

RESTORATION AND PEACEMAKERS MINISTRY

WHAT IS THE RESTORATION MINISTRY?

Second Presbyterian Church has a ministry specifically designed to help its members restore broken relationships by following the blueprint given to us in the Bible. Did you know that God cares very much how you handle problems such as family communication, personal or business disputes, or dysfunctional relationships? Before you give up or call a lawyer, contact the Restoration and Peacemakers Ministry. (“RPM”)

Some relationships suffer due to circumstances outside our control; other relationships fail due to our lack of communication or coping skills, physical or emotional issues, or inability to forgive one another. This ministry seeks to heal these strained or broken relationships. Ministry team members work under the authority of the Church Session with the supervision of the RPM Committee and our pastoral staff. We are committed to this way of restoration because believers are commanded by Scripture to be proactive in efforts to restore one another and to “Bear one another’s burdens,” thereby fulfilling the law of Christ set out in Galatians 6:1-2.

WHAT ARE TYPICAL PROBLEM AREAS?

Although we all face conflict in relationships and struggle in our Christian walk at times, members who need help from other believers might be involved in one or more of the following typical problem areas:

- Unresolved personal or business disputes
- Addictions of various kinds (alcohol/drugs, sex, pornography, gambling)
- Communication breakdowns
- Dysfunctional relationships
- Physical, mental, or emotional abuse
- Marital infidelity
- Parent/child issues
- Unwillingness to submit to the authority of the Church

These types of problems not only affect our relationships with other people but also our fellowship with God. Therefore, the ministry team also desires to restore hope in the forgiving grace of Christ.

HOW DOES RESTORATION WORK?

The RPM follows the plan given by Christ in Matthew 18. Ideally, the process begins first with the one who has been offended prayerfully going to the one who has caused offense with his or her concern, addressing the matter privately and informally.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 18:15, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” Most relationships can be restored in this way, and nothing more is necessary.

If the offender is unrepentant or resists attempts at restoration, one or two others may be enlisted to attempt restoration as a small, informal group. Matthew 18:16 says, “But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.” The aggrieved party or a concerned friend may contact the RPM through a pastor, Sunday School teacher, or elder. If the committee deems it necessary, a ministry team will be formed to meet with the parties in confidence to determine the facts and the willingness of the parties to repent and be restored.

If the matter is resolved, the team will be disbanded, praising God for His faithfulness. Although the restoration process in a very few cases may lead to formal church discipline, the ministry's approach is gentleness and a non-judgmental spirit. The ministry teams will be able to draw on the full resources of the church, including confidential financial and psychological counseling, mentoring, accountability, and any other means necessary in an attempt to make peace. This is a vital ministry of our church that flows from the core of the Gospel, for it was Jesus who came as the great peace-bringer, restoring us to a right relationship with the Father: "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." (11 Corinthians 5:18-19)

WHAT IF RESTORATION FAILS?

If an offending party refuses to repent and be reconciled, the ministry team may decide that the church should become formally involved through action of the Session. Jesus continues to lay out this process in Matthew 18:17a: "If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church." In such cases, the team will recommend a course of action to the RPM Committee, which has several options available. Formal discipline will be considered only after all other less formal means of resolving the offense have been exhausted, and it must usually involve a lack of repentance in the areas of heresy, immorality, or contempt for the established order of the church (set out in the Book of Discipline, EPC Book of Order, 11 1-20).

WHAT CAN I EXPECT OF RESTORATION TEAMS?

Team members who have a heart for and engage in this ministry approach this work in a careful, gentle, and loving manner, guided by God's revealed will in Scripture: "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." (Galatians 6:1-2)

Team members base their work on God's Word: "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness," (11 Timothy 3:16)

Team members approach their work prayerfully: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

Team members approach their work humbly: "But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)

Team members undergo self-examination: "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." (Matthew 7:5)

Team members are ready to forgive: "...bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." (Colossians 3:13)

Team members respect confidentiality: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother." (Matthew 18:15)

Team members are seeking repentance not perfection from the offending member: "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls." (1 Peter 2:25)

WHAT ABOUT CONFIDENTIALITY?

The Restoration and Peacemakers Ministry keeps the highest standards of confidentiality for those coming for help. Unless the offense precipitating a broken relationship is of such a public nature that it requires formal and/or public discipline, confidentiality must at all times be observed. The ministry team engaged in restoration may not discuss the reported offense, the attempt at reconciliation, or the progress of the restoration with anyone other than the team members themselves, the pastor assigned to the team, or the chairman of the Restoration and Peacemakers Committee. Although permanent records of each case must be kept for statistical and historical purposes, these records are securely stored in the church office.

If you are interested in accessing the resources available through this ministry, contact the Restoration Office at 454-0034, ext. 123 or peacemakers@2pc.org