



Dear Friend,

As you prepare to observe Domestic Violence Awareness month with your congregation this October, we hope that you will take advantage of the many resources that Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence (PADVN) has to offer.

This year we are lifting up selections from recent resource packets that will include educational presentations, worship resources, sermon ideas, and informative bulletin inserts. We also encourage you to check out even more of them by going to one or both of our websites:

<http://phewacommunity.org> and  
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/padvn/>

If you have questions or would like ideas for the observance of this important issue in your congregation, feel free to contact us at [phewainfo@gmail.com](mailto:phewainfo@gmail.com).

In Joy and Justice,

Rev. Trina Zelle  
PHEWA  
808-208-9166



## **Domestic Violence Educational Presentations**

PACT – PAN – PADVN - PARO - PASPM – PCAN – PCJN – PDC – PHN - PSMIN  
A ministry of the Compassion, Peace and Justice program area, Presbyterian Mission Agency  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
P.O. 4961, Louisville, KY 40204-0961  
<http://www.phewacommunity.org/> and <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa>

## SEVEN LAYERS OF MISUNDERSTANDING

### Part I

A presentation by Joan Fenton  
Presbytery of Grand Canyon

Today we're going to be examining violence in relationships, which covers the ground from the youngest to the oldest members of our society.

Opening prayer:

We gather today, Holy One, knowing that we are loved and sheltered by your comforting embrace. We also grieve with you when your people are injured and frightened. You hear our cries, share our tears, and know our anger and frustration. You at all times and in all places are steadfast.

We are gathered here in your presence seeking to become more aware of what you would have us do as we remember, name and respond to the violence in our families and in our communities. We walk with you today, grateful for your love and your plans for all of your people to have abundant life. In the name of your son Jesus, who himself knew the pain of violence, Amen.

At the most recent Presbytery meeting in Phoenix, a speaker shared the results of a survey in which many people were asked: What have you learned in life? And a seven-year-old boy's answer was: "I learned that you can't hide a piece of broccoli in a glass of milk." I thought to myself: this is a way to look at domestic violence in our churches. Our congregations are the milk, and the broccoli's the violence. Just because we can't see it, doesn't mean it's not there. We have chosen for the most part to not acknowledge the possibility of violence in our faith communities, or to learn about it, and therefore, the people involved suffer in the silence we wish to keep.

The first part of my presentation today covers domestic violence, and the second part will move us into the equally troubling issue of elder abuse. I call the first part "Seven Layers of Misunderstanding."

Let's examine what are considered seven significant layers of misunderstanding about DV. They affect our beliefs and therefore our responses to victims and to perpetrators. I'll refer to perpetrators as the victim's "partner", because while the couple is in a relationship, they are not necessarily married, and LGBTQ couples are also included.

The first layer of misunderstanding occurs when we blame the wrong person for the violence. Victim blaming occurs in every case of intimate partner violence. One major reason men have been able to abuse women (and children) without any repercussions is that the church has for centuries allowed the abuse, and has even encouraged it, by saying that women are inferior human beings, and deserve what

A modern example of this shortsighted attitude came to my attention in an email from Rev. Dr Marie Fortune, who has been a pioneer in DV education. She wrote in March that there still are many people who excuse men's violence, instead of stating that all violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights and is a sin. She then offered this quote from the current Pope in a statement he made in 2007: "Women are naturally unfit for political office. Both the natural order and facts show us that the political being par excellence is male: the Scripture shows that man thinks and does, a woman has always been the helper of man, but nothing more."

Through the centuries Christian men have used these kinds of reasoning to ensure that women remain submissive in abusive relationships. Even today, a woman may be told that she must have done something to provoke her partner, and she needs to pray for him as well as for herself. She may be given instructions to ask the abuser for forgiveness because she has "forced him" to abuse her. And what is her partner hearing? He understands that "It's her fault, not mine; she has to change, not me. I can continue to abuse her and my pastor and my congregation will back me up on this.

How exactly do our churches do that? We do it with our complete and utter silence." There is no accountability for the abuser, and for her there is no safety, or hope. Our silence gives consent to him.

The other side of the victim-blaming coin is revealed when we disagree with a woman's decisions. We get so frustrated! Why doesn't she leave him? Or why, why has she decided to go back to him? We may decide to throw in the towel. We're done here. But instead of blaming her, we should focus all the blame on the abuser's violent, destructive behavior.

We need to have a better understanding of the situations in her life that lead to the decisions she makes: AND, believe me, everything she does is directly related to her survival.

Here are a few:

- 1.) If she is currently living elsewhere, he may have found where she is staying and left threatening notes for her, or has confronted her directly. She learns from this that no matter where she hides, he will find her, and she can never truly feel safe.
- 2) He may have made threats about what he can do to her family members, or to anyone else who helps her.
- 3) He may have killed the family pet right in front of her-or threatened to-and then he tells her that this is what could happen to her and the kids.
- 4) She has found that the local shelters are full, and has no option if leaving, except to sit in the bus station, or in a park, or in her car overnight, if she's lucky enough to have a car. How many of us would really be willing to leave home today if we knew there would be no place to go that night or in the foreseeable future?
- 5) She may not be working, have no money, and no credit card. He controls it all. Should she decide to leave, she has almost nothing in the way of financial resources.
- 6) Her family and friends continually pressure her to go back. Her pastor may be pressuring her to go back.
- 7) Her partner may have passionately declared his desire to be with her, and asks her to forgive him. She remembers how loving he used to be, and she accepts his apology, returning to him, because she deeply wants that life again.
- 8.) Bible verses from Ephesians, Malachi, Genesis and Luke have been quoted to her, over and over again, by various people, including her partner, to pressure her into remaining in the relationship.

Her decision-making reflects these conditions, and more. All too frequently there are no good options for her, only worrisome and dangerous ones, and there are no guarantees of safety anywhere, even much later.

2) The second layer of misunderstanding relates to the excuses, or justifications her partner uses for abuse. As I have indicated, the most common reason an abuser uses is, "It was her fault." But other excuses are also offered. Perhaps he was abused, or watched his mother be abused, as a child. It is real possibility, but this does not excuse him. I can't walk up to anyone out here, slug that person, and then say "Oh, I'm so sorry, but it's not my fault. I was abused as a child." How well will that turn out for me?!

