**Restorative Justice: A justice that inspires.....**

**Restorative Justice inspires us to think differently....**

Have you ever said something that hurt someone? Of course; we all have.

*“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”. Matthew 5:44*

*“The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.” Psalm 34:18*

Instead of being angry, lashing out, we need to think differently, *“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;” Luke 6:37*

The more you practice Luke 6:37, the easier it gets to not condemn and to forgive.

**Restorative Justice inspires us to meet our neighbour....**

Restorative justice inspires us to consider how we should respond when we fail to love our neighbours. Restorative justice is concerned with responding to the harm caused by crime and other destructive behaviour. This means those most affected by the harm and those responsible for the crime are key players in determining how to respond. Meaningful accountability for the person responsible and a healing experience for the person harmed are key, as is community participation in supporting and addressing those involved.

*“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law? Jesus replied: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments”. Matthew 22:36-40*

**Restorative justice inspires us to reflect on important questions....**

* What is justice?
* Do I believe that *all* people deserve dignity, respect and compassion?
* How does restorative justice fit with my religious beliefs?
* What is one thing I can learn about RJ?
* What is one thing I can do to advance the values and principles of RJ?
* What is one thing I can change to help make communities safer and healthier?

**Restorative justice inspires us to take action....**

*“Love does no harm to its neighbour, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” Romans 13:10*

 If the idea of restorative justice resonates with you here are some ways that you can get involved:

* Get involved in a restorative justice program, Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) or a community justice program near you. Many of these programs cannot run without volunteers. This is also a great opportunity to see the human face of justice.
* Write, call or email your local MP or MPP: make your voice heard.  Tell your MP and MPP about restorative justice, how it works, how it should be used more often and for more different types of situations and about its efficacy over the criminal justice system.

**Restorative Justice inspires healing...**

*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. 2 Cor. 5:18-20*

*"Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed." Isaiah 53:4-5*

*“I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel’s mourners, creating praise on their lips. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the LORD. “And I will heal them.” Isaiah 57:18-19*

Looking for well-informed solutions that balance the humanity of the criminalized individual, the protection of society and the needs of victims should not be considered an impossible task. Instead of polarizing the issue and assuming these perspectives to be mutually exclusive there needs to be attention given to how we can develop solutions that meet the needs of all parties affected by crime. Having witnessed firsthand the potential to alternative approaches such as restorative justice, I am of firm belief that there is another way.

NRSV

The concept of an eye for an eye is mentioned only three times in the scriptures where as mercy appears several hundred times (“Towards a Theology of Transformative Justice” in *The case for Penal Abolition*) 273 times

Love 373

compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.

In the bible when