

REPORT OF THE

Restorative Congregations



PILOT PROJECT FALL 2014
PART ONE - THE REPORT

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Foreword

This report summarizes the findings of a pilot project begun in response to a number of questions we received about what it takes to become a restorative congregation. The pilot project began several years ago with three Christian Reformed churches in Ontario, and later with one CRC congregation in Michigan. In fall 2013 we interviewed 18 members of these four congregations to discover what their experiences were during the pilot project. The interviews in Ontario were conducted over a three-day period, and the interviews in Michigan were conducted a month later. Please keep in mind that these are four pilot congregations and that our reflections are based only on a three-day window in the lives of these congregations. Differences in findings may well have occurred had our interview schedule or format been different.

We trust this report will not only be informative about what members of these four churches experienced in becoming restorative congregations but also encourage you to become restorative in your local congregations.

We realize there are many other programs that address the health and spiritual well-being of congregations and their outreach programs. By recommending that congregations in the Christian Reformed Church become restorative in nature, we do not intend to denigrate existing programs. Instead, we believe we are implementing the recommendations of the report of the Committee to Study Restorative Justice, unanimously approved at Synod 2005. As such, we highly recommend restorative practices for your local congregations. Restorative practices in a congregational setting involve so much more than an additional program for a church to consider. They point to a way of life implementing how God in Jesus Christ continues to restore humanity to its original intent—love God above all, and one's neighbor as oneself!

Included in this report are several appendices highlighting key restorative values.

- Appendix A provides a copy of the letter we sent to the church members who agreed to be interviewed.
- Appendix B describes the importance of asking the right questions to begin the journey toward becoming a healthy congregation equipped to resolve conflict.
- Appendix C describes respect and accountability, which are essential values in the restorative practices and circle processes.
- Appendix D deals with the issue of shame and its impact on restorative practices in congregations and church members.

Each appendix touches just the surface of the issues described. We trust that the appendices will have served their purpose if they prompt you personally and congregationally to explore these issues in greater depth.

A brief bibliography is included for readers who may wish to begin studying the subject material more thoroughly. It is only a partial list of excellent literature available for further study.

For the past four years or so we have served as the Christian Reformed Church's restorative justice project managers. With John de Vries, Jr., working in Canada and John Lamsma in the United States, we have aimed to implement the restorative justice report by which Synod 2005 encourages Christian Reformed congregations to "preach and teach restorative justice as a biblical perspective" and urges "active participation . . . in restorative justice efforts in order to restore and reconcile victims and offenders where possible" (*Acts of Synod 2005*, p. 761). We worked at this mandate in a twofold manner.

- We provided information and a training manual for persons interested in prison and jail ministry and how such a ministry can incorporate restorative justice principles.
- We also began to work in the broader context of restorative practices and circle processes with individual congregations of the Christian Reformed Church.
- Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices both emphasize the importance of healing relationships. As such it is natural to extend these healing processes to conflicts in a church setting.

We were able to explore options with several agencies and professional restorative practitioners in Ontario and Alberta and later in British Columbia and Michigan. The pilot program for becoming a restorative congregation is one result of working with these existing agencies and professionals. We are grateful for the leadership they have provided and continue to offer.

May God continue to bless all restorative efforts in which the church continues to be engaged.

Rev. John de Vries, Jr.
Rev. John H. Lamsma

Executive Summary

Restorative justice, restorative practices, and restorative congregations are all based on human relationships within a community. In the criminal justice field, restorative justice brought the fresh approach that crimes are not simply a violation of laws but are foremost a violation of human relationships within a community. The offenders and those harmed must work diligently at restoring relationships broken by crimes and restoring trust in communities where such trust has been severely damaged. Exceptions to these types of offenses are Internet and cyber crimes, in which it is very difficult to identify offenders and their communities.

Restorative practices are about relationships, about the practice of human relationships, and about the practice of healthy relationships.

Restorative practices have brought these relationship building and healing skills to a broader context, reaching businesses, schools, and government. Restorative congregations use these same skills in the church whose Lord is Jesus Christ and who provided *the* restoring way of life for believers back to God through his own suffering, death, and resurrection.

Restorative practices are about relationships, about the practice of human relationships, and about the practice of healthy relationships. This connects with who we are as human beings created in the image of God. Key to understanding who God is, or

more accurately, how God is revealed to us in Scripture, is that God is in perfect relationship as the divine Trinity--Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. And restorative practices help to develop the human relationship within each one of us and with each other as children of our triune God.

The Restorative Justice Program, as part of the Office of Social Justice, provided seed money to Shalem Mental Health Association and FaithCARE in 2011 to begin working with three Christian Reformed congregations in Ontario and one Christian Reformed congregation in Michigan toward developing restorative practices in a congregational setting. FaithCARE provided training to members in leadership positions and others interested in the restorative process. Since one third of the churches' leadership changes every year, FaithCARE continued to provide additional training as needed.

In fall 2013 we interviewed 18 members of the four congregations, requesting that they organize their thoughts around five questions. The questions were variations on the restorative questions developed for use in the restorative

practices process. The purpose of the interviews was to see how the restorative process became an integral part of congregational life in each of the four churches.

One of the most visible and best of the restorative practices is the use of circles. In a congregational setting, circles use a number of basic biblical principles inherent in covenant relationships:

- all people, their beliefs, and their opinions are valued equally;
- circles use and develop healthy relational skills;
- God's presence can be experienced by all; all members can participate equally and safely;
- all can share their thoughts and opinions or choose not to speak as the talking piece is passed from one person to another;
- opportunities for grace-filled interaction are key to personal and congregational growth.

Circles were used in all four congregations with varying degrees of success. The actual circle experience was positive for all participants; everyone felt they were heard and were grateful for the experience. Several issues arose, however, after some of the circles had finished. A couple felt betrayed because some of the confidential information shared in their circle became known to others outside that circle. Others felt that decisions and a subsequent report made after the circle had been completed were not shared with them as promised. These problematic results were, according to the participants, a reflection of restorative practices gone wrong rather than people not following the requisite practices themselves.

The report included conclusions based on the interviews. In addition, there are four recommendations highlighting our findings and providing answers to questions asked by churches desiring to become restorative congregations. Several appendices are also included, as noted in the preceding Foreword.

We are excited about the potential for growth, both individually and congregationally, that restorative congregations exemplify. The process, however, requires hard work and persistence in commitments in order to be effective within a congregation and in its surrounding local community.

May God give you the desire and willingness to truly become restorative congregations. May this report be of help to you in this process.

Rev. John de Vries, Jr.
Rev. John H. Lamsma

Use of the Concept “Restorative”

Approximately three years ago, three Christian Reformed churches in Ontario and one in Michigan began a pilot project using restorative practices as an integral part of building community and developing healthy and mature relationships in their respective congregations. Training was provided by FaithCARE staff and by Bruce Schenk of the International Institute of Restorative Practices in Canada. Stan Baker, a restorative practices professional working for one of the school systems in Ontario, also provided training through FaithCARE. Staff from FaithCARE also provided assistance in facilitating circles

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and encouraging members of the churches to use restorative practices in their congregational life. Since 2010, FaithCARE has provided information and training to an additional 27 Christian Reformed congregations, several classes, and the CRC’s Office of Safe Church Ministry. Classis Alberta North has a Healthy Church Task Force, which uses restorative practices in working with congregations to ensure cooperative and healthy congregations. Classes B.C. North-West and B.C. South-East are using restorative practices through the Safe Church coordinator. This report is written in response to questions we have received from other churches wanting to know how

restorative practices will improve the life and spiritual well-being of their own congregations.

- Restorative practices nurture a biblically rooted process that focuses on building and maintaining healthy relationships in congregations and builds stronger church communities.
- A restorative practices approach helps resolve conflicts and reduce tensions to nurture healthy relationships that are basic to congregational life and ministry. Just as we believe in our salvation from sin, so in Christ we believe in restoration from relational brokenness that separates people.
- A restorative practices process maintains and renews congregational health and the experience of God-given *shalom* while maintaining the dignity and worth of each church member.

The emergence of the restorative justice and restorative practices movement has taken place over the past twenty to thirty years (Zehr, 1990). Restorative justice has as its focus personal accountability, community involvement, and making things right (*shalom*). Restorative justice sees human relationships as its starting point. Crime breaks our human interpersonal and community relationships.

- Our modern criminal justice process begins by asking which law was broken, who broke the law and, if found guilty, what the punishment will be.
- Restorative justice begins by asking who has been most affected by the harm done, who is the harm-doer, and what must be done to resolve the impact of the harm to the satisfaction of all parties concerned—victims, offenders, the community, and the legal establishment.
- Restorative justice focuses on the breakdown of relationships when criminal activity occurs. Crime breaks down the relationships between
 - (1) the offender and the victim, and
 - (2) the offender and the community.
- Thus, restorative justice's focus is on rebuilding such relationships, often described in terms of repairing the harm done caused by the crime. Restorative justice is about rebuilding broken relationships.

Where judges have enabled restorative justice practitioners to address the impact of crimes on victims and communities, the results have been promising. This assumes, of course, that the persons harmed and the harm-doers are willing to work hard at undoing the negative impact crimes have had on personal and community relationships. The process of restorative justice has proven to be emotionally demanding, making the offender more accountable and restoring personal and community relationships.

During the past ten years, the paradigm of restorative justice has broadened beyond the criminal justice arena (Wachtel, 2004) into many different areas such as the workplace, the school environment, and the local church.

- The emphasis of this expanded approach, called restorative practices, focuses on relationship building (Vaandering, 2010) as the “glue” that holds organizations and their employees together and allows them to improve.
- This report describes how restorative practices function in a congregational setting.
- Thus, restorative practices are all about relationships—rebuilding relationships wherever they have broken down, and strengthening existing positive, healthy relationships.

A second use of the concept “restorative,” based on Scripture, has to do with how God relates to us. Christopher Marshall, a New Zealand theologian, states that Christianity rests on two truth claims (Marshall, 2005).

- Christianity claims that the “Creator God is made most fully known in the person of Jesus Christ” (p. 11). The prologue of John’s gospel account clearly describes the relationship between God and Jesus. Marshall continues, “Jesus, then, is both the human embodiment of God’s very

being, and the one through whom and for whom God created the universe” (p. 11).

- A second claim made by Christianity, states Marshall, is “that this God has acted uniquely in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus to restore the world to its originally intended state” (pp. 11-12). He continues (p. 12), “In Jesus, God has entered fully into the human condition, shackled as it is to the power of sin and subject to the scourge of suffering and death, and has acted through him to defeat the power of evil and reconcile its victims to himself. (See also Colossians 1:15, 20) . . . In the cross, as the gospel writers put it, the veil of the temple is torn in two and God stands revealed. God’s *justice* also stands revealed. The cross shows that God’s justice is a peace-making justice, a reconciling, restoring, and healing justice.”

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Much more can be said on how the love, power, and restoring justice of God are revealed in Scripture. The central event, however, in all of history has been the finished work of the crucified and risen Christ. Marshall summarizes (p. 13),

From this it follows that the central principle of creation is . . . [a] vulnerable, passionate, reconciling, self-giving love, a love which subverts evil, not by an overwhelming display of coercive force, but by acting in amazing grace to redeem offenders and to heal sin’s victims, and at great cost to itself. In short, according to the Christian worldview, *restoring love is the ground of the universe*.

The use of restorative justice and restorative practices has no negative connotations, as some have stated. Instead, its use places the process within the restorative justice/restorative practices movement of the past thirty years.

- The concept of relationship building inherent in restorative practices is based on the Scriptural truth that “restoring love is the *ground of the universe*” and is indicative of how we as God’s children build relationships within our churches and how we can deal with such conflicts restoratively when they arise.
- One conclusion drawn from the above discussion is that all relationships are intended to be restorative in nature. This is especially true in the church, where all relationships are defined as being restorative in nature between people and God as well as among the people themselves.
- Both the source and content of this restorative process is God’s unconditional, self-giving love exemplified in the life, death, and resurrection of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. The church has the potential to make real in its life and ministry the self-giving, self-sacrificial, and unconditional love of Jesus Christ.

Restorative practices are about relationships, about the practice of human relationships, and about the practice of healthy relationships. This connects with who we are as human beings created in the image of God. Key to understanding who God is, or more accurately, how God is revealed to us in Scripture, is that God is in perfect relationship as the divine Trinity--Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. And restorative practices help to develop the human relationship within each one of us and with each other as children of our triune God.

We believe that the use of restorative practices is able to provide the means whereby issues that arise in the church can be faced openly and honestly.

- With this in mind, we began to interview members of the four congregations that began to work restoratively through issues. These congregations became part of a pilot project that began several years ago.

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- This report discusses how restorative practices have benefited members of these congregations. We sent a letter to each congregation, requesting distribution to each member who agreed to be interviewed. In it, we stressed the confidential nature of the interview, inviting participants to be open and honest in their responses to our questions.
- We decided that the best way to protect the anonymity of participants was to keep the names of their congregations anonymous. As a result, we used descriptive terms such as "serious" and "very serious" issues present in the churches, rather than actually describing the issues and concerns in specific detail. We felt that if particular concerns had been specified, privacy issues might have been compromised.
- During the interview process we assured interviewees that their comments would be held in confidence and not made personally identifiable to others outside of their congregation. At the expense of some specificity, we believe we have been successful in assuring their privacy.

