



October 2015

Dear Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

Each October, we are reminded by the many domestic violence awareness activities in all of our communities, that intimate violence is still very much a reality of our times. Perhaps you are involved yourself in Take Back the Night, a candle light vigil, the Clothesline Project, the Silent Witness Initiative, Empty Place at the Table, or other national or local programs.

Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), one of the 10 networks of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA), urges Presbyterians to be agents of healing by collaborating with our community allies in ending the violence. The church, bringing a faith perspective to this collaboration, has a unique voice in this effort.

People from every walk of life; including race, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, age, economic class, religious affiliation, levels of ability, education, and citizenship are represented in the statistics related to intimate violence. Individuals in our congregations are victims, survivors, perpetrators, and by-standers. We need to do our part in saying clearly that abuse is contrary to God's will and that it tears at the very fabric of human dignity and the covenant we have with God to care for one another, especially those who are most vulnerable.

This year, PADVN leadership has chosen to look at domestic violence awareness and resources through the lens of the day between Good Friday and Easter... Holy Saturday or Silent Saturday. It was the day that Jesus laid dead in the tomb. It was the day when hope was shattered. It was the day of deep mourning.

Yes, we are Easter People, but we need to acknowledge that many people live in Silent Saturday, a time of fear and dread. They find it difficult to live with the shouts of Alleluias when their lives are lived out in a very different reality.

Among our resources, we are including Pamela Patrick Cole's sermon, "Saturday People," which was published in the 1999 Journal for Preachers (Volume XXII, Number 2, Lent). She writes, "When people in our midst - maybe even we ourselves - are in Saturday, we want to shut them up. When someone is in Saturday, it is a heart-wrenching place to be. Saturday is a place when you are not so sure of the outcome. Saturday is when you are terrified of what is to come..."

Two seminary professors, each who have written about Saturday Time, have different ideas on who resides there. Dr. Shelly Rambo in her book, *Spirit and Trauma; A Theology of Remaining*, writes about persons suffering from trauma. Dr. Miguel De La Torre teaches and writes extensively that Saturday is the place where people on the margins live in hopelessness. Both of these authors expand the theme we have chosen.

Oct 11, the 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time, is designated on the Presbyterian Planning Calendar as the Sunday emphasis for Domestic Violence Awareness. The month of October is a good time to make your voice heard because it will dovetail with the activities in our communities, but this is not the only time to preach, teach, and pray about domestic violence...any Sunday is appropriate. By breaking the silence, we send the message that victims/survivors are not alone; that our congregations are safe places to come for help.

The resources that follow are presented as prompts to help you and your congregation think through how to be a place where truth is spoken and silence is broken.

The Rev. Nancy K. Troy
for the leadership of Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN)

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month As a pastor, would you be prepared if...

Summer is a busy time at [Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church](#). We always have a summer intern from Princeton Theological Seminary and a large part of that student's internship involves leading Vacation Bible School (VBS). It was the first day of VBS and it was a sunny, hot day. The church was buzzing- with staff persons, parents, grandparents, and children of all ages- registering children and getting everything set.

Suddenly a woman appeared, sweating, out of breath, and extremely upset, looking to talk to the pastor. She was hysterical. I took her into my office, closed the door, and her story began to pour out in the midst of her hysteria. She has been living in an abusive relationship for the past fifteen years and surviving day by day.

She said that today, at breakfast, her husband told her that he was going to kill her. He kept guns in the house and she knew this was a very real possibility. It was not the first time that he had threatened this. But somehow, she knew that, today, he really meant it and that she needed help.

She said that she had heard about the pastor that "works with domestic violence" and she decided to come to the church to find her. Because of an underlying medical condition requiring her to take medication, she does not drive. And so she left her home, when her husband left for work, and began the six mile walk to find the church where she believed she would find help.

As she was walking along the way on a busy highway, her husband found her, pulled up in his work truck and tried to get her into the truck. He had a gun with him and threatened her again. She ran into the bushes to hide. When she felt it was safe she returned to walking, only to be stopped by her husband again. She managed to get away a second time.

She flagged down a woman who brought her the remaining half mile to the church.

After four bottles of water and the snack of the day for VBS, she had finally calmed down enough to listen. After agreeing that she could trust me, we called the local domestic violence agency and together we talked about her options.

Her husband knew where the agency was and she was terrified to go there. An advocate came to the church. We arranged for her to go to the local shelter and to, hopefully, be transferred to another shelter in another county when a bed opened up. She agreed to press charges and soon we had the local sheriff's department and the state police in my office, because her husband was armed.

She was finally taken to the shelter about the time that Vacation Bible School was ending. The children noticed the police cars, the staff knew that something was happening.

What is the point of this story? We all have people in our congregations and in our community who live in, experience, or witness domestic violence. At any time they may come to your church looking for help. Are you prepared to help them? Would you know what to do?

[Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence \(PADVN\)](#), a network of the [Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association \(PHEWA\)](#) offers resources for pastors, congregations, and worshiping communities to equip you to effectively handle situations like these.



The Rev. Bonnie Orth, serves as Pastor of the Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church in Mayfield, NY and as Pastoral Care Coordinator of Nathan Littauer Hospital and Nursing Home in Gloversville, New York. She is a founding member of Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network and serves as PADVN Representative to the PHEWA Board of Directors. Bonnie also serves on the Board of Directors of CEDEPCA (Centro Evangelico de Estudios Pastorales en Centro America), an international nonprofit organization located in Guatemala City, Guatemala, that offers educational programs that allow people to improve their lives and change their communities. The Rev. Orth has training in clergy misconduct, ethics, elder abuse, domestic violence and sexual assault and violence. Her annual domestic violence prevention and awareness trainings in the local junior high schools, high schools, hospitals, police force, and ambulance services established Bonnie's reputation in the area for her expertise and enabled this woman to seek her out for knowledgeable assistance in a life and death situation.

An Empty Place at the Table

Following the domestic violence murders of two women and one child in northeast Pennsylvania in 1993, the community responded by holding a rally and march outside the county courthouse. To keep the momentum for social change alive, rally organizers and the Women's Resource Center, Inc., a member of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV), created ["An Empty Place at the Table."](#) The exhibit, "An Empty Place at the Table," was designed to honor those from Lackawanna and Susquehanna counties, in Pennsylvania, whose lives were tragically cut short due to domestic violence and to increase public understanding of the impact of domestic and sexual violence on families and the community. Since its creation, "Empty Place at the Table" has been used by other communities to educate people about domestic violence and to acknowledge loss in their communities.

The memorial exhibit consists of a dining table surrounded by empty chairs, a powerful reminder that the tragic deaths left an empty place not only in the lives of their families, but in the community as well. The table is set with tableware donated by the families and there is always one empty place to acknowledge the unnamed but never forgotten. The donated items can either belong to the victims or can be selected to reflect and celebrate their personalities, passions, and dreams. Some exhibits add a white tablecloth that can be covered with small text, hand-written in silver or gold, so that from a distance it just looks like a brocade tablecloth, but the text becomes visible when visitors approach the table. The text tells the personal stories of local women who have experienced domestic violence. Survivors can write their own stories directly on the tablecloth and volunteers can transfer other stories from text provided by survivors or friends and relatives of victims. Some displays also add collages celebrating the lives of the local victims incorporating photographs, letters and memorabilia provided by family members and friends of each victim.

The exhibit powerfully demonstrates the devastating results of violence against women and children and helps to ensure that these victims are not forgotten. In a most poignant and visual manner, the exhibit reveals how domestic violence undeniably leaves an empty place at the table.

If you want to start an exhibit, consider involving others in your community. The first people to get involved are family and friends of loved ones killed as a result of domestic violence. Ask them if they would contribute items for the table settings. For example, one table setting of the victims' dishes, a personal item such as a pair of eyeglasses or a book or a piece of jewelry. Contact your domestic violence shelters/program staff and invite them to collaborate, including providing hand-out materials for visitors. Contact and invite emergency medical personnel and police officers, who put their lives on the line responding to domestic disputes along with medical personnel, who treat domestic violence victims in emergency rooms every day. This display speaks to everyone, including businesses and corporations, whose absenteeism and health care costs have increased because of violence in the homes of employees.

To learn more about “An Empty Place at the Table,” contact Nancy Perri at the Women’s Resource Center of Scranton, PA at (570) 346-4460. A companion piece to the exhibit, the documentary film, *An Empty Place at the Table*, is available for public showing upon request to the Women’s Resource Center for a negotiable cost. The film has been shown for police recruitment training, college courses, community club meeting, state-wide association meetings, at conferences, local clergy/faith leaders meeting, as a display for fundraising events and more. WRC has a Handbook available to assist in the replication of the exhibit and a ‘Guide for Thought and Action’ that accompanies the documentary film in order to assist sponsors in their local production utilizing the film.

To order a Community Organizing package or a Community Education package of An Empty Place at the Table contact the **Women’s Resource Center (WRC), Table Project Manager**, for an order form at:

wrcgeneral@wrcnepa.org, fax (570) 346-3413, telephone (570) 346-4460.



