



## Prison Fellowship International, Faith-Based Leader of Restorative Justice Practices in Prisons Around the World, Redesigns RestorativeJustice.org to Share, Strengthen and Spur Global Restorative Prison Practices

WASHINGTON (June 20, 2022) – [Prison Fellowship International \(PFI\)](#), the world’s leading global network of Christian prison ministries, has launched a new restorative justice initiative and website to showcase and spearhead an open exchange of restorative justice practices in the *prison context*. This new platform is designed to engage and inspire practitioners, organizations, governments, prison officials, nonprofits and others to apply proven restorative principles and practices in their work with those in prisons around the world.

“Breaking the cycle of crime and restoring broken lives – offender, victim and community stakeholders – should be the goal of any just society and criminal justice system,” said Andrew Corley, president and chief executive officer of PFI. “The advancing of restorative principles, programs and systems is vital to **ensuring that prisons become places of corrections and repair and not simply punishment and despair**. We are delighted to launch this website initiative as one positive contribution towards this end.”

The newly redesigned [RestorativeJustice.org](#) provides free resources and publications, including Bible studies, academic research, handbooks and articles. It also provides an opportunity for individuals who are passionate about increasing the number of restorative programs in prisons around the world a way to give toward making that a reality. The website is part of the new Restorative Justice Exchange (RJE) initiative by PFI, which aims to increase and strengthen restorative programs serving prisoners, victims and families of prisoners across the globe.

This new initiative continues the work of PFI’s former Center for Justice and Reconciliation (CJR) – which launched the original website in 1996 with a wider lens. RestorativeJustice.org now streamlines the focus to restorative justice in the prison context only, which is the unique space that PFI holds in the broader restorative justice sphere. The database of articles collected and maintained on the original website will still be available in the Archive section of the new site.

PFI worked with the award-winning [Atmosphere Digital](#) team to build the updated website. Before its redesign, RestorativeJustice.org received approximately 870 unique visitors a day. In 2021, the website engaged 317,490 unique visitors. In 2022, 93,775 have visited to date; 72% of the traffic is organic. Now, the website is poised to engage more visitors with updated and user-friendly content, including a blog and quarterly newsletter that will delve into prison-based restorative justice programs and best practices from across the PFI affiliate network of indigenous, autonomous ministry partners in more than 100 countries around the globe. **The featured impact stories – first-person narratives of those who have participated in restorative justice programs – provide powerful, compelling evidence that restorative justice works.**

### Restorative Justice in Prisons

“Crime and wrongdoing break down individual relationships, but the ripple effect of those behaviors can extend the impact to include friends, families, communities and many others,” said Jonathan Derby, PFI special advisor on restorative justice. “Justice, like crime, ripples outward. It leads to wholeness and wellbeing within us, our relationships, our communities, and our world. Like fishermen who mend their nets in the morning after fishing all night, justice requires that those most impacted by crime do the hard work of mending the torn nets of their relationships.”

Derby, whose Restorative Justice [handbook](#) is offered as a free download on the website, works closely with PFI national ministry leaders who are leading restorative justice practitioners in their countries, including Netherlands, Germany, Syria, Rwanda, Nigeria, Canada, New Zealand, Colombia the United States and more. He co-authored the seminal restorative justice textbook “Restoring Justice” with Karen Heetderks Strong, Lynette Parker and Dan Van Ness, founder of the Center for Justice and Reconciliation, the progenitor of the Restorative Justice Exchange. The

sixth edition of the [textbook](#) was released May 2022, to reflect the growing concept and recent trends of restorative justice.

### **Restorative Justice Movement**

PFI is prisoner-focused (offender sphere), but often works with families of prisoners, who are harmed by crime as secondary victims (the victim sphere), and with church communities to mobilize volunteers (community sphere).

While there is general agreement about the meaning of restorative justice, there is no consensus about a precise definition. According to the “UN Handbook on Restorative Justice Programmes” (which former PFI vice president Dan Van Ness helped to write), restorative process is any process in which the victim and the offender and, where appropriate, any other individuals or community members affected by a crime participate together actively in the resolution of matters arising from the crime, generally with the help of a facilitator.

In the prison context, PFI defines restorative justice as: A response to wrongdoing that prioritizes repairing harm, to the extent possible, caused or revealed by the wrongful behavior. The stakeholders impacted most by the wrongdoing cooperatively decide how to repair victim harm, hold offenders accountable and strengthen the community’s relational health and safety.

In the PFI network of global affiliates, the three core elements of restorative justice are the interconnected concepts of encounter, repair and transform. Each element is discrete and essential. Together they represent a journey toward wellbeing and wholeness that victims, offenders and community members can experience. Encounter leads to repair, and repair leads to transformation. These steps equip practitioners to actualize restorative justice in real ways.

### **PFI’s Restorative Justice Roots**

PFI works to achieve its vision of a future in which restorative justice is the normal response to crime. For this to take place, there must be changes in perspectives, policies and practices. As a non-governmental organization (NGO), PFI maintains special consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has participated in the UN Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

PFI launched its innovative [Sycamore Tree Project](#) in 1996, which is based on the biblical concept of shalom. In this initiative, prisoners and unrelated victims meet in an encounter to discuss the crime, its impact, and how to repair the harm. Participants study the Book of Luke over eight, small-group sessions, while discussing concepts of responsibility, repentance, and making amends. Studies show that offenders who go through the course have significant changes in attitudes so they no longer view crime as acceptable, making it less likely they will re-offend once released. Currently, it operates in nine countries -- Nigeria, South Africa, The Gambia, Zambia, Lebanon, Spain, Chile, Colombia and Uruguay.

PFI’s restorative justice history also involves Communities of Restoration, which are based on an innovative methodology (called the “APAC Methodology”) developed in 1972 by an organization that is now Prison Fellowship Brazil. [APAC](#) (the acronym for the Portuguese saying 'Loving Your Neighbor You Will Love Christ') is a unique, powerful, community-based experience in prison reform that has been celebrated and replicated worldwide. Currently, 45 APAC prisons in Brazil and 10 Prison Fellowship affiliates outside of Brazil run APAC-based Communities of Restoration. Many more are working to adapt and apply specific APAC best practices within their own cultural context.

**During this week's June 22-25 Congress of APACs in Brazil, Corley will celebrate the Jubilee Year of APAC and cast a vision for the future of the APAC Method when he addresses the gathering of an estimated 500 practitioners, partners, volunteers, academics and authorities from Brazil and other countries.**

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**About Prison Fellowship International:** Since 1979, PFI has helped prisoners experience transformation from the inside out through the healing power of the Gospel. Its mission is to transform the lives of prisoners, their families and victims through a global network of ministry partners.  
**Learn more at [pfi.org](http://pfi.org).**