Description of an Actual Restorative Circle

Here follows a description of a restorative circle called to share thoughts and feelings on the proposed dissolution of the relationship between a pastor and congregation. Unfortunately, such dissolutions take place in our denomination. Some dissolutions are the result of clearly unethical or at times illegal actions. Other dissolutions can be the result of less-than-clear differences that become virtually irreconcilable after a painful process of degenerative behavior on multiple sides. Such results can often be seen in the divisions that develop within a congregation. At other times, dissolutions between a pastor and church council can take place because of issues that can be discussed in a relatively healthy, loving, and caring manner, such as differences in shared vision or gifts that may be incompatible with the perceived needs of the congregation. Even so, when such dissolutions take place, the congregation is often unaware of all the issues discussed between the pastor and the council. So when a decision is reached to dissolve the relationship, the congregation members may well be surprised, angry, and upset and may even feel betrayed because they were not involved in the process. The following example describing a situation like that is the account of a restorative circle that did not take place in one of the pilot congregations but was provided to us by a colleague.

Members of the congregation filed into the church basement, staring in confusion at the circle of chairs before them. Tentatively taking their seats, they watched as more church members entered, more chairs were added, and the circle widened. The mood was tense. At a recent worship service the congregation had been told by their pastor and a council member that a decision had been made, a very difficult and painful one, for the pastor to leave the church. Realizing how upset the congregation was at the news, the council decided to call a congregational meeting.

Some of the members sitting in the circle were confused, some were angry, some felt blindsided, and others were anxious about the implications for both pastor and congregation. They were there to express their thoughts and to get answers. Unlike at other congregational meetings in the church's long history, this time organizers wanted to make sure the conversation was restorative so that where harm had occurred and relationships were damaged, there would be opportunity for healing.

Two trained and experienced restorative practice facilitators were brought in to organize and facilitate the meeting. They explained that setting the chairs in a circle was intentional. "A circle recognizes the importance of ritual and sacred

space and time. It represents the never ending connection we have with God and each other. A circle emphasizes the significance of relational covenants, reflecting the facts that we are all part of the body of Christ and that when one of us is hurting, we are all hurting. Circles are used for many purposes, and for today this circle is about sharing thoughts and asking questions," they stated.

The facilitators explained that a talking piece would be used. When circle participants were holding the talking piece, they could talk; when they were not, they could listen. Participants could also pass the talking piece without saying anything. The rationale for the talking piece, explained the facilitators, was to ensure that all had the opportunity to speak and to do so safely. All voices and perspectives were equally important and welcomed. Conversation guidelines were established, in which participants agreed to speak as they would like to be spoken to, listen as they would like to be listened to, and be mindful about sharing the time to speak.

All voices and perspectives were equally important and welcomed.

The circle began with a prayer. The talking piece was passed to the left, and anyone who wished could express their views and ask questions. Accusations were made; anger, sorrow, and anxiety were expressed. The facilitators kept track of any questions that came up, and after the talking piece went around the circle twice, the talking piece was

suspended and questions were directed at appropriate individuals (council members, pastor, or church visitor). As the evening progressed, the mood changed dramatically. The extensive discernment process used by the council and pastor to reach their joint decision was discussed and ultimately accepted. While major consequences would result for both pastor and congregation, the church members came to respect and appreciate the difficult yet grace-filled conversations that had transpired. Many also expressed gratitude for having been given the opportunity to participate in a restorative circle.

With a promise to continue the conversation, the facilitators closed the circle process with prayer and with a reading about the importance of community.

In reflecting on this process in a final "check-out" round, one church member noted: "We have never talked like this before. We need to do more of this."

The use of circles with a talking piece is one of the most visible and effective means of using restorative practices in a congregational setting. As one pastor noted, "We don't talk about using restorative practices; we just conduct circles." When discussing an issue of importance, members sit in a circle and discuss the issue. The talking piece is used to allow people to share their concerns in turn. Only the person who holds the talking piece is allowed to share. This provides a deliberate process in which everyone can share, because it is significant that all members, not just some of the more vocal ones, be allowed to share and

be heard by every one in the circle. Usually a trained facilitator is present to facilitate the discussion taking place. The results of such circles can truly be transformative, as was the case in the circle described above.

Each of the pilot congregations was faced with at least one issue that, if not dealt with properly, had the potential to become divisive; two of the congregations faced issues that were much more difficult than those faced by the others. Since matters were difficult, we used professionally trained facilitators. Facilitators were not used in every circle gathered; nor are trained facilitators necessary for every circle. One congregation used circles to evaluate several of its programs and found the process very informative and helpful. They realized they had found an excellent way to evaluate church programs because the circle process is set up to allow everyone to give their input.

The interview participants also shared with us some difficulties they experienced with the circle process. One couple felt betrayed by members of the circle when information they had shared became known later outside of the circle, even though the circle participants had agreed to keep in the strictest confidence all matters discussed in the circle.

Timing can also be an important consideration.

- If a serious problem among church members or between pastor and congregation surfaces, questions concerning the best time to begin the restorative practices must be raised.
- Despite concerns about the issue of timing at its appropriateness, restorative practices are still the best person-respecting way to address the brokenness and conflict.
- A trained facilitator is crucial in assisting the church in determining the most appropriate time for restorative practices to be implemented.
- If the conflict exists between pastor and congregation, the denominational agency of Pastor-Church Relations or the classical Pastor-Church representative should be contacted and become involved.
- Personnel issues as well as issues of confidentiality are governed by labor laws, which must be followed. Without the required expertise, labor laws may inadvertently be broken during the circle process. Full disclosure of such issues may not be possible, given the constraints of such laws.
- If legal issues surface, the process becomes more complex. Each instance must be dealt with separately, and general comments on the advisability of beginning the restorative process cannot be made. Support must, of course, be available to both the victim(s) and the accused harm-doer(s). In such complex cases where major conflict exists, no quick solutions may be available.

As a general rule, however, restorative practices, if fully embraced, will resolve conflicts more readily and in a more grace-filled manner than via some other

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techniques. Even in circumstances in which involuntary separation between a pastor and congregation (Church Order Art. 17) is inevitable, restorative practices can provide a more civil and less painful process than such situations may have had in the past. Circles, however, do require hard work and a commitment to be honest and to express painful feelings and experiences. There is no short-cut to avoid the commitment and work required to work through difficult issues in a congregation.

The Use of Restorative Circles

Circles have been and are being used in many places to deal constructively with relational issues. Native Americans and Aboriginals in North America have used circles extensively. The Maori people in New Zealand have also made extensive use of circles in their deliberations and traditions. The restorative justice movement has borrowed and adapted the use of circles for its deliberations and processes. Circles have also been called peacemaking or talking circles.

Church members who use circles are experiencing a process of shared values (Pranis, 2005) that allows them to be connected in a positive, restorative way to each other.

Circles provide a sense of belonging, equality, fairness, and the significance and importance of each person in the circle.

- Circles provide a sense of belonging, equality, fairness, and the significance and importance of each person in the circle.
- Each of these qualities can be theologically defined. In terms of Galatians 3:28, equality is the ideal toward which we as God's children are able to work, "for we are all one in Christ."
- Lewis Smedes describes in his book on the relationship commandments (the second table of the Law) that we as human beings have value and, as such, our task is to remove all that hinders the full potential of our neighbors'

growth as human beings simply because they are important in God's eyes (Smedes, 1983).

- In a circle, each person has equal value, and even the most timid of participants has the opportunity to speak without fear of interruption or retaliation from those who are more assertive or aggressive.

The use of a talking piece in a circle emphasizes the importance of each person in the circle.

- Only the person who holds the talking piece is permitted to share her or his thoughts on the issue before the circle.
- No one is compelled to speak when the talking piece is passed around. The most common means of passing the talking piece around the circle is to begin at one point and pass the talking piece to the next person in sequence.
- Native traditions use a feather as a talking piece to emphasize the importance of what is shared and who is sharing at that moment. For them, a feather has significant religious and cultural importance.

- Even though we don't have anything comparable in our Christian tradition, the talking piece— whether a small stone or perhaps a small cross— conveys the significance of the person who speaks and what is being said.

As can be surmised by now, circles are not value free.

- In a congregational setting, circles have at its root the value of being restored to the original purpose for which God created us.
- Circles embody the value and significance of being human so that when members are being open and honest, there will be no fear of retaliation

One significant value common to all circles is the need to respect each participant in the circle

- or attack by others; their importance is respected by all, even though disagreements may arise in the circle process.
- Other values may also be added, depending on the nature of the circle. If the circle, for example, addresses personnel issues, strict confidentiality is required and must be agreed to by all. In other circles, achieving consensus may be agreed upon, so that one report may reflect the view of all.

One significant value common to all circles is the need to respect each participant in the circle and to allow each member to state what he or she believes or has experienced without fear of being verbally attacked by another participant.

- If that condition is not agreed to by every participant, the circle should not be held.
- The value to be able to freely express oneself without fear of verbal retaliation is so basic to the circle process that without it a circle cannot occur.

A circle may begin with a practice known as "check-in."

- A check-in may be as simple as "Tell us briefly what your day has been like," or "Tell us one thing the rest of the circle participants don't know about you."
- After everyone has held the talking piece and has shared, the specific agenda of the circle proceeds.

Similarly, at the end of the meeting, a "check-out" can take place.

- A check-out may reflect each person's feelings about the meeting, plans for the immediate future as a result of the meeting, sharing what went well in the meeting, and so on.

- A check-out provides a sense of closure to the meeting and can help participants gain a sense of future action based on the results of the meeting.

The circle described above did not use a check-in because the facilitators felt that the circle was too large and that a check-in might use up too much of the limited time available for the circle. The facilitators sent the talking piece around the circle twice so that participants could offer their initial reflections and then add other reflections after everyone had spoken. The check-out was used effectively, as participants shared reflections on the circle process they experienced that evening.

When a circle is called to discuss and share feelings on a serious issue in the congregation, trained facilitators are absolutely necessary.

The facilitator is a person who is experienced in conducting a circle exercise and in the practice of restorative conversations.

- The facilitator does not bring an opinion to the circle but enables the circle to describe and define its own issues and solutions.
- The facilitator may be a member of the congregation with expertise in restorative practices, or the facilitator may be from an organization which, for a fee, will facilitate the circle process.
- Classis Alberta North in Canada has a restorative justice/practices task force called the Healthy Church Task Force. Members of that task force have the expertise to facilitate circles, and they provide trained facilitation to local congregations.
- When a circle is called to discuss and share feelings on a serious issue in the congregation, trained facilitators are absolutely necessary. Since personal feelings and experiences are shared, trained facilitators ensure that participants are not hurt during the circle process.

Many different types of circles exist. Each serves a different function, although the dynamics are very similar. There are support circles, community-building circles, conflict circles, and reintegration circles. There is also the *fishbowl circle*, which serves as a problem-solving circle.

A fishbowl circle has a different setup in circle formation. There are two circles, an inner one and an outer one.

- The facilitator and those involved with the issue at hand make up the inner circle. Each person in the inner circle has a chair, and one additional empty chair is included in the inner circle.
- Every other participant sits in a chair in the outer circle. The problem is outlined, and each affected member in the inner circle has an opportunity to add to and clarify the issue. Then a brainstorming period follows.

- Those who are part of the outer circle actively listen, and once the inner circle is finished, a member of the outer circle can sit in the empty chair and offer his or her insights. The facilitator will suggest one or two solutions that were brought up by the group and will check whether these may be a solution for the problem described.
- When we interviewed members of one of the pilot congregations, several mentioned that they used a fishbowl circle to solve an issue in the church and that it proved to be a very helpful process.

In case of conflict within a congregation, a reference team is absolutely essential in describing the dynamics of the conflict and then addressing all aspects of the conflict in a circle.

- A reference team includes church members representative of all who are involved in the conflict situation as well as several in leadership positions.
- These team members work with the facilitators to ensure that the right questions are asked and being addressed in the circle process.
- This ensures that all have the freedom to address the issue(s) from their personal experience or perspective without fear of ridicule or retaliation by others in the circle.

When a final report is provided to the congregation, the issues identified by the reference team and discussed in the restorative circle and conclusions drawn from such discussion will be clearly covered. Such a report, prepared by the facilitators, will be forwarded to the church council which in turn will disseminate it to the whole congregation.

The Interview Questions

One key to good restorative practices is to ask the right kinds of questions around which helpful answers can be formulated. In conjunction with Shalem and FaithCARE, we tried to come up with a set of questions that would provide insight into the process of restorative practices in the pilot congregations. After some discussion, we decided on using a variety of the “Restorative Questions I and II” developed by Real Justice, the International Institute of Restorative Practices (see Appendix B).

