

## Restorative Justice with People Impacted by Incarceration: 09-18-19



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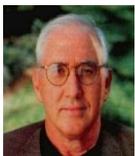
This webinar examines restorative justice as both a philosophy and practice built on repairing relationships and communities affected by acts of crime. It looks at the core questions and tenants associated with restorative justice compared with the traditional criminal legal system in the U.S. and how the tenants of restorative justice are consistent with Catholic teaching. Further, the effectiveness of restorative justice practices for people inside and outside of prisons is revealed through the story of Bridges to Life.

To learn more about restorative justice, please [click here to visit the CPMC restorative justice page.](#)

### Presenters:



- **Caitlin Morneau** - Ms. Morneau is Director of Restorative Justice at Catholic Mobilizing Network, where she oversees program development that increases awareness and use of restorative practices in Catholic communities. She authored CMN's new faith formation guide, "Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity: A Catholic Encounter with Restorative Justice."



- **John Sage** - Mr. Sage is the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Bridges to Life. He began Bridges to Life after his sister, Marilyn, was murdered in 1993. Bridges to life is a faith-based, restorative justice program for incarcerated men and women that reduces recidivism among program graduates and helps make communities safer.



- **Father George Williams, S.J.** – Father George is chaplain at San Quentin Prison and member of the Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition Leadership Team. He moderated the recording of this session and relayed the questions from participants.

## Transcription:

**Father George Williams:** Hi, welcome to our September webinar for the Catholic prison ministry coalition series. Today we have the honor of presenting restorative justice with people impacted by incarceration. Our presenters are Caitlin Morneau, who is the director of restorative justice for the Catholic mobilizing network. Their work is focused on ending the death penalty and promoting restorative justice in the United States. We also have John Sage, who is the founder of Bridges to Life. He founded that in 1998. It's a restorative justice ministry located in Texas, although they are connected with eight other States, and internationally in Texas alone, they have over 900 active volunteers. They work mostly with prisoners in Texas, emphasizing restorative justice, ministry, and victim impact. So, I am going to turn it over to Caitlin Morneau to begin our webinar today. You can follow this, and you can watch a recording of this after we're done today, and that will be up on our new website, newly launched Catholic Prison Ministries Coalition ([www.catholicprisonministries.org](http://www.catholicprisonministries.org).) So, Kaitlyn, welcome.

**Caitlin Morneau:** Wonderful. Thank you so much. Father George. Thank you to the Catholic prison ministry coalition for having us today, and thank you to John for joining me as well. I want to congratulate you on your new website, which looks fantastic, and I hope everyone here has been to it already and if you haven't, visit some incredible resources there. So, as Father George mentioned, my name is Caitlin Morneau Moreno. I'm the director of restorative justice at Catholic mobilizing network, where we are the national Catholic organization that is animating the campaign to end the death penalty use. We were founded ten years ago with that mission. We initially identified that mission gathered around a table with a murder victim, family members, bishops, members of the founding order of the Congregation of Joseph, as well as many others.

**Caitlin Morneau:** We understood that we needed to be clear about what we were advocating for in working to end the death penalty, and that was a gospel-centered response to the harm of crime or restorative justice. Many folks know about the Catholic church's stance on the death penalty, especially since the catechism revision that it is inadmissible in all cases. Fewer folks know that in, though this crowd probably does that in this resource put out by the bishops in the year 2000 called Responsibility Rehabilitation and Restoration, a Catholic perspective on crime and criminal justice. The bishops explicitly endorse the concept and practice of restorative justice. They say that, as Catholics, we need to encourage models of restorative justice. This approach seeks to address crime in terms of the harm done to both victims and communities. So, it's with this spirit that Catholic mobilizing network endeavors upon its education, advocacy, and prayer effort, not only to end the death penalty but also to transform the criminal justice system.

**Caitlin Morneau:** And so, when we are asked the question, what is restorative justice, this is how we tend to describe it. Restorative justice is, first and foremost, a philosophy. It's a way of understanding crime and how crime harms people and relationships rather than merely looking at the rule of law that was broken. Go on to say, sometimes, if you've heard of restorative justice, you've heard of it's called restorative practices. So, these seek to repair harm through transformative encounters. That model Jesus says reconciling way. Often, when we hear reference to restorative practices, we might think of victim-offender dialogue and circle process. Others might be called community conferencing. John, we'll go into more depth about what some of these practices look like in his ministry. I'll also share a little more about ways that Catholics are applying these practices in various areas of ministry, both inside and outside of prisons.

**Caitlin Morneau:** I always like to refer to the fact that restorative justice is rooted in values. And whether you're talking with people in a faith-based or secular context, this groundedness in values and principles is central. I'm always amazed and appreciate how, no matter who I'm talking to, those values are consistent with our Catholic faith and values. The values frequently named right off the bat, are human dignity and respect for all life. No matter the harm someone has suffered or caused, the need to live in right relationship with one another and our community's healing, accountability, and culture that Pope Francis is calling us to create. We'll hear and see how it's demonstrated in the practices. I'm always moved by the connection with the principle of subsidiarity. Those most impacted by harm, or an issue, ought to have the opportunity to participate in and power over the decisions that affect them.

**Caitlin Morneau:** We'll see how restorative practices, really create those opportunities in concrete ways. And so, I know these, these are all kind of really big ideas. And another way that I and others, I now find it helpful to think about how restorative justice compares to our traditional criminal legal system is by looking at the questions that it asks. Our criminal legal system typically asks: What law was broken, who's guilty, and what should be their punishment? A restorative justice approach asks: What was the harm? I would add that harm is thought about broadly.