The Silent Witness National Initiative **Remember My Story ~ ~ Remember My Name**

In 1990, [The Silent Witness National Initiative](#) began promoting and educating in support of ending domestic violence through community based exhibits. The Initiative started with a small group of volunteers in one state and grew into an international presence, with projects in all 50 states and 23 countries.

Silent Witness provides hope, help and healing for the victims and violators of domestic violence. Thousands die each year in acts of domestic violence in the United States. Each one has a story.

What Is A Silent Witness Exhibit?

An Exhibit is a visual representation consisting of life-sized, red laminated silhouettes of the women, men, and children murdered in acts of domestic violence. For the past twenty years, the Exhibits have been a powerful way to honor those whose lives were lost in acts of domestic violence and to begin the healing process through awareness, education, and treatment programs in hundreds of communities across America and several other countries, worldwide.

Where Can I Learn More About The Silent Witness National Initiative?

Information about the program, how to create a silhouette and stand, how communities have used the Silent Witnesses to help in their awareness and education campaigns can be found on the web: <http://www.silentwitness.net/> or by contacting:

The Silent Witness National Initiative

45 Madison Avenue

Wickford, RI 02852

Email: silentwitness2020@gmail.com

Phone: (401) 714-2388





The Clothesline Project **Bearing Witness to Violence Against Women for 25 Years**

[The Clothesline Project \(CLP\)](#), created in 1990 by a group of women from Cape Cod, Massachusetts, is a visual display of shirts with graphic messages and illustrations that have been designed by women survivors of violence or by someone who loves a woman who has been killed. The purpose of CLP is to increase awareness of the impact of violence against women, to celebrate a woman's strength to survive, and to provide another avenue for her to courageously break the silence that often surrounds her experience.

The popularity of The Clothesline Project has spread and there are displays in over 500 locations throughout the United States as well as in several other countries. The Clothesline Project is an important way to give every woman a voice and a place to be heard. Many of the survivors who have participated in CLP feel that making a shirt has been an integral part of their healing and recovery process.

You may start your own Clothesline Project. Start by contacting the National Network of the Clothesline Project to register your project. In order to maintain consistency of purpose and program among the various "Clotheslines" around the country, there are some boundaries to maintain. They are:

1. Violence against women must be the foundation and focus of all "Clothesline Projects." All publications (brochures etc.) must be clearly state this as our main purpose.
2. Only shirts are to be submitted, please (no pants, underwear, etc.). Originally, there was a color code that gave a visual "statistic" regarding the types of violence to which women were exposed. That color code was established as follows:

- White is for women who died as a result of violent acts.
- Yellow or Beige is for women who have been battered or assaulted.
- Red, pink, and orange represent survivors of rape and sexual assault.
- Blue or green is for survivors of incest and sexual abuse.
- Purple or lavender represents women attacked due to their sexual orientation.
- Black is for women assaulted for political reasons.

3. There can be no charge or fee required by any "Clothesline Project" for making a shirt and hanging it on the line. Groups may undertake whatever alternate, adjacent, or additional programs they wish, as long as it is clearly presented as not being a component of "The Clothesline Project."

CLP often brings up a lot of feelings for those who create the shirts, those working with it, and those in the community at large. You may wish to build some type of support for yourselves and those viewing the display. Creating a safe space that works for you and your group is absolutely essential. Because of the nature of this project, maintaining confidence is crucial. Starting your own project may not be a possibility. Check with the National Network of The Clothesline Project to see if a display exists near you that you can borrow. You may contact Carol, national contact for the Clothesline Project at:

The Clothesline Project
13 Plymouth Road
Yarmouth, MA 02675

ClotheslineProject@comcast.net



WHAT CAN YOUR CHURCH DO TO CREATE A DISPLAY AS WITNESS TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

If you are thinking about a powerful display for your church during October Domestic Violence Awareness month, or at any times throughout the year, consider using one or all of the resources provided by us, the Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), a grassroots volunteer network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA). PADVN leadership includes survivors/thrivers of domestic violence and those with experience, expertise, and training in the areas of domestic violence awareness and prevention. Some suggestions for your own witness include:

1. Have a workshop day at your church. Invite your local domestic violence program to present a workshop on domestic violence. This is an important relationship to establish. Consider adding a display of [An Empty Place at the Table](#), [The Silent Witness](#) or [The Clothesline Project](#).
2. Set up An Empty Place at the Table display. It can be as small as a card table with four place settings or as large as a table of twelve.
3. Contact The Silent Witness and bring in a display to set up in a room or in the sanctuary.
4. Contact your local domestic violence program to see if they have a Clothesline Project that you can borrow for display. If there is not a display and there is interest and energy, collaborate with your local domestic violence program to create one.
5. Consider a Silent Day of Remembering with empty chairs placed in a circle. Place stories, newspaper articles or a prayer on each chair allowing people to be in silent reflection about domestic violence in your community and around the world. Consider also sharing a meal in silence.
6. The [National Resource Center on Domestic Violence](#) shares here what others are doing this year, ideas to consider replicating for your own domestic violence awareness and prevention witness. PADVN is interested in learning about your events. Send us a note using the feature at the bottom of our web page or email us at: phewainfo@gmail.com.



*“It is not my enemies who taunt me - I could bear that; it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me - I could hide from them. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend, with whom I kept pleasant company; we walked in the house of God with the throng.”
(Psalm 55:12-14)*

What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of violent behaviors used to control an intimate partner. It may be physical, but it may also take on more subtle forms such as emotional, verbal, or financial intimidation and control.

It doesn't happen in my church, does it?

Sadly, domestic violence happens in all communities. People in our pews are not immune. Abuse crosses all social and cultural borders. Statistics reflect that 95% of domestic violence victims are women, although men may also be victims. But regardless of who is being victimized, domestic violence is a serious problem that needs to be addressed by religious communities. Surveys from the U.S. and Canada indicate that domestic violence occurs in 28% of all marriages.

padvn PRESBYTERIANS AGAINST
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NETWORK

A Network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)

<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn>

<http://www.phewacomunity.org/>

From the FaithTrust Institute: <http://www.faihttrustinstitute.org/>
What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?

Listen to the woman and believe her. Tell her that the abuse is not her fault and not God's will for her.

- Tell her she is not alone and that help is available.
- Let her know that without intervention abuse often escalates in frequency and severity over time.
- Seek expert assistance. Refer her only to specialized domestic violence counseling programs, not to couples counseling. Help her find a shelter, safe home, or advocacy resources to offer her protection. Suggesting that she merely return home places her and her children in real danger.
- Hold the abuser accountable. Don't minimize his abusive behavior. Support him in seeking specialized batterers' counseling to help change his behavior. Continue to hold him accountable and to support and protect the victim even after he has begun a counseling program.
- If restoration of the relationship is to occur, it can be considered only after the above steps have taken place.

More information:

National Domestic Violence Hotline

(800) 799-7233 (24 hours): TTY: (800) 787-3224

<http://www.thehotline.org/>

*“Have pity on me, O God, for I am in distress
with sorrow my eye is consumed;
my soul also, and my body.
I am like a dish that is broken...
But my trust is in you, O God;
I say, ‘You are my God.’”*

(Psalm 31:10-15)



PADVn is one of ten networks organized under the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA), a ministry of the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Come! Live in the Light! We Are Called

Glory to God; The Presbyterian Hymnal - 749
Sing the Faith - 2172

TEXT and MUSIC: David Haas, 1988
GIA Publications, Inc.

All Sing Verse 1 and Refrain

One: Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Most High has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. God has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of Our God's favor."

(Luke 4:18-19, The Inclusive New Testament)

All: May that be true for all who suffer from violence.

All Sing Verse 2 and Refrain

One: We call upon the church to be places of hope and healing. We give thanks for all who open their eyes, ears and hearts to the suffering around them; for reaching out to be the light of hope where darkness exits; for walking with survivors as they discover their path to wholeness.

All: May our fears be overcome by our faith in God's new beginnings.

All Sing Verse 3 and Refrain

One: We rejoice with survivors for their courage and strength in seeking new life. We remain with those still suffering until their mourning is turned to dancing, and all can sing a new song!

All: Amen and Amen.

For congregational reprint permission and a downloadable image file of the text and melody line of "We Are Called" please contact OneLicense.net: 1-800-663-1501, <http://www.onelicense.net>

For Colored Girls Who Know Enough Is Enough (suggested Sermon)
Words To Ponder: "Enough is enough and enough is too much."
Valerie Ray

**For Colored Girls Who Know Enough is Enough;
Psalm 139:14**

One: Oh Lord we praise you because we recognize that we are fearfully and wonderfully made,
and ...

All: Enough is enough.

One: Our bodies have always been under surveillance, yet not always protected, and ...

All: Enough is enough.

One: We must examine the structures that suggest that we invite rape through our dress,
decisions to travel alone, or inability to fight off our accuser because...

All: Enough is enough.

One: When one woman is hurting, we all hurt and...

All: Enough is enough.

One: When one woman is in danger, we all are in danger because...

All: Enough is enough.

One: We love ourselves radically enough to take a stand against domestic abuse of any kind
because...

