

**TURN MOURNING INTO DANCING!
A POLICY STATEMENT ON HEALING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

and

STUDY GUIDE

Approved By
The 213th General Assembly (2001)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Developed By
The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy
of the General Assembly Council

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To: Stated Clerks of the Middle Governing Bodies, Middle Governing Body Resource Centers, Clerks of Sessions, and the Libraries of the Theological Seminaries

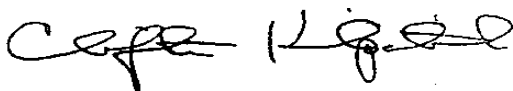
Dear Friends:

The 213th General Assembly (2001) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), in reliance upon God under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in exercise of its responsibility to witness to the Lordship of Jesus Christ in every dimension of life, has approved this policy statement "Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence." It is presented for the guidance and edification of the whole Christian Church and the society to which its ministers; and will determine procedures and program for the Ministries Divisions and staff of the General Assembly. This policy statement is recommended for consideration and study by other governing bodies (sessions, presbyteries, and synods). It is commended to the free Christian conscience of all congregations and the members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for prayerful study, dialogue, and action.

This policy statement is the result of a development process that included wide consultation and participation throughout the church, drawing upon biblical sources and insights from the Reformed tradition in giving renewed definition to Presbyterian understandings concerning the root causes of domestic violence and the church's complicity and response to the problem. The term "domestic violence" in this policy statement and its rationale is used as an inclusive term to broadly encompass the abuse found in child/child, parent/child, spouse/spouse, partner/partner, adult child/aging parent relationships, as well as violence that occurs in sibling and dating relationships.

The policy statement comes to you with a study and action guide, designed for personal and class use, in the hope that we may all become more aware of our call to be God's people in our daily lives and work.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clifton Kirkpatrick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "K".

Clifton Kirkpatrick
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly

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Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence

I. Policy

Mourning in Our Midst: a Life Story

With dark wide eyes four-year-old M. gazes into the camera. A dainty locket hangs around her neck. Two large white bows hold her hair in place atop her head. Her smile is tentative. By the time this photo was taken, M.'s father was already verbally and physically abusing her; he was sexually abusing her as well.

People in the church knew about the verbal and physical abuse, but no one intervened.

When M. was fourteen, her mother died. The sexual abuse became more frequent. Instead of allowing herself to feel the pain and humiliation, M. daydreamed it was happening to somebody else. Because her body belonged to that other person, she didn't have to remember the abuse later.

When M. quit attending church, no one came around to ask why.

Her senior year of high school, M. started attending another church. The pastor was supportive, loving. She told him about her father's abuse. In the privacy of his office and his house, he began to touch her body. Then he used it for his own gratification.

The pastor moved away. M. graduated from college and took a job in a distant city. Several times, for her own safety, she admitted herself into psychiatric wards. In therapy she began to remember the horrible things that had been done to her body. Her father was dead, so she could not confront him, but the pastor was still living. M turned to the church, demanding that it hold him accountable.

Her church responded that she was mentally ill; therefore, she couldn't be believed.

Later she wrote of her experience in a book, was even interviewed by a local newspaper. The people in her new church pretended they knew nothing about the book or article. No one spoke with her about the most defining experiences of her life.

When M. began to think of her future, she feared she would always be alone. It seemed inevitable, too, that she would have to spend the rest of her life in a mental hospital. She questioned how much longer she could hold on to faith in a God she tried to call "Father."

On August 22, 2000, at the age of fifty-two, M. took her own life.

A. Introduction

This policy statement represents the work of the Task Force on "Healing Domestic Violence: Nurturing a Responsive Church Community." The committee was formed in 1998 by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy in response to *Overture 97-3* from the Presbytery of East Iowa. The overture requested a policy on the issues of domestic violence as referred by the 209th General Assembly (1997). The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy developed a prospectus that called for the formulation of a task force whose purpose would be to "explore the root causes of domestic violence, to assess the church's complicity and response to the problem, and to propose a new policy statement with principles and recommendations to educate, develop preventive strategies and response criteria, and suggest ways to nurture a responsive church community." The prospectus went on to define the many types of relationships in which domestic violence occurs: child/child, parent/child, spouse/spouse, partner/partner, adult child/aging parent. The term "domestic violence" in this policy statement and its rationale is used as an inclusive term to broadly encompass the abuse found in each of these familial relationships as well as violence that occurs in sibling and dating relationships. [For more information about the task force's membership and procedure, see Appendix A.]