Whereas in criminal justice, crime is defined as a violation against the state. The harm in restorative justice is understood as a violation of people and relationships. So that harm includes all aspects, from physical and material to the emotional and spiritual.

**Caitlin Morneau:** And so we ask: how were those aspects of the whole self impacted, and what do we need to do to make it right, to repair the harm, to move forward in a good way with one another as much as possible. Of course, it recognizes that some harm cannot be undone. I include the image of this form of Japanese pottery in which, when the bowl breaks, rather than throwing it away, it is mended together using precious metals like gold. This is a compelling image to me because it shows that we are changed when harm happens and that there are ways to transform that into a relationship with one another that can never be the same.

**Caitlin Morneau:** But it can hopefully be made whole or as whole as possible. So, hopefully, these are some helpful ways to think about restorative justice. If someone asks you, you might think back on some of these kinds of core tenants as ways to describe what it is. I wanted to mention that, in this work to promote restorative justice, and it's these core questions that that Catholic mobilizing network is frequently asked: What is restorative justice? How do I put it into action? What does it mean for me as a Catholic? How does it connect with my faith? And so for this reason, earlier in May this year, we released a faith formation guide called: Harm Healing and Human Dignity, a Catholic encounter with Restorative Justice.

**Caitlin Morneau:** This was adapted from an earlier book that we released in 2017, Redemption Restoration and Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice. The faith formation guide boils things down into what we hope to be an accessible format, a pretty quick read. The faith formation guide helps one to consider what restorative justice means for our criminal justice system and how do the questions it asks impact our ministry and everyday lives.

I'm pleased to have John here presenting with me for Bridges to Life is mentioned several times in Harm Healing and Human Dignity. He has provided Catholics with a compelling model for

Catholics to look to for the last several decades, in terms of ways to bring this philosophy to life. So, thank you, John, for being with us, and I'll turn it over to you to say a little bit more about Hooper just to life isn't how you integrate this philosophy and principles in your work.

**John Sage:** Pretty. Thank you. Great to be here. Thank you to Caitlin Morneau and Father George and all people that had put this webinar together. I'd like to start off talking about the basic principles of restorative justice in a little different way. I once heard of a man say it's like a three-legged stool. There are three pieces to restorative justice. There's the victim, the offender, and a community. All three have had some harm done to them. In the offender's case, they've done some harm, but they also have harmed themselves. And the centerpiece of the restorative justice approach is that we have to focus on the one most harmed in this three-legged stool. And it's usually always the victim because the victim is the person that is victimized by the offender.

**John Sage:** And we have a broader definition of victim in our work. Victims can be a family member of someone that's been harmed by a crime committed against them or a loved one that dramatically impacts their lives. We start with the victim as the center of our program; we also build to help the offender and the community as it all ripples down. That's a pretty, you know, 30,000-foot viewpoint. But more specifically, I'd like to talk about Bridges to Life and how you got started. And, it did start from a victim-centered experience that I had. I had a sister murdered in 1993, 26 years ago, by two 19-year-old strangers in a vicious, unnecessary, and random event. They stole her car and \$13 and left her for dead. These 19-year olds split and were arrested in two or three days.

**John Sage:** Subsequently, they were charged with capital murder, which in Texas carries a death penalty sentence. Over two years, they went to trial and went through two death penalty trials and were both sent to death row in Texas at that time. And I was upset about it. We did not have life without parole. These two people were 19. The other choice was potential parole in 35 years. This even lead was unnecessary and brutal and we assessed them, thought they might be dangerous in the future, particularly one of them, interestingly enough, one of the killers was a male and one was a female and the female was assessed at being the most dangerous. The, just to carry on the rest of their story. The male died on death row, five or six years later of AIDS, and the female is still on death row.

**John Sage:** 26 years later, there is only five women on death row in Texas and only 50 or so in the United States. So, dealing with those trials and the death penalty issue was a very stressful, just dealing with murder trials. It was very stressful, but nothing compared to dealing with the loss of a loved one. I'm to, Catholic family of eight children, Irish Catholic. So, to see your siblings and your mother, my father had passed away, suffer and my wife was very close friends with my sister. The, sister introduced me to my wife when we were in high school, so they were very close. So, it was disruptive and traumatizing jar our whole family. And to watch all that transit myself, it took me to a very deep place of, anger, frustration, anxiety, led to depression. and I had two or three years there where I was not really functioning well.

**John Sage:** You can say, I had a broken heart. You have my sister our 19 months apart, very close. And then the trials and all the trauma. It was a devastating to me and my family during that, five years following her murder of a spiritual journey. People asked me at that time, what, what did your Catholic faith, the Catholic upbringing I went to 12 years of Catholic education, do for you I said, well, it taught me where to go when I was in real trouble. thankful for that rock foundation that was

taught to me and experienced in is I was a child and all the way up till I was 18 years old in high school, that education and during that five years, went on a spiritual journey to deepen my relationship with God and had a lot of books, spiritual books, did a lot of meditating, praying, and really is an effort to get out of the pain I was in.

**John Sage:** And through that I worked out of that. I, worked out of that pain level, got to a place where I think I was in a place of forgiveness and, pain ease. And, on the heels of that realization, I, was asked to volunteer for a program called Sycamore tree in a prison here nearby Houston, and that was sponsored by prison fellowship ministry. I've volunteered for that program is one of 12. All it had a crime affect us. Nisqually and, I, moved by what happened in that program. I saw offenders change, I, saw them impacted by the victim story and I saw the victims change impacted by the offender story. And there was healing going on, both the offender and the victim. I was inspired to say, Hey, maybe we could go to four or five more prisons with this and let me take this a step or two further.

