

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED BY FAITH COMMUNITIES

DO WE HAVE A RESTORATIVE VISION, A REDEMPTIVE THEOLOGY? HOW DO WE CONVINCING OURSELVES AND THE PUBLIC THAT WE DO NOT WORSHIP A VENGEFUL, RETRIBUTIVE GOD?

DO WE HAVE THE SKILLS WE NEED TO OFFER SUPPORTIVE RESPONSES TO THOSE IN OUR CONGREGATIONS WHO ARE INVOLVED IN THE HURTS WE CALL CRIMES? Morton MacCallum-Paterson reports from his research on victim need that “The most shocking thing was the discovery that faith communities typically freeze out crime victims as effectively as they do offenders.” (Toward a Justice That Heals, United Church Publishing, Canada 1988)

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF VICTIMS (AND THEIR FAMILIES)? To have their pain heard and affirmed? Crisis intervention and long-term healing? Competent referrals to victim services? Help with legal processes or community alternatives? Assurance that this is their church home?

WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF THOSE WHO ARE DESIGNATED OFFENDERS (AND THEIR FAMILIES)? Compassion rather than judgment? Appropriate referrals for legal counsel or mediation processes? Assistance in finding ways to make amends? Support in becoming responsible members of their communities? Assurance that this is their church home?

ARE WE SUPPORTING THOSE IN OUR CONGREGATION WHO WORK IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE, COMMUNITY SERVICES, CHAPLAINCIES AS THEY SEEK PREVENTIVE OR RESTORATIVE MEASURES?

IF OUR FAITH COMMUNITY IS VICTIMIZED, WILL WE HAVE A RESTORATIVE RESPONSE, MODELING WHAT WE ADVOCATE?

ARE WE FACING UP TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE DIMENSIONS AND OUR OWN COMPLICITY IN THE CAUSES OF CRIME?

DO WE EXPECT LEGISLATORS AND POLICY MAKERS TO DEVOTE RESOURCES TO PREVENTION OF HURT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION?

DOES OUR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE BEGIN AT HOME—LEARNING SKILLS NEEDED FOR LIVING IN HARMONY, PARENTING SKILLS, CONFLICT RESOLUTION, BUILDING PEACE AND JUSTICE?

WHERE DO WE SEE BARRIERS TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE? HAS IT OCCURRED TO US THAT THERE ARE HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR FAITH COMMUNITIES AND THAT WE SHOULD BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE RESTORATIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT?

WHAT WOULD IT MEAN IF WE DECLARED OURSELVES TO BE RESTORATIVE CONGREGATIONS/FAITH COMMUNITIES?