We interviewed 18 church members from the four pilot congregations. Fifteen were interviewed in Ontario in fall 2013 over a three-day period, and a month later three members of the pilot congregation in Michigan were interviewed. We sent the questions to the churches ahead of time, asking those who agreed to be interviewed to formulate their thoughts around the five questions we sent to them. The five questions are as follows:

1. What has happened with the restorative process in your congregation?
2. What impact has the restorative process had on your congregation? And on you?
3. What has been the most difficult aspect for your congregation in this process? And for you?
4. What needs to happen to move things forward? What can you do to make this happen?
5. Describe the use of circles in your congregation. Do you participate in them? What are the stated/implicit values of your circles? Do you find circles a safe place to talk and share?

Below we have aimed to organize the interviewees’ responses mainly according to the questions asked. The interview conversations, however, did not always lend themselves to categorical reporting. As a result, some comments and suggestions may be repeated or may overlap with the topic of another question.

1. What has happened with the restorative process in your congregation?

Training was mentioned by a number of those interviewed. The training, however, varied greatly from church to church.

- In all congregations an introduction to restorative practices was provided. Then different levels of training were provided in addition to the introductory material.
- Some received training that lasted several hours; others received training that lasted a day. Finally, some members attended a three-day training seminar on restorative congregations led by both FaithCARE and the International Institute of Restorative Practices, Canada. Both authors of this report participated in the three-day restorative congregations training, and we highly recommend this training to anyone interested in improving the quality of congregational life for their local churches.

Although a variety of restorative practices are available for use, circles are a prime way to process restorative practices.

circles are a prime way to process restorative practices.

- Circles were participated in by members of all four congregations. In one church, council meetings were conducted using circles, and the use of the talking piece ensured that all members felt they were heard by the others.
- One of the elders mentioned to us that it is now inconceivable that they would not hear from everyone at a church meeting. Even a congregational budget meeting was held using circles and talking pieces, and, not surprisingly, in this congregation the meeting went very well.
- This congregation had also received the most extensive training among the pilot churches. Between thirty and forty church leaders participated in a one-day training, and they are planning to have between fifteen and twenty members attend a two-day training, in which a number of them had participated earlier. Additionally, they are providing trained facilitators for community outreach concerns. A separate group of trained facilitators deals with issues that surface from the congregation itself.
- You can well imagine why the pastor of this congregation, whom we quoted earlier, stated, "We don't talk about using restorative practices; we just conduct circles." When we consider how this congregation has embraced restorative practices, it's no surprise because one of the church members is a professionally trained restorative practices facilitator. He continues to provide the needed training for new deacons and council members, since one third of the council is new every year.

Another congregation used circles as they reviewed and evaluated the church programs at the end of the year. They also used a circle on a very sensitive issue.

- The participants in the circle felt that they were heard by all.
- However, when the results came in but were not shared with member participants, some of the participants were left frustrated by the circle process.

- When a sensitive and problematic issue surfaced in this congregation, FaithCARE was called to assist with the difficulties in a spiritually healthy and restoring process.
- One of the members interviewed mentioned that she was part of the reference team, which help identify the issue, the seriousness of the conflict, and the people involved. The reference team also worked with the facilitators to recommend an appropriate response.

Restorative practices have also been used with *lectio divina*, a form of devotions that is well suited for restorative practices.

As a result of using circles in a number of different settings, the pastor of this congregation stated that the use of circles has made him much more aware of being as transparent as he can be in his ministry, so that no hidden agenda exists or can be inferred to exist. In addition, in one of the circles he felt safe to mention that at times he experienced a sense of loneliness as the congregation's pastor.

The third congregation in Ontario began their restorative practices journey in the midst of a serious crisis in the church, and the circles that were held to evaluate and process the difficulties

restoratively were not considered to be successful.

- Some considered the process unsuccessful because the desired outcome did not happen. One interviewee was also an expert in restorative practices, but FaithCARE was hired to run the circle that dealt with the most serious of the conflict issues. A steering committee was appointed by the council to act as a reference team.
- Although the circle stated its values and the participants agreed to those values, they were not adhered to after the circle exercise was complete. This exacerbated the problem. Both sides blamed each other for failure to adhere to the circle values, and one side felt betrayed because of a perceived lack of confidentiality among others in the circle.

Another interviewee mentioned that the restorative practices in their church are applied in various ways.

- Not only are multiple kinds of circles used, but the check-in and check-out processes are also used in other settings, such as during prayer time.
- Restorative practices have also been used with *lectio divina*, a form of devotions that is well suited for restorative practices. The talking piece is also used regularly in many different settings.
- The church was introduced to restorative practices by FaithCARE in 2012, and members have received several additional training sessions since that time. Three church members attended the three-day restorative congregations training.

The pastor of the pilot congregation in Michigan attended the three-day restorative congregations seminar, and as a result of that training, the pastor's council agreed to be one of the pilot congregations. The circle process is being used in council meetings as well as at other times.

- A fishbowl circle was used to gain new ideas for the children's ministry, with the council in the inner circle and congregation members in the outer circle. The process went well.
- As a result of the input from all participants, two part-time people were hired to provide guidance and leadership for the children's ministry of the church. The check-in and check-out processes are used in all elder and deacon meetings as well as in the council meeting.

The issue was faced directly; every member felt they were heard and responded positively to the process.

This congregation also faced a serious crisis when the pastor and several elders attended a function that was objectionable to many in the congregation.

- A circle with two trained facilitators was used to address this issue. The issue was faced directly; every member felt they were heard and responded positively to the process.
- After the circle process was completed, two members decided to no longer worship at the church. The two members who left were present during the circle, but did not sit in the circle and declined to participate.

2. What impact has the restorative process had on your congregation? And on you?

One respondent mentioned that the people were initially very uncomfortable discussing the crisis confronting the church, but relished the opportunity to be heard by all.

- Everyone who spoke felt that they were heard. They also felt they were able to rebuild the trust that had broken when the pastor and several elders had attended a function that was objectionable to many in the congregation.
- The persons we interviewed were excited about the result of the circle. In fact, they were so uplifted by the results of this issue being discussed using the circle process that they are ready to conduct a circle with regard to a longstanding problem the church has had with several of their members.
- They now believe that with trained facilitators they have the means by which they can deal restoratively with this particularly serious and

sensitive issue facing several members of the congregation and affecting the whole church.

One person stated that restorative practices in his congregation was still in the beginning stages and was seen initially as a way of dealing with a serious issue in the church.

- He believes that the church is beginning to realize that restorative practices can become a way of life for healthy congregational interaction among the church members.
- Another person suggested that the restorative process is of great benefit when the church begins looking for a new pastor.
- Yet another person stated that the Compass of Shame (Appendix D) was

restorative practices
can become a way
of life for healthy
congregational
interaction

- a good tool for identifying shame-based actions on the part of the congregation and then beginning the healing process from the unhealthy influence of shame.
- The compass also helped people to begin conversations about the issue of shame and its negative impact on relationship building in the church. She felt it had the potential to lead to significant healing in the church.

Another interviewee felt that the serious and very difficult issue faced by the congregation resulted in many being emotionally exhausted by the process.

- She felt that of the two circles run by facilitators, the expected outcome of one circle was very positive and the outcome of the other circle was much less so.
- She also experienced, however, that in both circles the process made it safe to share.

Someone else mentioned that the issue of continuity came up: How does one engage new leaders in the restorative process and become excited about its potential?

- Since elders and deacons are elected to the offices for a three-year period, each year about one third of them are replaced.
- How can one instill excitement in those who come in to take up leadership positions in the church, the same excitement that has grown among the leaders who have participated in the restorative process?
- She also felt that the use of the Restorative Questions was significant and very helpful in framing the issues in the congregation.

One pastor mentioned that the impact of the restorative practices in his congregation was mixed.

- He believed that the circle process went very well and that the members were heard and listened to by the others in the circle.
- However, in some cases there was a lack of follow-up to a circle exercise. When follow-up did occur, the participating members were satisfied with the results. When follow-up did not occur, the participating members became discouraged in the circle process.

One other member stated that the circles conducted by the worship committee were good but sometimes challenging.

- She had the opportunity to speak at a circle dealing with a serious issue in the church, and she was glad she took that opportunity. Though she felt it was nerve-racking to do so, she was grateful that her opinion counted.
 - She believes that members need to hear each other and that circles do provide that opportunity.
 - Another member stated that the circle process revealed more issues that required a softening of hearts, healing, and forgiveness.
 - She said she also believes that not all in the church have embraced the restorative process and that some do not want to address issues that may involve them.

members need to hear each other and that circles do provide that opportunity.

One congregation was so encouraged by the results of the circle that they are beginning to work on a very serious issue in their midst that has been festering for a long time. They have begun the process of working with those affected by this issue and believe they are not yet ready to conduct a restorative circle with regard to this issue. The pastor and elders interviewed believe they are making good progress in identifying the issue and the people who have been seriously affected by it.

3. What has been the most difficult aspect for your congregation in this process? And for you?

Several members in one congregation mentioned that those who were involved and excited about restorative practices and the use of circles needed no convincing that this process helps to bring about a healthy congregation. There are those too who have heard about restorative practices but have not become involved in any way. Thus, whenever a new training session is scheduled, it attracts those members who have already expressed an interest in and participated in the circle process, but not necessarily those who continue to be disinterested.

Another member stated that he felt it was important, but also difficult, to become as transparent and vulnerable as possible in his relationship with others in the congregation. Restorative practices have the potential for him to feel safe enough to be able to become more vulnerable and transparent. He stated that for him restorative practices can be compared to a “blob” that oozes and spreads into everything, into all the relationships and activities of the congregation.

Another interviewee mentioned that it was difficult to move beyond the council in implementing restorative practices. There is a cost involved in the additional training required.

- The council changes about one third of the elders and deacons each year, and training for council members is not cheap. Additional training for interested members of the congregation may be beyond the ability of the congregation to fund.

the process can only be as effective in the church to the degree that the pastor and council are excited about it.

- She suggested that Calvin Theological Seminary incorporate restorative practices in their curriculum so that pastors are experienced with and excited about the process before they accept calls. Calvin Theological Seminary does not offer training in restorative practices at this time.
- It is significant that another interviewee also recommended that Calvin Theological Seminary incorporate restorative practices in its curriculum.
- This person believes that the process can only be as effective in the church to the degree that the pastor and council are excited about it.
- The leadership of the church (i.e. the denomination) must be enthused about restorative practices and the circle process for it to become part of the local congregation’s culture.

One person mentioned that the facilitator who leads the circle has a direct bearing on the “success” of the circle.

- It is thus important that those who facilitate circles be sufficiently trained to be able to help clarify the goals of circles and be very intentional in the process so that all members of the circle fully understand the intent and process involved.
- At times, the goals and values of a circle were not as clearly described and defined as they could have been; in such cases, the circle, as a result, was less effective.

Still another member mentioned that she found the discussion on shame very enlightening and mentioned that the potential for healing was “revolutionary.” It

is a difficult concept to engage in since it is so difficult and painful to broach the subject of personal shame in front of others.

One interviewee stated that the impact of the circles was mixed; some stated the circles worked well, and others did not agree with that assessment.

- The worship team uses circles and have found the process very rewarding, but she isn't sure that the council fully understands and buys into the circle process and restorative practices.
- The most difficult part for her was the timing of the introduction to restorative practices—in the midst of a very serious crisis.
- She wished the process had started much earlier and could have made more of a difference than it did, or perhaps should not have begun until the crisis in the church was resolved. Then the circle process could have been used to begin the healing process.

circles are run on the basis of equality

One additional person of this congregation mentioned that she actively participated in the process and that for her the use of the quadrants in the Social Discipline Window (Appendices C and D) was very helpful.

- The expectations and role clarity were not as well identified as could be.
- Trust and feeling safe enough to share was also an issue for her, because of who some of the other circle participants were.
- She and several others mentioned that they were not aware of the depth of the difficulties in the church.

Several of the members in leadership positions had hoped that the restorative practices and circle process would be used to validate them. They felt that such validation did not happen. As a result, they were very discouraged with the whole process.

One responder mentioned that the restorative practices process is not a magic pill to solve all difficulties, especially those that turn out to be very serious.

- If some choose not to engage in the process, the results will not be as fruitful as could be if more participated.
- The potential also exists that people in conflict may again be at risk of being victimized. In instances like that, should there perhaps be some form of after-care as well? He wasn't sure.

Interviewees from another congregation mentioned that some had had experiences with circles but that others had not.

- They believed that this difference raised some difficulties as a result. They also mentioned that circles are run on the basis of equality; each member is significant and key to a successful process.
- However, the pastor felt that because the church is not a democracy, that could potentially generate conflict.
- According to him, circles do not necessarily follow church polity. Yet he believed the use of circles at council meetings can help clarify issues for council members and help them reach decisions.

4. What needs to happen to move things forward? What can you do to make this happen?

One member stated that she would very much like to see restorative practices become part of the culture in the congregation, but she isn't sure that this will occur.

a key to integrating restorative practices into the life of the congregation is to provide follow-up where needed

- The reason is simple; she was emotionally exhausted as a result of working through the very serious issue that faced her church.
- She did mention, however, that she would be very willing to work hard at trying to make restorative practices an integral part of the church.
- Several others expressed the same sentiment. The crisis the church had gone through was emotionally exhausting, and they, frankly, needed some time to recuperate from that intense struggle, which did not end well.
- The persons most intimately involved in the crisis ended up going their separate ways, something that they all had hoped to avoid.