**John Sage:** And I, moved in that direction, although it was a slow movement at that time, this was a new concept at that point. And, when I would go to meet with the warden and say we want to go into a room and get in a circle, have a confidential conversation, it really kind of look over their glasses and say, there's no such thing as a confidential conversation, convicts in a prison. And so, we had a number of barriers to go through at that time, just from the status of the system. to be honest, I didn't even know the word restorative justice for a few years, although I was, we were practicing it and the movement was just really in its infancy stage and now it gains a lot of momentum over the last 20 years. So we were, we were open to what God's will was and then the program became a well-received and a few prisons we were going to in Texas.

**John Sage:** And we just kept growing year after year. And just as a barometer, the first year we worked with, 41 inmates in one prison. And this year we'll be in about 105 prisons and work with about 7,000 inmates complete our program. And we went from a group of 15 volunteers to now we have over 900 active volunteers working in bridges to life. About 80% of what we do is in Texas and 20% is outside of Texas. We're now completing most of the prisons. We most all the prisons in Texas in the next couple of years. So, we're going to be making more efforts to go outside of Texas. We're willing to share our curriculum, and that we have a great book and study guide that we use to work through our curriculum. And we'll talk a little more about that and we show you our resources. it took about 10 years to develop our curriculum.

**John Sage:** We kept changing it and modifying it and it seems to work pretty well. We work in modules of 10 inmates, two facilitators. That's a 14-week program. We cover topics such as, crime and conflict, faith, personal stories, accountability, responsibility, confession, repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness. We go through those moral principles, which are really steps that you find in the gospel of Jesus and take them through there. And it's a combination of working through the book, the stories, some biblical passages on point with those things. And, material we have, we have a book and read what the personal story is, is a huge part of this. Personal stories can be healing. the inmates required to tell this personal story, for 20, 25 minutes in a confidential group and he has to admit his crime and take responsibility for that. And the way that that takes off is pretty amazing.

**John Sage:** And then when they hear the personal stories of victims, you have four victim stories in front of the whole group, during the project, that shows them that they can be forgiven, but it also shows them the harm it's done and what harm is done and how many people are hurt. He starts to develop some empathy the way that most people in prison were raised. I don't believe their empathy developed as a young person. There's actually a part of your brain that develops empathy, but we have learned that that can be tapped into. And if they admit what they did and they see what the harm is done, they can move a long way towards having empathy and being sorry for what they've done and embracing it. And the healing that comes about from that is, is really awesome. we have worked really hard on, our organization.

**John Sage:** We have 20 staff and as I said, hundreds of volunteers and we implemented this to maintain growth, tremendous growth, but also maintain our quality and the delivery and impact. we follow these people mainly for recidivism. We have a very good recidivism rate of about 15%. So, 85% of our graduates have come back. If you're not come back to prison, which is very impactful in society and affects the community, make it safer. We see so many people healed in this and it, ripple effect goes beyond the offender. It goes to the fender, finish his family, he goes to the victim, the victim's family. he goes to the guards and the prisons. A lot of people benefit from this work that we do. I can't tell you hundreds of reconciliations that have happened with family members of inmates. They've done everything to get away from their family, break trust with their family and to break a relationship with their family. And this has helped bring a lot of them back together. If they can have a relationship with their family, then they can, move on and it's really a big boost in helping them go through this process. I think that's a good bet about what our program's about. If we have some time, we'll fill in a few more pieces. I think Peyton going to talk about a few other things that in this restorative justice category.

**Father George:** Okay, John, thank you. And Caitlin Morneau, before you start just wanting to break in for a moment and for the, approximately 90 people who are participating online, if you'd like to address some questions to John or Kaitlin, if you scroll down to the bottom of your screen, you'll see a section that says chat. You can type your question in and then we will respond in the last part of this webinar to any comments or questions that you have. Okay. Caitlin, go ahead. Thank you, Father George.

**Caitlin Morneau:** All right. So, I guess that I just think that for just to life is such an incredible foundational and holistic model. you know, I'm reminded, I was reminded as, as John was talking about how, and, again, in, in the 2017 book that I mentioned, redemption restoration, John's colleague Kirk Blackard actually wrote a chapter in that book. And in that he talks about what contributes to, to incarceration being a transformative experience. And he has a Venn diagram, which we often see a lot of in restorative justice. So, whether it's been diagrams of victim, offender in community or, in this case, Kurt was reflecting on how, when there is the integration and there's, when there's, spiritual accompaniment, rehabilitative, work life skills, et cetera, combined with, with restorative elements in terms of that focus on repairing relationships and healing harm, that, that the three of those together can, can really lead to, to just even more transformative, experience for, for those who are incarcerated.

**Caitlin Morneau:** And so one of the blessings of this work is at a national level, a Catholic mobilizing network is getting to hear stories of various ways that folks are applying these principles to integrate that, that element of, of repairing relationship, and, and those core values, these practices in, in their ministry. And so, I wanted to share just a few other examples. because you

know, if someone's sitting there thinking like, Oh, I don't, I don't know that, you know, the, the prison where I ministered that they would be open to something like that. Or I'm, you know, as John mentioned, sometimes it's baby steps. I wanted to offer a few other models that, have been really impactful, with, with those who we have relationships with. and one example, well the first thing I wanted to say is that frequently in restorative justice, and you'll hear mention of these core practices, one of which is, circle process, sometimes called peacemaking circles.

**Caitlin Morneau:** May, may take a number of different names, in, in short, to give a very brief description, a circle process is deeply rooted in indigenous tradition and, it kind of draws on ways that, our indigenous brothers and sisters have sought to live in community and with one another, in, in right relationship how they approach a harm conflict decision making, as, as a community. And, very simply, you'll see a picture here, folks seated in a circle. There isn't a table or anything in the middle. sometimes there's, there's a centerpiece that might have objects that represent objects of, you know, values that the group holds. one, one core aspect is that there's a talking piece that's passed in a circle. and, and moves in order and what that allows us an opportunity for each person to speak without fear or concern of being interrupted and to each of us for each of us to listen really intentionally with one another.