All: Enough is enough and enough is too much!

Call to Confession Psalm 6:6

Lord, we are sick and tired of being sick and tired. Every night we cry ourselves to sleep. No
one understands, but you. So we come boldly to the throne of grace.

Prayer of Confession Job 22:29 & 23:2

Dear Lord we come boldly to the throne of grace

Like Job, we are bitter

We are angry

We seek to find mercy

For, we are weary

We are tired

Help us to understand

This is not our fault

We have done the best we can with what we have

We need you to forgive us missing the mark

We also need to forgive ourselves for missing the mark

While our hearts are hurting

Let us not grow cold to you

We lift up our teary faces towards heaven

Because we know you save the humble

In the name of Jesus, the Christ. Amen

Assurance of Pardon Hebrews 4:14-15

Jesus is our high priest, the one who has passed through the heavens and has heard our plea. He sympathizes with our weakness. Know that His work of atonement some 2,000 years ago is sufficient for us today.

Prayer of the Day ~ Mark 10:27, 29-30

Gracious God, our Holy Parent
We cannot help but to wonder
How long shall hell on earth continue?
If it's not one thing, it is another.
We have given up much to follow you.
We want to believe there is still a reward for us.
Help our unbelief.
Our human ability is limited,
But with God all things are possible. Amen.

Prayer of Illumination ~ Hebrews 4:12

Parent God, in the name of Jesus
We know that your Word is quick, and powerful
It is sharper than any two-edged sword.
It judges the intent of the hearts
So we need not to speak judgment, but
Let us speak the Word over our lives
Because the Word is the source of our power
In the midst of our pain, Thy Word is true.
In the middle of our dilemmas, Thy Word is a lamp for our feet
With tears in our eyes, Thy Word is a light for our path. Amen

Prayer of Intercession ~ Hebrews 4:14

Jesus, Our High Priest
We pray for our sisters of color
We pray for our white sisters
We pray for our sisters in the hood
We pray for our sisters in the suburbs
We pray for our sisters riding busses
We pray for our sisters with beautiful cars
We pray for our sisters who work hard every day to make ends meet
We pray for our sisters who are homemakers
We pray for our sisters who bear pain in silence
We pray for our sisters who are protected from pain
We pray for our sisters who endure violence
We pray for our sisters who enjoy peace
We pray for our sisters who live in luxury
We pray for our sisters who stand on their feet all day long

We pray for our sisters who feel trapped
We pray for our sisters who feel free
We pray for our sisters who look like us
We pray for our sisters who look different than us
We pray for our sisters who live overseas
We pray for our sisters who live next door
We pray for our sisters who are oppressed
We pray for our sisters who are depressed
We pray for our sisters who are happy
We pray for our sisters who are sad
We pray for our sisters who we have remembered
We pray for our sisters who we have forgotten.
Let the words of our hearts and the meditation of our mouths be acceptable in Thy sight, Oh
Lord our Rock and our Redeemer, Amen.

Invitation to the Offering ~ Luke 6:38

Give and it will come back to you! Good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over!

Prayer of Thanksgiving/Dedication ~ 1 Chronicles 29:14

**But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering?
For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you.**

Charge

For the colored girls who have decided that enough is enough and enough is too much: Know that God hears you. God has not forsaken you. It may be a dark time in your life, but we are here together and God is with us. This week speak God's powerful Word over your life. God will deliver! Go in Peace my beautiful sisters.

Sermon Suggestion

This sermon title is borrowed in part from the book and play [by Ntozake Shange](#) *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow is Enuf*. She is a Black Feminist and a prolific writer. This message does not have to be a "feminist" message. However, the pastor might want to consider the plight of colored women in general, and then segue into the domestic violence. Inner city colored women face a myriad of issues when trying to escape the snare of domestic violence. These women often have limited access to already scarce resources. Women in these instances can feel trapped. It is imperative that the preacher be sensitive to using God as a tool of strength without unrealistically making God into a supernatural band-aid. There is a redemptive work that must be carried out here on earth. It is up to us, as pastors, to build a safe environment for the women. We must not preach judgment or judge. That is God's job. The task to preaching to abused women is hard because our microphone will not bring in ripped-out hair, clear up blotched bruises, or give the women enough money to make it on their own. Our words are a gentle reminder that God cares and Jesus is sensitive to our afflictions...

That is why after the benediction, we must be available to pray with our feet. That is why we must be able to help the women with food, clothes, or resources. It is our job to bear the infirmities of the weak. Be encouraged.

Humbly Submitted by Sheena Marie Cameron, Master of Divinity student at Princeton Theological Seminary and Chaplain at Trenton Psychiatric Hospital.

WORSHIP AIDS FOR DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

CALLS TO WORSHIP

Come to Christ, the living bread, who satisfies those who hunger and thirst for what is right.
Come to Christ, who gives living water, that you may never thirst again.

Come to Christ, that being filled, yourself, you may minister to the hunger and thirst of others.
Come to God, in worship and praise, through Jesus Christ, who gives us life.

We gather today to worship a living God, a God who hears our cries, shares our tears, knows our anger, and is steadfast now and always.

We gather today to be in each other's presence as we remember, confess, name, and respond to the violence in our lives, in our families, our churches, and in our communities.

Let us walk this way together.

Leader's Guide: World Community Day for November 1, 1996
(New York: Church Women United, 1996)

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Dear Friends, God knows and understands the heart of each one of us. In that understanding, God reaches out lovingly to call us to repent of all our wrongdoing and to seek new ways of living with one another. When we confess our sins as a community, we do not usually separate anyone from the whole body, but make our confession as one unit. Today, however, we want to be especially sensitive to the fact that the body of Christ is divided, for some are abused, some are abusers, and some condone the abuse by looking away. As the community of faith, let us join with God and with one another in making our confession before God.

"Striking Terror No More, The Church Responds to Domestic Violence," Beth Basham and Sara Lisherness, editors, Bridge Resources, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We confess that we have too often offered the perpetrator/abuser cheap grace. Too quickly we have accepted the abuser's apology and advised the victim to "forgive and forget," "put it all behind you." In doing so we have stood in the way of genuine remorse that might lead the perpetrator to seek help and wholeness.

We acknowledge that we have misused the Holy Scriptures. We have emphasized the role of women to be subject to their husbands, children to obey parents. We have distorted the teaching of the gospel that Christians are called to share in the cross of Christ in ways that legitimate the destruction of the lives of many women, children, and other vulnerable people.

God, give us courage to name sin and thereby open the possibility for reform and renewal. Call us to remember and proclaim that we are created in the image of God, an image that is to be honored.

Taken from ["Turn Mourning Into Dancing," A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence.](#)

UNISON PRAYERS

1.

We are the church.
We offer ourselves to you, O God, our Creator.
We offer our hands.
May we use them to extend a healing touch to comfort sisters and brothers and children, youth, and elderly who are afraid.
We offer our eyes and ears.
May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence so that all may have someone with them in their pain and confusion.
We offer our hearts and our tears.
May the hurt and sorrow of the abused echo within us.
We offer our own stories of violence.
May we be healed as we embrace each other.
We offer our anger.
Make it a passion for justice.
We offer all our skills.
Use our gifts to end violence.
We offer our faith, our hope, our love.
May our encounters with violence bring us closer to you and to each other.
All this we ask through Jesus Christ, who knows the pain of violence.

The prayer, "A Prayer for Domestic Violence Healing," is from the background rationale of the 2001 Presbyterian Church (USA) policy statement, "Turn Mourning Into Dancing."

2.

We offer ourselves to you, O God our Creator.

We offer our hands to use healing touch to comfort sisters, brothers and children who are afraid.

We offer our eyes and ears. May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence, so that all may have someone with them in their pain and confusion.

We offer our hearts and our tears as their hurt and sorrow echo within us.

We offer our own stories of violence. May we be healed as we embrace each other.

We offer our anger. Make it a passion for justice.

We offer all our skills. Use our gifts to end violence.

We offer our faith, our hope, our love.

May our encounters with violence bring us closer to you and to each other.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ who knows the pain of violence. AMEN.

Excerpted from the 1992 Women's Interchurch Council of Canada Worship Service in remembrance of the December 6, 1989 massacre of 14 women in Montreal.

3.

Prayer to End Domestic Violence

Spirit of God, through your unconditional love made manifest in Jesus of Nazareth, you showed us how to manifest love, care, and respect in our relationships. We confess that, even in this faith community, many women, children, and some men are beaten and abused – verbally, emotionally, and sexually – by those who claim to love them. We pledge to be more caring in our personal relationships. We pledge our faith community to be a safe haven for those who are battered, a support for abusers sincerely seeking help, and an advocate for non-violence in the world. Help us to be signs of your unconditional love in the world. Amen.

Permission for use granted by Virginians Against Domestic Violence

LITANIES

1.

The Church

If this is not a place where tears are understood, Where do I go to cry?
If this is not a place where my spirits can take wing, Where do I go to fly?
If this is not a place where my questions can be asked, Where do I go to seek?
If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard, Where do I go to speak?
If this is not a place you'll accept me as I am, Where do I go to be?
If this is not a place where tears are understood, Where do I go to cry?