Another member of that congregation mentioned that he would like to see the restorative questions used more frequently and consistently.

- Additional training would be helpful. The training could be offered as part of the congregation's small group ministry so that groups could begin to put restorative questions and circles into practice.
- The leaders of the congregation could also benefit from additional training, he suggested. Perhaps the pastor could try to use the restorative questions as part of worship and mention them in a sermon, giving them greater visibility.
- In addition, it could help members of the congregation see how restorative practices biblically reflect what it means to be the people of God.

One pastor suggested that a key to integrating restorative practices into the life of the congregation is to provide follow-up where needed.

- If it takes some time after conducting a circle to reflect on and provide conclusions to the church, such reflections and conclusions should be shared with all who were part of the circle.
- Otherwise, disillusionment would set in. For a number of church members, use of the restorative process is like entering uncharted territory, because they are shy and are not used to talking at meetings and believing that their comments have value.
- Additional training may be needed to emphasize that in the restorative practices process all people have significant value and their opinions are very important and need to be heard by all.

Another member of that congregation mentioned that in order to move forward, restorative practices and circle processes ought to become an integral part of meetings, such as council meetings, Bible study programs, and other ministries of the church.

- Since new members are elected annually to be on the council, the question arises whether restorative practices will continue.
- Training should be expanded and done on a regular basis so that all interested members, including those in leadership positions, receive the training.
- The cost of additional training, however, may be an inhibiting factor in providing the necessary training on a regular basis.
- She also believes that it makes a difference who leads a circle and that the goals and values of each circle are not always clarified to the extent needed.
- Sometimes an outside, trained facilitator is needed, but at other times members of the church who have had the training can facilitate the circles and be effective.

It was clear that after our interviews, one congregation had been very successful in integrating restorative practices and circle processes in the workings and life of the congregation.

- They would like to see more members taking advantage of the circles, which are now held regularly in many different areas of the life of the church.
- They acknowledged, however, that it has been most helpful to have a “champion” of restorative practices in the congregation who is an active member. He continues to provide the needed training for new leaders on council and for other interested church members.
- When we interviewed the members of this congregation, they had hoped to have completed a day-long training for fifty members, but the training had been rescheduled to a later date. One member stated that she had initially been skeptical but now has been won over and has nothing

negative to say about the way the church has integrated restorative practices and circles into the life of the church.

- All agreed that much still needs to be done to further integrate restorative practices in the life of their congregation. The church faces more challenges as it tries to incorporate restorative practices and circle processes into all ministries and functions of their congregation.

The interviewees of another congregation stated that they are excited to have a process for working with additional conflicts in the church, using circles and also having trained facilitators to lead the circles.

- They would like others in their church to have the restorative practices training. Due to the small size of the congregation and its location, the funds needed for additional training will be difficult to find.
- Despite that, however, they are excited to move forward and believe that restorative practices will enrich members of the congregation and enhance their experience in the worship and programs of the church.

**5. Describe the use of circles in your congregation.
Do you participate in them? What are the stated/implied values of your circles? Do you find circles a safe place to talk and share?**

We added question 5 to help ourselves and those who were interviewed to reflect on the importance and significance of the circle process while answering questions 1-4. This technique helped, and the answers above reflect all four congregations' responses to question 5, so we will not repeat those responses here.

Summary Findings

This summary contains impressions we had after interviewing the pilot congregations. These are our reflections and interpretations, and they do not necessarily represent the impressions of the persons we interviewed. Each point reflects a summary and interpretation of one of the four congregations that participated in the pilot project.

1. The timing was not good in one congregation. The church was in the midst of a serious crisis. As a result, the whole process centered on solving problems rather than on the restorative congregation emphasis. We had the sense that the seriousness of the difficulties in the church blocked some members from hearing the restorative focus for the whole congregation and its exposure to restorative practices. When the serious difficulty failed to be resolved as hoped for, many in the church were disappointed. It appeared to us that the participants expected a different result than the one which occurred, and many expressed their disappointment with the outcome of the circle experience rather than the circle process.

Issues of privacy and personnel concerns complicated the circle process. Some felt they were being victimized again by the whole process. In one critical circle, the agenda was clarified and understood by all participants, but afterward it appeared that not everyone owned the terms, and some felt that trust was violated afterwards. Paradoxically, many expressed that the circle process did provide a safe place for them to express their feelings and opinions.

The circle process, including such features as check-in and check-out and the restorative questions, was appreciated and did create a restorative culture that continues in Sunday school classes and other small groups in the church. Even though one critical circle failed to achieve its objective, other circles were successfully used by members, and they are getting to know others well. The church is cautiously optimistic on the future of restorative practices. A beginning has been made. Circle processes were initiated, and the values and focus of the circles were identified and clarified.

The participants also are convinced that restorative practices and circle processes are not simply other programs for the church to embrace, but are important for developing and maintaining a positive church culture. At least one member of the congregation is professionally trained in restorative practices and circle processes, and these are an integral part of the individual's employment.

2. In another congregation, a serious issue existed, and the circle process worked well to address the issue. A reference team was appointed to work with FaithCARE to describe the issues, which could then be discussed in the circle. Those who participated felt they were heard and had the opportunity to speak, even though for some the process was difficult. There was no follow-up on discussing the results of the circle, so many expressed disappointment with the whole restorative practices process in their congregation rather than with the lack of follow-up.

The overall impact remains positive. Circles are continuing to be used in a positive manner. Year-end evaluations of the church programs were done by

People were supportive of each other; they felt it was safe to discuss feelings and experiences that resulted in a deeper level of communication among the members.

using circles. The circle process was also used with other programs in the church. The results have been very positive in these circles. People were supportive of each other; they felt it was safe to discuss feelings and experiences that resulted in a deeper level of communication among the members.

Some issues of concern do remain in this congregation. At the time of our interviews several members had been trained, but training is needed for others as well. Cost is a concern in providing the necessary training. With one third of the leadership changing every year, continued training and associated costs are of concern to the congregation. However, ongoing training is necessary for keeping the vision alive before the council of elders and deacons. The process has

been difficult to implement with the steering committees of the church since it uniquely addresses issues and solutions in ways different from those the church is used to.

One final issue surfaced in this congregation. Those who have been elected as elders and deacons work very hard during their three-year term and then have an opportunity to relax and slow down somewhat from the hard work involved as church leaders. How can enthusiasm for restorative practices and circle processes be maintained when their natural tendency is to slow down somewhat when they leave office?

3. The third congregation we interviewed has most fully embraced restorative practices as an integral part of their church ministry and outreach. The leadership in the church has been enthusiastic in supporting restorative practices and circle processes. As the pastor noted, "We don't talk about using restorative practices; we just conduct circles." Training sessions are held regularly for all who are interested and for all who are elected to be elders and deacons. The

person who trains the members is also a member of the congregation and works closely with FaithCARE in both training and facilitating circles in other congregations.

As part of the training, the church uses the Social Discipline Window and the Compass of Shame with elected leaders in the church. This training is tied to high expectation for those elected as elders and deacons. It continues to be a challenge to function out of the WITH quadrant in the Social Discipline Window,

Working on relationship issues is in our experience always fulfilling and always hard work. We were gratified to see the process work so positively in that congregation.

in which high expectations for members of the congregation are tied to high support by those in leadership positions as well as the other members of the church (see Appendices C and D).

For this congregation, the challenge is to encourage members who have not yet caught the vision and excitement the restorative practices brings to the life of the church. This underlying theme develops and encourages a true sense of building and having a servant heart, reflective of how Christ wishes them to relate to each other and the community in which they are placed.

Our observations noted the excitement in the use of restorative practices and the hard work it takes to become involved in the process. Working on relationship issues is in our experience always fulfilling and always hard work. We were gratified to see the process work so positively in that congregation.

4. The fourth congregation we interviewed is located in Michigan. The pastor attended the first restorative congregation training held in Ontario. He was excited about the possibilities that restorative practices could bring to the life of the congregation he is serving. When he and two elders were interviewed, it was clear that all three shared the same excitement and vision for the church. They wish that other members of the church could attend the training, but cost is an inhibiting factor. They continue to use the circle process in different aspects of ministry, even though not all understand the process.

The circle that dealt with the serious issue of the pastor and elders attending a function that was of great concern to the members of the church allowed members to express their opinions and feelings without feeling threatened by the process. The pastor and elders were so excited about the results of this circle that they are beginning to work on another issue that has not been dealt with for a number of years. They are now working with the members who were affected and will begin to work toward conducting a circle that will prayerfully bring healing.

Recommendations

The recommendations we are making in this report are based on the interviews of members of the four congregations and on our observations of the churches during a three-day period in fall 2013. We express our gratitude to those who took the time to be interviewed. We trust this report accurately reflects what we heard and observed during those three days. These are, however, our recommendations, for which we take responsibility.

disagreements
can be handled in
a respectful and
caring manner

1. Circles, the most visible form of restorative practices, do work and work very well in congregational settings. There is no need to repeat the purpose and function of circles in the Restorative Practices process. Refer to the description of circles above.

- Circles embody fundamental Christian restorative relational values. Each member deserves and is granted dignity, respect and value.
- The circle process provides a sense of belonging, equality, fairness and the significance and importance of each person in the circle.
- Because all have value, the task of the circle is to remove all that hinders the full potential of our neighbor's growth as human beings because all are children of God.
- Circles provide a significant means to deal with conflict which is often present in our congregations and be able to provide an atmosphere of dignity and respect in which the issues can be discussed openly and without fear of ridicule or retaliation.
- Consensus need not happen. In fact, serious differences may remain as one result of the circle process. At the end, however, disagreements can be handled in a respectful and caring manner respecting the various positions and, ultimately, being able to bless those with whom one disagrees.
- Generally, the circle process truly provides a grace-filled environment where solutions can more easily be found through consensus. If reconciliation is impossible, the process can provide a more civil and much less painful process in affirming such differences.
- The use of a trained facilitator is critical in ensuring that the sharing remains respectful, grace-filled, loving and caring, often in spite of serious difference of opinions and feelings.
- A reference team comprised of members identified by the council is critical when serious issues are involved. This ensures that the facilitators are aware of the dynamics of the difficulties and are thus able to address them.

2. It is very important to have a person in the congregation who will champion the cause for restorative practices.

- This person can advocate for the need and benefits of becoming a restorative congregation. This individual can also ensure that the necessary training has taken place, whether that will be the full three-day restorative congregations training, a half-day or full-day circle process training, or any other training that will ensure that restorative practices, once begun, will be conducted properly.

It is critical that the church leadership become and remain enthusiastic about becoming and being a restorative congregation.

- It is highly beneficial (though not necessary) if the champion has extensive restorative practices training. Two of the pilot congregations had restorative practices professionals who were members, but the other two did not.
- Above all, the champion can encourage the church's leadership, pastor, elders, and deacons to be enthused about the process.
- It is critical that the church leadership become and remain enthusiastic about becoming and being a restorative congregation. This is an ongoing task, with one-third of our elders and deacons changing every year.
- If such a champion cannot initially be found, perhaps someone with an interest in the Restorative Practices process can act as one, reminding the council and congregation when additional training is needed, when new opportunities arise in the church, etc.

3. Becoming a restorative congregation is not simply a matter of adding another program to an already existing schedule of programs in a congregation. It creates and sustains an atmosphere of dignity, respect, accountability and grace among the members of the congregation

- A restorative congregation has restorative practices as its underlying basis for all aspects of the church's ministry—preaching, council meetings, Bible studies, youth groups, Sunday school, outreach programs, and the many other creative programs necessary to be the church of Jesus Christ in the community in which it is placed.
- This will take time, long-term commitment, and a financial obligation to pay for the needed and regular training of all who are interested and who take up positions of leadership in the church.
- The champion described above, whether professional or not, can encourage the congregation to remain on track with all aspects of the church becoming restorative in nature, until such time that restorative

practices and circle processes become the preferred manner in which to minister.

4. The timing of beginning restorative practices within a church is also very important.

- FaithCARE in Ontario, the Healthy Church Task Force in Classis Alberta North, the Safe Church coordinator in both classes in British Columbia, and others in Canada and the U.S. who are trained in restorative practices are usually called when a serious problem exists in a congregation.
- At such times, reference teams are formed, values for circles are defined, and so on, in order to bring all affected parties together. Under the guidance of a trained and skillful facilitator, the circle process begins, and hopefully all people and issues involved can result in reconciliation and growth.

the circle can become a powerful means to deal with personal issues, such as shame-based existence and other difficulties.

- Trained facilitators are essential so that the process is run successfully and values are adhered to. If no trained facilitators are present, the possibility exists for harm to be done again and for revictimization of the participants to occur. This is of help to no one; trained facilitators are a must in such circumstances.
- If criminal issues are involved, legal concerns must first be addressed, of course. When those issues have been addressed, the above-described process can be implemented, and reconciliation and healing can take place, where possible.
- There are also times when it may be better for an issue to be resolved before the restorative practices process begins.
- One of the pilot congregations began its restorative practices and training during a very serious and difficult crisis in the church. When the circle process did not achieve the hoped-for result, many were discouraged by the restorative process and saw it only as something to be used if the church experienced a serious crisis rather than as an all-encompassing way to conduct ministry. Care should be taken when restorative practices are introduced to a congregation.