**Caitlin Morneau:** And there are other elements too. But and it all sounds so simple and in so many ways it is. But I think just that, that opportunity to, to know that you can share from, from a place of, of vulnerability and openness and trust, with a group of folks who, who have kind of agreed to, this process together. many, many people find it to be a very powerful and really spiritual experience. So, each of I mentioned that because each of the, examples that I share draw heavily on the use of circle process. and so, one example that I love is called let's circle up. Started by a friend of ours, incarcerated and inside of was great Ufford now, Phoenix in Philadelphia and he actually is Catholic himself and countered that Bishop's three hours document.

**Caitlin Morneau:** it was a really a part of his conversion and he said, how do I do this with, with my guys inside And so, and with, with a few other folks, he, he started this, these circles that meet weekly, exploring similar questions that John mentioned earlier and, and really seeking to be, even though, even though it's, it's as circle comprised of individuals inside really thinking about, the impact that, their, their crime and actions have had on others. and those that they have harmed as well as how their own, experiences of victimization, may have played a part in, in the harm that they caused others. so that's a really fantastic one. Another that you can actually read more about on our blog. it was just published last month. I found out about a few gentleman, deacon Tom Lang, who just retired from the diocese of Dubuque, has been integrating circles in his re-entry work.

**Caitlin Morneau:** So, you know, going, going into prisons, they are, they are working with folks who are reentering society. Those, those formerly incarcerated persons are paired with a mentor. And so, there's a one to one relationship that then feeds into what's called a circle of support and accountability. So, these are our community folks who come together in a circle. We meet regularly to assess and address the needs that that particular person and their family may have. Again, whether those are emotional, spiritual material, and, and provide this mutual communal support one another. and then, building off of that, again, circles that can be happening in communities, for folks who aren't, you know, inside on a regular basis, are, are spaces of support for victims of crime, families of victims of crime as well as families of those who are incarcerated. and then, you know, another, important aspect, that is I feel like always needs to be mentioned in this conversation of restorative justice is the opportunity for it to be used in, in diversion and alternative sentencing.

**Caitlin Morneau:** So, knowing that, that many times folks here are, are working on the inside with folks who are already incarcerated, but that your, your connections and relationships are, are vast. and I think, you know, we have an opportunity to really think about with restorative justice practices, again, community conferencing model, you know, when, when are there crimes that don't need to result in an incarceration, often with youth or low level offenses. When can a dialogue take place in order for, for all those involved to voice how they were impacted, what their needs are and come to an agreement on what, what can be done to make it right? and, and you know, break those cycles of violence and, and potentially, you know, as long as you know, frequently, as long as those, the terms of the agreement are upheld, then that young person doesn't need to serve time in prison, and no longer has it on their record.

**Caitlin Morneau:** so, and then the last thing I wanted to mention on this community building piece is, and, and frequently we hear this model kind of talked about in, in school settings. So, some of you may know that these practices are, are being applied in school discipline, and working to break down that school to prison pipeline. So when, you know, when harm and conflict happens, bringing in dialogue together, if, if there is a young person who is expelled or incarcerated that then when they come back to the community, and, and kind of doing that reentry work and saying, okay, how are we as a community taking care of one of the one another and what's, what are our expectations of you And also what do we need to do to help make sure you can stay here with us. and then another, another piece of that, there's three tiers in the school plan model is this community building.

**Caitlin Morneau:** So how can we be using circles in our classrooms and after school activities to build relationships with that harm is an, and crime are less likely to happen. that we can connect with them each other and really deep, deep ways to honor one another, human dignity. hopefully. And, and that in ways that restorative justice and practices can be preventative, in addition to creating a culture in which then when harm happens, having kind of a framework, a structure to deal with that that already feels familiar. so those are just a few other pieces. Food for thought, that I wanted to share with you. if, if there's something here in particular that stands out and you're looking to get connected or find more resources on it, you know, at the end, both John and my contact information will be there.

**Caitlin Morneau:** I would, I'd be happy to connect with you and see how we can get you plugged in. so I know, well we'll do more of that, you know, tools and resources and all of that. but if something perks your interest, I'm happy to, to help point you in that direction. so, with that, I see Father George coming back online. I'm about to, I was about to turn it back over to John to talk about how some of the outcomes that, they've, they've seen in this ministry. But, Father George. Yeah.

**Father George:** Well, no, by all means we will turn it back to John in a moment, but I just wanted to point out a comment we got on the chat side. Maybe you can see it on your screen, maybe not. But, Eddie Mendoza and Beaumont, Texas wrote that he took a bridges to Life to Mexico six or seven years ago first and one of the prisons in Monterrey and later two other prisons in Michoacana subtler DMX, Mexico and wa haka, a total of eight prisons with several hundred. The program he wrote, I can testify as a Bridges to Life volunteer. And I'm working those eight prisons. We saw the

changes in impact it had on those offenders in a positive way. I'm still working with Mexican prisons to have just alive grow as we have here in Texas. Thank you, John, for this amazing program. So yes, thank you John. And, if you would like to, take up where Caitlin Morneau left off, I will go ahead.