Being a heavy drinker or drug user is also not an excuse for being violent. Factors such as heavy alcohol or drug use may worsen the violence, but if the person is in recovery, he will not relinquish his behavior, but now will be sober and abusive. What about having a

quick temper? Or losing a job? No, no, we don't excuse the violence for any reason. We can begin to understand what causes abusive behavior when we see that it comes from a decision the abuser makes – his decision to control his partner through his actions—a pattern of behaviors that are designed to instill fear and compliance in her and to inflict damage; mental, emotional, financial, sexual and/or physical harm. Being controlling, being abusive is a choice. We all do the things that get us what we want. His behavior gets him what he wants. And it's his problem, not hers.

3) The third layer of misunderstanding comes into focus when we observe the many misguided ways our courts, as well as a lot of us, who mean no harm at all---how we try to fix the problem; i.e. – repair the relationship.

Many people have felt that saving the marriage is the primary goal, when really the first goal is always: safety for the victim. The perpetrator of violence has broken the marriage covenant with his verbal or physical abuse, and whether the relationship is ever to be mended depends on both the abuser's future actions and the victim's decisions about whether to try again or not. The victim has not broken the marriage covenant if she leaves her partner—the covenant was broken by his violence.

a) A misinformed effort by our courts to end the violence and restore the relationship to a healthy one happens when a man is sent to anger management classes. I just stated that the abuser is making a choice. He knows exactly what he is doing. His outburst of "anger" can be compared to an actor on the stage. As he rages about, hitting the wall, throwing things, screaming at his partner and possibly striking her, he remains in complete control of the situation and he is in complete control of himself. He knows how much anger to use to keep her afraid. He deserves a drama award for best actor, not to be sent to anger management classes.

b) Another way professionals try to stop the violence is by arranging for the couple to attend marriage, or couples' counseling. Couples' counseling pre-supposes that the two persons simply have differences of opinion in their relationship. Examples would be a disagreement over how to handle money, or how to raise children. Counseling for problem such as these may help the couple, but it works because it does not involve a situation where there is power and control. Couples' counseling may have good results when both persons have equal rank in the relationship, and there is mutuality and respect. There is

nothing to be gained in couples' counseling where there is abuse, and there will be danger to the victim if she discloses anything. Her partner will certainly not bring up his bad behavior.

c) Sometimes we may seek safety for the victim by counseling her to leave at once, and possibly consider divorce. We really need to understand that: Her timing is not our timing. We feel a sense of urgency and fear for her and for any children in the relationship. We can help her by saying something as simple as "I'm very concerned about your safety. I'm here for you. If you decide to leave, let me know if there is any way I can help." Give her hotline phone numbers, and suggestions on how to be safe. If she calls you at the moment when she is in imminent danger, use the crisis flow chart. You as pastors and church officers are considered to be first responders. You don't have to know everything and do everything. Your role is to give her options and resources, and tell her that the violence is not her fault and that her church family will support her. The three most important words a victim of intimate partner violence can hear from you are: "I believe you." Because her partner is so charming, so manipulative and so clever, many people will believe that he is incapable of abuse, and refuse to believe her story.

But don't expect her to follow your timetable. She may have had years of no opportunity to make decisions or choices for herself. The last thing she needs is for us to become the latest people in her life who are trying to control her. Only she can decide when a course of action feels like the right one. She is literally surviving on a day-to-day basis. Her decisions help to keep her and her children safe, and in some cases, alive. If she decides to leave her partner and possibly divorce him, this is the time when she is at the greatest risk of being killed. This is when he sees himself permanently losing his power over her, and a lethal act may be his final way to maintain control, or to show her that he will have the last word.

4) The fourth layer of misunderstanding I'll call "What about all the men?" The situation which speakers come across at presentations like this one today is that someone invariably stops to talk or asks a question about male victims. You probably have noticed how few women are in the news who have killed or severely injured their partner, but these cases receive a disproportionate amount of attention. To focus on one sensational media story about a woman who brutally killed her boyfriend removes the spotlight from the fact that each day in the United States three women or girls are killed by their boyfriends or husbands. How many of these brutal murders rate

months of TV coverage? The media focuses on the sensational and unusual, and always will. It has been shown that women who act violently toward partners are often retaliating for current or past violence done to them, or are protecting their children. A woman may throw something at her partner, or stab him, and then he batters her into a hospital stay. He has twice the upper body strength. There is no equality in domestic violence, and to focus on women who abuse men, is to take away from the fact that most abuse, especially physical violence and murder, is perpetrated by men and teen boys against women and teenage girls; perpetrated by men who view women as their property, and feel that they have a right to do what they want with their property. Obviously I believe there should be mutual respect in relationships, but my focus will not be on violence against men. I want to state an important truth here: Most men are not and will never be abusive.

5) The fifth layer of misunderstanding occurs when even victims indicate, "He never hit me; therefore I wasn't abused". But controlling with verbal abuse is a very significant part of domestic violence. It isn't something that one can be arrested for, but hateful words leave tremendous emotional scars and remove all feelings of self worth. Verbal abuse is extremely toxic. Physical wounds and bruises eventually heal, but words may echo in a child's or woman's head for a long, long time, preventing them from feeling competent to make decisions or to feel that they are even worthy of love and kindness. Verbal abuse may come first in a relationship, with physical abuse coming later, but not always.

6) The sixth layer of misunderstanding can be found in the image of what it means to be a man in today's society. The word "macho" in fact relates to this and has an interesting history. In his book "The Macho Paradox" author Jackson Katz speaks about the origins of the word macho. He notes that in the original meaning of the word, a macho man was a community leader, a man of courage and great honor. This man would never have permitted violence against women to persist within his community. The word macho certainly has been corrupted over the years. Katz contends that non-violent men are very secure in their maleness and have more self-confidence than men who feel they must control their partners. But abusive men have their attitudes reinforced in the media, where people who control others get what they want. And our kids are watching these programs! A person who batters his wife or girlfriend doesn't prove he's a "real man", but does prove he has real problems.

