

## Rubble to Restoration

Months of hard work, years of history, and hopes for the future went up in flames—just like that.

A young man, a teenager, was convicted of burning down Trinity church. An expansion that was two months from completion, the century-old church bell—everything—was ruined.

But this story doesn't end with the sorrow and hurt of the congregation and the punishment of the teen.

Part of the youth's sentence included three recommendations from the church itself. He was to provide 200 hours of community service alongside church members, tithes his part-time income, and publically apologize to the congregation.

On a late April day, the young man stood before 600 people whom he had hurt. As he began to express his remorse, his voice broke and tears began to fall. Many in the congregation shed tears as well.

Church members hope that working alongside them in their ministries will help put the young man on a new, productive path. They also hope it will bring healing to their community as they look to the future.

Restorative justice looks beyond the laws broken to the people who have been harmed, the ones who have done the harming, the community which has become less safe and what is required to, as much as possible, put things right.

### CONTACT

Get your church engaged in restorative justice efforts. Contact our restorative justice representatives to learn more.

In Canada:  
Rev. John de Vries Jr.  
johndevries@crcna.org  
519-473-9599

In the US:  
Rev. John Lamsma  
jlamsma@crcna.org  
706-444-3738

Visit the OSJ's website for more information and resources on restorative justice, including the 2005 study committee report:

[www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org)

# OSJ

△ Office of Social Justice

Phone: 616.241.1691  
E-mail: [osjha@crcna.org](mailto:osjha@crcna.org)  
Web: [www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org)



## A Call to Preach and Teach

In 2005 synod called our churches to “preach and teach restorative justice” and urged “active participation...in restorative justice efforts.”

Sounds good, right?

Except:

- maybe you have no idea what restorative justice is all about
- maybe you have questions about its biblical perspective
- maybe you don't know where to begin to participate in restorative justice efforts

This pamphlet gives you a snapshot of restorative justice, what it is, why our denomination is committed to its practice, and how your congregation can become actively engaged in this exciting work for restoration and healing.

We encourage local congregations to observe Victims of Crime and Restorative Justice Weeks in April and November respectively. Details and resources will be available at the OSJ website: [www.crcjustice.org](http://www.crcjustice.org).

## Questions and Answers

What is restorative justice?

Restorative justice is a biblically based view of criminal justice that attempts to engage victims, offenders and the affected communities in bringing about deep and lasting solutions by focusing on restitution, restoration, healing and the future. At its core, it is about relationships.

Is it biblical?

God's love and justice are revealed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Sin enslaves and victimizes us all. Through Christ's restoring, self-giving love, we are reconciled to God. This love overcomes evil, heals victims and redeems sinners.

Restorative justice is at the heart of our relationship with God.

Recognizing this, we look to restorative justice to resolve conflicts, to repair damage done to victims and communities, and to require accountability from and bring opportunities for renewal to offenders.

Restorative Justice is a way of living - the Christian way of shalom and justice for the poor, the broken, the oppressed, the victim and the offender.

How is it practiced?

There is not one prescribed method of practicing restorative justice, but common initiatives are victim offender reconciliation programs, sentencing circles, and family group conferencing. These methods typically engage the victim, offender, and members of the community in jointly arriving at solutions that meet the needs of the victim, hold the offender accountable, and bring both back into a supportive community.

Why do we want to get involved?

Christians are called to be many things: salt and light, pursuers of justice and a community that gives witness to the mercy and love of God. Through restorative justice, we have a unique opportunity to put to into practice our values of love for neighbor, peace-building and reconciliation.

How can we get involved?

There are many concrete ways that you and your church can become involved in restorative justice.

- hosting family conferencing
- creating and leading victim support groups
- providing help for families of offenders or ex-offenders

Our hope is that you will use the contact information in this brochure to speak with a restorative justice team member to discuss ways your church can become a force for restorative justice.