

SAGE



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E-bulletin

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Welcome to SAGE no. 8

Welcome to SAGE no. 8 – this issue of SAGE explores **New Directions in Restorative Justice**

From its humble beginnings in Kitchener Ontario to the widespread use of restorative principles in schools, churches and countless other criminal justice and non-criminal justice arenas; restorative justice has truly developed into an international movement. This issue of Sage is an opportunity to check in with the restorative justice movement nearly four decades later. As a theory and approach to justice, restorative justice is constantly evolving, as people push forward and expand our understanding of restorative justice. As someone interested in restorative justice it is sometimes overwhelming to keep up with new developments and ideas that emerge. This issue of SAGE is one opportunity for readers to get a small glimpse at some new ideas and directions in restorative justice.

Through this issue of SAGE you will hear a number of perspectives on this issue. We begin with a reflection by former CCJC Executive Director Janet Handy on the human capacity for resilience and the potential for restorative justice. This is followed by a contribution from Chuck Daly, an educator and restorative justice practitioner who shares with us his journey in restorative justice; tracing his changing understandings of the concepts and practices. We also offer a contribution from Anne Martin who introduces us to FaithCare; a program that aims to bring restorative justice directly into our faith communities. We also hear from CCJC board member Sharon Dunlop who talks about her participation in 1st Annual Wrongful Conviction Day.

Finally, we share some exciting new projects and work being undertaken by CCJC. We hope you will enjoy reading about some of the things we have been up to!

I hope you enjoy this edition of SAGE. I hope it fuels your imagination to envision a world that embraces a restorative approach, not only to justice, but in all aspects of our lives.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Bliss

Education and Community Engagement

FaithCARE: Building faithful community through restorative practice

Thousands of dollars disappear from a congregation's safe. The Council's executive informs the police. A police investigation discovers the pastor stole the money. He's arrested. FaithCARE facilitates restorative conversations for church members to talk about the impact of the situation on them and others. The conversations form the basis of a victim impact statement.

Conflict isn't optional when it comes to human relationships. The way people respond to conflict is. Conflict can unite and transform a community. Conflict can also divide and poison a community.

Communities, including faith communities, develop habits of conflict. Sometimes members are conflict-adverse. In the name of niceness, respect and consideration people deny and avoid conflict or hold parking lot meetings dealing indirectly with the issue at hand.

Sometimes congregational members are conflict-reactive. Conflict is met head-on. People justify hurtful candour insisting they're speaking the truth in love.



One of the central tenets of the Christian faith is that Jesus has reconciled the world to God. In response to God's grace, the apostle Paul tells the Corinthians they are called to be "ministers of reconciliation" to others.

What does a ministry of reconciliation look like so that conflict is neither ignored and left to fester nor responded to creating more harm? How can a congregation become conflict-friendly, learning and growing through responding well to conflict?

Faith Communities Affirming Restorative Experiences (**FaithCARE**), was born from such questions. In 2007 Shalem Mental Health Network hosted a retreat of restorative practice facilitators and denominational leaders to explore the use of restorative practice in congregations. To date FaithCARE has worked with over 60 congregations from 9 denominations.

Members of a congregation sign up to lease their land for wind turbines. Some congregational members condemn the signees for betraying the community. FaithCARE facilitates a restorative circle with signees

and members of the congregation to find a way forward.

When there's conflict FaithCARE facilitators offer a community response, ensuring that the dignity of the harmed and those causing the harm can remain intact or be restored so they can once again fully contribute as community members. A restorative response to conflict endeavors to heal the whole community as fully as possible.

A 14-year-old boy sexually abuses a number of young children from his congregation. FaithCARE brings together the boy's parents, the pastor and some of the children's parents for a restorative conference.

It's not unusual for people who have been hurt and are invited to participate in a restorative response to ask what's restored through restorative practice. Sometimes people are so deeply hurt that the thought of restoring a relationship that created so much harm is inconceivable. Sometimes people think it's about forgiveness and they're not ready to forgive.

FaithCARE facilitators assure participants that a restorative response is not about forgiveness. A restorative response is about being heard and hearing others. It's about opening to others, having a real and respectful conversation. It's about taking a step forward.

A congregation's pastor of 15 years announces he's retiring. FaithCARE facilitates congregational meetings to talk about the impact of the pastor's decision.

FaithCARE also works with congregations to develop a restorative culture. A restorative culture sets out clear expectations for leadership and congregants, and offers support to meet those expectations.

A restorative congregation builds and strengthens relationships using intentional and explicit restorative practices to:

- ensure everyone has a meaningful voice and is heard
- develop a fair decision-making process
- review and assess programs, policies and procedures
- provide a structure for meetings so that people enjoy their work and don't burn out
- develop a common understanding of how to respond to conflict when it happens, restoring respect and dignity as fully as possible.

A congregation's manse requires major repairs. Should the congregation sell the manse as is, repair it and then sell it, or keep it? FaithCARE organizes a series of congregational meetings to explore the question.

FaithCARE facilitators offer a number of workshops and trainings. In partnership with the International Institute for Restorative Practices FaithCARE offers a three-day training *Learning How to Grow Restorative Churches*.

It's always a privilege for FaithCARE facilitators to journey with a congregation. Each journey is an invitation for a

community to grow in its understanding of the gospel call to the ministry of reconciliation. Each journey is an opportunity for FaithCARE to deepen its understanding of what it means to work restoratively and to support faith communities, strengthening them as faithful communities.

Anne Martin is the director of restorative practices with the Shalem Mental Health Network. Anne holds a M.A. in Religion and Culture and a Ph.D. in Religious Studies. She is trained in Restorative Practices and a founding member of the FaithCARE steering team.

For more information about FaithCARE and what it can offer your faith community, contact *Anne Martin* annem@shalemnetwork.org or 647-986-8297.

FaithCARE (<http://shalemnetwork.org/support-programs/support-programs-restorative-practice/faithcare/>) is a program of the **Shalem Mental Health Network** (<http://shalemnetwork.org/>)