B. *Discipleship and Domestic Violence*

The ministry of the church in relation to domestic violence is an affirmation of discipleship responsibility. The *Book of Order* defines discipleship in a variety of ways, including the participation of the church

in God's activity in the world through its life for others by

- (a) healing and reconciling and binding up wounds,
- (b) ministering to the needs of the poor, the sick, the lonely, and the powerless,
- (c) engaging in the struggle to free people from sin, fear, oppression, hunger, and injustice,
- (d) giving itself and its substance to the service of those who suffer,
- (e) sharing with Christ in the establishing of his just, peaceable, and loving rule in the world. (*Book of Order*, G-3.0300c)

In A Brief Statement of Faith, PC(USA) professes that "the Spirit gives us courage . . . to hear the voices of peoples long silenced, and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace" (*The Book of Confessions*, 10.4).

After a long silence, the voices of victims and survivors of domestic violence are calling us. They call out for hope—that the violence will end, that they will find a safe space. They call out for justice—that those who have tried to usurp God's sovereignty will be brought to accountability. They call out for healing—that the Jesus who gave wholeness to the blind, the lame, and the outcast will transform their lives as well.

C. *Three Clear Goals*

We will hear the voices of victims and survivors and respond to their calls with the following goals: first, to protect the victims from further abuse; second, stop the abuser's violence and hold the abuser accountable; and third, restore the family relationship if possible or mourn the loss of relationship.

We have within our tradition many beliefs that can help us understand our responsibilities to victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. We believe the following:

- God's sovereignty over all the earth empowers us to take up God's world-transforming passion for peace and justice.

- Human beings are created in the image of God, an image restored to wholeness in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who freely offers abundant life to all.

- Human beings are created to live in right relationships with one another that include peace, love, respect, mutuality, dignity, and joy.

- Love of neighbor requires us to step beyond the boundaries of ethnicity, class, and religion and to do all that is within our power to provide sanctuary and promote healing.

- Jesus Christ embodies God's steadfast and gracious love and the possibility of transformation. Jesus Christ is the source of our hope

—that society will no longer accept violence as a norm;

—that healing, however measured, can come to those whose bodies and spirits have been gravely wounded; and

—that perpetrators can cease being violent and can be held accountable.

- In Baptism, we become members of the covenantal community, the Church. We are called to discipleship. We are called to be followers of Jesus Christ.

Like the man rescued by the Good Samaritan, victims of domestic violence call out for help. May the Spirit give us courage to hear their voices. May we offer them sanctuary, empathy, relationships of support, and opportunities for healing. Thus will we be proclaiming the Gospel.

Domestic violence desecrates God's good creation and violates God's commandments to love God and love our neighbor.

- We have been created to have integrity of body and spirit.

The inalienable togetherness of body and spirit is what it means to be a person, a good creation of God. Whether it be physical, sexual, emotional-psychological, or verbal, domestic violence inflicts harm and suffering on the whole person.

- We have been created to be free people.

We are created with the capacity to consent to relationships and to participate with others in decisions affecting our life. Through intimidation and silencing, abuse diminishes the power of victims to choose for themselves.

- We have been created to be in covenantal relationship with God and people.

God the Creator is preeminently a covenant-maker, the One who creates, sustains, and transforms the people of God. Domestic violence and abuse destroys covenants in which people have promised to treat each other with respect and dignity.

- We have been created to rejoice.

"[Our] chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy [God] forever" (*The Book of Confessions*, The Shorter Catechism, 7.001). Domestic violence works to destroy the capacity for rejoicing. Instead of experiencing delight, victims live in fear.

D. Acknowledging Our Complicity in Confession

Our tradition calls us to confess our sin and acknowledge our complicity.

As a people who believe that God intends for all to live with integrity of body and spirit in freedom, in relationship, and in joy, we confess the following:

- We have not always heeded the victims'/survivors' cries for help.

- We have too often offered the perpetrator/abuser cheap grace.

- We have not challenged a society that legitimates and promotes abuse through the portrayals of women, children, and men as objects in entertainment and advertisements.

- We have allowed, in our theology, representations of woman as the cause of sin, deserving of her demise, secondary in nature, needing to be controlled.

- We have misused the Holy Scriptures.

