

Crime and the fear of crime is having a serious impact on our nation. It is impacting our cities, schools, and even our homes. People are changing their preferred lifestyle patterns due to their fear of crime. There is a growing reaction, a sense that something has to change, something has to be done before this problem gets totally out of control. The responses vary.

There was a time when the moral leadership came from the religious community. Gal 6:1 says "when one is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." This clearly applied to those in the church (we don't always apply it even there). It seems to me that Jesus extended those boundaries even to the enemy. The Second Annual Restorative Justice Ministries Conference is intended to address these issues.

## CRIME

IS THERE A  
CHRISTIAN  
RESPONSE?

*Can there be a system that holds offenders accountable, teaches responsibility, restores the victim and the offender, and at less cost?*

Attend the 2nd Annual  
**Restorative Justice  
Ministries Conference**  
May 12-13, 1994  
Registration Fee \$50  
Held at Fresno Pacific College, Fresno, CA  
*Co-sponsored by Mennonite Central Committee &  
Prison Fellowship Ministries*

TO START A VORP IN YOUR AREA

Attend preconference workshop on Church-based  
Victim Offender Reconciliation Programs (VORP)  
May 10-12, 1994  
Registration Fee: \$300

Call 1-800-909-VORP

Fresno Pacific College  
CENTER FOR CONFLICT STUDIES AND PEACEMAKING  
1717 South Chestnut Avenue  
Fresno, California 93702

The Second Annual Restorative Justice Ministries Conference is scheduled for May 12 (evening) and 13 at Fresno Pacific College. You are all welcome. The focus will be on how Churches and individual Christians can pursue peace and justice while they "seek the welfare of their city." Special guest speakers will include Howard Zehr, international lecturer and author of *CHANGING LENSES* and Dave Worth, founder of the first VORP. Dave, one of the mediators in the famous first case in Kitchner, Ontario, Canada, will tell the story of that first case and reflect on VORP development on May 12 (evening). Other speakers and response panels will include representatives from Chuck Colson's Prison Fellowship Ministries, other VORP leaders, and local justice leaders. Conference fee is \$50.

Every community needs a VORP!!  
Attend the Pre-Conference Training:  
"How to Plant a VORP in Your Community." May 10-12. Training

will be based on the Fresno VORP model which is a Church Based Model. The \$300 VORP Organizing Training Fee includes the Conference at no additional cost.

Why do we need VORP in every community? Because reconciliation happens more often when someone takes the initiative to invite the participants to consider the idea. If more invitations were extended, stories like the following one could be repeated every day in every community. Stories like this begin to lay the foundation for restoring long term safety in our communities. Our story is from Todd Wenger who was with Fresno VORP this last fall in the Director in Training Program. MCC was asked to send someone to Burkina Faso, West Africa who had knowledge and experience with VORP. So, before Todd began his three year assignment he came to Fresno. The following story is a case he worked with. Names and some details have been changed to protect identities.

The back of a city bus was covered with graffiti. Tony, a young man, was drawing with a black marker on the back of two seats. A woman who was getting off identified him to the bus driver. The bus driver stopped the bus and requested that Tony exit the bus. Bus security personnel had been following the bus and now waited with Tony until the police came and cited him.

I met with Tony and his mother and explained the VORP process. He described what he had done and agreed to participate constructively in the VORP process.

I next met with the bus driver. I explained the VORP process and he described how he experienced the incident. He explained that the young man was back on the bus the very next day after the incident. He said that Tony acted arrogant, rude, and generally had a bad attitude. The bus driver did not feel that he wanted to meet with Tony and did not feel that he could be constructive with him.

I talked with Barb, VORP case manager, who informed me that in a previous case in which the city bus company was the victim, some administrators joined the driver in the joint meeting. Also, one possibility was that another bus driver could sit in the place of the actual bus driver and could describe for Tony some of the thoughts and feelings about graffiti and vandalism from a bus driver's perspective.

I telephoned the actual bus driver to see if he minded if another bus driver attended the meeting in his place. When I explained the idea, he said that he would be willing to participate if a bus administrator was also present.

At the joint meeting Tony described what he had done. The bus driver and administrator described how they experienced the graffiti. Next they discussed a way to make things right between them. Tony said that he no longer had a job. The bus personnel did not want Tony's mother to pay for the damage. Tony offered to work off the debt. Because of the liability involved for the bus company, the administrator said that they could not have Tony work for them.

At this point the meeting was at a stand still. The administrator suggested that the participants take a week to think about restitution and then meet again. I asked Tony if he had any other ideas. He said that he was looking for a job. He also said that he was no longer doing graffiti. He added that he was going to be a father soon.

*Continued on back*

The bus personnel began to express their sincere concern for the young man's future. One stated that he felt Tony really needed to get his high school education because without it it would be very difficult to support a family.

The driver asked if re-enrollment in school could be included in an agreement. I said it could be if all participants agreed.

Everyone was immediately interested in this idea. They agreed that Tony would call his guidance counselor by the next day and set up an appointment for the next week to take the necessary steps to re-enroll. Tony would inform the bus personnel of his grade point average at the end of each quarter.

We began to talk about other future intentions and how the participants would interact if they saw each other again. The bus personnel said that they hoped that Tony would feel comfortable enough to stop by their office and tell them how things were going. Near the end of the meeting, the bus driver shared with Tony that as far as he was concerned, Tony was welcome on his bus in the future. As we were leaving the meeting place, Tony's mother expressed thanks to the bus personnel for their concern for her son's future.

When I reflected on the joint meeting, I was reminded of the Bible verse, "If one is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness." Gal 6.1.

Thanks Todd!!

**More Volunteer Mediators are needed!!! The next Mediator Training Events are scheduled for March 11 (3 hrs) and 12 (6 hrs) and May 9, 16, & 23 (3 hrs each evening). Training fee: \$15 (materials only) for those who work with at least 3 cases, \$75 for those who are interested in training but will not be taking cases.**

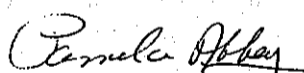
**Please make a financial contribution! VORP relies entirely on your contributions!! Please add VORP to your regular charitable giving. Expenses are running just ahead of contributions due to increased activity. "Thank you" to those who are so faithful in your contributions. Some of you haven't yet experienced the joy of giving for Victim Offender Reconciliation. This is a great time to start. No contribution is too small. We have included a special letter that accompanied a substantial contribution. Pamela is a local pastor; Kent is a local attorney.**

Mr. Ron Claassen January 23, 1994  
VORP  
2529 Willow Ave  
Clovis, CA 93612

Dear Ron,

In honor of our engagement, Pamela Abbey and I enclose a donation for use by VORP. We feel that a donation will be more satisfying than the customary exchange of engagement rings. The reconciliation and justice forged by VORP are visible signs of God's hand at work, and we are happy to be supportive of VORP as part of our covenant.

Grace and peace,

  
PAMELA ABBEY

  
KENT PARR

Congratulations, Pamela and Kent, on your engagement!! And thank you for your contribution. Your support is a great encouragement to all of us who value justice and reconciliation.

Shalom

Ron Claassen, Director

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