**John Sage:** Right. Well, and Caitlin Morneau said, and what Eddie just wrote in and speaks to the impact, it is hard to talk about the impact in a few minutes. I will say that, the two biggest surprises to me of this whole adventure or journey have been how large bridge to Elijah's gotten and the impact on the volunteers, both victim volunteers and facilitator volunteers. obviously, our main goal is to impact the offenders, but I, I saw that happen and believe that what happened is other two had been kind of surprises. We, just to show you the, the vastness of it, we will hit a large milestone in November. We'll celebrate our 50,000, graduate of registered life as ones that finished the program. We probably had 60 or 70,000 started. So, we're talking about a lot of inmates and a lot of prisons. We've had about 3000 volunteers since we started our volunteers this year will contribute 85,000 hours of service.

**John Sage:** But those figures speak to the impact in that. I don't think this many people would get this involved, give this much time. They didn't see results. It's a mutual, it's a mutual thing. our volunteers go in thinking they're going just to give, but they end up receiving and it's, it's the idea of the giver becomes the receiver and the impact, as I said earlier, it goes across a number of groups, vendors of families that still taters the victims in it, the officers, the community. And we've seen it affect people in many ways. And the family reconciliations are one of the biggest plays. I think the leaks that we, have the inmates fill out evaluations after every project. And the typical, typical impact is they realize what they've done to them, their victim and other victims in the family. They're a victim. And it starts to tap into that empathy factor.

**John Sage:** And I think that is where the heart of it is. The other, another major impact is forgiveness, primarily getting down to knowing that God can forgive them. And many of them already believe that knowing that their victim can forgive them, most importantly, forgiving themselves. I think when you get down to the root of it and peel all the layers away, they get pretty honest. They know they've done something, is wrong and that they seek to forgive themselves or they think they can really have hope. And they really, some of them are lost hope. They don't really believe in God's; they think that their actions have been such that don't merit grace. We bring that back to them and show them if they can't have hope. We've had many stories of inmates. We get letters from inmates, families, parents, mothers of brothers, sisters, spouses, a weekly basis, give you the flavor of those.

**John Sage:** It is mostly grateful that they were able to take this. I see a huge difference in this, and it really impacts them and their families. we've had people that hadn't had a visit from their family in five years, 10 years, 15 years in prison, and through the letters that we write and send to the family as part of our curriculum. And we can, we've had many of them get first-time visits and the family and many years. And those are the things that can lead to the healing. Those are the things can lead to hope. Those are things that could lead to when they get out thinking they can have an ordinary life. Most of them have lost hope. They can have an ordinary life and prisons are a dark place. They're difficult places to work in and are interested in other people work in our program around the country. It takes time and it takes work and I've done things maybe more complicated, but I've never done anything. It takes as much patience as a working presence and doing this program. If we have some time during the question answer, I may want to read a note from a family member, but, I guess we need to move on to our question time and see if we, what level of questions we have.

**Father George:** Sure. John, this is, Father Williams here. one question from Cheryl is, do you have a contact person for restorative justice in New Hampshire That would be probably, I think that's directed to you.

**John Sage:** no, we do not. I was on a conversation yesterday with some people in Connecticut. We don't have anything specific going in New Hampshire. We love to talk to you. Check our website short in a minute, but it's register life.org

**Caitlin Morneau:** and I, off the top of my head, I cannot think of a specific person in New Hampshire, but I do have a good contact in Maine. who, who have Cheryl, I can follow up with you? you know, one of the things that I think is interesting to note is that, this as Jordan or I'm sorry, as John mentioned earlier, this is really, you know, it's a, it's a philosophy and a set of practices and it's a growing social movement too. And that movement is taking shapes in different parts of the country in different ways. So, we definitely see, ways that, that certain, some States are really active and have a lot going on and other States not as much or maybe not as much that we're aware of yet. But that's, you know, that's part of the, part of this work too is, is being able to connect with, with, you know, someone in New Hampshire.

**Caitlin Morneau:** So, if, if, this, this dialogue, helps to create a relationship with Catholic mobilizing network, they, we are happily to do that. and, and just to point out that a few of the States and places that are doing a lot of this in addition to Texas, ones that come to mind, particularly where the Catholic community is, is especially evolved, involved in art, California and Chicago or California or I'm sorry, Chicago, Illinois, and others as well. It's certainly not limited to that. but, but just to know that, that it, it may look, it may look different in different places or kind of are maybe be called different things. so, yes, maybe that was, maybe that was more of an answer that you were looking for. but Cheryl, let's, let's stay in touch.

**Father George:** Okay. And for both of you, a deacon Larry has this question and I would just preface this with I, working on death row in California, I've long felt that the, life in prison is actually even more cruel than the death penalty. But deacon Larry asks, how does Pope Francis, his recent comments that there should never be life in prison it into this whole picture

**John Sage:** well, I actually sentencing the death penalty, really not part of what bridges to life does. We don't really take a position on the death penalty. It is always the, the heart of the work that Caitlin Morneau does, but we are, we are into the healing of the ones that we can touch. we cannot meet with inmates on death row because they can't come out and get in the sparkle. Some of them read our books. So, I would say it's a bridge to life. It's not really the primary issue.

**Father George:** Okay. Caitlin Morneau, what do you think?

**Caitlin Morneau:** Okay, sure. So, thank you for highlighting that because I think so many folks are, are really aware of the church's public stance against the death penalty. And, and Pope Francis in particular, another church student as well has, I really love the way that he phrases it, that, and I, I know I'm not, not quoting perfectly here, but that, any, any response to harm and crime should not be without the possibility of, of redemption of reintegration. and so, CMS certainly focuses are, are policy work, and advocacy on ending the death penalty. and, and I think that, yeah, I, I just think that we can continue to, what I think restorative justice invites us to recognize is that no, no person

is, is beyond the possibility of transformation. and how do we, how we create a legal system that honors that possibility for, for change and redemption and, and the hope of reunited with one's family and community.