Permission for use granted by Virginians Against Domestic Violence

2.

Litany for Children

One: O God, who came to us as a child, who welcomes the child, and who calls us to be more like children, we thank you for all the blessings that children bring.

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For the children in our neighborhoods, our towns and our cities, who play in our yards and on our playgrounds and sometimes in the streets, who bring life to our communities with their laughter and joy,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For the children of our world, who live in different cultures and speak different languages, wear different clothes, and learn different ways of doing things, and in whose faces, we see the face of Christ,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: O God of all children, who calls us to care for and protect the vulnerable, and to defend the rights of the oppressed, we pray for the needs of children.

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children in our families and in our faith communities who are lonely and neglected, who are ignored and brushed aside,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children in our neighborhoods, towns, and cities who are ostracized because of the color of their skin or their differing abilities, who are victims and perpetrators of violence,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children of our nation who live in poverty, who live without healthcare coverage, who go to school hungry, who have no house to go home to,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children of the world who lose limbs to landmines, who lose homes when they become refugees, who lose their lives to preventable diseases,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: O God, as we strive to serve you in all that we do, help us to remember the children, listen to the children, celebrate the children, serve the children and love the children in all that we say and think and do.

All: Amen.

Litany from the worship materials for the 2001 PHEWA Biennial Social Justice Conference, "A Little Child Shall Lead Them."

BENEDICTIONS

1.

Now, go and breathe deeply, for each breath is from God; go and serve gently, for the earth and its people are fragile; go with energy and strength, for God knows your every need and God's Spirit will grant you peace.

Peacemaking Through Worship, Volume 2, Ed. Jane Parker Huber, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1992, p 126

2.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and we have not yet recognized Your face in each of our brothers and sisters.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and we have not yet shared Your bread in grace with our brothers and sisters.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and we have not listened to Your Word in the words of our brothers and sisters.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and our hearts are still so slow to believe that you had to die in order to rise again.

Stay with us, O God, because our very night becomes day when you are there.

Peacemaking Through Worship, Volume 2, Ed. Jane Parker Huber, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1992, p. 127.

Thinking About Preaching or Teaching?

During October we hear a great deal about abuse since it is the recognized national month of awareness. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has designated Sunday, October 11th as the programmatic emphasis for Domestic Violence Awareness in 2015. Awareness can come through a variety of ways: A special study or speaker, a mission activity, a sermon, a prayer of confession, a litany, a minute for mission. All can send a message to victims that they are not alone and that this is a place to find safety and healing. Perpetrators of violence need to hear that abuse in any form is against the will of God. Bystanders need to hear how they can be part of the healing that needs to take place... in our homes, congregations, and communities.

As You Prepare to Preach or Teach...

John S. McClure, in [Telling the Truth](#), writes: "Preachers have three goals when speaking out about sexual and domestic violence from the pulpit.

1. To speak a word of hospitality, resistance, and hope to victims and survivors.
2. To send a message that the church will cease to be a place of easy rationalization and cheap grace for abusers.
3. To invite the congregation as a whole to consider how it might become a "safe place" and a force for compassion and resistance in relation to sexual and domestic violence." (111)

Marie Fortune, also in [Telling the Truth](#), reminds preachers that there are always three groups of persons present when we gather: victims/survivors, perpetrators/offenders, and bystanders. "We must attempt to meet our pastoral and ethical responsibility to all three groups -- which is no easy task." (49)

A Place to Start: Some Practical Suggestions...

- Familiarize yourself with the dynamics of abuse and the Dos and Don'ts of responding to victims and perpetrators. Begin by going to the Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network's website, <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> or to <http://www.phewacommunity.org/>
- Learn about your community's resources and take advantage of your local crisis center's educational events. Crisis workers will be happy to see a person of faith supportive of their efforts. Tell them about your plans to break the silence in your congregation. Ask them for advice and partnership.
- As you prepare your sermon, view the scripture through the lenses of all three groups mentioned above by Marie Fortune. Examine carefully the context of the reading and challenge those sections that might be misinterpreted to validate violence, child abuse, or the subordination of women.

- Theology can be a road block or a resource. Pay particular attention to how suffering and forgiveness are interpreted. There are many resources that can help. The PADVN website has some sample sermons that can give you ideas of how others have preached about abuse. The commentary, [Feasting on the Word](#) (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville Kentucky) is an excellent resource that looks at each lectionary reading through four lenses: theological, pastoral, exegetical, and homiletical. As you prepare, add the lenses of victim/survivor, perpetrator, and bystander.
- If it feels uncomfortable to preach an entire sermon on abuse, start slowly by incorporating language into prayers, making announcements about activities during October Domestic Violence Awareness Month, enclosing a bulletin insert, or asking someone from a community organization to do a minute for mission. Any reference will be noticed by those who need to hear that you are a safe person to speak with, that your congregation is a safe place for them.
- Even though you are being urged to use October to lift these issues up, “one shot” sermons seldom raise the level of awareness to change minds and behaviors. Help your congregation make a long-term plan for becoming a safe sanctuary, a place where truth is spoken and where troubled relationships are transformed.

Using the Lectionary....or not...

Preachers may want to step outside of the lectionary to preach or teach about abuse, but there are selections in both the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) and in the Narrative Lectionary (NL) where its inclusion would work. The selections below are from the RCL, but the NL with Old Testament passages on Moses, the Ten Commandments, Ruth, and David can easily provide openings as well as the NL New Testament readings in Mark.

October’s RCL Old Testament Readings...

Each Sunday during October the Old Testament readings are from the Book of Job. Job suffers. He not only suffers, but his suffering is undeserved, like persons who are abused. He is angry at God and has to contend with “friends” who offer less than helpful advice and questionable theological understandings. Job’s encounters with his friends can give the preacher a chance to voice the myths, misunderstandings around abuse and raise concerns over religious and theological beliefs that might prove to be more roadblock than resource. The message needs to be clear that victim’s suffering is not redemptive.

Norman Habel in Job, Knox Preaching Guides, warns that, "Preaching from Job is like nurturing a cactus garden. One is liable to recoil from constant prickles and miss the blossoms in the night." In Texts for Preaching: "The sermon arising from these texts may make the church the most dangerous place in town, because it is the place where the awesome, hidden rule of God is spoken about unflinchingly." Even with those warnings in mind, there are some real possibilities for preaching...

Where is God in the midst of suffering and injustice?
What roles can bystanders have with victims? With perpetrators?
What is the role of self-advocacy in this story?
Can the faithful cry out to God; rage against the silence?

October 4 - 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Psalm 26

In Texts for Preaching (year B), Walter Brueggemann writes, "This psalm is the urgent petition of a genuinely pious person (Ps. 26:9-10). It is the prayer of one whose life is under threat, who prays to God, confident of a hearing, emboldened by fidelity that gives a right to pray. The parallel reading for today in Job 1-2 points to the assumption of faithful people, that they can indeed make claims on God. Our psalm is not yet required to face the severe theological problem of the book of Job, but still operates with innocent trust... This prayer exhibits a properly courageous posture before God, one of confident, trustful, honest need." (535)

Mark 10: 2-16

In the Gospel reading, we are confronted by a very difficult text on divorce. Seen through the lens of a person experiencing abuse, this passage could set up a roadblock for some who, for the sake of their safety and the safety of their children, must leave a violent relationship. The covenant of marriage is broken by violence, not divorce. Great care must be taken if the preacher chooses this text. She might ask herself, "How are these words (scripture & reflection) heard by a victim? By a perpetrator?"

October 11 – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time - PC(USA) Domestic Violence Awareness

Psalm 22: 1-15

This well known psalm is a prayer of complaint. Most will recognize the plea, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" as Jesus' words from the cross. They may also think of a time in their lives or the life of their community when they have experienced the absence of God. The cry is uttered by a person who is faithful (verses 3, 9, 10), but who does not see God's intervention into their situation. The preacher might list a number of situations where their congregants might have felt the utter silence of God, including abuse. In walking with victims of violence, they will often talk about the silence or absence of God, but affirm their faith and trust in God, exactly as the psalmist does. A caution here is to make sure that listeners do not leave with the unhelpful idea that suffering is their "cross to bear."

October 18 – 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Mark 10: 35-45

Poor James and John, the sons of Zebedee... What were they thinking? Here we have the brothers jockeying to be in the place of power, prime examples of Mark's portrayal of the disciples just not getting it! Jesus turns that request into his radical vision of mutuality and servanthood. While listeners may judge these two harshly, particularly in view of what Jesus has in front of him as he enters Jerusalem, we can all confess to coveting the best, most powerful, place at some time in our lives. There's something pretty heady about having power and control. One of the best examples of the misuse of power and control is how the perpetrator of abuse views his or her relationship with a partner. The tactics used to maintain control over another are anything but Jesus' vision of servanthood that should define all our relationships. See the [Power and Control Wheel](#).