7) The seventh and final layer of misunderstanding comes out of the widely held notion that men's violence against women is a women's issue. This idea makes it sound as if women can, on their own, end abuse, and that men really don't need to concern themselves, because it's being taken care of. Can women end abuse? All alone, on their own? Can women end rape by themselves? No, it's obvious they can't. Men have to be involved in a major way. Women for decades have been in the forefront of domestic violence prevention and education. But more recently, men have formed groups in several states and are speaking out against violence, and offering training to well-meaning men, encouraging them to speak out. These groups reach out to their peers, as well as to boys and to young men about what real men do, and how well-meaning men can change perceptions on how to treat women and girls.

These men are working to counter the influences of the media and male culture which continues to produce, in the United States each year, thousands of physically and emotionally abusive boys and young men. The statistics bear this out by telling us that at least one in every four adult relationships contains abuse, and teen girls are more likely to be battered by a boyfriend than be injured in an auto accident. The men aren't telling us that violence against girls and women is a women's problem – they aren't simply saying "Look at me! I'm a good guy – I don't batter women – this isn't my issue." They are actually out there, in the world, working to end violence, and are to my mind, deserving of the title macho.

I hope you have some fresh insight into intimate partner violence. But now what?



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## **ELDER ABUSE/ LATE – LIFE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

A presentation by Joan Fenton  
Presbytery of Grand Canyon

We're going to step right into the subject of elder abuse.

How do we get from there—from family and intimate partner violence—to the significant amount of abuse against our elderly population? What are the connections? Our traditions teach us that we should always revere and care for elderly family members. Most of us do love and protect the frail elderly persons in our care. But we need to understand what is going on with our elders who are not so lucky; the one in ten who endure abuse.

Late life abuse is a crime without boundaries, crossing all racial, social, class, gender and geographic lines, exactly like domestic violence, and also the types of abuse are identical to what younger women and children endure.

Perhaps 2.1 million older Americans are abused each year, or about 10% of the population, with more women than men being victims. Nine out of ten abusers are family members. But because it is estimated that only one out of every 14 cases is reported to authorities, we may be looking at a considerably higher percentage than the 10% which is reported.

Bessie was a woman who led a full, happy, active and healthy life for more than 90 years. When she was in her late 90's, she and her family chose a care home in Arizona where she could receive assistance with daily tasks. From the second week of her stay there, Bessie was abused. 14 months passed before her family became aware of it.

But the good news is that Bessie was able to testify in court against her abusers. Her case became a high - profile one, and lawmakers responded to the public outrage. They immediately acted to change the penalty for a conviction on elder abuse from a misdemeanor to a Class 2 Felony.

The legislators also passed a law that required adult care homes from that point on to be inspected and licensed by the state. What Bessie endured ultimately brought about important safeguards. But her story may cause us to wonder why a victim wouldn't report abuse.

Some reasons for not reporting are:

1. Elders may not feel that what is happening to them qualifies as abuse, especially if the abuse is verbal.
2. No chance to report – conversations monitored by caregiver; phone is not accessible.
3. Dementia renders victim incapable of reporting.
4. Fear of being institutionalized, and separated from family.
5. Fear of the caregiver.
6. Embarrassment: the elderly person doesn't want anyone to know that a member of the family could be doing such horrible acts.
7. Concern about being disbelieved. The very real issue of not being believed is a part of how we stereotype our older citizens, joking about forgetfulness and mental confusion. The abuser and the victim know this too. The victim thinks: What if I report the abuse and no one comes to check on me? Or, what if someone comes, but at that moment everything looks OK? Or what if I am not believable due to my confusion?

These factors help to show why a significant amount of elder abuse is not detected. Elder abuse prevention also is under-funded. Of federal dollars spent on domestic violence, only 2% goes to elder abuse.

Look and Listen – Red Flags of Elder Abuse:

If you or others in your congregation are visiting frail, homebound members of your church, young or old, or who reside in a care facility, conduct training on the Red Flags, which are in your packet today. You may be the only one who sees him or her, or the only one who knows what to look for. If something seems wrong, or off in some way, trust your instincts and report it. Don't ignore your gut feelings. It's better to report your concerns and be wrong than to be right, but not report.

Searching for the causes of elder abuse, we are brought back to an examination of our younger families. Think again about our culture. The prevailing message received by children and adults in movies, TV, music videos and video games is that violence is normal, acceptable, and is quite useful. Whoever has the most guns and the biggest explosives, the fastest cars, and the most beautiful women is the winner, am I right? We see the strongest and most powerful people controlling others. And these are the "real men" of our fantasies; the ones with the sleek cars and sleeker women. They are seen as being entitled to power and authority. This distorted view in the media

transfers directly over into the lives of real people living in the real world, often with societal approval.

As our children become adults, they may carry these images into their own relationships, and into what they expect from their partners. Children from violent homes may not grow up to repeat what they experienced as children. But the harm done to them often has consequences throughout their lives. What I am getting at here is that elder abuse does not occur in a vacuum. We get from there to here when we ignore the violence that is hiding in plain sight. When our society and our churches ignore that which allows the more powerful people to prey on the weaker, domestic terrorism occurs at all levels. Jesus had a lot to say about protecting those who have little power, and we have never been told that we can just ignore the problems that make us uncomfortable.

People should, at all times, be modeling respectful attitudes toward each other. Even at Presbytery meetings! Continually show by example that we honor God through our relationships with one other. I haven't been talking today about other families, somewhere else; these are our Presbyterian families. Violence is in our midst, and we have ignored and denied it in that glass of milk far too long. If we want to see elder abuse come to an end, we must care passionately about ending all forms of abuse in relationships. I hope you will see yourselves assuming roles in violence prevention persons, breaking the silence now, and never being silent again.

Some places to start:

- 1) Invite a shelter worker to speak. Support the shelter in various ways, and tell them that you will not encourage a woman from your church family to return to her abuser.
- 2) Set up trainings for the youth leaders in your Presbytery on healthy dating relationships and then offer classes for youth and college age young adults every two years.
- 3) Find a church family who will provide a foster home for pets in an emergency situation.
- 4) Put safety information for women in each bathroom stall at your church. Never put them in the men's stalls. You will endanger an abusive man's partner if you do. Pick up a brochure today from the display that you can modify as you choose and put in the stalls.
- 5) Provide training on identifying elder abuse to your entire congregation every few years, with special emphasis on training anyone who makes visits.