- We have misused the biblical teachings of the relationship of wives and husbands and children to 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 (especially in the context of marriage), children and other vulnerable people.

E. Domestic Violence and Its Manifestations

Domestic violence has several manifestations. Domestic violence is always a violation of the power God intended for good. It is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behavior, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners or vulnerable family members. In abusive relationships, perpetrators use their power in ways that inflict harm on others for the perpetrator's own need for power and control.¹

This need for power and control that results in violence can take many forms—physical, emotional (also known as psychological maltreatment), sexual, and neglectful.

Physical abuse is the use of brute force, such as hitting, biting, kicking, slapping, burning or scalding, to damage a person's body. Sometimes a weapon, such as a gun or knife, is used.

Emotional abuse is an attempt to control or intimidate a vulnerable person. Though it is often in combination with physical abuse, it can be inflicted without the perpetrator ever touching the body, as in hitting with words.

Sexual abuse is defined as a perpetrator's use of a victim for personal gratification. It may occur on a contact basis, such as involving the use of physical force (beating someone up, holding them down), the threat of force (such as the use of a gun or a weapon), or other forms of effective coercion. Incest is sexual contact between a parent-figure or a sibling, which usually involves physical or psychological coercion. Sexual abuse may also occur on a noncontact basis, as when the abuser forces the victim to watch a sexual act.

Neglect is the term used to describe situations in which parents or those responsible for the care of the individual fail to look out for their physical and emotional needs.

There is no avoiding the fact that violent behavior in our homes and in the larger society is most frequently directed against society's most vulnerable persons—children, women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and those with mental illness.

Child abuse refers to deliberate harmful actions by an adult, generally by a parent or parent surrogate, against a child. It may include use of or exposing a child to pornography, use of a child for sexual purposes—personal or commercial. Child neglect may involve abandonment, refusal to seek treatment for illness, inadequate supervi-

sion, health hazards in the home, ignoring a child's need for contact, keeping a child home from school repeatedly without cause.

Spouse/partner abuse is a pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult over another. It is not a marital conflict or a lovers' quarrel.

Elder abuse, while it involves the common forms of abuse, can also include depriving the person of food or clothing, withholding medications or health care, and taking financial advantage.

Sibling abuse, the abuse of one sibling in a family by another, is seldom reported to the authorities but excused as normal rivalry.

Dating violence is abuse that occurs in the context of a dating relationship.

Those with disabilities, such as physical, mental, and psychological, are often targets of abuse.

F. Domestic Violence Is of Epidemic Proportions

Domestic violence is of epidemic proportions. Its victims include children, youth, adults, and the elderly of every race, class, or religious affiliation. Domestic violence occurs in all types of family configurations and in every region of the United States, whether urban, suburban, or rural. Tragically, many cases go unreported. The following statistics, based on reported cases, are grim reminders of how prevalent the problem is.

- It is estimated that 50 percent of all women will be victims of battering at some time in their life;
- There are at least 4 million reported incidents of domestic violence against women every year;
- Between 15 percent and 25 percent of pregnant women are battered;
- Every year 13,000 acts of domestic violence are perpetrated against women in the workplace;
- In 1998 there were 3,154,000 reports of child abuse;
- Every year approximately 4.8 million women are raped by their intimate partner;
- An average of 28 percent of high school and college students experience dating violence at some time;
- The National Center on Elder Abuse estimates that in 1996 there were approximately 1.01 million cases, 2.16 million if self-neglect is included in the count;

- Research has shown that 40 percent to 60 percent of the known sexual assaults within the family are committed against girls 15 years and younger, regardless of region or culture (UNICEF study, May 2000).

G. *A Description of an Abuser*

Abusers can be anyone, old or young, male or female, professional or working class, of any income, race, religion, or culture. A few, when we see them at work, at church, and other localities during our day, appear ominous; most look respectable and trustworthy. During the period when the Task Force on “Healing Domestic Violence” met, two violent incidents in which Presbyterian men were the abusers made national headlines: a pastor who murdered his wife, and an employee of the Presbyterian Foundation who committed suicide after attempting to kill his female friend and her male friend.

Rapists engage in coercive and exploitative sexual behaviors against other persons, including children. Rape is almost always committed by males. We can distinguish between types of rapists according to whom they victimize: men who rape women and children within the family; men who rape within marriage and other intimate relationships; men who rape dates and acquaintances; men who rape strangers.

