

In every conflict there is danger and opportunity. One danger is that love is lost to hate and that the seeds of desire for revenge and retaliation that exist in all of us are allowed to prevail. Jesus said, 'You have heard it said, 'you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...' (Matt 5: 43,44) The opportunity is that a conflict will become the occasion to reexamine relationships in the light of love, responsibility, freedom, the dignity of each individual, and pursue justice (the process of making things right between people).

The focus of VORP is on the conflict we call crime. VORP mediators invite victims and offenders to resolve the conflict between them, to find the opportunity and reduce the danger. VORP mediators are trained to invite people who are in conflict 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 to the victim and to keep from repeating the injustice again).

1990 Report

I am deeply saddened when I realize that of the estimated 4,000 cases per year that our justice officials suggest would be appropriate to be invited into the VORP process, only about 10% per year are currently being worked with because of our limitations. Each month VORP Mediators have shared the wonderful stories of victim/offender reconciliation that do occur when people are invited. The victim and offender in 3,600 cases were not invited to find the opportunity in their conflict. If each church provided one VORP mediator to work with one case per month, all of these cases could be worked with. The task is not out of reach. I think that when we accomplish it here and in many other communities, it will also impact how we work at the larger issues, like the Persian Gulf Crisis. I sometimes dream that we will someday be willing to invest massive energy, talent, and resources to develop VORP type structures to help work constructively/cooperatively with disputes at all levels.

New initiatives, change, and catchup are descriptive words for this last year.

New Initiatives included starting a VORG Outside program

New initiatives included starting a VORG Outside program. The Victim Offender Reconciliation Group (VORG) is a program started at Vacaville State Prison in which inmates sensitize themselves to the pain and injustice

that victims experience and then they take some constructive steps to help victims heal and to change their own patterns so that they don't repeat a similar offense. It has been a very significant and life changing experience for some of the inmates. After being introduced to VORP they asked if we would help them start a group for individuals who parole to the Fresno area who have been part of VORG. This last year, with the help of a VORG graduate, Dave Dupuis, John Bergey, Ken Janzen, and Michael Pierce we now have a VORG Outside group meeting regularly and a second in the developing stages.

Another new initiative was to clarify what it was that we were looking for in support from churches. We are asking churches to: 1) Include VORP on their prayer agenda. 2) Announce VORP training sessions (aiming for providing at least enough mediators to work

Several churches have responded positively to the "Sustaining Friends of VORP" program

with one case per month. 3) Encourage participation by using VORP as an illustration of Biblical Justice, repentance, forgiveness in at least one sermon per year. 4) Include VORP in the churches financial contributions. At

least \$100/year for churches with 150 members or less and \$250/year for larger churches. Contact has been made with at least 30 churches and to date several have already responded positively. Our "Sustaining Friends of VORP" are: Downtown Church, Campus Baptist, College Community MB Church, Peoples Church, Valley Christian Center, Peace Community Church-Mennonite, St. Anthonys, Mennonite Community Church, Northwest Church, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church. If your church is not yet listed, please help us.

Staff transition is part of our lives at VORP because we rely on short-term volunteers. Although they are short term they come with energy and enthusiasm combined with high quality skills and competency. This combination and their willingness to serve for a subsistence monetary allowance is what makes it possible for the Fresno VORP to provide so much service at such a low cost. From the Mennonite Voluntary Service program: Rudy Dyck left in May, Elaine Enns was with us the whole year, Beth Holck joined us in July. From the MB Christian Service Program: Shannon Jost left in Aug to be administrative assistant to the Fresno Pacific College Center for Conflict Studies and Peacemaking (CCSP). I am now employed full-time by CCSP but 2 days per week are contracted back to VORP (no change in paid VORP time).

Our 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. Russell Templeton, President; Mark Hill, Secretary/Treasurer; Denise Jackson; Dianna Fain; Richard Unruh; Ron Claassen; New in 1990: Joby Dupuis and David Janzen; Leaving in 1990: D.H. Mapson who contributed substantial time to helping with our computer system and Margaret Hudson who has given sacrificially of her finances, ideas, and caring support since the beginning of Fresno VORP in 1982. The commitment and dedication of each board member is a vital part of what makes VORP work.