- 6) Look into the idea of starting or supporting an existing shelter for older women, as they transition from a lifetime of abuse to a safe environment. Partner with other churches in your community.
- 7) **PREACH ON ABUSE!!** Every October there is an emphasis nationwide on domestic violence. There are great worship and liturgy available on the Presbyterian DV web site. October is the perfect time to state that your church staff and congregation opposes all forms of violence in relationships, that abuse is contrary to Christ's teachings and is never the victim's fault. Make this a part of your mission statement, and advertise it on the church web site. The Presbytery web site should also contain information and resources. Be ready with information if victims come for help.
- 8) If a person who has used violence comes to you saying that he has had a religious conversion and is a new man (or woman), tell this person that the church will support their good choices, and will pray for them, but you won't be a part of any attempt to heal the broken relationship until the abuser has completed what will hopefully be a 52 week court-mandated class on abuse, and then only if the woman desires to return to the relationship. Bear in mind that out of all the men who have been convicted on DV charges, only about 7% will change their behavior and their perceptions about how they should treat women. Maybe if we consistently teach children about respecting each other we can change that outcome in the future.
- 9) Support PADVN with an annual membership, and make use of their resources.
- 10) Always be prepared on what to say or not say to a victim. Offer to listen, and be patient and not pushy. Again, check out the wonderful PADVN resources for pastors and just about anyone.
- 11) Offer assistance to caregivers in your congregation. Form a group of people who will offer respite to those who care for elderly relatives or others with chronic illnesses. Realize how overwhelmed they may feel. Caregiver depression or resentment is thought to predict a higher incidence of abuse and neglect, and caregivers can be helped to avoid faulty coping mechanisms such as smoking, drinking or overeating. Contact me or your local DV educators if you want to conduct workshops in your community or at your church.

It's not just someone else's problem; domestic violence, in all its forms, damages all of us. Our God wants everyone to have abundant life. We know for certain that the Golden Years should not be black and blue.

Thanks, and God bless you!



## **Domestic Violence Themed Worship Services**

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A ministry of the Compassion, Peace and Justice program area, Presbyterian Mission Agency  
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## **A Service of Commitment to Survivors of Family Violence\***

The following Order of Service was designed by an ecumenical group in Cleveland to highlight the issue of family violence and break the silence that surrounds it. It is offered as an example of the kind of service that can be conducted.

### ***Bringing the Secret to Light***

#### ***Call to Worship***

#### ***First Reading*** Ephesians 5:11-17

We are called to expose the secret

#### ***Silent Reflection***

#### ***Communal Confession***

**God of Mercy, we confess that we are humbled and frightened by the anger, hatred, and violence we know is rampant in our society and in the world, and which we sometimes feel within ourselves. We acknowledge our unwillingness to see the secret of violence locked within our private lives. We confess our unwillingness to hear the voices of pain that need to be heard out of the loud silence. We feel our numbness to the suffering of both the victims and perpetrators of violence, numbering among them ourselves.**

**God of Forgiveness, we come before you from the pseudo-sanctity of the house that harbors hidden violence. We confess that this is where we all reside. We have been participants by our complacency when we would be compassionate; by being judgmental when we would be empathic; by thinking ourselves outside the family of violence when we would be spiritual kin. Hear now, our silent personal confession.**

***Hymn*** "By the Babylonian Rivers"

#### ***Assurance of Pardon***

#### ***Second Reading*** Luke 13:10-13

Our hope lies in the sign of a woman whose life was unbent by the healing power of God.

#### ***Silent Reflection***

#### ***Statement of Belief and Commitment***

*We believe in God the Creator,*  
who created all things and all persons as good,  
who entrusted the care of all things and all persons to other persons so that we might preserve,  
maintain, and foster that goodness.

We acknowledge that we humans have not always been faithful to that trust.  
We have turned God's original blessing into a source of original sin.  
We have failed to nurture God's goodness and have created violence even in our families.

Despite our failure, we continue to believe in the goodness of God's creation.

We believe in Jesus the Christ, our redeemer and healer

who proclaimed and lived the true love which brings all persons to their fullness,  
who gave himself into the violence of the cross so that all violence and death could be overcome by his resurrection.

We believe in the Spirit, the Sanctifier,  
who enlivens us with the spirit of truth and love,  
who challenges us with the spirit of wisdom and justice to heal all divisions, remove all violence, and reaffirm all goodness that families may be made one, persons may be made whole, and all people may come to the fullness of peace through a community of believers committed to acknowledging family violence among us, removing its causes, and healing its results.

Yes, we believe, we believe that God has created goodness, Jesus has bought healing, The Spirit proclaims peace for all families. **Amen.**

***Prayer of Intercession***

Sisters and brothers, we acknowledge that violence exists in families in our land, and we commit ourselves to exposing that violence and freeing those who suffer such violence from its crippling effects. Therefore, let us pray.

For children who suffer pain, degradation, and rejection from those responsible for their care,  
**Grant them safety and protection, Lord.**

For parents who suffer the anguish of their failures as parents,  
**Grant them insight and healing, Lord.**

For women who are abused and battered by those who profess to love them,  
**Grant them strength and courage, Lord.**

For men who batter those they love,  
**Grant them the repentance which can change their lives, Lord.**

For all those who suffer violence in their families,  
**Grant them love, solace, and healing, Lord.**

For all Christians and people of good will,  
**Grant them openness to and compassion for those who suffer family violence, Lord.**

Lord God, God of Love and Creator of the universe, restore all families to your loving care, Teach them calm strength and patient wisdom that they may overcome arrogance and division as well as anger and violence, that they may resolve conflicts without violence, and nurture one another in the spirit of love and peace proclaimed by Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

***Charge and Benediction***

\*Used by permission of James Leehan, author of *Pastoral Care for Survivors of Family Abuse* [Westminster/John Knox Press; Louisville, Kentucky] from which this service was taken.

## A SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE AND HEALING

### PRELUDE

### CALL TO WORSHIP

from Psalm 55

Leader: Give ear to my prayer, O God. Do not hide yourself from my supplication.

**People: Attend to me, and answer me; I am troubled in my complaint. I am distraught by the noise of my enemy because of the clamor of the wicked.**

Leader: My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me.

**People: Fear and trembling have come upon me, and horror overwhelms me.**

Leader: It is not my enemies that taunt me—I could bear that; it is not my adversaries who deal insolently with me—I could hide from them.