October 25th – 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Psalm 34:1-8 (19-22)

Louis Stulman in *Feasting on the Word* (Year B, Vol. 4) writes that this Psalm is "Good News for the Brokenhearted... [It] celebrates God's gracious acts of deliverance on behalf of those who have been battered and bruised by life." (201) "The psalm concludes with a series of observations about God's involvement in the world. All exude great confidence and hope. At the same time, all recognize life's deeply strained texture: God's people have their share of "troubles" and "afflictions." The righteous inhabit a ruptured world in which they must "cry for help;" and at least some are wounded beyond words, that is, "brokenhearted" and "crushed in spirit." And yet amid the wreckage of one's life, God is near and indeed saves...rescues...keeps... [and] redeems....In sum, Psalm 34 is a survival story, a joyous response of gratitude to unexpected deliverance from disaster." (201-205)

Mark 10: 46-52

In this very short story of Jesus' encounter with Bartimaeus, whom we are told is "a blind beggar," we see once again how Jesus listened to the voice of the most vulnerable. Those around the man tried their best to silence him, but Jesus stopped, engaged the man in conversation, and healed the man of his blindness. This man was an outsider as many victims feel themselves to be. Often they sit in our pews, silent and afraid to speak out about what they are experiencing. Others may break the silence and share their pain but are not believed and, like Bartimaeus, are sternly ordered to be quiet. Are we, like the crowd trying to stop Bartimaeus, afraid or unable to hear or bear the cries of pain? Do we urge the victim to keep quiet...it can't be happening...you must be doing something...it's a private matter? Who are we in the story? Are we the bystanders? Are we willing to be present to the outsider as Jesus did, over and over along the way? What is it like to be the outsider?

Saturday People

Psalm 30:7b-10

The Rev. Dr. Pamela Patrick Cole
Easley Presbyterian Church, Easley, South Carolina

She did not often come to church on Sunday mornings. She came to my office regularly to talk during the week, but she did not often come to worship. She would quietly sneak up behind me in the halls during the work week with haunted eyes looking for something, hoping for something. After a few pleasant words, she would usually go away so that I could get on with the busyness of my day. I thought little of it.

One day, with fear in her eyes, she appeared behind me and told me she had written something for me to read. She handed me a crumpled-up piece of paper that was still wet from the sweat of her palms. "I was not going to give it you," she mumbled "but — well — you do not have to read it." She scurried away, probably afraid that she had just handed her heart to me and that I was going to stomp on it.

I come to find rest
I come to find freedom
I come to find peace I come to find... to find I am scared, no - terrified.
The faces around me smile... but do not know me.
The smiles are pasted and blank with joy.
The hymns sound like noise to me.
I do not know how to make the same noise.
Is it a noise everyone knows but me?
Around me they proclaim "I believe in blah blah blah mmm mm. Amen."
I cannot proclaim because
I do not understand.
Help me.
They say "I believe in God."
Where is God?
I come anyway.

When I read her poem, I realized that I had not stomped on her heart; she had stomped on mine. She had come with a longing for God; I had given her platitudes. She had come with an all consuming ache; I had given her a Band-Aid. She had come to bring God to me; I had presumptuously thought I was to bring God to her.

This woman was afraid. No, afraid is not a good enough word. She was filled with terror. She had been brutally abused as a child. She longed for church. She longed for God. She longed for

an open, loving community of faith. She came around because she longed, yet she did not find here that God for which she longed.

She did not find that God here because we all look so deceptively good on the outside. We preach the gospel with great authority, with great assurance. We say the creed as if we believe it, as if life has been neatly tied into a nice package and there is nothing left to worry about, or to hurt about. We look so good and so perfect on the outside that no one would suspect that we are hurting.

No one who comes here hurting would suspect that we have any problems or that we ache. We smile at each other and say we are doing fine. We say we are doing fine even if we are falling apart. We act like we have all the answers and we do not feel any pain — at least that is what we look like to an outsider who is in great pain. Someone who comes in hurting judges her insides by our outsides — and oh, we look good on the outside. We preach the good news and smile and laugh and look so good in our Sunday best. (She, on the other hand, was too depressed even to wash her hair, much less put on her Sunday best.)

The biblical text shows us a God who is not as neatly wrapped up and packaged as we might imagine. The biblical text does not show us a God who ignores pain and makes everything just fine. The biblical text shows us a God who yearns, a God who aches, a God who suffers, a God who hurts, a God who dies. The biblical text shows us a different God than the one we pretend to worship on many a Sunday morning who is neatly packaged — the one who leaves the hurting saying "Help me! I do not understand. Please help me. I feel so alone!" The biblical text shows us a Saturday kind of God, because we are at many times in our lives, a Saturday kind of people.

On Friday, Christ was crucified. On Sunday, he was resurrected. But on Saturday — Saturday — everything was more horrible than we could imagine. On Saturday, the disciples had lost their Lord. Mary had lost her son. The people had lost all hope. On Saturday, God had been crucified. On Saturday there was darkness, and no one knew if there would ever be light again. Saturday was a day of total and utter loss.

Unfortunately, in our churches we are all too quick to run from Friday to the triumph and assurance of Sunday. We are all too quick to run from Friday to Sunday — holding our breath so that Saturday will pass us by without touching us with its endless, unbearable, uncertain, palpable pain. We usually try to rush those who are hurting past Saturday. We say, "It will be OK — God is with you." To a Saturday person, nothing feels further from the truth. We say to our hurting friends to rush them past Saturday, "Nothing will separate you from the love of God." Nothing, in fact, feels more like a lie, to us or to them.

If we are to take the biblical witness seriously — the biblical witness as a whole — we need to take seriously every part of the God it presents. If we are to take the biblical witness seriously, we have to grapple with a Saturday kind of God—because we are, even though we do not look like it or act like it, a Saturday kind of people.

When we ignore the hurting God, the yearning God, the angry God, the aching God, we end up ignoring those in our midst — maybe all of us? — who are hurting and yearning and angry. When we ignore the God who is absent, we kick out those among us who feel God is absent in their lives. From the Psalms we hear, "Thou didst hide thy face, I was dismayed." "How long, O Lord, Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?"

When we ignore the God who is angry, we shut up those among us who are angry. Listen to words from Job when God replies out of a storm. A storm! "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you and you shall answer me. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know!" Listen to words from the prophet Joel, "The Lord thunders at the head of his army; his forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey his command. The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful. Who can endure it?"

When we ignore the God who is crucified, we ignore those who are fighting tooth and nail with death in their lives. From Matthew, "From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani' which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' " Walter Brueggemann has pointed out that the words are not "My God, my God why does it seem like you have forsaken me?"

Brueggemann told a story about a renowned teacher who lost his child in an accident. The teacher had written a lot about the pain of his loss and the agony of being forsaken by God. After a moving discussion by this teacher of the reality of gut wrenching pain in the Christian life, someone stood up and told the teacher that the death of his child was really . . . good. Good.

That is exactly what we are apt to do to our sisters and brothers in Christ when they are hurting. Rather than allowing them to hurt, to rage, to question, to doubt, to ache, we say, "Don't worry. God is in control." We say, "God is good." Once in my clinical pastoral education year at Spartanburg Regional Hospital, one of my colleagues told a woman whose son had just died by suicide that it was a sin for her to be angry — that she needed to confess her anger to God and accept God's will.

Oh, we may not say such egregious things, but we can say them in our actions and in our terror to push down our own doubts, fears, and rage. We come to church and smile at everybody even if we are hurting. We are afraid to say, "I hurt. I do not know if God cares very much." Instead we say, "Things are fine, just fine, just fine." Maybe things are so unfine that we do not come to church at all. We do not have the breath to utter words of faith when our hearts are empty.

When we give this flimsy message of hope to those who are hurting, when we give this flimsy message of hope to ourselves, we are denying the full, deep, real experience of being God's people. We are denying the full, rich, complex God revealed to us in Scripture. When we give this flimsy message of hope to those who are hurting we are ignoring the Saturday God. We all know about the pain of Good Friday — we all know the suffering of death. And we all know the hope of new life, resurrection Sunday. Seldom, however, do we Christians allow people to be in Saturday. Saturday. Saturday was the day on which it looked as if God were dead and that was that. Saturday was the day that no one knew. No one knew what was going to happen. Because we look back with joy upon the resurrection, it is difficult for us to remember what Saturday must have been like. Or is it?

What is it to be in Saturday?

Saturday is being told the chemo is not working and there is nothing else to try.
Saturday is finding out the baby in your womb no longer has a heartbeat as you lie on the cold, hard table in the examination room staring at a picture of a smiling baby on the ceiling.
Saturday is feeling lonely and afraid in a room full of Christian sisters and brothers.
Saturday is being told by your spouse that he or she does not love you anymore.
Saturday is finding out your spouse is committing adultery.
Saturday is finding out that your child has been killed in an automobile accident.
Saturday is the confusion and pain of not knowing how to forgive someone or communicate with someone.
Saturday is like... What? What is Saturday like for you?