**Father George:** Thanks Katelyn. this question I think is probably more for John and this is Mary Iverson. S have you used this Have you used the bridges to life program in youth detention centers

**John Sage:** Yes, we have a juvenile curriculum and we have been in about five youth detention centers. We're currently one in Houston were going in for 10 years, Houston area. And it's, it works well. It's quite different because of the age. and we had to do a lot of adaptations to the curriculum, but we are using these principles, and we even have a graphic novel that speaks to these different moral principles that we work with. So, the answer's yes, we're doing that, and we're open to working in more youthful. I had a lot of inmates tell me if they'd had this program when they were young, they wouldn't be in prison. And a question back to them would you really have listened. And we find, we find that the juveniles listen, but they don't listen errors that are broken and you know, a person gets broken and goes through some things. The older they are, they're more willing to listen. But I still think we do good with the juveniles.

**Father George:** Yeah. I have the same question all the time at San Quentin about, you know, God guys want to go back and work with youth and yet I say the same thing as like, well when you were 17, were you listening to anybody but it's great that you're doing that. Can you say a little more about, what's the difference between the juvenile curriculum and your adult curriculum?

**John Sage:** What would you say to tone it down quite a bit in, presented in a more simplified way. one big thing is just the handling the group. And we met in groups. As I said, we're up to now 10 and a group of inmates. We went to the juvenile, we tried six, I was too many. We tried five, that was too many. We meet one stilted with four and it's, it didn't want to get down to mentoring cause we wanted to help more. But in order to deliver the message, we work with fewer. the curriculum has the same topic, but it's, it's delivered a different way from their homework is more graphic and more visual. and we have to work with them on telling their stories are not as vocal as others, maybe just getting him to pay, pay attention. So, it's, I didn't know there was that much differences until we, I participate in the first one. It was a test. It's really much harder to work with the Jew house.

**Father George:** What about, do you divide with when men and women prisoners or is there a difference in the way you run this, the circles

**John Sage:** No. Well, we, obviously we work in men's president women's prisons. We have the same format, same curriculum, the same model, with the women. it's a little different in, most of them are highly victimized and we stressed, them getting out of their victim role. They're so victimized, they're angry, and they have to get out of being a victim to be a survivor, you know, recover. And so, we accentuate that a little more and they tend to tell their victim story more, which we encourage. But the materials, the same in the format's the same with a lot of females more than the average percentage of the population.

**Father George:** Well, if there is any more questions out there from our participants online, here is your chance to, a last chance to get those questions into us. in the meantime, though, Caitlin, was there anything you wanted to say about upcoming events

**Caitlin Morneau:** Sure, glad to. so, in addition, I'll mention, some of our resources a little later, but we do have some exciting things happening at Catholic mobilizing network. on October 10th, which is world day against the death penalty. We will be, celebrating our 10-year anniversary, hosted at the, the episodes nude suture here in D C. if you're in the city or across the country, we hope that you'll join us. it's going to be a beautiful celebration honoring our founders, sister Helen Karen Clifton and Archbishop Fiorenza. we also, wanted to put in a plug for next month's webinar when, our executive director of Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy along with our good friend and colleague Doris Anella, will be presenting next months, CPMC webinar on, on the death penalty specifically, particularly in light of the, the restart a federal executions. and that will be, if I have it right here, Father George, on October 22nd at 1:00 PM Eastern, the other, well I can, do we have any other questions that have come in recently I can put him in one more plug.

**Father George:** Yes, sir. A few more. let's see. Oh, let's see.

**John Sage:** Okay.

**Father George:** This, these questions apply for John. and this he wants to know, do the adapted juvenile pro is the adapted juvenile program on your website, John

**John Sage:** No, it is not on the website, but we send our contact and we can head over to that, that material.

**Father George:** Okay. So, what would the, would the contact information be on their website

**John Sage:** Right. Yes. Okay. You don't have the books on there It's on the order page. We do. I'm sorry. Do you have those, a juvenile book is on there and be ordered like our adult books.

**Father George:** Yes. Cause several people are asking about that. So I think there's a lot of interest in having access to that website.

**John Sage:** You can order the book we used both adult or juvenile and the study guides.

**Father George:** Great. okay. This is to all panelists. in Florida, the society of St. Paul, St. Vincent DePaul uses a reentry program called getting ahead while getting out. Recently the Florida department of corrections has approved it as part of the core curriculum for all state prisons. It isn't mandatory, but if approved, if the warden wants it, what States is bridges to life approved in

**John Sage:** Well, we, actually have that same approval in Florida and we are in it. We've been through three prisons there. we are currently working in, FARA, North Carolina, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Colorado, quite a bit in California, quite a bit in the state of Washington. of course, quite a bit in Texas. We have worked in the past and through three other States, Louisiana, Tennessee, Utah, and we're open to working toward that. We did have approval in the state of Ohio, but we did not get started there, that we'd be open if anybody's there and through the and through the ropes, so to speak, to get approval. These approvals have taken anywhere from, a month to do eight years. And, that's, that's a, that's a whole other story. But we are on the, I do want to mention we've created a new position that's going to start January 1st we'll outreach manager. We're going to be doing more work to reach out outside the state of Texas and most of our future growth will be

outside of the state of Texas. We're willing to share material, willing to train people and work with you. And obviously that's a great question you asked because first step is getting the state or the prison to approve us going in.