**People: 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.**

### \* OPENING HYMN

*There Is a Balm in Gilead*

*Hymn 394*

### \* CALL TO CONFESSION

### \* PRAYER OF CONFESSION (unison)

**Holy God of Justice and Mercy, from the time we are very young children in our society, we are taught to respect and embody the authorities of power and force. We acknowledge these forms of strength can be both positive and negative within the international arena, but we confess that we know that when power and force define the way we relate within the interpersonal arenas of our lives, they damage and destroy relationships and life itself. We confess, Lord, and acknowledge that control destroys relationships and people.**

**Teach us to enact your wisdom and your grace in our relationships. Teach us that it takes greater strength to be gentle than it does to be cruel, that it takes stronger personal discipline to demonstrate change than to coerce it, and that it takes deeper love to accept the imperfections of those we love, than it does to punish them into change. Help us, Lord, as we strive to be the Love and Justice of Jesus Christ to those around us, and open us to the cries against domestic violence within our communities before more lives are destroyed.**

*[After Silent Confession]*

**Lord, we confess our complacency by thinking that violence occurs in some other part of the country rather than here. We confess our helplessness in thinking we can do nothing as Christians who serve a God of Love, we confess our hopelessness that the Lord of Resurrection life cannot live and reign in the violence of our society. Lord, hear our prayer, and grant us courage and hope. We pray in Christ's name.**

**\*RESPONSE TO CONFESSION**

*By the Waters of Babylon (Sung twice)*  
Hymn 245

**DECLARATION OF PARDON** (*unison*)

Despite our failure, we continue to believe in the goodness of God's creation. We believe in Jesus the Christ, our redeemer and healer, who lived among us in a human family, who proclaimed and lived the true love which brings all persons to their fullness, who gave himself into the violence of the cross so that all violence and death could be overcome by his resurrection. We believe in the Spirit, the Sanctifier, who enlivens us with the spirit of truth and love, who challenges us with the spirit of wisdom and justice to heal all divisions, remove all violence, and reaffirm all goodness that families may be made one, persons may be made whole, and all people may come to the fullness of peace through a community of believers committed to acknowledging family violence among us, removing its causes, and healing its results. Yes, we believe, we believe that God has created goodness, Jesus has brought healing, the Spirit proclaims peace for all families. Amen.

**\*\*REMEMBERING THE WATERS OF BAPTISM**

As votive candles are placed in the baptismal font, worshippers are invited to say:

"We place a candle in the Baptismal font to remember; to remember that by water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice; to remember that it is through Baptism that we enter into the covenant that God has established; and that through Baptism we are claimed as God's own. We light this candle to remember the life of ( name ), precious child of God, a member of our worshipping body and now one of the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before us. As we light this candle we remember that God claimed ( name ) through Baptism and we also remember our own Baptism, God's visible sign of God's invisible grace.

**\*HYMN 260**

***A Mighty Fortress Is our God***

**Prayers for Healing** (*adapted from Caroline Sproul Fairless*)

God of grace, you nurture us with a love deeper than any we know, and your will for us is always healing and salvation. God of love, you enter into our lives, our pain, and our brokenness, and you stretch out your healing hands to us wherever we are. God of strength, you fill us with your presence and send us forth with love and healing to all whom we meet.

**We praise and thank you, O God.**

God of love, we ask you to hear the prayers of your people. We pray for the world, that your creation may be understood and valued. Touch with your healing power the minds and hearts of all who live in confusion and doubt, and fill them with your light. Touch with your healing power the minds and hearts of all who are burdened by anguish, despair, or isolation, and set them free in love.

**Hear us, O God of life.**

Break the bonds of those who are imprisoned by fear, compulsion, secrecy, and silence. Fill with peace those who grieve over separation and loss.

**Come with your healing power, O God.**

Restore to wholeness all those who have been broken in life or in spirit by violence within their families; restore to wholeness all those who have been broken by violence with our family of nations, restore to them the power of your love; and give them the strength of your presence.

**Come, O God, and restore us to wholeness and love.**

Let us name before God and this community gathered, those, including ourselves, for whom we seek healing...

*(those gathered may name individuals silently or aloud)*

... that they, in our remembering, may find sanctuary and shalom.

**In our homes, our workplaces, our communities, our churches, and in this world.**

We lift up before you this day all those who have died of violence.... *(those gathered may name individuals silently or aloud)*

**... in that place where there is no pain or grief, but life eternal.**

O, God, in you all is turned to light, and brokenness is healed. Look with compassion on us and on those for whom we pray, that we may be re-created in wholeness, in love, and in compassion for one another.

**So, let it be so!**

**PASTORAL PRAYER**

**READING OF HOLY SCRIPTURE** Judges 19

**SERMON** *Clinging To the Threshold of Hope*

**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** 1979 PCUS Declaration of Faith

**In the death of Jesus Christ, God's way in the world seemed finally defeated. But death was no match for God. The resurrection of Jesus was God's victory over death. Death often seems to prove that life is not worth living, that our best efforts and deepest affections go for nothing. We do not yet see the end of death. But Christ has been raised from the dead, transformed and yet the same person. In his resurrection is the promise of ours. We are convinced the life God wills for each of us is stronger than the death that destroys us. The glory of that life exceeds our imagination but we know we shall be with Christ. So we treat**

**death as a broken power. Its ultimate defeat is certain. In the face of death we grieve. Yet in hope we celebrate life. No life ends so tragically that its meaning and value are destroyed. Nothing, not even death, can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.**

## **AN INVITATION TO DISCIPLESHIP**

**\*CLOSING HYMN 332**                      *Live Into Hope*

**\*CHARGE AND BENEDICTION**

**\*POSTLUDE**

\*Please rise, in body or in spirit.

\*\*This ritual, developed by PADVN member Bonnie Orth, reminds us of the eternal presence of God who assures us that, even in tragedy, we are profoundly loved by God and Christ. Following the placement of candles in the font, participants who lost family members are invited forward to kneel at the baptismal font for the laying on of hands. Other survivors or individuals who have experienced domestic violence in their own families were encouraged to be the inner circle of folks laying on hands, with the rest of the congregation invited to stand behind them and lay on hands in prayer.



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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**



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**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 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**



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**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.