When people in our midst—maybe even we, ourselves, —are in Saturday, we want to shut them up. When someone is in Saturday, it is a heart-wrenching place to be. Saturday is a place when you are not so sure of the outcome. Saturday is when you are terrified of what is to come. If you are like me, you are scared that if someone you love is in Saturday too long it will rub off on you! If someone you love is in Saturday too long you might have to deal with the Saturdays in your own life — the ache, the pain, the doubt, the angst, the fear. Consequently, you try to make those around you move out of Saturday as quickly as possible. Oh, how a Saturday kind of God scares us. Oh, how Saturday people scare us!

The next time she sneaked up on me in the hall, I was ready. I said, "Wait — do not go so quickly. I read your poem. I have never written poetry myself. I have only written prose. But I have tried to write a poem. I have tried to write a poem for you. Could I read it to you?" She nodded a silent response. I fearfully read to her my first attempt at poetry:

Thank you for bringing the crucified God to me, the Saturday God.
I am scared of him.
He sweats blood and that seems like it would hurt unbearably.
I would rather not sweat at all.

Thank you for bringing the crucified God to me, the Saturday God.
My soul longs for this God.
But will this God take me to places that I am afraid to go?
Will this God take me back into the dark places of my childhood, the places that I want
to go away and never return?
Will this God make me hurt again like I hurt then?
Thank you for bringing the crucified God to me, the Saturday God.
I am confused by this God's unsmiling face.
If I do not say the creed, I do not know what to say.
Can you help me?

Permission was granted to use this sermon. The sermon first appeared in *Journal for Preachers*,
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PO Box 988, Montreat, NC 28757
www.journalforpreachers.com

A CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TURN MOURNING INTO DANCING!

“We are the church. We offer ourselves to you, O God, our Creator. We offer our hands. May we use them to extend a healing touch to comfort sisters and brothers and children, youth, and elderly who are afraid.

We offer our eyes and ears. May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence so that all may have someone with them in their pain and confusion.

We offer our hearts and our tears. May the hurt and sorrow of those who are abused echo within us.

We offer our own stories of violence. May we be healed as we embrace each other.

We offer our anger. Make it a passion for justice. We offer all our skills. Use our gifts to end violence.

We offer our faith, our hope, our love. May our encounters with violence bring us closer to you and to each other. All this we ask through Jesus Christ, who knows the pain of violence.”

“A Prayer for Domestic Violence Healing,” is from the policy statement, Turn Mourning into Dancing! [The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s policy on healing domestic violence.]

A note from the author...

This packet was originally written for the Kentucky Council of Churches and is, therefore, Christian in its orientation. Over the years of my work in domestic violence awareness and prevention, I have worked at a non-profit domestic violence shelter, at the national offices of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), as a congregational pastor, and a community advocate. Although this is written from a Christian perspective, most of my work has been partnering with the interfaith community.

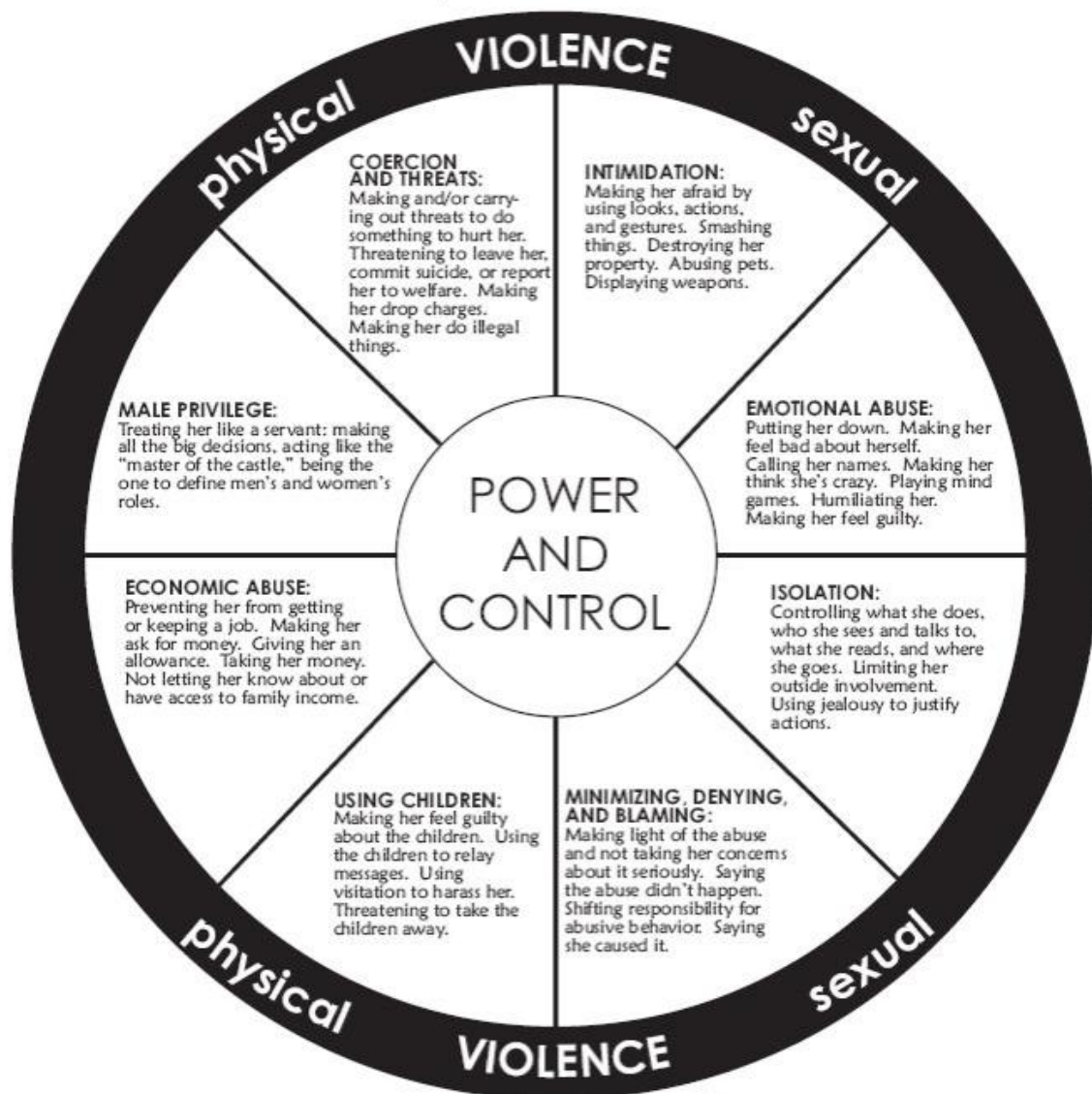
I am a founding member and serve in the leadership of the Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA): <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org>

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What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence can be defined in different ways, but there is general agreement that it is a recurrent pattern of assaultive and controlling behaviors directed against an intimate partner. The violence can be *actual* or *threatened* and can cover a wide range of behaviors. Many people think of physical, sexual, or verbal assaults, but subtle forms of abuse are also common: isolation, humiliation, ridicule, threats... These behaviors are used to control the victim and they cause physical and psychological damage. What domestic violence is NOT is losing control. Abusers are very much in control and choose how, when, and with whom they will use these behaviors.

The Power and Control Wheel, created by the Domestic Violence Intervention Project of Duluth, Minnesota, is a visual way of seeing the types of behaviors used by perpetrators. Offenders may use only one method or many to control their partners.



The key concepts to understanding the dynamics of domestic violence are...
PATTERN of behaviors ~ **POWER** and **CONTROL**

While the Duluth model has been embraced by both faith groups and domestic violence professionals, it is important to also understand that state laws will differ in how they define domestic violence. You will need to keep both definitions in mind as you respond to domestic violence.

What are the laws regarding domestic violence?

Laws pertaining to domestic violence, emergency protective ordinances, and reporting differ in each state. Wherever your ministry takes you, check with your state domestic violence association for current laws. There are serious consequences in reporting, and those agencies can identify those for you. In Kentucky, refer to the Kentucky Domestic Violence Association (KDVA) at www.kdva.org for resources, including a listing of crisis centers.

Who are the victims?

85% - 95% of the victims are women, although the incidents of men being victimized is often unreported due to stigma and embarrassment. Women of all ages, colors, religions, sexual orientation, economic, and educational levels are victims. About one in four women will experience abuse sometime in her life. She is your neighbor, your teacher, your office colleague, your sister, your pastor. We need to keep in mind that the children who experience violence in the home are victims also.

What are the signs or signals for recognizing someone who is being abused?

Among the signs are...

- ✚ Does she have injuries that are difficult to explain, or does she wear clothing that covers her body even in the heat of summer?
- ✚ Does she seem to be isolated from friends and family?
- ✚ Does her partner check up on her when she is away from home?
- ✚ Does she hold herself to an unhealthy standard of perfection?
- ✚ Do her children seem overly protective, or treat her with disdain and disrespect?
- ✚ Does she talk about her husband being jealous or wanting to be with her all the time?

Why doesn't she just leave?