Child molesters target children for sexual exploitation. Acts of rape or other forms of sexual abuse may be perpetrated by family members (incest), trusted adult acquaintances, older children and youth, pedophiles, (those who target children of specific age and have multiple victims) and those who use children in the sex industry and/or for production of pornographic material.

Batterers inflict harm upon women, men, and/or children in their families or intimate acquaintances. A batterer physically, sexually, and psychologically abuses his or her spouse, partner, date, or children. Most often the batterer is male. Because they are most often the primary caregivers, and so have increased occasion, women, too, abuse others.

Verbal abusers use words to control and intimidate. They may be words that taunt, degrade, or threaten. Verbally abusive parents batter a child’s sense of self-esteem or frighten the child with threats to harm the child, a pet, or a favorite person. A verbally abusive spouse does more than nag or argue; he/she creates a hostile environment in which the abused party lives in fear.

For most abusers, violence is seldom a one-time occurrence. Quite often, a pattern of violence is passed on from one family generation to another and becomes the customary way for family members to relate to one another and others.

H. *Ethical Principles Grounded in Love, Justice, and Grace*

Ethical principles should guide us as we work to heal and end domestic violence.

The church should be a vehicle of God’s love, justice, and grace for victims and survivors. This will require an intentional process of becoming trustworthy partners in the process of mourning, healing, reconnecting. In ministering to victims and survivors, the church is called, first, to

1. help provide safety;
2. listen to victims/survivors as they break the silence, cry out, tell their stories, deal with the memory;
3. believe and validate victims’/survivors’ experiences;
4. acknowledge the injustice and let victim/survivors know that the violence perpetrated against them is not their fault;
5. respect the autonomy of victim/survivors, that is, their right to make their own decisions when they are ready;
6. offer a community of friendship and support to victim/survivors as they plan for future safety;
7. provide access to community services;
8. respect confidentiality; and
9. remember that God offers grace and hope for victims’/survivors’ healing.

Second, the church should be a vehicle of God’s love, justice, and grace for the abuser. In ministering to perpetrators, the church is called to

1. be clear that violent behavior is unacceptable and must stop;
2. encourage truth-telling and the acceptance of responsibility for their actions; and, in any case, reject the abuser’s rationalizations or blame of the victim;
3. insist that concrete action, such as attending a treatment group be essential to validate any promises to change;
4. offer hope for forgiveness and a call to discipleship; and
5. remember that God offers abusers grace for forgiveness and hope for change.

In responding to domestic violence, the church ministers to both victims/survivors and abusers and engages in advocacy for peace and justice in society. First of all, the

church works for changes in society so that violence is not accepted or in any way legitimated by the social and cultural realities. This means working for systemic change to the end that, while immediate needed care is provided to victims and survivors and abusers are held to strict accountability, changes are made in society to prevent future victims of violence and abuse. In addition, the church is responsible to engage in ongoing reflection and repentance regarding its own complicity in violence and to model by its life and witness, a nonviolent and Christ-centered way of relating to one another and to the world. In dealing with these systemic issues, the whole church witnesses to Jesus Christ.

II. Recommendations

Therefore, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy makes the following recommendations to the 213th General Assembly (2001), to the middle governing bodies, to sessions, to local leaders and members, to the theological seminaries, and to the Board of Pensions:

A. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 213th General Assembly (2001) direct the General Assembly Council to do the following:

1. Direct the General Assembly Council to establish a cross-divisional staff team with responsibilities related to domestic violence, including representatives of the Child Advocacy Office; Health Ministries; Older Adult Ministries; Presbyterian Health, Education, and Welfare Association; Presbyterian Peacemaking Program; Women's Ministries; National Network of Presbyterian College Women Network; Curriculum Publishing; and the Criminal Justice Program, charged with the responsibility to devise a plan for implementing the concerns of this policy and report to the 214th General Assembly (2002) to be taken into consideration in the planning for the 2003 Mission Budget and giving consideration to the following strategies:

a. Provide a listing of services, both in print and Web accessible, for each manifestation of domestic violence (spouse/partner, child, sibling, elder, date violence) with user-friendly guides for recognizing the symptoms of each form of abuse and its prevention, and a sample listing of appropriate possible referral agencies for a community coordinated response that can be adapted to include local community agencies.