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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.*



## **Bulletin Inserts**

PACT – PAN – PADVN - PARO - PASPM – PCAN – PCJN – PDC – PHN - PSMIN  
A ministry of the Compassion, Peace and Justice program area, Presbyterian Mission Agency  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
P.O. 4961, Louisville, KY 40204-0961  
<http://www.phewacommunity.org/> and <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa>

## **Domestic Violence Awareness**

### **The facts about domestic and sexual violence**

**Statistics** of domestic violence (or intimate partner violence) within the United States (from the FaithTrust Institute: <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org> )

1.3 million women are estimated to be victims of physical assault by an intimate partner every year.

85% of victims of domestic violence are women.

Women aged 20-24 are at the greatest risk of non-fatal intimate partner violence.

Most instances of domestic violence are never reported to police. 60% of all sexual assaults are not reported to police.

Witnessing violence between one's parents or caretakers, as a child, is the strongest risk factor in transmitting violence between generations – boys who witness violence are twice as likely to abuse their own partners and children.

30% - 60% of perpetrators of intimate partner violence also abuse children in the household.

1 in 6 women and 1 in 33 men will be a victim of sexual assault in their lifetime.

College-aged women are 4 times more likely to be sexually assaulted.

Approximately 73% of rape victims know their assailants.

In a 2011 Centers for Disease Control (CDC) survey, 9.4% of high school students reported being physically hurt by their boyfriend or girlfriend within the past 12 months.

Approximately 1 in 3 adolescent girls in the U.S. are victims of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.

1 in 5 youth aged 13-14 say their friends are victims of dating violence.

## **FACTS and Frequently Asked Questions**

Domestic violence (or intimate partner violence) is a pattern of coercive and assaultive behaviors that include physical, sexual, emotional/psychological attacks, and/or economic coercion. The violence is about power and control over a partner. Domestic violence is learned behavior, coming from observation, experience, and reinforcement from within families, communities, and culture. It is not caused by genetics, illness, drugs and alcohol, anger, stress, or by the behavior of the victim.

Anyone can be a victim of intimate partner violence; there are no specific categories of typical victim/survivor profiles. Likewise, batterers also come from all contexts.

Signs of intimate partner violence include evidence of physical assault, harassment, controlling or jealous behavior, stalking, and possessive behavior by partners, and isolation from friends, family, and neighbors.

**What can I do to be helpful if an abusive situation is revealed?** (from the FaithTrust Institute: <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org> )

- Listen to the victim and believe her. Tell her that the abuse is not her fault, and is not God's will.
- 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, a 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 the abuser has begun a counseling program.
- If reconciliation is to occur, it can be considered only after the above steps have taken place.

Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)



*“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.faithtrustinstitute.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.



## **Domestic Violence Sermons**

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## *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.



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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.



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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



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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:



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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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Presbyterians Against Domestic  
Violence Network

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

## 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



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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



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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 - 27<sup>th</sup> 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 – 28<sup>th</sup> 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



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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 – 29<sup>th</sup> 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 25<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> 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,



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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?



## **Domestic Violence Themed Worship Resources**

PACT – PAN – PADVN - PARO - PASPM – PCAN – PCJN – PDC – PHN - PSMIN  
A ministry of the Compassion, Peace and Justice program area, Presbyterian Mission Agency  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
P.O. 4961, Louisville, KY 40204-0961  
<http://www.phewacommunity.org/> and <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa>



**PRESBYTERIANS AGAINST  
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## October Domestic Violence Awareness Sunday

### Call to Worship

*From Psalm 106: 1-5*

**Leader:** Praise the Lord! O give thanks to the Lord for God is good.

**People:** **God's steadfast love endures forever.**

**Leader:** Happy are those who observe justice, who do righteousness at all times.

**People:** **Remember me, O Lord, when you show favor to your people;**

**Leader:** Help me when you deliver them

**People:**

**That I may experience the blessings of your chosen ones,**

**Leader:** That I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation.

**People:** **That I may glory in your heritage.**

### Prayer of Confession:

**Great God of justice and righteousness, you call us as your people into a covenant relationship of love and compassion. We acknowledge the alarming degree of brokenness in families all around us. We lift up the victims of family violence who know the pain of broken trust, even from those who promised to love and protect them.**

**We know that your will for families is based on the foundations of love and peace, joy and mutuality, justice and righteousness. Sadly, there are many families who struggle with fear and jealousy, control and anger, manipulation and abuse in their daily lives. Forgive us, O Lord, for our silence when others suffer. Guide our families with Christ's love and peace. We pray in Christ's name. Amen**

### \*Litany

*(From Philippians 4: 8-9 and from facts and statistics derived from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence- May 2014 and from World Health Organization International Statistics on Domestic Violence- October 2013)*

**Leader:** Finally beloved, Whatever is true:

**People:** **One in every four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. An estimated 1.3 million women in the U.S.A. are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year.**



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**Leader:** Whatever is honorable:

**People:** Witnessing violence in the home is the strongest risk factor of transmitting violent behavior from one generation to the next.

**Leader:** Whatever is just:

**People:** Almost one third of female homicide victims, as reported in U.S. police records, are killed by an intimate partner.

**Leader:** Whatever is pure:

**People:** Globally, 35% of women have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

**Leader:** Whatever is pleasing:

**People:** Sexual assault or forced sex occurs in approximately 40 to 45% of battering relationships.

**Leader:** Whatever is commendable:

**People:** Boys who witness domestic violence are twice as likely to abuse their own partners and children when they become adults.

**Leader:** If there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise:

**People:** Globally, risk factors for being a victim of intimate partner and sexual violence include- low education, witnessing violence between parents, exposure to abuse during childhood and attitudes accepting violence, and gender inequality.

**Leader:** Think about these things.

**People:** In the U.S., intimate partner violence results in more than 18.5 million mental health care visits each year.

**Leader:** Keep on doing the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

**People:** The contrast of your will for our relationships and the reality within our society is staggering, O God. Teach us anew to be guided by Jesus Christ to serve as witnesses of hope to all victims. We pray in the name of the Prince of Peace, Amen.

## **You Are Not Alone!** **The Ministry of CEDEPCA and their Women's Ministry**

There was a sadness that hung on Marta like a heavy snow drooping on tree branches. She was pregnant, rubbing her belly, and behind her she towed two beautiful little girls. I was drawn to her the minute she walked through the door.

