



# NEWS

VORP of the Central Valley, Inc.  
September 1996

## Annual conference to examine role of church, state, legislation in Restorative Justice

### VORP News readers & volunteer mediators invited to attend

by Elaine Enns

On October 25–26, church, community, and criminal justice leaders from Fresno and across the United States and Canada will meet at Fresno Pacific College for the fourth annual Restorative Justice Conference.

This year the Restorative Justice Conference focuses on defining the role of legislation and the role of the church in restorative justice.

“Restorative justice” is becoming a popular term, and legislation related to restorative justice is being proposed at an increasing rate. Government, church, and community all have roles to play in responding to crime. This conference will examine the roles of legislation and the church in defining and shaping the vision and practice of restorative justice.

Conference speakers and panelists include: **David Augsburger**, Fuller Theological Seminary; **Lois Barrett**, Commission on Home Ministries, General Conference Mennonite Church; **Elaine Enns**, Center for Peacemaking & Conflict Studies, Fresno Pacific College; **Kathy Lancaster**, Criminal Justice Office, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); **Wayne Northey**, Mennonite Central Committee Canada; **Kay Pranis**, State of Minnesota, Restorative Justice Planner; **Bill Preston**, Restorative Justice Institute; **Lisa Rea**, Justice Fellowship; **Duane Ruth-Heffelbower**, Center for Peacemaking & Conflict Studies, Fresno Pacific College; **Rick Templeton**, Justice Fellowship; **Dan Van Ness**, Prison Fellowship; **Steve Varnam**, Justice Fellowship; **John Wilmerding**, Vermont Reparative Justice Program; **Howard Zehr**, MCC U.S. Office of Crime & Justice and Eastern Mennonite University.

Fresno VORP and the Center for Peacemaking & Conflict Studies encourage VORP News readers and VORP mediators and financial supporters to attend the conference. The cost for two-day conference registration is \$80 (\$65 for those who register prior

to October 4). VORP of the Central Valley, Inc., volunteers who register prior to the October 4 early registration deadline will receive an additional \$15 discount (total registration fee for Fresno and Central Valley VORP volunteers: \$50).

The conference is a project of Restorative Justice Ministries, a program of the Center for Peacemaking and Conflict Studies at Fresno Pacific College. Conference co-sponsors include Fresno VORP,

West Coast Mennonite Central Committee, and Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

RJM's mission is to promote restorative justice within the church, the criminal justice system, and the larger community. In addition to the annual Restorative Justice Conference, RJM provides training and technical assistance for the development of church-based VORPs.

A pre-conference training will be held on October 22–24 for people interested in starting church-based VORPs in their communities. Call Restorative Justice Ministries at 800-909-VORP (locally, 455-5840) for information.

### VORP needs volunteer mediators

Please consider becoming a VORP Mediator. VORP mediators attend a nine hour training which continues throughout the first case and thereafter as needed. Mediators often work in pairs or with assistance as needed from VORP staff. Cases are assigned and selected based on the mediator's experience and comfort level.

Mediators provide a significant service to the community and report significant improvement in their relationship and leadership skills. For mediators who work with three or more cases, the cost for training is only \$20 (\$100 for those who do not choose to mediate VORP cases).

The dates for the next training events are: September 24, October 1 & 8; and November 15 & 16.

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Detach and Mail Registration Form with Payment —or— Register & Pay by Phone with Credit Card

### RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FORM

- Please register me for the RJ Conference, October 25–26  
\$65 (postmarked by October 4, 1996)
- Please register me for the RJ Conference, October 25–26  
\$80 (postmarked after October 4, 1996)
- Please register me for the RJ Conference, October 25–26  
\$50 (VORP of the Central Valley, Inc., mediators only, post-marked by October 4, 1996)
- Please register me for the pre-conference training, October 22–24  
\$600 (no added charge to attend conference, October 25–26)
- I am staying in a hotel and will need transportation; name of hotel: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

( Home  Work) Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

( Home  Work) Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Checks can be made payable to RJM.

(If paying by check, please include this form with payment and mail to: RJM • 1717 S. Chestnut Ave. • Fresno, CA 93702)

# Minds meet in multi-lingual mediation

by Cathy Bell (Northwest Church)  
with Ron Claassen

I had attended the mediator training and had taken my first case, but despite my eagerness to use this new training, time passed. I couldn't find the courage to place that first phone call to my first offender. Finally, I called Julius Lockett, VORP case manager, for encouragement. That call and the events of the next few hours were very special, and I want to share them with you.

