

Special Issue

1995: The Year in Brief

by Ron Claassen

VORP happens because of the efforts of many people. 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 responsible right relations between individuals and with God.

42 Churches Are Sustaining Friends with VORP

These churches have formalized their mutually supportive relationship with VORP. Elaine Enns is the VORP staff person who works with the "Sustaining Friend Churches." If your church is listed below, thanks. If your church is not listed below, please contact Elaine (455-5843).

VORP "Sustaining Friends – Churches" in 1995 were: Apostolic Revival Tabernacle; Bethany Church; Bethel Temple Church; Butler Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church; Campus Baptist; College Church of Christ; College Community MB Church; Downtown Church; Faith United Methodist Fellowship; First Congregational Church; First Mennonite Church, Reedley; First Presbyterian Church; Fresno Christian Reformed Church; God's Family Church; Harmony Free Will Baptist Church; Iglesia De Dios; Lord of All Nations Mission Church – Lutheran; Memorial United Methodist Church; Mennonite Community Church; New Hope Community Church; North Fresno Church MB.

Northpark Community Church; Northwest Church; Peace Community Church – Mennonite; The People's Church; Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church; Redeemer Lutheran Church; Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church; Sanger First Presbyterian Church; Second Baptist Church; St. Columba's Episcopal Church; St. Luke's United Methodist Church; St. Paul Newman Center; Trinity Lutheran Church; United Japanese Christian Church; Valley

VOLUNTEERS LEAD PEACEMAKING PROCESS

by Ron Claassen

VORP mediators are community volunteers who are trained to invite and encourage the offender and victim to decide first individually if they are willing to look for a constructive resolution to the conflict/injustice and then, if they are willing, to lead them in the VORP Peacemaking process:

1. recognize the injustices (tell/listen/summarize the events and impact in the violation and offender accepting responsibility);
2. restore the equity or balance between them as much as possible (agree on what can be done to make things as right as possible now – realizing that to some extent this is always symbolic, restoring equity is a combination of restitution and grace);

3. establish commitments for a safer, more respectful, and more just future (give assurances and take steps to prevent the injustice from happening again).

When the individuals have recognized each other and made these agreements, forgiveness and reconciliation happen and trust starts to grow. If the agreements are kept, the trust continues to grow.

Reconciliation is the primary goal of VORP. I think of reconciliation as being movement along a continuum from increasing hatred to increasing care.

While reconciliation cannot be forced, it happens between people who experience forgiveness together. Those who report reconciliation also report a greater sense of justice and a greater sense of safety.

Christian Center; Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Clovis; Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Fresno; Westside Church of God; Wesley United Methodist Church; West Side Miracle Revival Center.

Staff Transition Is Part of Our Lives

Staff transition is part of our lives because VORP relies heavily on short-term (one–two years) volunteers. Although they are short term, they serve with energy and enthusiasm combined with high quality skills and competency.

This year two from the Mennonite Voluntary Service (MVS) program have ended their terms. Jesse Corwin served as case manager. Laura Fultz has been in a dual position helping to initiate VORP in Madera County and assisting Fresno VORP with financial and volunteer development. Laura will be continuing and expanding her efforts and now employed directly by Fresno VORP.

Nestor Gerente joined our staff in August as part of a trainee program sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). He is from the Philippines where he has completed a bachelor's degree in economics and three years of law school. He is currently assuming primary responsibility for case/volunteer management. Trevor Siemens, a volunteer through the MVS program, is continuing as case follow-up manager.

Elaine Enns completed her seminary degree and now is on staff full time with the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at Fresno Pacific College and part of her time is contracted by VORP. Elaine's responsibilities continue to be focused on the Sustaining Friend program plus staff and volunteer training. I continue to be employed full-time by the Fresno Pacific College Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies with VORP contracting for part of my time (no change from last year).

VORP Board of Directors Assumes Both Financial and Policy Responsibility

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. Board members shoulder significant responsibility so that our hundreds can serve as mediators and thousands of victims and offenders can have the opportunity to experience Restorative Justice.

Deborah Owdom and Jonathan Villalobos completed their service with our board this year. Each board member has an impact on VORP and while their formal service on the board has ended their contributed wisdom continues to provide direction.

Our current board of directors are: Mike Manghera, President; Jim Parks, Vice President; Pam Hatwig; Rich Smith; Carol Fransen; David Kleschold; Kay Mathison (new in 1995); Rick Gaston (new in 1995); and Ron Claassen. These board members carry the responsibility and potential liability for VORP. They receive very little recognition. In addition to overall program guidance their participation provides significant encouragement to staff. The commitment, dedication, and wisdom of each board member is a vital part of what makes VORP work. Thanks again to those who are currently serving and to all of you who have served on the board in the past.