- ✚ She stays primarily because her abuser will not let her go. 75% of the domestic violence homicides occur when a victim tries to leave.
- ✚ She may not have the financial resources to care for herself and her children apart from her partner. Nationally, 50% of homeless women and children are on the street because of violence in their home. http://www.kdva.org/dv_info/myths.html
<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/domestic.html>
- ✚ She may blame herself or believes that she can change his behaviors by changing hers.
- ✚ She may believe that she is breaking the covenant of marriage if she leaves.

- ✚ She may not live in a community where there are supportive services, or she lacks knowledge of available services.
- ✚ She may have come from an abusive family and thinks that this is normal and expected behavior. She may excuse his violence if he was raised in such a family.
- ✚ She loves him.
- ✚ She may believe that her Christian faith requires her to forgive him and to save the marriage at all costs.

Who are the perpetrators?

It is not easy to describe abusers. You would not recognize them walking down the street, in the office, or sitting in a pew. Perhaps the best way to describe them would be to say that they have two personalities or characters. There is the public persona: charming, talented, well-liked, law abiding, respected by colleagues, church, and community. Then there is the private persona: authoritarian, egocentric, hypercritical, unpredictable, self absorbed, threatening, jealous, possessive, and violent.

What are some of the signs or signals that someone is an abuser?

- ✚ Does he have rigid ideas about gender roles and expectations?
 - “I’m the head of the household.”
 - “A house is a man’s castle.”
 - “Wives need to be submissive to your husbands...”
- ✚ Does he control all of his partner’s activities, relationships, and financial resources?
- ✚ Does he always blame others when something goes wrong?
- ✚ Is he extremely jealous, or does he accuse her of being unfaithful?
- ✚ Does he use derogatory or degrading language when describing his partner or other women?

Frequently Asked Questions

Does domestic violence occur in religious homes?

Unfortunately, domestic violence has no boundaries. It cuts across all religious, economic, racial, cultural, educational, and age lines. If you think about the women sitting in the pews of our congregations, about ¼ have or will experience domestic violence.

Is it true that domestic violence is more prevalent in lower income families?

The fact that lower income victims and abusers are over-represented in calls to police, battered women's shelters, and social services may be due to a lack of other resources. Where resources are more available, victims can more easily leave and find support beyond community support services.

Isn't domestic violence really a private family matter?

Domestic violence is everyone's business and it is against the law. Keeping domestic violence secret helps no one, has been shown to harm children, incurs substantial costs to society, and serves to perpetuate abuse through learned patterns of behavior, often over generations.

Don't victims provoke their partners' violence?

Whatever problems exist in a relationship, the use of violence is never justifiable or acceptable. The perpetrator chooses to abuse and will find something to give him permission to be abusive. Many victims talk about "walking on eggshells," never knowing what the next moment will bring. Some, reading the signs, know an assault is coming soon and will try to get it over with at a timing of her own choosing.

Isn't domestic violence an impulse control or anger management problem?

No, partners who are abusive act deliberately and are very much in control. Abusers choose whom, when, and how to act in abusive ways. For example, an abuser will selectively batter his wife but not his boss. He deliberately chooses where to hit her to avoid public notice.

Isn't it true that women are as abusive as men?

All available evidence indicates that domestic violence is largely perpetrated by men, but violence perpetrated by women against men is probably under reported. Women do try to protect themselves and their children; some have killed their husbands. Over the years a number of Kentucky women who have murdered their husbands, have been released from prison. This has largely happened as people gain a better understanding of the dynamics of abuse.

Can marriage or couple counseling help to stop the violence?

Counseling couples together often increases the risk of violence to the victim. He may retaliate against her for something that she says. When the focus of counseling is on the relationship, it takes the focus off the abuser and the changes that he needs to make.

Aren't anger management programs the best method of intervention to help abusive partners stop being abusive?

Although briefer and less expensive than certified batterer intervention programs, anger management programs are not effective in addressing the deep-rooted issues of batterers.

Isn't substance abuse a major cause of domestic violence?

The alcohol or drug use does not cause the violence. Some perpetrators are alcoholics or use other drugs; some do not. Substance abuse treatment programs treat substance abuse; they are not equipped to stop the violence. It is often easier to put blame on alcohol than to admit to abusing one's partner.

As a pastor to both the husband and wife, how can I take sides in these situations?

You remain the pastor to both, but your actions will be different for the individuals. The victim and children need safety; the perpetrator needs to be held accountable. If the relationship can be reconciled, it will only be after a great amount of work by the perpetrator in understanding the deep rooted reasons for his behaviors, and that will best be accomplished by trained professionals who work in the domestic violence field. You can walk with each, being a pastoral presence. If reconciliation is impossible, you may be called upon to help them mourn the death of their relationship.

What about confidentiality in the clergy/congregant relationship?

Denominations and faith groups have varying expectations around the issue of confidentiality. Clergy need to know the expectations held by their faith tradition. Explore the difference between confidentiality and secrecy. Karen Lebacqz in *Professional Ethics: Power and Paradox* writes that “classical theological arguments about keeping secrets permit several instances in which even the professional may—or indeed, should—break confidence. One of these is where there is direct threat to another person.”

Isn't this an issue that should be left for social services to handle?

It takes a coordinated community response to stop the violence. Congregations have been silent too long, and sometimes have been perceived by the professionals in the domestic violence field to be part of the problem. The coordinated community response wheel on the next page shows the dimensions of a coordinated approach to ending abuse.

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http://www.ncdsv.org/images/wcadv_dv-sa_ccr_toolkit_2009.pdf

What your congregation can do to partner with domestic violence community services:

- ✚ Maintain ongoing relationships with staff of domestic violence programs so that if the occasion arises, you will know who can best help, and they will know that you can be a trusted partner.
- ✚ Invite shelter workers to make presentations at teen and adult education sessions.
- ✚ Coordinate with community programs during October's Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities.

- ✚ Ask for brochures to make available in the church for anyone seeking help.
- ✚ Offer support to shelters and domestic violence agencies financially, with testimonial letters for grants, and with other fund-raising projects.
- ✚ Offer church space for support groups or community educational programs.
- ✚ Make your congregation aware of volunteer opportunities regarding family violence.

What your congregation can do to educate, respond and prevent abuse:

- ✚ Acknowledge that domestic violence happens to people of faith, and make intentional efforts to break the silence. Victims will hear that they are not alone, and abusers will hear that God does not condone violence.
- ✚ Believe them when they trust you with their stories.
- ✚ In preaching and reading scripture, remember that there are victims and perpetrators sitting in the pews listening to your words. What message are they receiving?
- ✚ Establish policies and procedures, and think through how you will respond when someone comes to you for help. Remember that this is one of the most dangerous calls that police officers answer. Don't put yourself or others in danger. Help the victim develop her specific plan for being safe, including urging her to take such practical steps as calling shelters to ask about their services and how to proceed if and when she leaves. Trust her to know when it is best to leave.
- ✚ Provide community services brochures alongside of other church materials. Place tear off cards with the domestic violence national hotline and community services contact information in church restrooms.
- ✚ Ensure that the church library has some books about domestic violence and the church's response.

What your congregation can do concerning the court system and state laws:

- ✚ Establish a relationship with an advocate who can tutor you on state laws and what changes need to be made to strengthen them.
- ✚ Speak with or write to legislative representatives to ensure their support of laws that protect women from partner abuse.
- ✚ Join advocates from domestic violence services as they accompany victims during court sessions.
- ✚ Attend the training sessions provided by domestic violence services so that you can be an educated participant and advocate.
- ✚ Encourage attorneys who worship in your congregation to participate in pro-bono work on behalf of victims.

The Crisis of Faith

It is certainly understandable that along with the abuse persons experience, they may also have a crisis of faith. Faith leaders have the resources of their own Christian faith to assure victims and survivors that neither God, nor their church, will abandon them. Some of the theological and biblical issues that victims often struggle with follow in abbreviated form. Congregational leaders are encouraged to use some of the suggested resources listed here or in the appendix to dig deeper into the depth of these theological issues.

Suffering

Some victims of abuse may accept the suffering they are experiencing and use theological and/or biblical references that may even keep them from getting help. You may hear: “It’s my cross to bear” and “God doesn’t give us anything that we can’t bear.” These are examples of victims trying to find some meaning in their suffering. Faith leaders can encourage victims to reframe their thinking and consider the uniqueness of Jesus’ suffering and death, how Jesus fought against suffering and evil, and how abuse can never be redemptive. Christians are “Resurrection/Easter People.” A theology of the cross that does not offer new life or resurrection is dangerous to victims of violence. **To dig deeper...**

Woman-Battering; Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling
(chapter 6 – “Suffering and Theology”)

Covenant (or Sacrament) of Marriage

All faith traditions acknowledge that there is no place for abuse within the covenant of marriage. There are differing views on if the covenant can be broken, when it is broken, and the consequences of covenant breaking. Theologians working in the area of abuse make a strong case that the violence is what breaks the covenant, rather than fleeing or leaving the marriage. Many victims, and their children, stay in dangerous relationships because of religious beliefs about divorce or because they are counseled to return and reconcile. Remember, safety is your primary responsibility to victims.