On the other hand, if no serious issues exist in a congregation, restorative practices are there for the members to begin relating to each other in an even more meaningful and deeper manner than they have been.

- A better time does not exist to begin the process toward a more spiritually healthy and alive congregation. By all means, the timing cannot be

better to introduce restorative practices and circle processes in such circumstances.

5. Restorative practices can also become the setting in which personal difficulties and past traumatic experiences can surface. This process is not a substitute for professional counseling, but the circle can become a powerful means to deal with personal issues, such as shame-based existence and other difficulties.

Two examples might shed some light on this issue of personal woundedness.

The focus of restorative practices is to address relationships

- If one uses the Social Discipline Window (Appendices C and D) to see where not only the congregation functions but also where individual members function, suppose a person has developed a lifestyle which involves the FOR quadrant and one has become proficient in “doing for” others. When in restorative practices it comes to light that

the most emotionally and spiritually healthy congregations and people function out of the WITH quadrant, it may involve much more than simply switching behavior to reflect the change in quadrant. It may mean a change in values, values which one holds dear and which will be difficult and painful to change. It could also mean a stalemate in the restorative practices for that particular congregation.

- A second example deals with the Compass of Shame (Appendix D). One of the persons interviewed suggested that talking about shame and using the Compass can be revealing. This is especially true if a person functions from a shame-based perspective. From personal experience, making major changes from a very negative, shame-based outlook on life to one in which the vortex of shame becomes the means of personal and spiritual growth is a life-changing and very painful process. The circle process provides an excellent setting in which a shame-based person can begin to take small steps towards personal and spiritual growth. It too may also require professional counseling to deal with the personal woundedness discovered in the restorative process.

While restorative practices do nurture a healing process, we are aware that they may not necessarily be the right means to heal deeper wounds. The focus of restorative practices is to address relationships—improving healthy relationships and healing broken relationships. We wanted to address this concern so that if personal trauma surfaces in the restorative process, facilitators and participants are not blindsided by such occurrences.

REPORT OF THE

Restorative Congregations



PILOT PROJECT FALL 2014
PART TWO - APPENDICES

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Appendix A

Letter sent to Interview Participants

Fall 2013

Dear Interview Volunteer:

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview concerning your experiences with the restorative practices in your congregation.

Please allow us to introduce ourselves. John de Vries, Jr., and John Lamsma, both longtime and retired chaplains, are the restorative justice coordinators for the Christian Reformed Church in North America, and we are, respectively, from Canada and the U.S. Synod 2005 adopted the report of the Committee to Study Restorative Justice, encouraging the churches to preach and teach restorative justice principles and restorative practices. John de Vries, Jr., chaired that synodical study committee. We were hired by the denomination part-time in 2009 to raise restorative justice and restorative practice awareness and to support congregational initiatives.

The process of restorative congregations has been one such initiative. Three congregations in Ontario and one in Michigan have begun to use restorative practices. Under the expert guidance of Stan Baker, Anne Martin, and Mark van der Vennen, and with additional training provided to others by the International Institute of Restorative Practices, Canada, the restorative congregations' initiative began. We have received requests from other congregations asking about the impact and significance of restorative practices in the life and ministry of a congregation. We believe the best way to answer such questions is to ask members who have experienced restorative practices in the life and vitality of their congregations.

We are planning to interview a number of church members, write a report on our findings, and make the information available to interested churches, placing the report on the restorative justice website of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. In writing the report, however, we are very concerned about issues of confidentiality. We will do our best to phrase your responses in such a way that you will not be identified as a responder to the questions listed below. If you have real concerns about issues of confidentiality, please let us know and we will make accommodations satisfactory to you. We will request permission to use the names of all four congregations in the report.

One additional reason exists for the interviews and the report. We believe that a restorative model improves the spiritual health and well-being of a congregation.

The process matures already healthy churches and significantly improves the life and ministry of marginally healthy congregations. In addition, it keeps embattled congregations from deteriorating even further. Several changes are being made in the denominational structure. The small denominational offices of Pastor-Church Relations, Safe Church Ministry, and Pastoral and Congregational Excellence are restructuring to provide more comprehensive services to congregations in the denomination. We strongly believe that restorative practices in congregational life and ministry can make a significant contribution when combined with the work of these offices, and we would like to see the restorative practices component become part of the restructuring. We are convinced that our interviews will support our beliefs.

Our interview process will center on the following questions. Please feel free to organize your thoughts around these issues.

1. What has happened with the restorative process in your congregation?
2. What impact has the restorative process had on your congregation?
And on you?
3. What has been the most difficult aspect for your congregation in this process?
And for you?
4. What needs to happen to move things forward? What can you do to make this happen?
5. Describe the use of circles in your congregation.
Do you participate in them?
What are the stated/implied values of your circles?
Do you find circles a safe place to talk and share?

Again, thank you for your willingness to take the time and share your experience with restorative practices in your congregation.

Blessings,

John de Vries, Jr.
John Lamsma

Appendix B

The Restorative Questions I and II

Terry O'Connell, the Australian Director of the International Institute of Restorative Practices and a retired police officer, developed the Restorative Questions. He began to bring restorative justice practices to his police work, and the development of these questions was a direct result of this restorative justice process (Wachtel, O'Connell & Wachtel, 2010). As an alternative to the criminal justice process, restorative justice deals with both the victim and the offender when harm has been done as the result of an offense. One set of questions deals with the offender (I) and the other set with the victim(s) of the offense (II).

Restorative Questions I—*When things go wrong*

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

Restorative Questions II—*When someone has been hurt*

- What did you think when you realized what had happened?
 - What impact has this incident had on you and others?
 - What has been the hardest thing for you?
 - What do you think needs to happen to make things right?
- (Wachtel, O'Connell & Wachtel, 2010)

Nowhere is the difference between the criminal justice and restorative justice processes evident as in the Restorative Questions I and II. In the United States, and to some extent in Canada, the most common solution to criminal activity is found in punishment, in retributivism. The retributive theory of punishment, which has echoed through the criminal justice system for the past twenty-five years as the punishment of choice, provides one answer to the question of crime. The retributive theory of punishment states that the offender must pay a price for having violated the law. The cost to be paid, then, is determined by the severity of the offense. Emanuel Kant and Friedrich Hegel in their philosophical writings developed a retributive theory of punishment in the late nineteenth century. Kant believed that "juridical punishment can never be administered merely as a means for promoting another good, either with regard to the criminal himself or to civil society, but must in all cases be imposed only because the individual on whom it is inflicted *has committed a crime*" (Kant, 2010).

In addition, both Kant and Hegel emphasized injury to society as opposed to the harm caused to the victim. Societal harm is the basis for criminal punishment as seen in today's criminal justice system. As Zvi Gabbay (Gabbay, 2003) states, "Retributivism does not allow us to focus on the specific harm caused to a specific victim as the basis for the public response to crime, and any imposition upon the offender to restore that harm would be deemed unjustifiable" (p. 375).

On the basis of Kant and Hegel's retributive justice theory and violations of crime against society, Gabbay further states, "The public response to crime cannot be used to achieve additional goals other than punishing offenders according to their 'just desserts,' if these goals alter in some way the 'deserved' punishment" (p. 375).

The enormity of the increase in the incarceration rate in the United States as a direct result of several decades of "getting tough on crime" has left almost no funding available for programs for change and rehabilitation. For example, in the United States more than 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the country's prisons and jails. The United States has 5 percent of the world's population but 25 percent of the world's prison and jail population.

The emphasis on punishment to solve the problems of crime, however, does not work toward solving the underlying issues. For example, at a minimum, the victim should be assured that the offender be a better person upon release from prison, so that the victim no longer needs to be concerned about issues of safety and well-being. In a punitive, retributive setting such goals are usually ignored, since the emphasis is not on change or rehabilitation but on punishment. Retributivism always deals with past behavior and is not future oriented. Over 90 percent of current inmates will be released someday into the community and could become our future neighbors. If these persons have only been punished and not held accountable or experienced healing, the community, including our neighborhood, will be a more dangerous place for us all.

Restorative justice, on the other hand, tries to work toward a solution inherent in the problems crime creates. The restorative questions are geared to working toward a solution created by the harm done in a crime. Using the restorative questions in the much broader context of restorative practices in relationships in which conflicts might arise, the intent is always to work toward a solution so that relationships can be healed. Using the restorative questions in the context of the life of a church in which members are able to experience the biblical sense of *shalom*, healing and restoration can take place; a future can be viewed as a viable, relational objective for all participants who desire to work toward the goal of *shalom*. Restorative justice is always future oriented. How can relationships be healed, for example, so that there is a future for both the person harmed and the harm-doer and for their life together in community?

APPENDIX C

Respect and Accountability: Integral Values for Restorative Practices

John de Vries, Jr.

Conflict is evidence of community brokenness. Community brokenness highlights the underlying reality of broken relationships. "Conflict over power and status happen all the time" (Lederach, 1999). Conflict happens in all organizations, including the church (Matthew 18). Restorative justice is a way of thinking informed by universal values. In the implementation of the values that guide and shape restorative practices, the harmed and the harm-doer are actively committed to make things as right as possible. This article highlights two restorative justice values: respect and accountability. These values support the restorative practices that nurture healing and reconciliation.

Respect: the Bridge to New Beginnings

Respect involves feeling or showing esteem or consideration. The value of respect provides a threefold focus for the restorative practices that describe the steps implementing the restorative justice process. Mutual respect for all participants is integral to the restorative justice process. Everyone is honored as worthy. Each participant is given full consideration regardless of past behavior, race, or religious beliefs.

Second, mutual respect fosters transparency for related issues. The motto from the twelve-step program, "We can't change what we won't name," is applicable to restorative practices (Brubaker and Hoover Zimmerman, 2009). Mutual respect for one another and the circle process ensures the honesty and full disclosure needed for a satisfactory outcome.

Third, besides process transparency and interpersonal respect, it is important that participants honor their own needs. The healing that comes from restorative practices is experienced by discovering the inner prison that keeps persons hostage to their own fear, guilt, shame, and personal woundedness (Denison, 1991). Mutual respect ensures that fears and wounds are honored and dealt with.

For Christians, the biblical teaching to love your neighbor as you love yourself frames the restorative justice value of respect for self and others. Persons in conflict are sinful image bearers of God. Mutual respect honors each participant, their skills, and their opportunities. The Bible describes persons as being "in Christ," and Christ is "in us" (Eph. 3:17; Gal. 2:20). Each person is called to honor the presence of Christ in the other person: "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, slave and free . . . you are one in union with Jesus

Christ" (Gal. 3:28). Biblically speaking, unconditional respect for all is basic to restorative practices.

In conflict situations, the person harmed, the harm-doer, and the affected community do not naturally seek healing and reconciliation. Society's first response to harm is punishment and payback. This retributive model forms the backbone of our current criminal justice system (Llewellyn and Holmes, 1999). As the saying goes, "You do the crime; you do the time." Crime is more than breaking the law. Crime is a violation of people and relationships. Therefore, it creates obligations to make things right between people (Zehr, 1990). So it is with differences and conflicts in everyday life. Mutual respect for the other person, including the person harmed, the harm-doer, and the affected community, is basic to create and maintain a healthy and healing congregation.

Historically the punitive model of criminal justice is relatively new. Neither the Romans nor the Greeks had words for crime or punishment (Bianchi, 1984). During the thirteenth century, the Church Inquisition introduced codified laws for punishment. According to Bianchi, poor biblical translations contributed to incorrect and retributive justice understandings. The mistranslations of the *lex talionis* (Lev. 24:19), and the biblical sh-l-m (justice) root words nurtured punitive practices. According to the Bible, retribution is forbidden: "Do not retaliate, for mine is the peace," says the Lord. In the Sermon on the Mount, the proportional ethic of an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, was replaced by respect for the other person. That respect results in "turning the other cheek" and loving your enemy as yourself (Allard and Northey, 2001).

The early church attitude of compassion and respect toward the offender was well expressed in the Apostolic Constitution: "it behooves you . . . to encourage those who have offended and lead them to repentance and afford them hope." The Reformation attacked misguided Christian doctrines and practice, but the legitimacy of the Greco-Roman justice system was never challenged. The state gained center-stage. Respect for the victim and for community healing was silent.

Bianchi's biblical study and analysis challenge the contemporary church to rediscover biblical hidden treasure. Respect for the other person is rooted in the biblical teaching of men and women created in the image of God. The triune God is a relational God who covenants with Abraham and Israel and through Christ with all people. Because every person is worthy and redeemable in God's eyes, every person is honored. "In so far as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me" (Matt. 25:40).

This Christian truth became clearer to me while visiting Japan. The Japanese persons whom we met in thirty different communities were extraordinarily hospitable, gracious, and respectful. We were honored. Why? The Japanese

person honors the Buddha in the other person and thereby practices respect. As Christians, we are called and equipped to do no less.