b. Facilitate, with the middle governing bodies, a strategy to educate, train, research, and provide advocacy for healing domestic violence in church and society by assisting them in developing guidelines and training procedures for use by church leaders in local congregations.

c. Work with middle governing bodies and other appropriate entities to establish funding for and facilitate, with a middle governing body planning team, each year for

four consecutive years, a national conference (or regional conferences) to train presbytery representatives as facilitator/trainers in domestic violence and in nurturing a responsive church community. The initial conference will introduce domestic violence and offer a vision for a responsive and nurturing church environment, sharing available resources, and seeking feedback on ways to meet the needs of the congregations. The remaining three conferences, one each year, will focus on a different theme, allowing the church to gradually introduce a new emphasis in ministry, such as child abuse and sibling rivalry, spouse/partner abuse and dating violence, and elder abuse.

d. Foster awareness and participation in the congregations for the observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October), Sexual Assault Awareness Month (May), and Child Abuse Prevention Month (April). Also make available special liturgies relating to domestic violence (child abuse, sibling rivalry, spouse/partner abuse, dating violence, and elder abuse) and suggestions for programs.

e. Consider an office for dealing with the issues of domestic violence with a full-time staff position with support staff and a guarantee of funding (new moneys) for a four-year period.

f. Direct the development and expansion of its ministry and resources on sibling abuse and elder abuse, and evaluate the need for and availability of resources on child abuse, spouse/partner abuse, and dating violence, and produce resources as needed by the congregations.

g. Through the office on domestic violence, incorporate sex abuse prevention training in child and teen education programs and curricula.

h. Report this implementation plan to the 214th General Assembly (2002) and take it into consideration when planning for the 2003 Mission Budget.

2. Direct the Presbyterian Washington Office to do the following:

a. Monitor legislation involving domestic violence and related federal initiatives and advocate the church's policy.

b. Advocate support for daycare, shelters, social services, etc. that counteract the rise of violence and abuse in society.

c. Reaffirm the General Assembly's call to urge the United States Senate to ratify the United Nations Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and on the Rights of the Child.

d. Support policies, programs, and services that protect victims, hold offenders accountable for their

offenses, provide incarceration of and treatment for offenders of domestic violence and advocate for support for family members.

3. Direct the Criminal Justice Office in the Social Justice program area to continue to address the injustice of the criminal justice system, including but not limited to racism and sexism, in order to provide effective measures to ensure accountability for crimes involving domestic violence and appropriate rehabilitative treatment for offenders.

4. Direct the Child Advocacy Office to work for the eradication of the sexual and commercial exploitation of children.

5. Direct the Higher Education program area and the National Network of Presbyterian College Women, to make available or develop resources on dating violence and urge college chaplains to address the issue in sermons and in other communications with students.

6. Direct the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to instruct its task forces on disabilities and serious mental illness to include the dimension of domestic violence and its impact in their respective work.

7. Encourage all clergy, elders, deacons, church members, other church staff, and volunteers to

a. always report to the appropriate authority the abuse of children, the elderly, and those disabled in ways that prevent them from reporting the abuse themselves; and

b. after appropriate training, discuss with all victims/survivors their risk and safety options, and refer the victims/survivors to appropriate resources.

8. Encourage the presbyteries' committees on ministry to

a. require training on domestic violence for all candidates for ministry, for commissioned lay pastors, and for church educators;

b. request the theological seminaries, in which their candidates for ministry and church educators are enrolled, to include domestic violence issues and strategies for its healing in their curricula and field education training programs.

B. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 213th General Assembly (2001) urge the middle governing bodies to do the following:

1. Develop a presbytery/synod policy to guide the clergy and staff in the prevention and response to domestic violence in the presbytery.

2. Require education and training for all clergy, commissioned lay pastors, and church educators to recognize the causes and symptoms of abuse, to offer instruction for recognizing professional limitations and making appropriate referrals, to intervene appropriately in instances where abuse is reported or suspected, and on how to be part of a community coordinated response by providing a referral list for pastors of qualified agencies and psychotherapists for guidance and counsel.

3. Request presbytery and synod resource centers to acquire resources on the issues of domestic violence based on the bibliography in the appendices.

4. Encourage all congregations to offer workshops on domestic violence, utilizing *Striking Terror No More* and other resources.

5. Designate that a special fund be established at the presbytery level and in local congregations to help victims of domestic violence pay for counseling.