A joint meeting was scheduled to begin in an hour, and Julius invited me to attend. He said it promised to be interesting. It was to involve three offenders from a culture different from mine, and a deaf victim. The individual meetings with the offenders and the victim had been completed by a fellow trainee who had just called saying he couldn't come to the meeting because of an emergency.

When everyone was present, the three offenders took their seats on one

side of the table. Three fathers and one mother took seats behind the young boys. The victim, a deaf man of about 40, sat across the table. Julius and the sign language interpreter were seated by the head of the table. I observed from the other end.

The joint meeting began with each of us introducing ourselves. Although the boys and one of the fathers spoke English very well, two fathers spoke only a little English, and the mother spoke only her native tongue. The boys seemed fascinated by the sign language interpreter; at first they looked at her as they spoke, rather than the victim.

Julius reviewed the purpose of the joint meeting, and clearly stated the rules. Everyone agreed to both the purpose of the meeting and the rules.

Each offender was then asked to describe what had happened. It was some time before the offense was clear to all of us. The information was conveyed in two spoken languages and sign language. The sign language interpreter told the victim that the boys drove to the lake, then broke a window in his car. The English-speaking father interpreted for the others. Before proceeding, Julius always checked to be sure we all understood. When the boys were finished telling what they had done, the victim was asked to summarize what had been said. The sign language interpreter shared the victim's response.

Then the victim explained that he had gone to the lake to fish with his young daughter and her friends from school. Later, when he returned to his car, he discovered the broken window. He said he was very surprised to see that the ones who did this to him were so young. The boys understood and

repeated what the victim had said through his interpreter. It was clear they understood the injustice which had brought us to this mediation.

Now it was time to make things as right as possible. A repair bill was presented by the victim, who said he had gone to several shops for estimates. The victim said he would be satisfied with reimbursement of his costs. Even though the fourth offender was not present, the bill was divided by four, and the three offenders and their families each agreed to pay one-fourth of the total. Each agreement was prepared, and included the amount and date due. One father paid immediately, and the other parents were given return envelopes for mailing the restitution to the VORP office. The agreements were read aloud and signed, restoring the equity.

When Julius asked the offenders to state their future intentions, each one said he was sorry he had broken the car window. The boys said they would never do it again. This was communicated to the victim. He again conveyed his surprise that the offenders were so young.

The purpose of the mediation had been achieved, and as we all stood to leave, each offender walked to the victim, shook his hand, apologized again, and thanked him. Then each parent, including the mother, said, "Thank you." These were very touching moments. This very diverse group had come together and achieved a vital common goal.

I feel the mediation was important to each participant, and will be a special memory for all of us.

*Thanks Cathy and Julius!*

*Blessed are the Peacemakers!!*

## VORP Relies on Your Contributions!

VORP relies on your contributions! VORP cases would not happen if it were not for you who contribute some of your hard-earned finances.

Your contribution makes it possible for mediators to approach offenders and their families and ask them if they are willing to accept responsibility for the offense. Your contribution makes it possible for mediators to meet with victims and listen to their frustration and pain as they seek healing. Your contribution makes it

possible for mediators to encourage and assist reconciliation between victims and offenders. Your contributions made it possible for Ken and Jerry to transform their relationship.

***If you haven't yet, you may receive a phone call inviting you to make a financial pledge to VORP. Please say "Yes!"***

No amount is too small. The need for accountability and reconciliation is great!!

## THIRD ANNUAL VORP BENEFIT Raffle & Silent Auction

CSUF Banquet Facility at Residence Dining Hall

Saturday, Sept. 21 • 7-9 PM

- ◀ Hosted by Angelo Stalis, KSFN-TV
- ◀ Music by Matt & Melissa Horton: "Sounds of Gershwin"
- ◀ Gourmet Coffee & Specialty Desserts

**CALL VORP, 291-1120, FOR BENEFIT & RAFFLE TICKETS**

**Admission: \$15.00 per person (includes refreshments & entertainment)**

**Raffle tickets: \$1.00 each (12 for \$10.00)**

**Raffle prize: Margaret Hudson 'Lion & the Lamb' sculpture valued at \$400.00**

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Victim Offender Reconciliation Program  
2529 Willow Avenue • Clovis, CA 93612  
(209) 291-1120

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