**Father George:** I guess that would be my follow up question is, could you elaborate what the first step, if somebody who's watching this and would like to introduce this to their jail or prison, what would you recommend they do to, as their very first step

**John Sage:** First went to, to go to our website and order our book, our study guide that we used in the prison order that, look at that and then contact us. We'll have some dialogue I think ain't seen the material and see what we do. If there's a serious interest. the only thing I would say is it's a lot of work and you really, it helps if you have access to a prison or doing prison work. He takes, access to the prison and volunteers to, minister our program. The first day will be to order the material and went not in the book business. And we're not, you know, we're not trying to promote the books, sell it. We just, you order it, buy, do you buy the books for \$15 \$10 for the book, \$5 for the study guide. definitely that gets the first step to thing. If you have an interest.

**Father George:** This next question is from me in this business because I get asked this all the time and so I want to share with you as my colleagues when you get asked, what about the victims How do you respond to that

**John Sage:** What about the victims and our work, we work closely with victims and it's a healing process for the victims and victims are sometimes disregarded and I think the victims, as I said, are the really first leg in that three legged stool. The victim has to participate part of this process for it to be true restorative justice. I've gone through the victim process, myself and I have go a lot of empathy for people who go through it and we must pay attention to them, listen to them and give them more voice in the system because the system doesn't give them voice. It's really the state of Texas versus the murderer rather than individuals. So, they kind of removed the victim from the process. I think there needs to be more ministries or grief groups to help victims overcome the trauma of being victimized.

**Father George:** Yes. I can't emphasize that enough. And how about you Caitlin Morneau How do you answer that question

**Caitlin Morneau:** Yeah, I mean, I would echo all of that. And, and I would add that I think for, for any of us who are doing this work in ways that maybe, you know, I'm thinking about, some of the models I mentioned earlier that maybe don't have, you know, the, the specific victim of the same crime involved in a process that that's a question that we should be asking ourselves every day and in different times in different ways because I think that's how we keep ourselves, like how are excels accountable to what it means to, for these to be victim centered processes. and then the, the other thing that I'll, I think I'll mention piggy backing off of all of this, does that again, an adversarial system that wants to make us believe that there are, there are victims in one corner and there are offenders in the other and that they're separate from one another.

**Caitlin Morneau:** And yet we know that so many times and we know this in our, in our personal lives. I mean I shouldn't have criminal justice that so many times when, when harm is caused to others that it is born out of suffering and pain. And, and we know more and more now about, adverse childhood experiences and how experiences of abuse and trauma as young people, create

conditions for violent behavior later. unconscientious that is not to say that people who have experienced trauma are prone to violent acts. It is to acknowledge that those who commit harm have so frequently been harmed themselves. And so how do we, how do we think of the concept of victimization broadly, to do include and, and specifically, point to those who were directly impacted as well as those who have been indirectly impacted by a particular crime, to include families, loved ones and communities. so again, this is kind of a nod to how, how, how can we continue to ask ourselves those questions to remain victim centered in, in any kind of adaptation of these practices that we seek to employ an integrate.

**John Sage:** Know I had to that briefly. You know, we encourage our offenders to talk about their victimizations, as you said, most of them have been victimized strictly in the females and we never let that victimization or difficulties in their life be an excuse for committing a crime. However, we blend that in and show them how that did affect them and how that did move them a certain way. A little understand their background or my favorite quotes is St. Augustine said, the more you understand, the more you forgive, the more they understand themselves and whether they can forgive themselves and move through that and say, look back at it as something that happened and how do I move past that instead of letting it affect the rest of their life. I say often, if I'd had the lives of most of our inmates, I'd probably be taking bridges to life instead of administrative difficult lives, but we never let that excuse committing a crime.

**Father George:** Okay. one more question. We have, we have time for, and then we'll have a few more minutes to talk about resources. But, quickly, Cheryl asks, are you aware of restorative justice programs in the court systems prior to incarceration

**Caitlin Morneau:** Yeah, so that is, this is, that is done elephant, an element of diversion or sometimes called alternative sentencing that I referenced earlier. So, and, and actually there's, hopefully I'll say enough you can fund it, by me describing it. But there's a really great NPR story recently on some work that's happening here in D C and the prosecutor's office, where it was aware basically the, they're identifying cases saying these don't need a, or these, these cases can benefit from, from an alternative process. And, and how can we kind of, move, move cases and people into that track. instead of a, an incarceration, geared track. and so, there are increasingly counties,

**Caitlin Morneau:** Yeah, largely the County level of taking up those models. another one that's mentioned in the harm healing and human dignity book is, the community conferencing center in Baltimore, was, has really been a leading model, in, in integrating that community conferencing. so there, there are numbers throughout the country and Charlotte sounds like maybe we'll follow up and we can talk more about kind of who you're looking to connect with, and I can see how

**John Sage:** We actually walked in three County diversionary our programs in that arena if they are there long enough.

**Father George:** Okay, great. Thank you. I just want to break in here with one more commercial announcement that I'm going to turn over to Kaitlin to discuss in the last few minutes, resources. But I want to point out one new resource that we have on our brand-new Catholic prison ministries coalition website. If you go to the second, I item on our menu on, resources and sharing ministry. You as you scroll down to where it says jail and prison ministry, one Oh one. this is a six-hour long training that was, offered by me and Father Dustin fed in back in, at the, meeting in Mundo lane. when the national association of Catholic chaplains and what it is. It's basically a very basic

introduction to prison ministry and jail ministry for people who are just interested in beginning, or who are just, early into the process of volunteering in prisons. And there's a lot material in there, but it's very good I think preparation for people who are either starting the work or thinking about doing it. So, please check out our website for that jail and prison ministry one Oh one. And so, Katelyn, I'm going to turn it over to you to give us our final word on resources

**Caitlin Morneau:** And I know John has some, some to share as well. here yam is just wanted to, you know, share with you about the faith formation guide, in, in addition to the hard copy booklet itself, it's available on eBook, all from liturgical press, that there's an online reader guide where there are our videos. And other kinds of interactive media ways to engage with, with the content. and just to mention that there are, if, if this is something that you'd like to share with others, there are, discounts available for, for orders of 10 or more as well as if you're in a diocesan director. If you contact liturgical press, they have, they have additional discounts for dialysis and directors ordering multiple copies. and I mentioned earlier, the, our blog, which is, our hope over death blog that really seeks to share out stories of what are creative ways that folks are, are to end the death penalty as well as implementing restorative practices in ministry.