VORP Mediators are people who put their faith and beliefs into action

VORP Mediators are people who put their faith and beliefs into action. They give up personal time to help victims and offenders find the opportunity in what otherwise seems like a totally negative experience. They are: Robert Ackerman, Ed Barton, John Bergey, Ellie Bluestein, Tony Atkins, Steve Bolm, John Border, Bill Botzong, Ken Braun, Cynthia Callaghan, Roxanne Claassen, Ron Claassen, Allan Cohan, Iris Cotton, Edward Deines, James Diaz, Liz Dodds, Thomas Dorsch, Rudy Dyck, Lynette Eason, Elaine Enns, Sue Ewert, JoAnn Elizondo, Dianna Fain, Walter Fast, Mark Godgel, Ron Guenther, Tino Guev-

era, Pete Hagel, Harlan Hansen, Joel Hernandez, Beth Holck, Margaret Holohan, Jackie Holmes, Shari Horton, Brian Huie, Larry Huntsman, Mike Iliff, David Janzen, Beverly Jim, Betty Jones, Craig Jost, Shannon Jost, Daria Joyce, Kent Klassen, Dave Kleschold, Roberta Kroeker, Michael Kunz, Jerry Linscheid, Linda Mack, Mike Mangh-
era, Elmer Martens, Sharon Martin, Dora Muniga, Dan Neufeld, Phyllis Neufeld, Rudy Neufeld, Nathan Ogan, Rosa Palacios, Laurie Perry, Michael Pierce, Brent Pries, Galen Quenzer, Dalton Reimer, Duane-Ruth Heffebower, Nobel Schear, Sandy Smith, Harry Wiens, Kevin Van Dolah, Walter Bergen, Karen, Stobbe, Al Stobbe. "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

Referrals are received from the Police Probation Team and Juvenile Probation Intake as a diversion from the court system for some juvenile offenders who are first or second time offenders. We also receive referrals from the court system when restitution has been ordered and VORP is recommended. Occasionally we work with a self referral, either victim or offender. Toward the end of 1989 we received more referrals than we could handle in a timely manner. We had to stop accepting referrals in the first several months of 1990 to catch up. The average number of referrals that we have worked with since 1985 is 376 which brings our total number worked with since we started in 1983 to 2,548. 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 Judge Austin, Presiding Juvenile Judge; Verne Spiers, Chief Probation Officer, Roger Palimino and Joe Walden, Probation Division Chiefs, and Duane Tanner, Probation Supervising Officer, whose wealth of experience and willingness to give advice and counsel combine to help make VORP possible.

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 1990 totaled \$38,127: 12% from board members, 66% from individuals, 20% from churches, and 2% honorariums, etc. Thanks again to College Community Church for donating space for our office and Pacific Printing Press for continuing to provide brochures, letterhead, business cards, etc. Because of your generous giving, we ended the year with all expenses paid and \$1,200 to begin 1991.

Tulare County VORP is now up and running. Bill Jost, Program Manager, has worked hard with the Board of Directors to accomplish their goal of getting started with cases and establishing their funding. 31 cases were worked

with and pledges for funds are in place to provide a half time program manager. Plans are to expand this funding base to allow them to include a full time volunteer from a voluntary service program. Tulare County VORP is a program of VORP of the Central Valley, Inc. and guided by their own Board of Directors: Dan Neufeld (President), George Nord (Sec/Treas), Stan Isaac, Henry Peters, Gordon Wiebe, Bryan Goossen, Lyle Willems, and Jerry Reed.

VORP continues to expand throughout California. I continue to work with our Expansion/Consultation Central Function now through the College CCSP. This activity is funded by a \$5,000 grant from Mennonite Central Committee-West Coast and initial training subsidies provided by Justice Fellowship. We arranged and hosted the Third Annual California VORP Gathering. It was well attended and participants exchanged very helpful information and ideas. Following are those counties which have a VORP program either up and running or well along in the development stages, and director and/or other contact persons: Ventura County, Berta Steele; Contra Costa and Alameda, Rick Mockler and Judy Gordon; Santa Clara (VOMP), Gretchen Newby and Judy Hopkins; Monterey and San Luis Obispo, Connie White; San Diego, Nancy Rempel; Los Angeles, Tim Cooper; Orange County, Mike Neimeyer; Santa Barbara, Sky Aijian; Sacramento, Dave Deleplane; Tulare, Bill Jost; Fresno, Ron Claassen.

Looking Forward

Dr. David Augsburg will be our guest speaker on April 11, 1990 for our Annual VORP Gathering. Plan now to attend.

The next two VORP Mediator Trainings are scheduled for Jan.28/Feb.4 and March 5/March12. Each training consists of two sessions, 6-10pm, reading the Handbook, and participation in one case. The training is free for those who intend to work with at least 4 cases, \$75 for others. Financial assistance is available. All are welcome.

Our goals include increasing our number of volunteer VORP Mediators, increasing cases, expanding our number of churches who are "Sustaining Friends with VORP", and bringing on a staff person who will provide continuity in managing our office. We are not sure if there might be a volunteer in the community who might do this or if funds will be found to employ someone. Please pray with us that this goal will be met this year.

Shalom

Ron Claassen



2529 Willow Avenue • Clovis, California 93612

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
Clovis, Ca. 93612
Permit #376