

# THE MICAH MISSION

*Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8)*

## BUILDING A CULTURE OF HOPE

This summer and fall, Micah was pleased to partner with several other organizations to plan and hold a conference in Saskatoon entitled ***Restorative Justice: Building a Culture of Hope; We are All Related***. The event highlighted the value of healing relationships within communities harmed by violence and crime. And primary objectives were to:

- ◆ Put hope at the centre of discussion about justice, crime and healing;
- ◆ Open a dialogue about Restorative Justice between people of faith, indigenous peoples, the academic community and the justice community;
- ◆ Challenge commonly held opinions about people who have been harmed by crime and people who have served time in prison.



### Planning for the Conference (left to right)

**Archbishop Luigi Bonazzi**, Apostolic Nuncio; **Bishop Gary Gordon**, RC Diocese of Victoria; **Peter Oliver** - The Micah Mission; **Amanda Dodge** - Classic Legal Service; **Bishop Don Bolen** - R.C. Diocese of Saskatoon; **Harry Lafond** - Office of the Treaty Commissioner; **Bishop Bryan Bayda** - Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy.

**Conference Co-Sponsors:** RC Diocese of Saskatoon, The Micah Mission, Mennonite Central Committee, Office of the Treaty Commission, St. Thomas Moore College, Alberta Lutheran Synod.

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*The Micah Mission of Saskatoon believes in the power of transformative justice to build peaceful and faithful communities.*

*From our foundation in many churches we are committed to restoring individuals and communities to caring and respectful relationships in the wake of harm.*

*We believe that incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people and their families must be spiritually supported in this often profoundly difficult journey.*

## NEWCOMERS' REFLECTION ON FALL 2015 CONFERENCE "RESTORATIVE JUSTICE: BUILDING A CULTURE OF HOPE"

by Glen and Sandra Grismer

Sandra and I are pleased to provide this reflection. Our foray into restorative justice began with the Academy of Discipleship class last spring and the conference was the most recent leg of what is, for us, a new journey.

First, thanks to everyone who attended, from organizers and presenters to those who shared openly and others who listened. Everyone's contributions merged to take us closer to a culture of hope. What a great opportunity for us to learn so much, and in the weeks that followed, for us to confidently discuss restorative justice with many others. We will continue to do so.

We were affected in different ways perhaps because we have different backgrounds; Sandra's working with immigrants and

international development issues, and I work in community and environmental planning. Although restorative justice has obvious and necessary application to changing our prison and judicial system, a culture of hope calls, we think, for broader application. In this regard we were excited to find potential of restorative justice in many settings from local community development to international co-operation.

We were struck by the stark contrast between our institutionalized, retributive justice system and the restorative, victim oriented, community-building alternative. It occurred to us how, once exposed, the current system has so little merit. How can it persist? What is everyone (almost) so afraid of? As with so many other institutions, prisons are big money: money so much better spent on counseling and other healing programs. There are many people who rely on the current system politically and economically so one challenge is to find ways for the people who depend on the status quo to derive reasonable benefit from the change. How do we draw them into the new culture of hope and let them find a place there?

The presentation by Rev. Brian Rude about his El Salvador work was, at once, encouraging and frustrating. The truce declared by the gangs showed that all people have a desire and capacity for peace, but the peace was so fragile. The ability to connect with the gang members, partnering with other organizations to gain access to the prisons, and the endless patience required to work within any system show us that good work by even a few has positive effects. The restorative justice work being done in prisons, here and abroad, is experience to be shared and it was well shared at the conference.



As we were taking in new information and pondering new ideas, it occurred to us that there was one essential for becoming involved, a good sense of humour. A sense of humour like Bishop Gary Gordon's would do. When people told their stories they used laughter. In the workshop sessions there was humour. The Hon. Steven Point drew on his rich, traditional humour to tell of a lifetime of finding the best in tough situations. If people who have been victims or lived through difficult times can laugh at their situations and themselves, working alongside them must be a joy?



We find restorative justice intellectually interesting, a valid alternative, and a potentially powerful expression of our Christian beliefs, or so we think. Thinking is the easy part. The conference, however, challenged more than our thinking. By participating with many who live restorative justice through their involvement in prison chaplaincy, as members of CoSA groups, STR8 UP, Person 2 Person (P2P), and Forward Step, or who work in other countries, our hearts were challenged. Deciding to participate in restorative justice work is not easy, but we clearly will not be alone. This conference seemed egoless while the people we were with became names and faces and stories to attach to the ideas we were learning about. Being with the people at the conference gave us a sense that at some point we could take one more step and not be able to go back. Perhaps the notion of going back would fade altogether. Perhaps that is what it takes to bring about a "culture of hope" no matter where or how we might seek to bring reconciliation and community restoration.