VORP Mediators Are Volunteers 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. 1995 VORP mediators were: Mark Abate, Doris Ashworth, John Auer, Kelly August, Mary Avila, Margaret Baldwin, Ed Barton, John Bergey, Kristi Blankenship, Jan Blue, Michael Blue, Phil Bohnsack, Danny Boling, Arthur Borders Jr., Amy

(See 'Mediators,' page 2)

Mediators, justice officials, contributors, make VORP possible

Byers, Larry Carmean, David Castro Jr., Pam Childs, Greg Chittum, Ron Claassen, Roxanne Claassen, Maria Cockroft, Heather Compton, Joseph Coppola, Melissa Coronado, Jesse Corwin, Katie Crask, Renie Cuevas, Linda Curtis.

Sheila Davidson-Rollin, Autumn Davis, Daniel Desantis, Liz Dodds, Rachel Doherty, Sheri Durst, Mary Elizondo, Elaine Enns, Emily Foss, Wilma Francis, Laura Fultz, Richard Gaston, Nestor Gerente, Leanne Gibson, George Gong, Jay Griffith, Gary Hall, Brandon Hamilton, Brandon Hanke, Tamika Harold, Pamela Hatwig, Roberta Heinrichs, Clinton Heise, Melissa Hergenroeder, Philip Hofer, Anne Howe, Heather Hollins, Becky Hoppert, Lejon Howard, Leon Indart, Beverly Jim, Kent Klassen, David Kleschold, Mary Ann Larsen-Pusey, Karen Latham, Beth Lederach, Ted Loewen, Michelle Madril, David Marshall, Gail Marshall, Elmer Martens, Kay Mathison, Lauri McClintic, Kristin McLaughlin, Kelly McMillan, Dale McNeil, James Merson, Laurie Mitchell, Shoua Moua, Dora Mugica, Trophy Olson, Latda Ornta.

Simone Ostrander, Marcus Page, Kent Parr, Majbrit Perez, Charles Peterson, Connie Pitt, Lisa Plett, Faith Porter, Carol Pryor, Tony Redfern, Paul Reimer, Deborah Rekoon, Malyn Rose, Aimee Russell, Duane Ruth-Heffelbower, Roxanna Sadler, Katy Seagle, Jan Shoji, Trevor Siemens, Nannette Stomberg, Kathy Stück, Charles Tavookjian, Cosmo Tedeschi, Melinda Vaughn, Robert Volpp-Garcia, Lucile Wheaton, Thomas Widlund, Rose Willems, Robyn Williams, Tammy Williamson, and Ka Xiong. "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

Referrals Were Received Primarily from Criminal Justice Officials

Most referrals were from Juvenile Probation as a diversion from the court system for those juvenile offenders who are first or second time offenders. VORP also receives referrals on more serious cases from the courts, both juvenile and adult. A few referrals were made directly by the police. And occasionally we receive a self referral, either victim or offender (these tend to be the most serious cases). VORP is often part of a sanction or sentence but occasionally the sole sanction. VORP received 595 referrals in 1995 compared to 439 in 1994. 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. Thank you Verne Speirs, Chief Probation Officer, who has left and now is CPO in Sacramento; Joe Walden who was acting CPO in the interim; Larry Price, our new Chief Probation Officer; and Norma Suzuki, Juvenile Probation Director. We recognize the wealth of experience and wisdom among you and your staff. We appreciate your cooperation, advice, and counsel.

Financial Contributors Are Silent Partners

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 1995 totaled \$66,737: 4.1 percent from board members, 41.2 percent from individuals; 17.8 percent from churches; 13.3 percent from fundraisers; 4.4 percent from private grants; 16.8 percent from a City of Fresno grant; 2.4 percent from honorariums, training fees, etc. Because of your generous giving, VORP ended the year with all expenses paid and \$5,000 to begin 1996. Thanks also to College Community Church for donating office space; Pacific Printing Press for brochures, letterhead, business cards, etc.; David Janzen for bookkeeping; Mark Roy for newsletter layout; Oasis for preparing newsletter mailing; and David Kleschold and David Janzen for maintaining our computers.

The VORP Auxiliary

The VORP Auxiliary worked at several fundraising events. The second annual Evening in Margaret Hudson's Backyard was a great success. Many new people heard about and contributed to VORP because of the event and the Lion and Lamb sculpture won by Joyce Spry. Special thanks to Margaret Hudson! A garage sale, sales of Entertainment Books, and first-aid kits were the other fundraising events sponsored by the VORP Auxiliary. Laura Fultz provided staff support. Shannon Janzen and Carol Fransen are also providing leadership. You will be hearing from them.

VORP RELIES ON YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Please don't wait. VORP can only grow if financial support grows. 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!

VOLUNTEER MEDIATORS NEEDED!

VORP volunteer mediators are learn and practice peacemaking skills that can be used at home, at work, and in the congregation.

The next trainings are scheduled on March 22 & 23; and April 16, 23 & 30.

Call Laura, Trevor or Nestor at 291-1120 for details.

BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS!!

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