6. Appoint appropriate person(s) to attend the yearly national/regional training conferences on domestic violence and to coordinate the presbytery-wide effort to educate and train congregations in nurturing a responsive church community to prevent and heal domestic violence, either through a special task force or by utilizing existing structures.

7. Provide for the training of camping program leadership and counselors in domestic violence issues, especially in child abuse and dating violence.

8. Develop safety and risk-reducing policies and procedures for synod and presbytery-sponsored events, such as camps, retreats, youth gatherings, child care, and mission trips where children and youth are involved, and share such policies with congregations.

9. Be encourage to monitor legislation involving domestic violence and related local, state, and federal initiatives and to advocate the church's policy, and to support the efforts of ecumenical organizations in responding to these issues.

10. Encourage the presbyteries' committees on ministry to

a. develop and oversee regular pastoral review in a systematic fashion so that clergy who are victims of or perpetrators of domestic violence can be identified and helped;

b. adopt a policy to encourage clergy, elders, deacons, synod and presbytery staff, and volunteers always to report to the appropriate authority the abuse of children, the elderly, and those disabled in ways that prevent them from reporting the abuse themselves;

c. appoint a committee to research area resources for victims, survivors, perpetrators, and those who offer support to any of these;

d. urge clergy to include in the premarital counseling setting a discussion of the various forms of domestic violence;

e. review training and education in domestic violence of clergy coming from other denominations and, if deemed insufficient, provide training and educational opportunities.

C. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 213th General Assembly (2001) urge pastors, sessions, and congregations to do the following:

1. Make certain that pastors, church officers, people involved in caregiving ministries, and volunteers are trained to recognize and respond appropriately to domestic violence. This would include educating them about restraining orders, shelter visitations, and those actions that jeopardize women's, children's, and men's safety. Encourage churches and pastors to communicate to their children and youth that local resources addressing domestic violence are available and that their pastors and trained church educators are accessible and appropriate adults with whom to discuss real or potential domestic violence.

2. Preach about domestic violence through the ministry of the pulpit.

3. Address domestic violence through liturgy, prayers, stories, testimonies, minutes for mission, thematic worship, and Bible studies for the participation and empowerment of the faith community.

4. Consider providing for or sponsoring a shelter for abused women and children.

5. Develop a session policy to guide clergy and church officers in the prevention and response to domestic violence in the congregation, especially with regard to reporting child abuse. Appoint a committee with the two-fold purpose of researching and evaluating resources on healing domestic violence in the local community and reporting to session for follow-up action.

6. Offer meeting space in the church for victim/survivors. This involves creating a climate of openness, safety, and acceptance that encourages victims to speak of their pain, seek help, and discuss risk and safety options with other adult victims/survivors.

7. Encourage members of the congregation to learn about domestic violence; invite speakers from local community organizations; routinely include information in monthly newsletters, worship bulletins, and bulletin boards; and, provide shelter and crisis phone numbers, along with encouragement to seek assistance, on posters in

church restrooms.

8. Maintain an up-to-date listing in the church for referral to local community coordinated response agencies, such as domestic violence shelters, rape crisis centers, child protective services, etc.

9. Offer preventive programs for children and youth, similar to those offered in *Striking Terror No More*. Also, use available curricula that encourage values of gender equality and nonviolent conflict resolution.

10. Initiate or strengthen existing partnerships with other churches in the neighborhood to provide church school leaders/teachers with instructions on both the recognition and prevention of domestic violence, especially with respect to children, and to be familiar with the appropriate response and referral.

11. Participate with ecumenical, interfaith, and other community agencies (e.g., shelters) to offer services, education, and advocate on these issues to develop community coordinated prevention and response programs. Other forms of assistance could include providing services such as transportation, child care, chaplaincy, and emergency clothing distribution.

12. Provide religious persons who are willing and trained to minister to women and families in shelters.

13. Use trained leaders to provide parenting classes, support groups, and respite care for parents and other child and elder caregivers under pressure.

14. Use trained leaders to provide support groups for survivors of abuse.

15. Appoint a research committee to learn what resources are in the community. With the Presbyterian Washington Office, monitor opportunities for advocacy on domestic violence concerns and in their local governments to advocate for public policy initiatives that will bring community resources to bear in response to and prevention of domestic violence.