**Dear Micah,**

*I would like to thank whoever it was that invited Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz to the conference. I attended her workshops twice, had lunch with her and am now reading the report she left me/us. It is entitled A LISTENING PROJECT: TAKING VICTIMS AND THEIR ADVOCATES SERIOUSLY. I think I will finally have something concrete to offer to our group in terms of Victim support. Thank you in fact for the entire conference. It was so good, such a blessing.*

Florence Paquette  
October 2015

## Faith Community Reintegration Project

by Rev. Dave Feick

Correctional Services Canada made us aware of a new project opportunity this past spring — a Faith Community



Reintegration Project (FCRP). We applied and Micah was granted a contract for this project, starting August 2015. It allowed me to leave my work at the Correctional Center to work full time at Micah Mission.

The FCRP work is similar in many ways to what Peter and previous Community Chaplains have been doing all along, but with an emphasis to be more intentional about finding or creating supports within the faith communities. Mount Royal Mennonite Church has proven over the past two years that this (intentional effort) can work well.

I've heard it said that "if every faith community in Canada were to support a released offender, we could close some of our prisons." I'm not sure who it was that said that, and it may also take some changes to some of the practices of the justice system, but the concept of making that kind of difference in our country is impetus for what we will try to do.

## The Micah Mission Needs Volunteers!

You are invited to join our volunteers in making a difference in someone's life. There are people in our prisons who never have any visits. You could be the first person in years to visit that person.

We seem to receive new referrals every week from probation or parole for the CoSA program\* — people who need good support to help them reintegrate into society without re-offending.



Your support of one of these people through friendship can help get us closer to the goal of "no more victims."

Talk with others in your congregation or faith community about befriending someone who is looking to reintegrate without re-offending. Then give us a call or send us an email.

306-653-3099, 306-270-5031  
micahcoordinator@gmail.com

\*Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA)



## Micah's Support Groups

At this time we have 13 core members (released prisoners) presently involved in 7 CoSA groups (circles of support and accountability). A new CoSA is being organized in Humboldt.

In our Person to Person program (P to P) we have 17 volunteers visiting 12 incarcerated men.

During the 2014-15 school year we had several practicum students from Bethany College volunteering through P2P at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre. They visited with men who did not have a lot of visits and prison staff were appreciative of the students' help.

In August, four of our clients, together with four volunteers (plus staff member, Dave), ventured to Chitek Lake for an afternoon fishing trip. It was a good day. We would have had more clients and volunteers had work schedules or conditions not prevented their participation.

## A Great Fishing Trip

by Phil Siebert



What a treat to go fishing with some of the Micah Mission clients and volunteers this August! Even though the forecast predicted showers we piled in and headed for Chitek Lake.

We had lots of time for good chats in the van but once we arrived at the lake we got serious about fishing. Speaking of serious, a few of the guys had gone all out and purchased brand new gear for the trip. (I actually thought that Dave should have caught the biggest fish because he showed up with a spanking new 'massive' rod).



The two rented pontoon boats gave us lots of space to move around and interact with each other. Once we got onto the water we explored all the recommended fishing spots and did our best to catch what we came for. While some of the guys only washed their hooks my friend caught a few really nice ones. He mentioned that this was the first time he had been out fishing since he was a teenager. He totally enjoyed the experience.

When we got back to land we fired up the stoves. It was nice to see the guys eat up the hamburgers and enjoy the freshly caught fish, fried up in Shirley's special batter mix. I think the abundant supply of fried onions really topped off the feast and fishing experience.

Thanks to all for a fantastic trip - and not a drop of rain! Let's do it again!



# Lessons in Restorative Justice

By Colleen Rickard

At one time, my definition of restorative justice was mostly limited to what I had read about on 'healing circles'. But my understanding has changed significantly over this last year... or better said, expanded.



