

# VORP NEWS

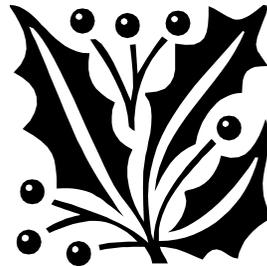
A Monthly Newsletter of the Victim Offender Reconciliation Program

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## The Christmas Season is Upon Us!

We at VORP wish to express to you our sincere hope for a safe and celebrative holiday season. We look forward to this season especially because it is a special reminder that God is with us and for each and every one of us. God bless you and your family as you make preparations for the new year!



### *Appreciation Corner*

On behalf of our Board and Staff, our Sustaining Friends and supportive churches, our various community contributors, our volunteer mediators, and those of you we know well within the juvenile justice system, I am sure you would want to join us in expressing to Ron Claassen, our resigning director, our warm and generous sense of appreciation for his significant contributions to the work of Restorative Justice, and especially to VORP, over this past 17 years.

Ron, we wish you continued success in your advocacy for Restorative Justice as co-director and presiding professor at The Conflict Resolution and Peacemaking Center at Fresno Pacific University. Thank you for your service to God and your neighbors through the ministry/service of VORP and now at FPU and abroad!

If you would like to send Ron a letter of appreciation we would encourage you to write to: The Center for Peacemaking & Conflict Studies at 1717 N. Chestnut Ave., Fresno Pacific University, Fresno, CA 93702, or e-mail him at [rlclaass@fresno.edu](mailto:rlclaass@fresno.edu).

### **VOLUNTEER MEDIATOR TRAINING CALENDAR—2000**

This upcoming year we would like to service 400 offenders and their victims (800 families).

Your participation could mean significant outcomes in the way offenders and victims handle crime in their community. It can also speak loudly to our juvenile justice system about the viability of community justice, and if needed, mediation, prior to probation and court justice, to reasonably address crime in our County.

February 4 & 5  
March 4 & 5  
April 29 & 30  
June 13, 16 & 17  
September 8 & 9  
October 12, 13 & 14  
November 10 & 11

## The Word From Around the



As we enter into the new Millennium, and this special season of goodwill, Restorative Justice is finding a voice in forms other than simply juvenile justice concerns, but economic and social justice as well. The word getting around the world is the idea of Jubilee, and it's voice is getting stronger.

Hundreds of thousands of religious, community and political leaders worldwide are currently advocating for releasing neighboring nations, like those in South America, from their national debts to our country and others. The idea is one built on a foundation of forgiveness and reconciling goodwill to empower nations to start anew economically and socially while developing new & more supportive international relationships for the next century.

Jubilee is not some wild new concept or practice in foreign or domestic policy. It is an ancient Jewish social and religious concept and practice, believed to be handed down by God through Moses, and later promoted and encouraged through the early Israelite prophets and political leaders of Israel, and especially proclaimed during reign's of King David and Solomon. It was a way of ensuring and passing on God's concern and blessing for the people's welfare.

Today, like then, Jubilee Justice is not merely sound economic policy, it is sound social policy as well. The principle behind the idea of Jubilee is that of "not just looking after one's own interests, but to the best (long-term) interests of one another." This is a principle very close to home for us at VORP. It's the valuing and caring for people we want to embody when we invite mediation. In the face of the chaos and confusion of crime, such assistance actually works to help set others free from their debts and look-out for the long-term best interests of one-another, economically and socially.

There are some very simple ways you might promote the gift of Jubilee to others today. This might mean partnering with VORP in someway (see margin, next page) or consider volunteering and/or supporting other worthwhile good works in our community. If you would like to read more about Jubilee consider: Jubilee Time by Maria Harris, 1996, Bantam Books/Random House Publishers (\$13.95, 256pp).



# A Word from our New Interim Director- Carrying on the Vision of VORP by Jay Griffith

## Partnering with VORP for the New Year

Fresno VORP needs your support in the following areas:

1. 25 new Prayer Partners & 25 new Intercessors for VORP and the people we provide services too.
2. Consider a year-end, tax-deductible, contribution to VORP.
3. Internship opportunities with mentor support for Students in Social Work, Psychology & Criminology.
4. 50 new mediators desired for Winter Trainings. Sign-up today!
5. 12 New Major Donors to support us in 2000. Businesses & Corporations please inquire.
6. Provide a Matching Grant to sponsor a part-time or full-time staff person.
7. Volunteers to assist with Translating, Office Management, Word Processing, Newsletter Publishing/Editing, Volunteer Support & Recognition, Funding Development, and Church relations.
8. Churches wanting to learn more about Restorative Justice and its biblical roots. For presentations call VORP Office.
9. Office Equipment Improvements (copier, printer, pagers & cell phones).
10. A few Office Furniture needs (4 sitting room chairs, coffee table & plants).



### To Contact Us:

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I am thankful to the Board and Ron Claassen for granting me their vote of confidence in providing interim leadership to the VORP program.

For 17 years now, the vision of VORP has been to provide a community-based program to address the issue of juvenile crime. With it's primary source of support coming from area churches and like-minded individuals, it's own vision has been to be an extension of the church as it seeks to provide a restorative justice alternative to compliment our traditional justice responses to youth crime.

This year alone we will have made our services available to 370 offenders, their victims and their families. That's roughly 720 families affected by juvenile crime this year in Fresno County alone. The actual number is much higher. We are being told by Probation there is a need to service somewhere around 2,500 offenders and their victims every year. That's incredibly 5,000 families in our County!

VORP will face new dangers and opportunities as we enter the new Millennium. And just like many other non-profits who face limited resources and great need, our commitment to our vision and values will be tested as we continue to make this service available to our community .

There are seven (7) responsibilities, which if we manage well, will enable us to carry on the vision of VORP in Fresno County well into the next century. They are:

1. Inviting mediation opportunities for victim-offenders who are in the juvenile system (present) and prior to system referrals (future).
2. Providing on-going training in conflict resolution and mediation to interested community members.
3. Developing additional financial support for a core-paid staff team (3 minimum) and seeking volunteer interns to support them.
4. Continuing to extend opportunities for an ecumenically, racially, ethnically diverse group of mediators, volunteers, staff and board to give continued guidance and energy to this restorative response to crime in our community.
5. Being a reliable advocate and community voice for Restorative Justice to our Juvenile Justice System, and among local churches, and civic organizations & businesses.
6. Addressing how to best deliver our services and increase capacity to support additional clients while maintaining reliable and enthusiastic staffing and volunteer support.
7. Maintaining our hope and trust in God as having all our best interests at heart as we seek the welfare of one another through prayers and works of service.

For those of you partnering with us — You are tremendous. I invite you to share with us any thoughts or concerns you have for our future. If you are considering partnering with us — lend us your head, heart and hands to an area of work you feel gifted and we have need of. Give us a call to let us know what that might be. Simply call or e-mail VORP or myself (see margin for details).

On behalf of VORP, our Board, Mediators, and Contributors, it is our best hope that you experience the abundance of God's love, grace and truth this holiday season!

*Volunteers, Staff & Staff Support:*

*Our VORP Volunteer Community Mediators*  
*Oasis (Older Adult Social Services) — Newsletter Prep.*  
*Carol Pryor — Newsletter Publishing/Editing*  
*John Wiens — Finance/Reparations Manager*

**FRESNO**

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 Reconciliation Program

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