick, Dale McNeil, Willie Moore, Shoua Moua, Dan Neufeld, Nathan Ogan, Linda Olthoff, Bruce Owdom, Deborah Owdom, Tina Otoskey, Stephanie Parmely, Ron Per-ring, Galen Quenzer, Beverly Reimer, Dalton Reimer, Jaun Romero, Maite Gayo Romero, David Ryburn, Karen Ryburn, Wesley Schmidt, Patti Silva, Leland Silva, Gayle Speirs, Carrie Smith, Barbara Toews, Don Warkentin, James Wenger, Angela Wilbanks, Lyle Willems, Becky Willems, Sherri Williams, Carol Winchester. "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

REFERRALS were received from the Police Probation Team (no longer operating) and Juvenile Probation Intake as a diversion from the court system for some juvenile offenders who are first or second time offenders. VORP also receives referrals from the court. Occasionally we work with a self referral, either victim or offender. VORP received 326 referrals (up 19%) in 1992. 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 Lawrence J. O'neil, Presiding Juvenile Judge; Verne Speirs (see letter), Chief Probation Officer; Roger Palimino, Juvenile Probation Director. We recognize the wealth of experience among you. We appreciate your cooperation, advice and counsel.

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 1992 totaled \$44,702 (up 17% from 1991): 13% from board members, 54% from individuals, 23% from churches, 4% Corporate Sponsors and 6% honorariums, training fees, etc. Because of your generous giving, VORP ended the year with all expenses paid and \$2,500 to begin 1993. Thanks also to: College Community Church for donating office space; Pacific Printing Press for brochures, letterhead, business cards, etc.; David Janzen for bookkeeping; Mark Hill newsletter layout; Oasis for preparing newsletter for mailing; and Mark Hill, David Kleshold, and David Janzen for maintaining our computers.

VORP CONTINUES TO EXPAND THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA. I continue to work with our Expansion/Consultation Central Function now called Restorative Justice Ministries through the College CCSP. In the Fall we arranged and hosted the Fifth Annual California VORP Gathering. The expansion and support activity is funded by a \$5,000 grant from Mennonite Central Committee-West Coast and materials development assistance from the MCC Office of Criminal Justice.

WE NEED YOUR HELP

Next VORP Mediator training events are scheduled for Feb. 11, 18, and 25 and Feb. 26, 27. For details call Linda or Barbara at 291-1120.

VORP relies entirely on your contributions! If you aren't actively supporting VORP with volunteer time, prayer, or financial support, we are praying that this will be the year you start. The need is great!!! "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

Shalom

Ron Claassen, Director



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INCREASE YOUR CONFLICT HANDLING SKILLS- ATTEND A VORP TRAINING

You can increase your skills in handling conflict cooperatively while serving your community! Your next opportunities for VORP training are: Jan 12, 19, & 26 (6:30 - 9:30) or Feb 26 (6:30 - 9:30) & 27 (8:30 - 3:30). Training costs \$10 for materials for those planning to work with VORP cases. If you want the training but don't intend to work with VORP cases the fee is \$75.

VORP relies entirely on your contributions!!!!!!

Suggested New Year's Resolution: "I will begin to/continue to contribute \$15, \$25, \$50, \$100 per month to VORP to encourage, support, and expand Restorative Justice in Fresno." If you want to encourage more reconciliation stories and haven't yet contributed, now is the time to start. The beginning of the next ten years depends on you. If you see VORP as a "Beacon of Light," now is the time to offer your support.

Shalom

Ron Claassen



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