16. Promote legislation that requires hospitals to ask and report instances of domestic violence.

17. Oppose pornography, child prostitution, the sex industry, and the combination of violence and sex in the media. Support efforts to curb their spread.

18. Adopt screening guidelines and policies for all people who deal with children or youth in the church setting, and maintain a safe environment with see-through windows and open doors.

19. Be certain that liability insurance includes sexual abuse coverage.

D. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 213th General Assembly (2001) urge the theological seminaries to do the following:

1. Include domestic violence issues and strategies for detection, treatment, and prevention in their curricula and field education training programs.
2. Encourage faculties to engage in research on the causes of domestic violence and its physical, psychological, and spiritual impact on the individual and family.
3. Encourage faculties to engage in a cross-disciplinary study of domestic violence and to analyze the church's role in perpetuating and ending it.
4. Encourage faculties, students, and alumni to work across disciplines for societal change in areas related to domestic violence.
5. Continue to include clergy sexual misconduct issues and strategies for detection, treatment, and prevention in their curricula and field education training programs.

E. The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy recommends that the 213th General Assembly (2001) urge the Board of Pensions to do the following:

1. Periodically encourage its clergy members to monitor health concerns such as self care, stress management, attention to family relationships, reasonable workload, and collegial consultation and supervision.
2. Study how family members of clergy and of church members who are in the plan receive care and how that impacts where families go for help.
3. Continue and expand mental health coverage.

F. *A Challenge for Discipleship*

The 192nd General Assembly (1980) adopted *Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling*. In that statement we find these words: "Peace is the intended order of the world with life abundant for all God's children." Today the church's challenge for discipleship is to work at peacemaking in the most fundamental contexts—in homes across our country, in people's most intimate relationships, in nurturing our young.

Having confessed our complicity, the 213th General Assembly (2001) calls on the whole church to affirm God's gift of abundant life in Jesus Christ to all. The church promotes the respect and human dignity of all persons and through God's love and grace, their right to safety, nurture, care, and freedom from abuse and violence. The church commits itself to listen and to seek accountability. The church further commits itself and its resources to provide leadership in creating a just and compassionate

society.

We offer ourselves to you, O God, Our Creator. May we comfort and support sisters and brothers, children, youth, and elderly who live in fear and isolation. May our indignation over their wounds inspire us to work for justice. May we work to end violence. Amen.

To this end, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) submits the report "Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence" to the 213th General Assembly (2001) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and recommends that the 213th General Assembly (2001) approve the following additional recommendations:

1. Approve the policy statement and recommendations.
2. Receive the background rationale and appendixes (to be included in the published *Minutes*).
3. Approve the report as a whole for churchwide study and implementation.
4. Direct the Office of the General Assembly to publish the entire report "Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence" with background, bibliography, appendixes, and with a related study/action guide; and, direct the Stated Clerk to distribute it in published form to the sessions, middle governing bodies and their resource centers, and libraries of the theological seminaries, making additional copies available for sale to aid study and implementation efforts in the church, and to place the document as a whole on the Web).
5. Direct the Stated Clerk to encourage middle governing bodies, sessions, and individual members to give prayerful attention to this report as a help in responding to domestic violence within intimate relationships in their own homes, congregations, and in the communities where they live and work.
6. Call upon the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to monitor the implementation of the policy and recommendations on domestic violence periodically with a final report to the 219th General Assembly (2007).
7. Commend enthusiastically the members of the Task Force on "Healing Domestic Violence: Nurturing a Responsive Church Community" and express to them the church's gratitude for their work and contribution to the whole church in the development of the policy statement "Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence."

Rationale

This report and recommendations are in response to the following referral: *Overture 97-3. On Instructing the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy to Develop a Policy on the Issues of Domestic Violence to Present to the 211th General Assembly (1999)—From the Presbytery of East Iowa (Minutes, 1997, Part I, pp. 42, 47, 681–82).*

I. Introduction

The Sacrament of Baptism is a covenant-making ceremony marking our inclusion in the body of Christ. Baptism is not simply one ceremony, one event; it is an affirmation of the church's ongoing responsibility for care and nurture, spiritual formation, and sanctuary. It also marks the beginning of our call to discipleship.

Our model for this calling is Jesus Christ, whose ministry was characterized by his identification with the vulnerable: the poor, the children, the sick, the brokenhearted, the disabled, the outcast. His was a ministry that redefined neighbor and community, as in the parable of the Good Samaritan. It was a ministry that redefined leadership and discipleship, replacing messianic visions of domination and headship with caring for the least of these.