**Caitlin Morneau:** And so, you will see more examples of ways that folks are doing that there. and I also mentioned that, this the circle process that's a core, core practice that, sometimes it's, you know, we can hear it described, but then when we have the opportunity to experience it, it's, it's kind of easy to articulate, to share with others and to recognize it's, you know, the opportunities. And so, next month, Catholic mobilizing network is hosting a, a circle intensive in Tallahassee, Florida. If you're in the area, we'd love for you to join us. it's not a training but it's an opportunity to say I'm curious about this. I'd like to explore it in a little more depth with other Catholics and think about how I can bring it to my ministry. We're also hosting a, a four-day circle keeper training in Chicago with precious blood ministry of NEC of reconciliation. Another really dynamic Catholic community-based ministry, transforming criminal justice in the Chicago area. father David Kelly and sister Janet Ryan are going to be, are, are just top-notch trainers for that. so that's October 16th through 19th. All of this is on our website, which has [blow@catholicismobilizing.org](mailto:blow@catholicismobilizing.org). and of course, feel free to contact me with questions, opportunities, ideas. I'd love to hear from you my emails on the last slide. So, I'm just really grateful

**John Sage:** That she was going to show some, resources. The shows are book restoring pieces. The, we use our curriculum and our life study guide. Those are what allow us to be the first step to order online. We also have discounts. If you get into ordering 10 or more, we, you can study those. The other thing, and then first step is look at our website. Got a lot of videos, a lot of information on there. There's another item here you see on the screen, there's a bomb in hospital. This is a recently published book this year, 2019 written by a Lutheran pastor about some great restorative justice book. It's about one tinker inmates' journey by his crime, by going to prison for 17 years and about taking bridges to life and also entering a mediation with the parents of the young people that he killed in a drunk driving accident. I would highly recommend that if you want to get a good feel for or a restorative justice and the application of forgiveness and Christian principles. So those are the things that I wanted to show in our websites. At the bottom, that'd be [wbridges.life.org](http://wbridges.life.org). There's contact information. And if you have a serious interest, we'd really like to work with you. And, it's been a great pleasure to be on this webinar with Kaitlin. Everybody else. Caitlin Morneau, you got any closing words I think we are out of time.

**Caitlin Morneau:** Oh, I think that about it for me too. Just wanted to extend another thank you to Catholic prison ministries coalition and Caith for hosting us, John for joining in this dialogue and all of you for your interest and commitment to transforming criminal justice, and, and being agents of healing and restoration in your communities. We need you. so, I think, yeah, I think that's all on my end. All right, well, thank you so much to all of you. We hope you have a great rest of your day and that we'll see you on next month's webinar as well. Thank you again.

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### References Shared During This Webinar

1. **Catholic Mobilizing Network:** <https://catholicmobilizing.org/>  
**Mission Statement:** Catholic Mobilizing Network is a national organization that mobilizes Catholics and all people of goodwill to value life over death, to end the use of the death penalty, to transform the U.S. criminal justice system from punitive to restorative, and to build capacity in U.S. society to engage in restorative practices. Through education, advocacy, and prayer, and based on the Gospel value that every human is created in the image and likeness of God, CMN expresses the fundamental belief that all those who have caused or been impacted by crime should be treated with dignity.  
CMN works in close collaboration with the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and is a founding member of the Congregation of St. Joseph Mission Network.
2. **Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity:** Adapted by Caitlin Morneau, this is a faith formation resource to help small groups in parishes and schools, as well as individual believers, reflect on the Catholic call to restorative justice. Through Scripture, Catholic teaching, eye-opening statistics, and personal stories, each chapter prompts prayerful consideration of the place of human dignity and the common good as we respond to crime, incarceration, and the death penalty in the United States. Prepared in cooperation with the highly regarded Catholic Mobilizing Network for the Abolition of the Death Penalty, *Harm, Healing, and Human Dignity* will help Catholics consider what it means to choose hope over death and redemption over vengeance. It's a choice that can foster healing, transform relationships, and build the culture of life to which our Catholic faith calls us.  
<https://catholicmobilizing.org/harm-healing-and-human-dignity-catholic-encounter-restorative-justice>
3. **Bridges to Life:** *"The mission of Bridges To Life is to connect communities to prisons to reduce the recidivism rate (particularly that of violent crimes), reduce the number of crime victims, and enhance public safety.*  
  
*The spiritual mission of Bridges To Life is to minister to victims and offenders in an effort to show them the transforming power of God's love and forgiveness."*  
  
**For more on the Bridges To Life story, read the [History of BTL](#).**
4. **Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration, A Catholic Perspective on Crime and Criminal Justice: A Statement of the Catholic Bishops of the United States** Issued by USCCB, November 15, 2000. Copyright © 2000, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Inc. All rights reserved.  
<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/criminal-justice-restorative-justice/crime-and-criminal-justice.cfm>

5. **Restorative Justice:** See <https://catholicmobilizing.org/restorative-justice>
6. **Redemption and Restoration: A Catholic Perspective on Restorative Justice**, by David Matzko McCarthy, Trudy D. Conway, and Vicki Schieber, Editors  
<https://catholicmobilizing.org/resource/redemption-and-restoration>