Last winter the Saskatoon *Academy of Discipleship* partnered with Micah, the Mennonite Central Committee SK, and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon to offer an introductory course on Restorative Justice (RJ). I attended, and among other things, learned about the theory of RJ, its biblical perspective, how RJ is happening here in Canada and in other countries, about life in the 'prison world', and about issues around our country's penal system. Since taking the course, I often find myself thinking about three things:

1... the presentation given by members of *Str8 Up* (former gang members)... each telling his and her story of growing up in a violent and confused environment, struggling with outcomes, experiencing our penal system, and making the journey to find healing and inner strength through avenues of introspection and caring community support;

2... the joint presentation given by a mother and son; several years ago the young man was beaten badly here in Saskatoon. The pair told about the numerous emotional, physical, mental and practical struggles that they and their family have been coping with ever since, much of it heart-breaking; and

3... the talking circle that I participated in at a Saskatoon prison. Entry into the prison was one thing! But more so, I was taken by surprise when the inmates that gathered from different parts of the facility, went out of their way to welcome me. They thanked me for coming... they shook my hand... they thanked me again later on... they shared about their lives, families, hopes, plans, faith. They laughed and joked with one another. Some gave thanks to the Creator. Some talked about their imminent release.

...Inside me a shift was happening as I started to see each of these guys differently ...not just as a prisoner... but as someone's son, husband, brother, nephew, dad... struggling and 'fighting' in different ways to make his way in this world.



Our present education and justice systems certainly don't teach what I learned in this course. In the RJ classroom and at the prison, people opened their hearts and invited me into their world. And collectively, they pointed to the deep need for each of us to let go of judgements and to reach out and help whomever and wherever we can so that there can be hope and healing.

Thank you to the Academy, the organizers and the teachers for making this course on restorative justice happen.

Note: For those interested in restorative justice, there are several interesting videos found online:

1. [The Neuroscience of Restorative Justice](#); 2) [Being with the Energy of Love and Forgiveness](#); and 3) [Q&A with Howard Zehr: Offenders as Victims](#).

## Maximilian Kolbe

Fr. Kevin McGee has donated this song about St. Maximilian Kolbe to the Micah Mission to support the work of restorative justice.



**Composed by:** Fr. Kevin McGee - Saskatoon, Canada  
**Sung by:** Kieren Martin Murphy - St. Albert, Canada  
**Recorded by:** Bart McKay—Saskatoon, Canada

The video premiered October 1, 2015 at the "Building a Culture of Hope" conference in Saskatoon.

The video can be found on YouTube at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-1EsJdJz2lQ>.

## The Ought's & Ought Nots of Prison Ministry

*The work of prison pastors  
ought not  
assist prisoners  
to adjust to their environment.*

*A well adjusted prisoner  
does not a free man make.*

Peter Oliver

## Supporting Micah Financially

Please consider donating to Micah.

We offer several ways to do this including online options,  
automatic bank transfers, and direct donations.

You can visit the donation page on our website for more information at  
[http://themicahmission.org/?page\\_id=209](http://themicahmission.org/?page_id=209)

For more information, contact us at :[micahcoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:micahcoordinator@gmail.com)  
Peter Oliver — 306-260-6213 or Dave Feick — 306-653-3099

## Two Micah Board Members.... Sharing

By: Harry Harder and Blake Sittler

### Harry:

Micah Mission is an ecumenical organization of various Christian denominations. Different denominations have different strengths and in a group such as Micah those differing abilities can complement each other. For instance, I represent Mennonite Church Saskatchewan. I would characterize the Mennonite approach to doing social service work as “lighting candles in the darkness”. Mennonites are a small group and build models and examples, and hopefully if enough people follow, a difference can be made. But, “setting the world on fire” is beyond our imagining.



Catholics on the other hand, are used to being a majority, or a very significant minority, in society. They build their own hospitals and educational systems. Size does not intimidate Catholics. They have the contacts, resources, and attitude to make things happen. When Catholics begin something they expect the whole world to follow. Mennonites suggest that we try some modest fundraising. Catholics suggest establishing an endowment fund that will take care of our needs into the foreseeable future.

It is obvious that our members bring gifts to our board table that have been nurtured in their own faith traditions. There are different ways of worship and praying, organizational structure, methods of decision making, and networks and connections to our communities. These methods and approaches complement each other in our common purpose at the Micah Mission and make us better than we are by ourselves. It is a privilege to work together in such a group.

### Harry and Blake:

The mission overwhelms our reality! We have this group of Christians who are unified in a vision so beautiful that it walks effortlessly around our differences. Sara Miles, in her book *Take This Bread*, writes from the perspective of a radically left-leaning, lesbian Christian who visits in a prison alongside a radically right-leaning conservative Christian; they could not agree on anything theologically but they were bound together in their outreach to the prisoners. When one of them offered the other a stick of gum, they recognized the Eucharistic implications of serving in communion.





**Blake:**

In the past, missionary Christians pierced the “New World” (more accurately, a very ancient world of many nations) and swung the double-edged sword of the gospel. Their intention was to spread the truth of the gospel because it was their biblical mandate.

