Restorative and Peacemaking Practices for Church Communities

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What makes any resolution process restorative?
   a. **Conversations WITH people, not TO people**
      (hence, processes that are inclusive and empowering)
   b. **Addressing harms both in source and impact**
      (hence, balancing accountability and healing)

Yet, restorative work need not only be reactive to incidents (**intervention**); it can also engage whole systems before problems (**prevention**).

Realms of Church Peacemaking Practices:
   1. Missional Practices (beyond the local church)
   2. Inter-Tribal Practices (with other church groups)
   3. Communal Practices (within the local church)

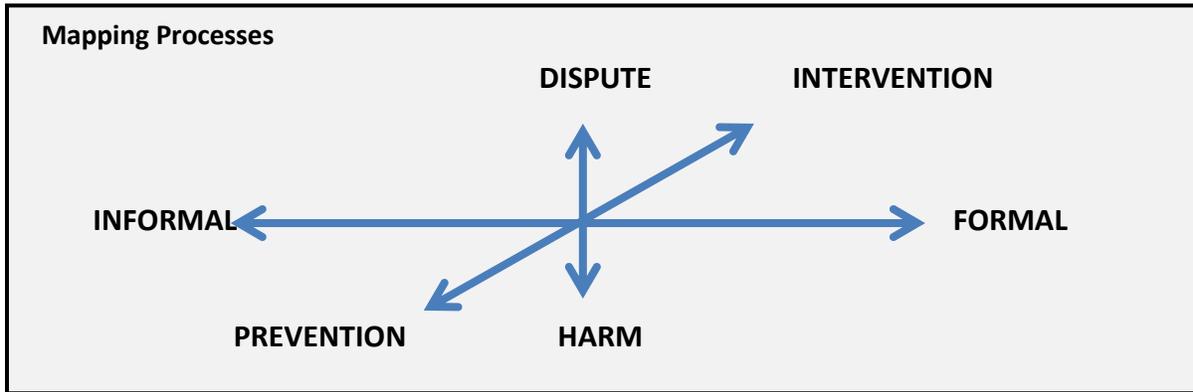**Missional Practices** (Biblical examples: Isaiah 58; Jesus' ministry to others)
- Ministries to victims and offenders of crime
- Involvement in restorative justice programming
- Neighborhood community justice projects
- Prophetic witness to injustices; military resistance
- Advocacy work for victims of abuse and trauma
- Providing resolution processes to local people
- Racial reconciliation forums and initiatives
- Other _____

Question: While individual Christians can do any of the above, how might churches be involved in missional practices collectively?

Inter-Tribal Practices (Biblical examples: Joshua 22; Jerusalem Council - Acts 15)
- Problem-solving process between a church and denominational conference
- Forums for addressing conservative-liberal polarization issues
- Church-to-church initiatives re: racial reconciliation and other "isms"
- Other _____

Question: What might allow a church community to be an effective agent of peace in the context of denomination divisiveness?

Mapping Processes

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              DISPUTE        INTERVENTION


INFORMAL ←———————————————————————→ FORMAL


       PREVENTION        HARM
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Communal Practices (Biblical egs: Joseph story; Matt. 18; "one-anothering" texts)

A. Prevention / Formation / Pedagogy
- Peacemaking education in study and worship
- Normalizing a culture of apology and forgiveness
- Fellowship across lines of differences
- Sharing Circles that address topics, not incidents

B. Decision-making / Discernment
- Collaborative, cooperative leadership processes
- Inclusive input processes with whole congregation

C. Intervention / Reconciliation / Problem-solving
- Interpersonal conversations
- Third-party supported conversations
- Congregational group conversations
- Intervention with outside mediator / facilitator

D. Post-Incident Healing
- Grieving or closure circles for addressing difficult loss
- Parallel support circles for ethical breach incidents
- Restorative termination processes

The Power of Restorative Communication Processes to Restore Trust:
- A. Storytelling
- B. Listening
- C. Being Heard
- D. Space for apology and forgiveness

> Removes walls.
> Builds bridges.

Question: Church groups are typically conflict-avoidant. What are some supports and biblical perspectives that can help such groups to embrace conflict resolution?