Matthew 25:36b calls Christians to honor Christ. That includes respect for family, needy persons, offenders—"as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me." As we honor and respect each other, congregations guided by restorative practices become safer churches. Conflicts are fewer. Differences are addressed and resolved because we are Christ's body, members of one another. As we respect and honor one another, we have a life and future together and with all God's people.

Justice is an inherent right. "The well-being of all is encouraged, and people are honored" (Vaandering, 2010). Having been reconciled to God in Jesus Christ, sinners are called to love and respect the unjust and take steps that all may be reconciled.

In restorative practices, respect for the harm-doer bridges human disconnectedness. Recently I had no relationship with the driver who injured me with his automobile. The call to make things right encouraged me to respect the person, despite the harm done to me. Hearing his story, I recalled my own youth, and I identified with his brokenness—that could have been me. Eventually we came to sign a mutually satisfactory agreement to make things as right as possible. Respect for a previously unknown person led to understanding and mutual acceptance of one another. That freed both of us to move on with our lives.

Christians often equate justice with punishment. In the Hebrew Bible, there are 600 passages describing extreme violence. There are a thousand verses where God's violent actions are described in detail (Allard, 2001). The desire for retribution and vengeance is the most seductive drug that we have. This changes when respect takes over. Then, regardless of the misbehavior, persons are honored as human subjects rather than as disposable objects or things. (Vaandering, 2010). That was part of Nelson Mandela's upbringing. "Even as a boy, I defeated my opponents without dishonoring them" (Mandela, 2000, p. 12).

In contrast to the retributive lens, Howard Zehr calls people to use the restorative lens. It sees crime not merely as the breaking of human or divine law but as the brokenness of relationships. Because people are valued children of God, mutual respect prompts steps to make things right. A fresh reading of Scripture provides us with a restorative lens. Equipped with a restorative, biblical lens, the church is better equipped to be the church God wants it to be—a healthy and healing haven of peace where differences and conflicts are intentionally addressed so that members and neighbors are honored and God is glorified.

Basic to the restorative teachings of the Old Testament is the covenant relationship of man with God and of people with one another. An unfaithful

Israel, traveling to the land of promise, received the Ten Commandments not as a list of prohibitions but as “indications” (Bianchi, 1984). Covenant persons, as covenant partners and image bearers of God, do not kill or steal. A number of justice words or Hebrew Sh-l-m words describe God’s way for his people. These describe the covenant reality of mankind’s covenant relationship with God. That is what biblical justice is about—it is not punishment per se. As God’s indications, the Ten Commandments call people to talk and work out their differences. The law, no matter how great the unfaithfulness or brokenness, provides directions to a future with a solution. “Do not take revenge; I will repay” says the Lord. People need to discuss. Israel’s elders at the city gates facilitated discussions to maintain peace within the community.

In Christ the reason for restorative justice is enriched. God’s choice is for new beginnings in Jesus Christ. As broken and sinful image bearers of God, persons are given a second chance and more. Seventy times seven is the guideline for forgiveness. Christ gave himself for broken sinners and thereby makes every person worthy of our respect.

Respect for the harm-doer enables one to hear the other person’s story. In the bigger picture it opens the door to justice that heals and restores. When the harmed and the harm-doer meet, mutual respect facilitates the experience of reconciliation. It is never easy. Often it is emotionally demanding and costly. Respect lays the foundation for the grace and experience of reconciliation.

Allow me to share a personal experience. After I was hit and injured by an errant seventeen-year-old driver, we met face to face. Questions were asked. What happened? What were you thinking of at the time? What have you thought of since? What are you going to do to repair the harm? As the harmed person, it was essential for me to listen to the driver. Without giving him respect and space, he would never be able to tell his story and or experience me as a person. Listening to him, the harm-doer, transformed my thirst for revenge. What did I need to do to make things right? I had worked in the penitentiary long enough to know that prison as punishment would not repair either of us. Prison brings no closure. Face to face we experience each other as the door opens to life as a healing journey. Despite our brokenness, Christ’s boundless love offers hope. It empowers us to respect one another and experience God’s gift of healing and reconciliation.

“It is not as though Christianity has been tried and found wanting. It has been found hard and left untried.”—Ravi Zacharias (Allard and Northey, p. 119)

Accountability: Healing Broken Relationships

At first sight restorative justice seems easy—talking things out without a punishment focus. But as an alternative to retributive justice, restorative justice is not always asked for. Persons fear making themselves vulnerable. Listen to Ivan: “No, padre, rather than sit down and talk with the person whom I violated,

just let me do my prison time. I don't want to see her. That would be too much." Punishment alone does not bring closure for Ian, his victim, or the affected community. By not being accountable to his victim, Ian misses the opportunity to acknowledge and understand what he did. It denies him a chance to take steps toward healing and reconciliation.

Accountability is the core value that nurtures the process of healing brokenness between persons. Human behavior, for good or bad, always affects the persons at hand. Accountability means taking responsibility for our actions. It is defined as answerability, blameworthiness, liability, and experiencing account giving. When the victim, the offender, and the affected community members join in a restorative practice circle, the participants speak about their respective experiences—what happened, what they were thinking of, what the impact was on them, and what steps need to be taken to make things as right as possible.

Punishment without accountability brings no closure and denies healing for everyone—the victim, the offender, and the community. Punishment by itself fails to empower the offender to take steps that address the violation and brokenness.

The harm-doer, like Ivan, for example, becomes accountable by sharing in the circle. All—victim, harm-doer, and community—discover that they have needs as participants in becoming mutually accountable. Often the victim needs to ventilate and share the experiences of loss or pain.

The harm-doer needs to express remorse and explore how to make things right. In one circle discussion with Ivan it became clear that the harm-doer needed to take anger management training. The community person discovered the need for the community to make that training available for individuals like Ivan. In the circle dialogue, all participants are accountable to facilitate healing and community safety. For example, Ivan promises to repair the harm done to his victim. He will also take anger management training. The community decides to take steps to make anger management training available for Ivan and others. With all participants acting responsibly, all are satisfied. Brokenness is healed, and the community becomes safer.

The biblical basis for restorative justice begins in the Old Testament. The covenant was established to form a new relationship between God and Abraham. In the covenant relationship, Abraham and his followers are accountable to God. The words of the Ten Commandments are the indications that describe the life of persons in a covenant relationship—in other words, God's people do not covet, steal, murder, and more (Bianchi, 1984). When the covenant is broken, persons act accountably to repair the harm and experience new life in Jesus Christ.

In the gospel of Matthew, accountability is the way of Jesus: "I tell you that men will have to give account. . ." (Matt. 12:36). In Luke, accountability is the core of what it means to be human: "Give an account of your management" (Luke 16:2). The circle provides a safe place for everyone to be accountable by

acknowledging their behavior and expressing their feelings. Accountability opens the way to healing and reparation. Christ came so that forgiven sinners may have life in all its fullness. Acting accountably, participants in restorative circles experience healing glimpses of Christ's fullness. As persons accountable to God, there is no need to wait for Judgment Day in order to be reconciled.

The fundamental mission and accountability of the church is to do justice. Will it be retributive or restorative justice? In Christ's death retribution is finished. Reconciled Christians are called as partners in Christ's kingdom service. Christians are called and equipped to do the justice that envisions Christ's promise of *shalom*. If that is true, what about Pierre Allard's observation that "the Christian community is not conscious of having lost a great treasure and is therefore not engaged, for the most part, on a journey of (justice) rediscovery" (Allard, 2001). The banner of the Canadian Church Council on Justice and Corrections declares that it aims to be "a shining star in the area of justice." The lost treasure of the restorative jubilee and Christ's mission is to proclaim freedom to the captives. What does that mean for the church in North America when thousands of persons are in prison wasting away out of sight and mind. What does it mean for the congregation whose members want to enjoy healthy and healing relationships?

Harm and crime create injury to be healed, a debt to be paid, and, as Wilma Derksen, mother of a murdered daughter, Candice, put it, "an emptiness to be filled" (Derksen, 2002). It is a matter of accountability—understanding and acknowledging the harm done and taking steps to repair the harm. Accountability is multidimensional and transformational. For one person, accountability means punishment. For another, accountability means talking things out. It all depends on whether one looks through the retributive lens or the restorative lens (Zehr, p. 202). When persons look through the retributive lens, wrongs create guilt, leading to punishment that is paid as a debt to society. Accountability means taking one's punishment because the wrongs done were freely chosen. Through the restorative lens, wrongs create obligations and guilt that is removable through reparation. The debt is to the victim. Accountability means being responsible as a person who made choices in a social context. How persons as wrong-doers act with accountability depend on whether they look through the retributive lens or through the restorative lens. The restorative lens leads to a life in church and community, and the retributive lens leads to pain, isolation, and a living death.

Perhaps punishment cannot be eliminated completely. But as communities and churches advocate for justice and *shalom*, the number of persons isolated in prison will decrease. Today in North America the percentage of the population in prison is the highest in the world, after Russia. In this context, churches have accountability to the imprisoned as well as to congregational members who are disconnected and experiencing broken relationships.

Thankfully there are community chaplains, assisted by churches, facilitating community reintegration of ex-inmates. In some countries there are church volunteers who, as members of Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA), surround warrant-expired sex offenders in a way that respects their God-given dignity while supporting them to be accountable. Research shows that recidivism rates are lower and communities are safer. "Punishment is limited, while love is unlimited. Redeeming love, not punishment is the primary human responsibility" (Zehr, p. 210).

Thank God for renewed energies and glimpses of accountability expressed through shalom nurturing ministries. A growing number of countries and persons empowered by restorative justice principles are drafting new laws and are engaging volunteers for alternative restorative justice initiatives. For example, in Rwanda, the scene of the devastating 1994 Rwanda genocide, basic Christian teaching and preaching have nurtured conversations between tribal victims and killers. Reconciliation continues to grow. Villages are being created where the families of genocide victims are now living with killers from the other tribe. It is hard work supported by lots of prayer. Restoration in the name of Christ and new beginnings guided by biblical restorative teachings are generating miracles of living reconciliation. Our churches need to get rid of a picture of God that does not fit with the life and person of Jesus. Jesus, the image of God (Col. 1:15; Heb. 1), is the image for followers of Christ. It is radical. God calls for mercy and not sacrifice.

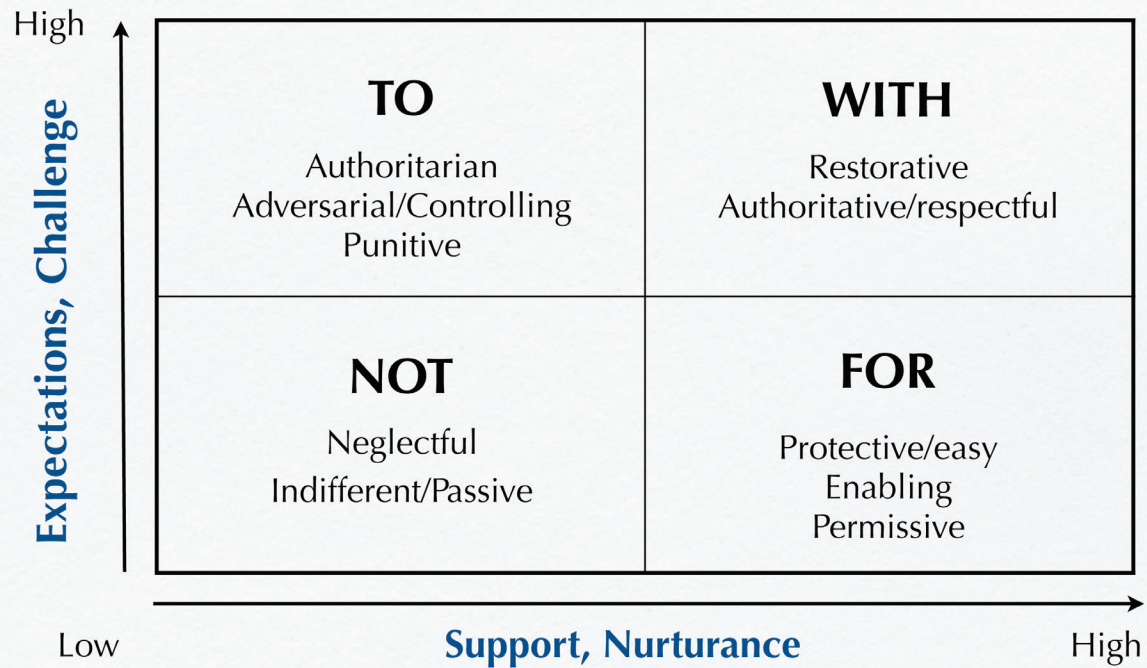
By adopting the restorative justice study report in 2005, the CRC synod unanimously chose to call churches to preach and teach restorative justice. It wanted to enhance accountability as a denomination concerned about the imprisoned in addition to creating healthy and healing congregations. As a restorative denomination, the CRC is better focused and equipped to fulfill Christ's promise for new life and life to the full (John 10:10). Today restorative practices are being implemented in churches, schools, and everywhere in the world where two or three persons are either in healthy or unhealthy relationships. Many are choosing to intentionally serve as God's instruments of reconciliation in difficult places and among difficult people—like Jesus when he spoke to the Samaritan woman, advocated for the woman caught in adultery, and showered grace on the criminal hanging with him on the cross. Years ago restorative justice resources were few. Today libraries and the Internet have more restorative justice resources than a person can manage. The worldwide upsurge in restorative justice thinking and practices points us to Christ who, in the words from Isaiah, was sent to "proclaim liberty to the captives" (Isa. 61:1-2). Persons of faith are increasingly accountable for the prisoner, captive, and all who are prisoners of broken relationships. Through the work of FaithCARE, the International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP) has added churches to its catalog of venues where restorative practices are being used.