We now live in a world where the sword is dull and the modern armour is thick. We must now evangelize, not through the power and force of the truth of the gospel, but through the warmth and attractiveness of the beauty of a relationship with God. Pope Francis preaches and lives this approach as he was inspired by Hans Urs von Balthasar who said that when it comes to sharing our experience of God, “love alone is credible”.



Every day, the Micah Mission lives out the beauty of the gospel by making time to journey with people who are utterly alone due to the nature of their crimes. We do not befriend them out of naïveté, but out of an insight inspired by the Holy Spirit and with a strength that only Christ can guide.

Every time we meet, I am inspired by the efforts of my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. The efforts of our many denominations are indeed flavoured with the charisms of our various theologies but those differences in perspective do not divide our desire to, in the words of C.S. Lewis, “become little Christs”.

**Our Board Members and Staff**

Sharon Wright (Board Chair), Quaker  
Cameron Harder, Lutheran  
Tom Morgan, Anglican  
Eric Olfert, Mennonite  
Marjorie Keyser, United Church  
Josh Wallace, Mennonite  
Blake Sittler, Roman Catholic

Harry Harder, Mennonite  
Heather Peters, MCC SK Restorative Justice (on leave)  
Randy Klassen, MCC SK Restorative Justice  
**Staff:**  
Peter Oliver, Roman Catholic  
Dave Feick, Mennonite  
Colleen Rickard, Alliance

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In spring 2015, Courtney Zerk, a student in the Youth Care Worker Program at Saskatchewan Polytechnic, conducted a research project, looking at Micah's prison visitation program, *Person 2 Person (P2P)*. She interviewed 21 former and current volunteers who ranged from having less than one year experience to over 30 years.

The research identified three objectives:

1. to gather feedback that will help us to understand the rewards that people experience as they participate in the ministry;
2. to learn about the experience volunteers are having as they engage in this ministry; and
3. to ask if there are any areas where there is a need for improvement in the way this ministry is being offered.

We are very appreciative of the time and effort that Courtney put into the interviews, assembling the data and writing the report. She has managed to capture valuable insights that address the project's three objectives very well. The material is not only confirming and helpful for us as we move forward, it will also be useful for sharing with others who are interested in supporting our work.

The report is currently undergoing final revisions and once completed will be available on our website.

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## **Our Volunteers Come from Various Faith Groups**

**Mennonite  
Mennonite Brethren in Christ  
C3 Church  
United Church  
Anglican  
Roman Catholic  
Baptist  
Alliance**

**The Micah Mission says  
THANK YOU!!  
to all of our volunteers  
and donors.  
We couldn't  
do it without you!**



*Christmas is not far off....*

## **DID YOU KNOW THAT GIFT CARDS CAN BE USED TO SUPPORT MICAH?**

**FundScrip** is a Canadian organization that helps non-profits raise much-needed funds through the sale of gift cards. It's easy for donors to participate. And it doesn't cost the donor or the non-profit a thing to use it!

**How does it work?** You donate to Micah by shopping for everyday items as you normally do. Instead of using regular payment methods (like cash or credit cards), you make your purchases with a gift card that you obtain from FundScrip. A small percentage of each purchase is donated by the retailer to Micah (the % varies from retailer to retailer).

**How is free to use?** There are no strings attached to using the card. You buy a merchant card from FundScrip.... say for \$100 Then you use the card to make a \$100 worth of everyday purchases (such as gas, food, clothes or entertainment). When you buy something with the card you pay the same amount as with other payment options.

**Who are the retailers?** A wide variety of well-known businesses participate in FundScrip. They represent department stores, restaurants, coffee shops, toy stores, clothing stores, sporting goods, beauty salons, drug stores, electronic stores, theatres, hotels, and so on.

Go to <http://www.fundscrip.com/retailers> for a complete list of the participants with FundScrip.

**Who can use the gift card?** Anyone can. You can use a card for personal use. Or give it as a gift for someone else to use.

**How do I buy a card that is associated with Micah?** Go the [FundScrip website](#). Click on 'Support a Group' and use the code **BYGJU5** to support the Micah Mission.

## **Contact Us**

**Give us a call for more information about our work and volunteer opportunities.**

**The Micah Mission**

**226 Ave V South - Saskatoon SK S7M 3E3**

**306-653-3099 - [www.themicahmission.org](http://www.themicahmission.org) - [micahcoordinator@gmail.com](mailto:micahcoordinator@gmail.com)**