I met Marta at a workshop at the Nazarene Church Civvencorral as part of a three-workshop series in Cobán, Guatemala, called, Owing Our Rights, facilitated by the Rev. Delia Leal, Betty LaPaz Carrerra, and me.

We began our workshop introductions which led right into the first exercise, making prayer braid necklaces. Each woman was given three strips of beautiful batik fabric and was instructed to pray as they created a braided necklace. One strip of fabric represented God; one strip represented themselves; and one strip for someone or something they wanted to pray for. The women quickly began their assignment; many were working rapidly, holding the strips of fabric with their chins to keep them secure, and smiling while they worked.

Marta was working hard and she was praying out loud as she worked. Pain was etched into her being. Her brows were furrowed and you could tell that she was in deep communion with God.

Delia had taken the children off to the side, away from the circle, to create their own necklaces. As I looked over at Delia and the children, I could see that Delia was totally engaged with the children and there were tears running down her cheeks.

At the end of our workshop we did prayer balloons. Each woman wrote a prayer and folded it and put it into a balloon. Then we blew up the balloons and, at a signal, let them go. As they flew around the room, each woman was to run to get someone else's balloon and then to open the prayer and stop and pray for that woman.

Marta ran fast when she released her balloon and quickly gathered her own prayer back. She handed me her prayer and asked me if I would pray for her. The prayer said, "Dear God, please protect my baby son. My husband has kicked me in the stomach and the doctor said there is something wrong with my baby. Please God, help my baby!"

As Delia, Betty, and I gathered to reflect on our workshop, Delia shared what the children were praying for as they made their necklaces. Yairsa, who is eight years old, prayed that her father would stop drinking alcohol and hitting her mother. She said, "My

father works in a car workshop, he is a mechanic. He arrives home drunk and makes trouble. He shouts and hits my mother.”

Ashlie, who is four, told Delia, “We get very scared all the time. One time he arrived at home drunk and took my toy doll and stabbed it with a knife. He destroyed it, pulled out all the cotton that was inside of it and I was left without a toy.”

“When he comes home drunk, our mother tells us to get out of the house and stay on the street until our father goes to sleep,” Yairisa added. “We hide ourselves on the street. We are scared on the street, not really knowing where to hide, but our mother tells us we are safer there. When our father finally falls asleep, our mother comes out on the street to look for us and tells us that we can come home. This is the reason that I want to pray that my father won’t drink anymore. We are worried about the baby.”

Like many women living in domestic violence situations, Marta and her children live day to day in danger. They must constantly be prepared to seek safety. Marta is forced to make decisions for her children that many of us would think are very dangerous, but she is protecting her children in the only way that she can. This workshop gave Marta hope. It helped her to understand that she is not alone, and that others understand and pray for her. She was encouraged to know there are many women throughout the world who live in similar situations.

The Women’s Ministry has been an integral part of CEDEPCA (the Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America) since its inception. Offering workshops and classes to women throughout Central America, CEDEPCA works to promote the dignity and self-esteem of women.

Please pray for Marta and Yairisa and Ashlie and their new baby. Please pray for CEDEPCA, for their ministry in this very important area.

The Reverend Bonnie M. Orth, Pastor, Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church, Mayfield, New York and member of PHEWA’s Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN) Leadership Team. Bonnie serves on the Board of Directors of CEDEPCA USA:  
<http://www.cedepca.us/index.html>

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Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org>

## What Can Your Congregation Do About Domestic Violence? A Lot!

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month. One in 3 women worldwide will be victims of domestic violence in their lifetime. Domestic violence knows no racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic boundaries. Victims can be young or old and of any income or job skill level. Often family and friends know that something is wrong but they are not sure how to respond.

Churches have traditionally been silent when it comes to domestic violence. This stance can make it difficult for victims to receive spiritual support when they need it most. Often, pastors are unsure what to say or do, so nothing is done. The good news is that there is a lot that churches can do. The following is a list of ways that churches can help raise awareness and respond better.

If someone is in immediate danger, the local authorities should be contacted immediately and their advice followed. The following list is not meant to be used in immediate emergencies but to raise awareness within a worshiping church congregation.

These are small steps that can yield big results for victims within your congregation!

1. Pray for victims, survivors, and perpetrators during prayers of the people. Address domestic violence from the pulpit.
2. Print the local domestic violence helpline in the church bulletin at least once a month, preferably every week.
3. Put domestic violence posters, with local telephone numbers to call, in the stalls of the rest rooms. Your local domestic violence agency will be happy to provide them to you.
4. Educate, educate, educate. Do a Bible study on domestic violence. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) provides *Anguished Hearts*, a seven-session study for congregations on domestic violence. A brand new 13-session study called *Men in the Mirror, Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity* has just been released written by The Rev. Dr. Kevin Frederick, Moderator of Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN). See: <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn>.
5. Bring in someone to do training for your pastor and leaders on domestic violence.
6. Get involved in helping your local program and shelter. Have a shelter shower. Choose an item of the month to collect to donate to the shelter. Ideas for items of the month include:

backpacks and school supplies for children, stuffed animals, clothing, or used cell phones. They can best advise of their current needs.

7. Does your church collect a fifth Sunday collection? Donate a fifth Sunday to your local shelter.

8. Have a resource table for Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Contact your local domestic violence agency for resources. Many resources are also available on the PADVN websites: <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org>. Stay connected by taking out a PADVN/PHEWA membership there.

9. Download bulletin inserts from PADVN for use during Awareness month (and throughout the year).

10. Talk to the youth of your church about healthy dating relationships.

The Reverend Bonnie M. Orth, Pastor, Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church, Mayfield, New York and member of PHEWA's Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN) Leadership Team. Bonnie serves on the Board of Directors of CEDEPCA USA:  
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## 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.



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## 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."*



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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.

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## 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.**



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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.*



Presbyterians Against Domestic  
Violence Network

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

## 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.



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## 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."*



Presbyterians Against Domestic  
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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*



Presbyterians Against Domestic  
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## 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.**



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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.