How can Christian Reformed congregations grow in their accountability as partners in Christ's ministry today? The restorative practice leaders have adopted pre-industrial era circles to create safe congregational havens that nurture restorative justice transformation and reconciliation. The circles facilitate an effective process for churches using restorative justice principles for congregational life and ministry, thereby making congregations safer and healthier. When church members have differences or conflicts, restorative principles equip them to facilitate reconciliation and healing. The true preaching of the Word of Christ shall be lived in congregations that have healthy relationships. Increasingly such congregations are equipped to address unhealthy situations that happen in church life. Those congregations will maintain and attract persons seeking safety and life-affirming relationships with God and neighbor.

Possessing the experiences of the Restorative Congregation Pilot Project can help the process for congregations wanting to become accountable for the brokenness and conflict among their members and in their community outreach. There are resources available, and FaithCARE staff can be called upon for consultations and more. These are valuable for the accountability of congregations seeking to develop healthy and healing congregations.

Accountability is a core value because it reminds us that all persons are answerable to God, neighbor, and self. Some time ago, the Social Discipline Window (SDW) was created by Paul McCord and Ted Wachtel to explain the dynamics of interpersonal relational health or brokenness. In the context of the call to be ministers of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:16-21), FaithCARE adapted this window to explain the communication dynamics that support persons seeking to nurture healthy and healing churches. For church leaders, the Shalem-modified Relational Practice Domains (RPD), adapted from the SDW, is available for increased understanding and use to help create congregations that are stronger and healthier (Shalem Digest, Spring, 2012).

LEADERSHIP PRACTICE DOMAINS



Appendix D

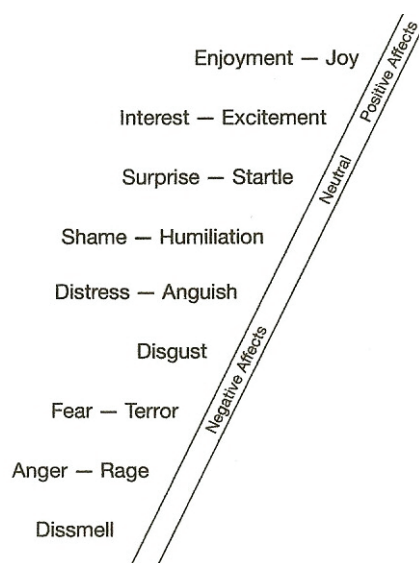
Impact of Shame on Restorative Practices

John Lamsma

Transparency, ability for all to speak, a sense of acceptance of all members, and a quick and healthy way of dealing with conflict are keys to being a restorative congregation. These practices are readily observable in a congregation, and success can be measured. If these practices are effective in a congregation, it is well on the way to become restorative.

Using and understanding Nathanson's *Compass of Shame* and Tomkins's *Affect Theory* have proven to be critical in working restoratively (George, 2011). Emotion and shame are important concepts in the restorative process. Understanding shame is critical in developing and maintaining relationships. This is equally true in the process used by restorative congregations.

Nathanson credits Tomkins for identifying these nine affects—stimuli within the individual that cause a reaction when they trigger the affect and, depending on the individual, create a unique emotion in response. Nathanson (1992) states that affect is biology and emotion is biography. Each person has the affects, but how the response is played out in the individual depends on the person's biography. Each person's unique biographical makeup allows for an individualistic response to a given affect.

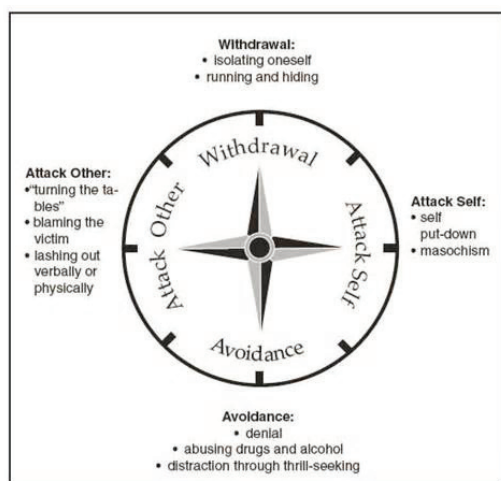


Each of the affects covers a range in which the first word indicates its mildest form and the second its most intense form. The first two affects are positive; the third one is neutral and is of very short duration. The remaining six affects are all negative. Nathanson (1992) discovered that if the two positive affects are interrupted for any reason, the negative affect of shame is produced. A mature response is to acknowledge the shame, discharge it in some way, and move on. Many people, however, do not respond to this interruption in a mature manner. For them, the affect of shame lingers and gets stored with other forms of shame within the individual, and the person will respond to stimuli from a shame-based perspective.

An example from my work experience may clarify this. I am a retired prison chaplain. At one of the institutions where I worked, a number of volunteers and

I were waiting for the others to arrive before entering the prison to begin the religious program. The warden had given special permission for an ex-offender to be part of this particular religious program. The mood in the front lobby was positive, and we were enjoying each other's company. The institution also held a U.S. Marshals jail where pre-trial inmates were housed. If needed, they were escorted to U.S. District Court for arraignment or trial. The U.S. Marshals escorted inmates to and from the court almost daily. Before we were ready to enter the institution, two U.S. Marshals were leaving after having brought a number of inmates back from court. While away from the institution, the inmates were escorted in full restraints—with handcuffs, leg irons, belly chains, and a chain going from the leg irons through the belly chain to the hand cuffs. I heard the clanking of chains as some U.S. Marshals proceeded through the security grill with the restraints in their hands, preparing to escort another group of inmates. I turned to watch a particular volunteer's reaction to this procession. He heard them, saw them, turned white as a sheet, and began to shake all over. He was reliving those times when he was fully incapacitated by such chains.

All of us heard and saw the U.S. Marshals carrying the chains. These stimuli caused no reaction in the rest of us because our biographical history was totally different from that of the ex-offender. His positive affects, though, were rudely interrupted, and shame took over. He saw himself in chains again as a helpless individual filled with shame and remorse many years ago. That evening he pictured himself in chains, but this time in front of all his friends was even more shame producing. Tomkins coined the term "*dissmell*" to describe a response like we have to a bad smell or bad-tasting food. In the case of the volunteer observing the U.S. Marshals with chains that day, the shame affect turned into self-dissmell and self-disgust (Nathanson, 1992). Nathanson (1992) mentions also that when shame is experienced, the body releases chemicals in the shoulder and neck areas that make the head drop—hence the expression of hanging one's head in shame. This is a physiological change that takes place.



Nathanson (1992) further states that the two positive affects are usually experienced in relationships, and the shame affect is also experienced in relationship with others.

Nathanson developed the *Compass of Shame* diagram to show how people cope with shame. The four poles describe the ways people deal with shame in an unhealthy fashion. This is true more often of our own behavior than we care to admit. It is equally true in congregations and can prove to be an inhibitor to becoming effective restorative congregations. Some ways

in which this may occur in a congregation will be described after the *Compass of Shame* is explained.

At the top of the Compass is *Withdrawal*. When one experiences shame, the person withdraws and stops relating to others. By doing so, the person hopes to avoid scrutiny and judgment. It makes no difference whether that actually happens or not. It increases a sense of loneliness and self-imposed isolation from others.

On the right side of the Compass is *Attack Self*. Here the person stays connected and remains in relation to others, but tries to control the situation by making disparaging comments about the behavior. The individual condemns his or her own behavior before others have a chance to do so.

Once an individual begins to express his or her own shame experiences, it inevitably becomes a taproot for wonderful spiritual growth and maturity.

At the bottom of the Compass is *Avoidance*. One can hide the feelings of shame entirely or shift attention away from what produced the shame, attempting to somehow restore the status and control back to the individual. One of the most common means to hide the sense of shame is through excessive use of alcohol or drugs. Another way is to excel in an area of the personality in which no defects are found and continue to emphasize that area of excellence. The concern with either option is constant fear of being exposed to others: "If they only knew who I truly am." Coupled with this is, of course, a fear of rejection.

At the left of the Compass is *Attack Other*. By attacking others, one makes them smaller and hence feels better about oneself. This is a cheap way of gaining a form of self-importance and a semblance of self. The bully is one who functions in this fashion by meting out one's own sense of inner shame on others. Rules, of course, do not help stop the bullying, for it does not solve the issue of shame that promotes bullying in the first place.

Regardless of where one functions in this *Compass of Shame*, the damage done to the psyche and to others around the individual is extensive and harmful to relationships with others. One of the impacts of the *Compass of Shame* is an attempt to normalize the feelings and personal experiences of shame. This allows people to talk about their own shame—which is in itself a shaming experience. Once an individual begins to express his or her own shame experiences, it inevitably becomes a taproot for wonderful spiritual growth and maturity.

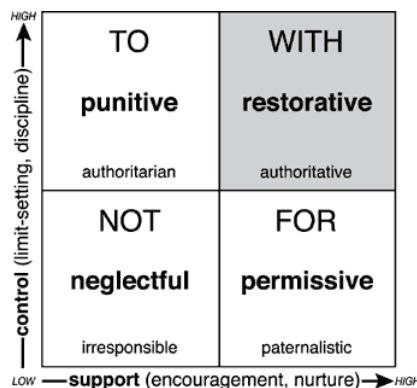
Robin Casarjian, who worked for many years with prison inmates, wrote a book and workbook on her experiences called *Houses of Healing*. On the basis of her experiences, she believes that people not only experience personal shaming

in relationships but also that many experience a cultural shaming as well. She states (p. 39),

We live in a profoundly shaming culture where people are shamed for being poor, shamed for being a minority, shamed for having learning problems, shamed for being a victim, shamed for making mistakes, shamed for “not being successful.” By virtue of circumstance, many people have come to see themselves as personal failures.

She describes not only the experience of prison inmates and their backgrounds but also that of many others who have not violated the law. Many of us have also grown up in a shaming environment.

In a recent discussion about the personal effects and impacts of shame on individuals and congregations, two FaithCARE directors and the Canadian restorative justice coordinator and I found that the *Social Discipline Window* sheds additional light on the complex issue of shame and shame-based experiences in life.



The *Social Discipline Window* demonstrates what happens when one combines high expectations with high support. If there are low expectations and low support, one is neglectful. If there are high expectations and no support, the result is a form of punishment. If there are low expectations but high support, the result is that the individual has done activities for him or her. The intent here is not to discuss the validity of the *Social Discipline Window* and its implications other than to describe how the “TO” and “FOR” quadrants can produce shame in the relationship interactions.

The author’s own experience working in a prison recognizes that shame emanates from the “TO” quadrant. Behavioral expectations were very high for the inmate population, but the support for such expectations was almost non-existent. Being incarcerated is a shaming experience by itself, and when high behavior expectations are added and punished if not met, the result is increasing shame in the inmates.

In a similar manner, but to a lesser extent, families and churches can also function in the “TO” quadrant when there are high expectations with minimal support. When family systems are rigid and rules are made to be obeyed and not discussed, and when support for children is not high, the result in the children is often shame. Even in family systems with less rigid structures and higher support, the result may still be shame-based for the children. Remember that the affect theory states that if either of the two positive affects is interrupted,

shame occurs. For example, my parents were horribly impacted by the German occupation during World War II while they were living in Amsterdam. For more than twenty years after the war, their positive affects were interrupted almost every time they heard German being spoken or when someone spoke about Germany in their presence. Today their condition is called post-traumatic stress, but at that time this was unknown. When they experienced such shame, it was also conveyed to us as children. Other similar examples can be cited to support how relatively normal families can still be shame-based.

Any message about requirements for achieving a quality Christian life without the grace to achieve it inevitably results in a shame-based experience.

Churches can also function in the "TO" quadrant. Not every congregation provides high support for its members, even though high expectations are present. All congregations proclaim God's grace to its members, but is that message always heard? If the message of God's grace comes with "shoulds," "musts," and "oughts," God's grace may not necessarily touch the hearts of the individual members. The "shoulds," "oughts," and "musts" are powerful shame-inducing words and may drown out the experience of grace. Instead, shame is heard, and shame occurs. Lewis Smedes (1982) states (p. 4),

A religion without grace will wallop you with God's image of the perfect human life; it will condemn you for not matching it in your own life. Religion clobbers you for your failures and sends you groveling in the sawdust of defeat.

Any message about requirements for achieving a quality Christian life without the grace to achieve it inevitably results in a shame-based experience.

In a similar fashion, church members may also function in the "FOR" quadrant, providing ministry and high support but low expectations for others in the church and community. Although this form of ministry may appear to be very legitimate and gospel fulfilling, it ultimately is not. When one functions in this quadrant, the recipient experiences condescension on the part of the one who enables; as such, the recipient feels inferior in relationship to the enabler.