Repentance

Just as forgiveness is a process, so too is repentance. Repentance means turning from sin. In *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, Alan Richardson writes that repentance implies much more than a mere change of mind. “It involves a whole reorientation of the personality, a ‘conversion.’” If the abuser seeks forgiveness, the pastor needs to keep in mind that safety of the victim and children is the primary concern. The abuser can show true repentance by changing the behaviors, relinquishing his need for power and control, accepting any judgments imposed by the legal system, and making restitution for his actions. **To dig deeper...**

Pastoral Care for Domestic Violence: Case Studies for Clergy

Abandonment by God

Throughout the Bible we hear the plea of utter forsakenness. Moses, Job, the psalmist, and Jesus himself cried out when feeling God’s abandonment. Victims may acknowledge a variety of feelings, even anger, at God and the community who failed to keep them safe. James Leehan writes, “God creates and sustains, but does not control.” He goes on to say that our Judeo-

Christian tradition affirms a wide variety of images of God. Perhaps the idea of Emmanuel, God with us, can be most helpful. God chose to come to us in the form of Jesus; God incarnate. To dig deeper...

Defiant Hope (chapter 7 – “Unmasking Our Illusions About God”)

Forgiveness

Marie Fortune (FaithTrust Institute) talks about forgiveness being the very last step. Victims are sometimes told that they must forgive and are encouraged to do so based upon someone else’s timeframe. Forgiveness is not forgetting or absolving the perpetrator of his actions. One cannot declare forgiveness on behalf of another person, nor does forgiveness automatically mean the restoration of the relationship. It might be helpful for the pastor to explore the three Greek meanings for “to forgive” in the New Testament (see Keene). **To dig deeper...**

Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook (“Structures of Forgiveness in the New Testament” – Keene; “Forgiveness: The Last Step” – Fortune)
Defiant Hope: Spirituality for Survivors of Family Abuse (Chapter 6 – “Tough Forgiveness”), James Leehan

Suggested Resources

There is a host of resources on domestic violence and a religious response. These resources are chosen because they are practical in their approach. The goal is to understand the basic dynamics of abuse, know who in your community to refer to, and know how to faithfully carry out your responsibilities in breaking the silence in your congregation and providing pastoral care.

Hotlines:

National Domestic Violence Hotline – 800-799-7233; 800-787-3224 (TTY)

The Hotline operates 24 hours a day in more than 140 languages. The TTY number is for deaf callers. Service providers have valuable information for victims, friends and families. This number should be posted in restrooms in every church, and clergy can obtain life-saving information here when responding to domestic violence.

Books:

Adams, Carol J. *Woman Battering; (Creative Pastoral Care and Counseling)*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994. This book’s main focus is on victims and how ministers – clergy, chaplains, pastoral counselors, deacons – can respond to them. This short (120 pages) book can easily be used for training purposes within Christian congregations.

Adams, Carol J. and Marie Fortune, eds., *Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook*. New York: Continuum, 1995.

Basham, Beth and Sara Lisherness, eds., *Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence*. Louisville: Bridge Resources, second edition 2006. The book is organized in three parts: (1) background articles; (2) workshop designs for partner, child, elder abuse, and acquaintance and date rape; (3) worship resources.

Fortune, Marie M. *Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Dr. Fortune gives answers to many of the challenging questions that arise for Christian women who are being abused. This low cost

booklet makes it possible for pastors to maintain a supply to give to persons when contacted concerning abuse. English, Spanish, Korean

Leehan, James. *Defiant Hope: Spirituality for Survivors of Family Abuse*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993.

Leehan, James. *Pastoral Care for Survivors of Family Abuse*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989.

McClure, John S. and Ramsey, Nancy J., eds. *Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*. Cleveland: United Church Press, 1998. This resource is the result of a consultation on preaching that helps pastors prepare to preach about sexual and domestic violence. Now available online as a free download (180 pgs.) at:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=evfZ4msdViUC&printsec=frontcover&dq=mcclure%2C+ramsay%2C+te#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Miles, Al. *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000.

Murphy, Nancy A. *God's Reconciling Love: A Pastor's Handbook on Domestic Violence*. Seattle: FaithTrust Institute, 2003.

Curriculum:

Basham, Beth and Lisherness, Sara, eds., *Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence*. [see above description]

Breaking the Silence; A Resource to Equip United Methodists to Speak Up and Speak Out About Domestic Violence. General Board of Church and Society. Free 23 pg. download at: <http://umc-gbcs.org/resources-websites/breaking-the-silence>

Fortune, Marie M. *Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2002.

In Her Shoes: Living with Domestic Violence. This two hour fast-paced interactive simulation helps participants experience the ups and downs a battered woman might experience over the course of several years. It also allows reflection on what the community can do. It is published by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, www.wscadv.org

<http://wscadv2.org/resourcespublications.cfm?aid=6388541a-c298-58f6-02a2a6cf514e6448>

Pastoral Care for Domestic Violence: Case Studies for Clergy. FaithTrust Institute, 2006. Video, Training Manual consists of a 9-part course on pastoral care in response to domestic violence. <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/store/01tA0000000M7roIAC>

Troy, Nancy, ed. *Anguished Hearts: A Study Guide to Accompany Turn Mourning into Dancing!* Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2003. Seven sessions, designed for one hour time frames, cover topics of the church's calling, partner abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, sibling abuse, dating violence, and vulnerable populations.

<http://store.pcusa.org/7027003025>

Organizations:

FaithTrust Institute is an interreligious, educational organization that provides training and materials for faith groups concerning domestic and sexual violence, child abuse, and ministerial misconduct. Seattle, Washington. www.faithtrustinstitute.org.

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Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> and <http://phewacommunity.org>.

The National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence. This site has particularly good resources on domestic violence in the military. www.ncdsv.org

The National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women. www.immigrantwomennetwork.org.

Shimtu: Korean Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program through the Korean Community Center of the East Bay (KCCEB): <http://kcceb.org/our-work/interpersonal-violence-prevention/>

The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community. <http://www.idvaac.org/>

The Women of Color Network, <http://womenofcolornetwork.org/>

Alianza: The National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence. www.dvalianza.org.

Organizations working with men:

Men Stopping Violence: a national training institute that provides organizations, communities, and individuals with the knowledge and tools required to mobilize men to prevent violence against women and girls. <http://www.menstoppingviolence.org/>

A Call To Men: Works to create a world where all men and boys are loving and respectful and all women and girls are valued and safe. <http://www.acalltomen.org/>

MensWork: Eliminating Violence Against Women, Inc. is a collective of men working to educate, mobilize and organize men to prevent all forms of sexual and domestic violence. Louisville, Ky. www.mensworkinc.com.

Videos and DVDs:

Broken Vows: Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence presents the stories of six battered women Jewish, Roman, Catholic and Protestant and demonstrates how religious teachings have been misused to perpetuate abuse, and how religious communities can work proactively to end domestic violence. 60 minutes, English and Spanish.

www.faithtrustinstitute.org
<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/store/01tA0000000M7rSIAS>

Domestic Violence: What Churches Can Do. This one-hour program for use in Christian education offers basic information on domestic violence, as well as concrete ideas about how congregations can become involved in prevention and can offer a safe space for battered women. Utilizing a 20-minute video (an edited version of *Broken Vows*) the program provides worship materials, background information, discussion questions, and practical steps congregations can take to become involved in preventing domestic violence. www.faithtrustinstitute.org
<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/store/01tA0000000M7rWIAS>

Denominational/Faith Tradition statements and policies: (a sampling)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Turn Mourning into Dancing!* A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence. Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2001.
<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/turn-mourning-dancing-policy-statement-healing-dom/>

American Baptist Churches USA, *Resolution on Family Violence*, adopted in 1982, modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board – September 1993:
<http://www.religiousinstitute.org/american-baptist-resolution-of-family-violence/>

Episcopal Church, General Convention Statements:

1991, Renew Commitment to Address Violence in Society:

http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1991-C022

1994, Urge Government Funding in Matters Affecting the Health of Women:

http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=1994-A055

2000, Support Legislation to Reduce Domestic Violence and Protect Victims:

http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2000-D073

2000, Urge Education, Prayer, and Local Response to Issues of Sexual and Domestic Violence: http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2000-C025

2009, Encourage Training for Prevention of Domestic Violence:

http://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2009-D096

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), *Domestic Violence Policy Resolution*, adopted by the 1989 Churchwide Assembly:

http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Domestic_ViolenceSPR89.pdf

Roman Catholic Church's National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response To Domestic Violence Against Women*. 2002 statement against domestic violence towards women:

<http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/marriage-and-family/marriage/domestic-violence/when-i-call-for-help.cfm>

Denominational/Faith Tradition statements and policies: (a sampling)

United Methodist Church, *Violence Against Women and Children*, adopted by the 2004 General Conference and readopted by 2008 General Conference:

<http://umc-gbcs.org/resolutions/violence-against-women-and-children-3423-2008-bor>

United Methodist Church's 1992 Statement on Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse:

<http://archives.umc.org/interior.asp?ptid=4&mid=939>