

Introduction to Crime Forum, June 3, 2001, Matsqui Centennial
Auditorium, 7:00 – 9:30 p.m.

Good evening, and welcome to this Crime Forum.

My name is Wayne Northey. I serve as Director of M2/W2 Association – Restorative Christian Ministries. It is a one-to-one prison visitation program throughout BC that also does several other specialized initiatives in the field of criminal justice, including one in crime prevention. The other sponsors of the event are: Mennonite Central Committee of BC Peace Section, and Fraser Valley Arts and Peace Festival Committee of Project Ploughshares.

A few housekeeping details:

- ❖ Washrooms are outside the auditorium to my left.
- ❖ At the end of the evening, panellists are willing to linger behind and chat for a while.
- ❖ The entire dialogue is being videotaped, and the tape will be available for sale. Details on that are on a one-page flyer in the foyer.
- ❖ There will be a 15-minute break at approximately 8:15 p.m.
- ❖ Legal Grounds Coffee House in Abbotsford has been kind enough to bring some speciality coffees for sale during the break. Legal Grounds Coffee House at its location on 33775 Essendene Avenue organizes many entertaining and educational public events in any given month. One soon upcoming is a general dialogue on violence, its origins, and a community response. I will present at that discussion. Please check their WEB site. Further information is available at their booth.
- ❖ There are books for sale during intermission, and at the end of the evening, by Father Jim Consedine. He brought them with him from New Zealand. They are: _____. They cost: _____. Unfortunately, they must be paid for in cash.
- ❖ There are a few hundred dollars in costs related to this evening's event. If you wish to donate anything, DONATIONS boxes are beside where the books are being sold.
- ❖ **PLEASE: NO DRINKS IN THE AUDITORIUM!**

In March, 1997, I took part in an event called “The Talking Place: A Forum on the Death Penalty”. By drawing on the local native tradition of establishing a “talking place”, we were urged in the introduction to approach the conversation as “**a way to discuss current, controversial issues in an intelligent and civil way so [we] are better prepared to make an informed decision.**”

Tonight we are privileged to hear from four panellists and two commentators on the vexing issue of crime. The procedure is: **David Milgaard** will set the whole discussion in context, drawing from his personal experience of serving twenty-three years in prison for a wrongful conviction. Then I will introduce each panellist before he or she speaks. When we have heard from all four, there will be an opportunity for each briefly to interact with any of the others. Then, the floor will be opened to questions and comments. Finally, **Marc Forget**, Director of the national Quaker Committee on Jails

and Justice, will conclude the formal part of the evening at 9:30 with some summary comments on “What I Have Heard”.

There is one panellist whom I did not mention: **Ruth Morris**. Unfortunately, due to her ongoing battle with cancer, Ruth very reluctantly had to decide not to travel from Salmon Arm, where she and her husband just moved to from Toronto. Ruth was last year’s recipient of the Annual Ron Wiebe Restorative Justice Award, presented by Correctional Services Canada. She has been a tireless advocate for a vision of “transformative justice” – her preferred term – for over thirty years. At the conclusion of her most recent book, *Stories of Transformative Justice*, she wrote: “[p. 256, last paragraph, “Every problem... Transformative justice is the choice of life.”

I dedicate this evening to Ruth Morris and her vision of Transformative Justice.

A few more comments: During the Open Forum discussion, please be patient in waiting your turn. Two mikes will be set up on the floor at that time. Please try to phrase your question or comment within a one-minute time frame. And please remember the Alaskan native “talking place” tradition. Tonight is a forum “**to discuss current, controversial issues in an intelligent and civil way so [we] are better prepared to make an informed decision.**” And then we are also better equipped to take action.

A contemporary New Testament theologian writes: “**Despite our nods to participatory democracy, we detest dialogue. We hate debate and discernment and decision making together. But this, I insist, is where God’s project for the world is given expression: in the messy conversation between many voices, in the genuine give and take of multiple perspectives and plans and projects, in the listening and discerning and obedience of faith, in reciprocity and exchange** (Luke T. Johnson, *Faith’s Freedom: A Classic Spirituality for Contemporary Christians*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, p. 128).”

So let the “messy conversation” begin!

Reminder at end of evening:

- ❖ Panellists are willing to linger behind and dialogue for a while.
- ❖ If you wish to purchase books, or make a donation to cover costs, there will be some time now to do so. DONATIONS boxes are located where the books are being sold.
- ❖ THANK YOU to all panellists, to David Milgaard, to Marc Forget, and to you all, for participating tonight! Good night.