The danger of the "FOR" quadrant in a church setting is in the process of enabling, doing for others what they ought to do for themselves. Although the reasons for enabling are very complex, it often is a shame-originating response to meet perceived needs in others, arising most often to fulfill a need in oneself. Another motive for enablers is that they think they have a better idea regarding what the other person needs. This can easily lead to issues of control that result in a shame-based view of self as described above.

Thus, in many ways, shame is an integral part of almost all relationships—and often unintentional. One of the unintended consequences of our inability to

work any saving good by nature is to conclude that we cannot do any good no matter how hard we try. We then try to overcompensate by working diligently and putting in long hours. We become “human doings” (Bradshaw, 1988), people who must do to receive a sense of approval. This, of course, involves living with the fear that if those for whom we work so hard only knew what was behind the façade—a person consumed by unhealthy or toxic shame.

The “WITH” quadrant is the one toward which restorative practices strive. This quadrant has high expectations and provides high support. Ted Wachtel describes functioning in this quadrant as follows (Wachtel, 2004):

The fundamental unifying hypothesis of restorative practices is disarmingly simple: that human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and

human beings
are happier, more
cooperative and
productive, and
more likely to make
positive changes in
their behavior when
those in positions of
authority do things
with them

more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them. This hypothesis maintains that the punitive and authoritarian *to* mode and the permissive and paternalistic *for* mode are not as effective as the restorative, participatory, engaging *with* mode. If this restorative hypothesis is valid, then it has significant implications for many disciplines.

Scripture also places high expectation on its followers. The apostle Peter states that we are a “chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Pet. 2:9). Paul states it differently when he writes, “Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of

the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). Paul further believes that since we are the most envied of all people, it will draw others to seek what we have experienced in Christ Jesus. The ethical demands placed on us are, therefore, very high.

Built into its high expectations, Scripture also provides for high support for those who try to incorporate Scripture’s ethical requirements into their lives. The unfolding of God’s covenant with God’s people in both the Old and New Testaments provides the high support needed to grow and mature as children of God. Scripture provides the possibility of high support. Whether the church actually does the same is a different question that is not easy to answer. Some pastors and congregations are better at providing the support needed than others are. The support, however, is there. Becoming restorative congregations provides the necessary means, we believe, to achieve the high support necessary for meeting the high expectations as described in the Social Discipline Window.

The Social Discipline Window can also be used to evaluate the role of a pastor in his or her ministry setting. I personally know of no pastor who functions out of the "NOT" quadrant. Seminary training is rigorous enough to weed out those who are irresponsible and neglectful.

It is not difficult to imagine that some ministers function in the "TO" quadrant. Scripture is authoritative because it is the revealed Word of God for us. Some ministers take up the role of being the authority in the church since they bring the authoritative Word of God. There is something seductive in bringing God's Word to people. Although the minister may say that we should, we must, or we ought to change our behavior, it can quickly change to "you must, should, or ought," describing a distance between the minister and the members of the congregation. This approach provides little support for the high expectations the pastor has of the church members—that change, growth, and maturity must be evidenced through the ministry of the pastor. In all likelihood the pastor is not able to provide the high support needed because of the distance created between the pastor and congregation, a distance that will only become larger in time. Much more can be said about pastors who function in this quadrant, but that is beyond the scope of this paper.

A pastor can also function in the "FOR" quadrant, doing for church members what they ought to do for themselves. This position provides a sense that one is needed and thus provides value to the pastor. In the Bureau of Prisons, many staff members had a negative view of chaplains. Chaplains were perceived as "gophers" who would "go for this and go for that," doing for inmates many things that should not be done. In other words, the perception was that some chaplains were easily conned by inmates who manipulated them. This placed chaplains in the "FOR" quadrant, having low expectations but doing things, however defined, for inmates. A corollary to this was that chaplains who functioned in this quadrant were not respected by inmates either, because they did not fully respect and treat inmates as real people and as imagebearers of God. Any form of manipulation ultimately shows disrespect to the person manipulated as well as a disrespect for oneself. Ministers can easily fall into this quadrant with their ministry, because it shows that they are needed by others and that they can help to provide for those needs.

Ministers who function in the "WITH" quadrant not only demand and have high expectations but also provide the support needed to achieve what is expected. Pastoring a church or engaging in other forms of ministry can be done to meet this type of need. How much better is it to be busy about the Lord's ministry working long hours each week in order to achieve a sense of worth which, at best, is fleeting? Toxic shame will reject any sense of worth through "human doings," whether in full-time ministry or in just being very active in some form of ministry in a local congregation or outreach program.

To be part of the life of members of a congregation is one of the great privileges and responsibilities of the pastor. Rodney Hunter (1990) makes the following observation, stating that pastoral care is

a form of servanthood . . . characterized by suffering, alongside of and with the hurt and oppressed. . . . Ministry of presence in the pastoral office means vulnerability to and participation in the life-world of those served.

As described earlier, pastors can also function in the “TO” and “FOR” quadrant as the result of a shame-based existence that influences one’s form of ministry. Pastoring a church can be done to meet this unhealthy need. How much better is it to be busy about the Lord’s ministry, working long hours each week in order to achieve a sense of worth which, unfortunately, never arrives? Shame, especially the toxic variety, will reject any sense of worth through “human doings” (Bradshaw, 1988) in full-time ministry.

It is easy to see shame-based behaviors in others and yet be unable to see them at work in our own life. I have included some statements below that can be suggestive of shame-based behavior in ourselves. I encourage you to read those statements and see if any of them are true for you. See if any of them cause a “twinge” of unease or perhaps a feeling contributing to a sense of not being good enough. (Smedes, 1993)

- The Lord knows my inmost thoughts and heart (Ps. 139). Is that troubling to you in any way?
- Asking God to bless “all” our activities today. Do you really mean all, including the ones which ought not to be blessed?
- Do you say to yourself, “If people only knew who I *really* am . . .”
- Do you feel that if you just do a little more—and then you do but experience no change whatsoever?
- Do you feel that if you just do a little more, you will finally be accepted—and yet you feel that you are not?
- Do you feel a need to control others and have them behave the way you’d like them to? The reason, of course, is that you have a better idea of what needs to be done for them.
- Have you felt a sense of non-acceptance from those who are or were important in your life—even outright rejection at times?

- Were you held to high perfectionist standards? And, of course, you never really, truly measured up. Have you felt that God's grace may be for others but not for you?
- Is a sense of conformity and propriety required in your church? If so, have you ever felt marginalized because of that?
- Do you doubt and have a mistrust of much in your life, even at times in yourself?
- Do you feel you are on the defensive frequently?

How well did you do in reviewing the above-named items in the list? There are many more such "pointers," and you may have experienced others that have felt as real to you as those described above. Each of these carries a sense of or comes out of a toxic shame-based experience of life.

Many other questions can be asked of psychology and psychiatry when it comes to describing shame-based experiences and lifestyles. They have much to offer us with their insights and wisdom. Another viewpoint, and a necessary one, is to develop a theology of shame, or more specifically to share some theological reflections on the significance of shame in the lives of people. Many active, church-going Christians struggle with the issue of shame in their lives. Very seldom, however, is the difficulty identified as shame; more often it is defined in terms of guilt, of needing to work just a bit harder on doing God's will for their lives.

Where does shame originate? How come shame has such a tight grip on people, often without their knowing it is shame? Having read much and discussed the issue of the origin of shame, it seems to me that shame arises when human beings desire to be someone other than who they are and who they were created by God to be. Adam and Eve wanted additional knowledge, wisdom, and insight into areas of life that were not theirs to have because their desires went beyond their createdness. After they sinned through disobedience, they hid from God because they were filled with shame; they were not filled with remorse or guilt at what they had done, but they experienced shame. As a result, their relationship with God, with each other, with self, and with the creation began to fall apart, and they were alienated from all meaningful relationships.

Human beings have ever since tried to reach beyond themselves. It ultimately results in the feeling of being unworthy, even worthless (Smedes, 1993). Smedes also believes that shame involves living with a sense of *not-good-enoughness*. This inevitably leads to fear of abandonment (Kurtz, 2007).

Frequently these feelings come to expression in the need to control others as well as events, the need for perfection, and the need to be filled with anger

and rage, and the need to enable and be codependent—to name just a few forms of behavior coming out of that sense of toxic shame. Toxic shame, says Bradshaw, is the core of all addictions (p. 66). For me, one form of addiction is expressed in our church's teaching that we are unable to do any saving good. Paul picks up the same theme when he speaks of all people as being implicated in sin from the beginning (Rom. 3:23; 5:12-21). David in Psalm 51 states that he was conceived in sin, which he believes carried on throughout his life. This is that sense of original sin which leads all people to be addicted to sin! The book of Psalms often describes those who live by depending on themselves rather than on God as those who are "wicked" or "foolish." To be addicted to sin does not describe first of all someone who is outrageously evil, but simply one who believes himself or herself to be autonomous.

A major difference between shame and guilt lies in the fact that guilt relates to behavior and shame relates to being.

Isn't that one of the greatest virtues espoused by the North American culture? One can be a very respectable citizen in the U.S. or Canada and yet be autonomous and addicted to sin rather than being dependent on the Lord. By its very nature, autonomy excludes dependence on God. One of the best ways to describe an addiction is to use a double negative, "*I can't not...*" *I can't not* be autonomous; *I can't not* drink; *I can't not* use mood altering chemicals; *I can't not* gamble; and,

to be respectable, *I can't not* buy into the American or Canadian dream, pulling myself up by my bootstraps! When it comes to church life, *I can't not* work hard at gaining God's approval, but I will always fall short with the resulting sense of shame. In many ways, however, God's approval is a given, freely given to us by grace.

A major difference between shame and guilt lies in the fact that guilt relates to behavior and shame relates to being. In life, one makes mistakes; those mistakes, however, do not detract from the worth of the individual. If one makes mistakes and is ashamed of those mistakes, the individual's value of self is diminished. Life becomes a failure for that person. Someone once told me that if life were compared to a football field and game, guilt is the same as incurring an infraction of the rules; one pays the penalty and moves on from the spot of the penalty. Shame, on the other hand, is the inability to score a touchdown every time one has the ball; thus one is viewed as being a failure in the game of life. Nothing one is able to do measures up. The result reinforces the notion that one is flawed as a human being and that anything one tries to do will result in being viewed as a failure. John Bradshaw call this "toxic shame" (Bradshaw, 1988), and Jill McNish defines this as the "shame vortex" (McNish, 2004).

This shame vortex is experienced as the godless place, or, to put it another way, the place where God is felt to be absent and where God would never come. Our heads say, of course, that such is not true. God is everywhere. The psalmist states, "Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"

(Ps. 139). The psalmist answers that even in the depths of one's personal despair, God is present. The shame experience, especially at the shame vortex, feels that God cannot possibly be there! The reason is that in the shame vortex one experiences the ultimate rejection of the self by the self (Bradshaw, 1988). In a church where the message is ultimately about undeserved grace, some experience no grace at all. The shame vortex in a shame-based person has literally no room left for grace. Even though our Reformed tradition states that God's grace is irresistible, those who function out of the shame vortex do not experience God's grace.

Change for a shame-based person can occur only in an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance.

The early life of Martin Luther seems to be an example of how toxic shame functions in a person. Although this is conjecture on my part, it seems that Luther's classic struggle to please God and regular failure at this meant that he struggled with a sense of not-good-enoughness. He was filled with such shame that he could not experience the grace of God in any form. Although he described his attempts as filled with guilt, it seems to me that his struggles in life reflected shame much more

than guilt. It was only after many years of struggling unsuccessfully to do the will of God in his life, and then recognizing the teaching of salvation by grace in Scripture, that he finally began to experience the grace of God in such a way that the shame vortex slowly diminished in his life. Ultimately, unfaced shame is much more difficult to deal with than unresolved guilt, as evidenced in the life of Martin Luther and many others (Kurtz, 2007).

How does one resolve this seemingly impossible dilemma, whereby the grace of God can make the necessary changes in a shame-based person who, by definition, resists the grace of God? Change for a shame-based person can occur only in an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance. Only when the person is repeatedly and unconditionally accepted will it be "safe" enough for the person to begin to accept the potential for change. The need for change is, of course, obvious. The potential for change can occur only in an atmosphere where no sense of judgment is present. If the individual senses any form of judgment, the sense of shame takes over and the person shuts down emotionally.

One way of dealing with issues of shame in a congregational setting is to use circles as described in this report. A proper use of circles allows members, including shame-based members, to experience a sense of acceptance not often found elsewhere in the church. This also gives them freedom, without fear of ridicule or retaliation, to try new ways of relating to others and, as a result, to experience God's grace in new and real ways.

As I am writing this appendix, I realize that so much more can be written about shame and how it affects church members and, ultimately, the mission

of the church. This appendix is not the place for a thorough investigation of the issue of shame and its impact on the restorative process in congregations. The bibliography to this report includes a list of good books dealing with both unhealthy expressions of shame and healthy manners in which shame can become spiritually growth producing. Hopefully this appendix will begin to raise an awareness of how pervasive shame and toxic shame can be in the life of individual church members and well as congregations.

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