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## **One Pastor's Response to Tragedy**

### Part I, What Happened

On May 2, 2012 in the Phoenix suburb of Gilbert, Arizona, five members of the same family, including Lisa, age 47, her daughters Amber, 23, and Brittany, 19, Amber's daughter Lily, 15 months, and Amber's fiancé, Jimmy, huddled together behind locked doors. They were hiding from Lisa's ex-boyfriend, J.T. Ready, an individual who was well known locally because of his out-spoken anti-immigrant views and links with neo-Nazi organizations. Mr. Ready also had a history of abusive behavior towards Lisa and threats to Amber's fiancé. Suddenly the family heard a loud noise as a truck crashed into their garage. Within minutes, four of these five individuals were dead. Brittany had managed to hide under a bed in the back room before the shooting started.

Across the nation in the mountains of Western North Carolina, Lisa's parents received the phone call that every parent dreads. The details they heard exceeded their worst nightmares.

"Mr. Holmquist, I am sorry to tell you that Lisa, Amber, her fiancé and Lily have all been killed by Lisa's former boyfriend in a domestic homicide. He then took his own life. Brittany is safe and unharmed but badly shaken by this event."

For Rolf and Diane Holmquist, members of the Burnsville, North Carolina, First Presbyterian Church community, a huge part of life, as they had known it, ended. The days ahead were filled with planning and memorial services in Arizona and in North Carolina. At Burnsville Presbyterian Church, members who had known and loved Rolf and Diane for years, as well as other residents of that small mountain town, came together to grieve with them.

As a minister member of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina, I was notified along with all of the pastors about this grievous event. In my capacity as co-chair of the Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA), I contacted the Holmquists to offer our assistance to them. Ten days later I met them face to face. Their own pastor, Interim Bill Lindemann, was providing effective pastoral care but Rolf, a visual artist in his early seventies, wanted more than pastoral care. He wanted to redirect his life efforts to effectively addressing the problem of domestic violence and welcomed the opportunity to talk with me.

“Kevin,” he said, “God is calling me to service as a result of this terrible tragedy.”

After further conversation with them, it became evident that the Holmquists and their congregation would need additional help in absorbing this horrific tragedy. It was decided that I would come to First Presbyterian in Burnsville for an evening presentation on Domestic Violence. This would be followed by a worship service in the sanctuary to include the larger community.

The afternoon of the presentation and worship service, I arrived at the Holmquist home and met with Rolf and Diane, Bill Lindemann, and Joe Bennett, a Presbyterian hospice chaplain and family friend. We discussed the plans for the upcoming evening and listened as Rolf and Diane reflected further on the tragedy that had devastated their lives. After an hour and a half we headed to the church.

It was then that I really noticed the full beauty of their natural surroundings; their home is nestled in a mountain cove with the mountain’s profile looming in the background. Rolf observed that it had provided a healing peace to them. And then as I followed their car to the church, I noticed the powerful message on the back window of their blue jeep. It was a large window decal of a red filigreed cross with the words, ‘In Loving Memory’ and underneath, the names of the four victims, each birth date listed separately, but with a shared date of death: May 2, 2012.

Generally speaking, I have never cared for this type of memorial tribute, but in this case I was struck by the magnitude of seeing all four names with the same date of death. I was also impressed by the brave witness of this retired couple, breaking the silence against Domestic Violence whenever they drive, thinking that it will always serve as a painful reminder to them of their loss. And then I realized that while the reminder is there for the world to see, that reality is already deeply seared onto their hearts and will be present with the Holmquists in every breath they breathe until their dying day.

The Rev. Dr. Kevin Frederick

## **It's Never Too Late to Break The Silence; A Story of Hope and Restoration**

I recently lost my mother. She was ninety-two years old, although she only admitted to being thirty-nine. She was one of the most courageous women I have ever known. She was an immigrant, born in Mandal, Norway. She came to this country at age seventeen, to visit her aunt, a seamstress in New York City. While she was here, the Nazis invaded Norway and she was not able to return home. She got a job as a nanny and began to learn English. She met and married my father and had three daughters.

On her eighty-fifth birthday, my mother gathered her three daughters and shared with us that the reason that she had married my father was because he had raped her and she became pregnant with my sister. After eighty-five years, she broke the silence and finally named the violence that she had lived with for her entire marriage.

My father was an abusive man, to her and to us. Domestic violence was that dirty secret that she could not hide from us because we lived with it, although we rarely spoke of it. But the shame of the rape stayed hidden and buried all those years, even for twenty years after my father's death.

Why, at eighty-five? Why, on her birthday? Could it be because she had watched one of her daughters walk away from an abusive marriage, to find healing and restoration? Could it be that she finally decided that she deserved a birthday present for herself? She never told us why.

When my mother finally verbalized her terrible secret, you could visibly see the weight fall from her shoulders. Her tiny frame, sitting in her wheelchair, suddenly appeared much taller. Her face showed a resilience and an even stronger determination than we were used to seeing.

The final seven years of my mother's life were filled with happiness and joy, despite her many health issues and her paralysis of over thirty years. People would look at her and say, "You poor lady!" My mother would respond, "I am the luckiest woman in the world!" And, amazingly, she truly believed that!

Breaking the silence, for my mother, brought hope and restoration.

The Reverend Bonnie M. Orth, Pastor, Mayfield Central Presbyterian Church, Mayfield, New York and member of Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN)

## Prayers of Invocation

God of wondrous love,  
you have touched us  
and never left us in despair.  
You have held us  
in our grief and chaos.  
You have never deserted us.

You paid us a visit  
and your visit has never ended.  
You clung to us  
when we were given up for dead.

In life and in death--  
you raise us anew!  
This we know!  
This we experience!  
This is your word of assurance!

God of wondrous love,  
touch us again in this time.  
Stay with us--  
as we continue healing  
our memories and lives.

In Christ's name, we pray. Amen

God with us,  
we have gathered with a sense  
of the sacredness of this space,  
aware of your presence flowing from one  
person to another.  
We come with our wounds wide open,  
with our defenses down,  
wearing our personal needs like placards,  
calling to you as did so many who  
approached Jesus,  
saying, "Heal me, help me, touch me!"  
We work hard at being happy,  
at coping, at surviving, at holding on,  
but we have come here hoping to let go  
and to open ourselves to Christ's healing  
flow.  
Touch our lives, our God, as we worship here  
today,  
and cast your sunlight through our tears till  
rainbows rise,  
and plant dreams where wounds leave scars  
like furrows in broken ground,  
rekindling our hope,  
reviving our strength,  
refreshing our faith.  
Amen.