As Jesus ministered to the physical and emotional wounds of those who endured marginalization and mistreatment, we, through our baptism, are called to do the same. We are called to work toward "The Great Ends of the Church," as stated in our *Book of Order*. Two ends that seem particularly relevant to this paper are "the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship of the children of God," and "the promotion of social righteousness." Victims and survivors of domestic violence are children of God in need of "shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship." Their wounds call us to work for social righteousness.

How do we minister to them? How do we respond when the bodies and spirits of women and men, children, teens, the elderly, and the disabled are threatened? In a culture saturated with domestic violence, how do we, the church, become a resource of prevention and healing?

II. How Does Domestic Violence Desecrate God's Good Creation and Violate God's Commandment to Love God and Neighbor?

Our theology is grounded in our affirmation of the sovereignty of God. God's sovereign powers of creation and covenant-making mean the whole world is in God's hands. God's sovereign power refers to God's care: ears that hear the cry of the oppressed; eyes that see violation and injustice; hands that shelter and protect, mouths that comfort and confront. God's sovereign power means God has a world-transformative passion for peace and justice.

Thinking theologically about domestic violence compels us to think about power. In its most basic meaning, power is integral to our being; it is a basic element of living. Whenever we breathe or think or act, we make a claim on life, on the

world in which we live, and on God who gave us life. Whenever we develop and exercise our basic human capacities, we exercise our power of being. Secondly, power is always relational; it is an ingredient in the character and dynamics of relationships. Therein lies both the promise and the danger of power.

We can better understand the positive and negative possibilities of power by looking at four aspects of our common humanity and the theological understandings that inform them.

A. *We have been created to have integrity of body and spirit.*

We learn from Scripture that every human being is created in the image of God. The inalienable togetherness of body and spirit is what it means to be a person, a good creation of God. God expects us to respect the dignity of the person, that is to respect the integrity of body and spirit. Our spiritual well-being depends on this connection.

Domestic violence violates the integrity of body and spirit. Whether it be physical, sexual, emotional-psychological, or verbal, abuse is demeaning. It inflicts harm and suffering on the whole person. All too often the Christian community trivializes physical suffering on the grounds that "It's just the body." For God, the body is the temple of the spirit and is to be treated and cherished accordingly.

B. *We have been created to be free people.*

We have been created to respond freely to God and to one another. In the covenant-making assembly at Shechem, Joshua recounts the history of God's acts of deliverance and providence. After making clear the requirement of faithfulness, he puts the decision to the people gathered: "Choose this day whom you will serve." He asks the question three times, so there can be no question of the people's consent (Josh. 24:1–28). We are created with the capacity to consent to relationships and participate with others in decisions affecting our life together. Our freedom to speak and act, to envision new possibilities and change things, is the basis of our sense of responsibility—and the assumption behind our confession of sin.

Domestic violence violates human freedom. It acts against another's will, often through use of force or threat of force. Children and adults who are abused are denied the right to express their own wants and needs. It is not uncommon for abusers to deny victims the freedom of association, prohibiting them from spending time with friends or from participating in nurturing activities. Through intimidation and silencing, abuse diminishes the power of the victim to make choices.

C. *We have been created to be in relationship with God and people.*

The biblical witness offers extensive attention to covenantal relationships. God the Creator is preeminently a covenant-maker, the One who creates, sustains, and transforms the people of God. We are created through and for relationships, for love and friendship, for nurturing families, for building communities, for working together with others in productive

work, for caregiving and justice-making. Through these covenants we learn to trust the one who takes care of us and the one for whom we care.

Domestic violence violates the most intimate relationships we have. It destroys covenants in which people have promised to treat each other with respect and dignity. It destroys marriages, partnerships, and family ties. Often, too, abusers seek to isolate victims from friends, colleagues, and other church members. The absence of these relationships leaves victims feeling abandoned and isolated.

D. *We have been created to rejoice.*

The Shorter Catechism begins with the question: “What is the chief end of [humankind]?” The answer is, “Our chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy God forever.” Perhaps the distinctively Christian contribution to our understanding of humanity is the recognition and affirmation that human beings are created for rejoicing.

Domestic violence violates God’s plan for joyous living. Amnesty International recognizes domestic violence as a form of terror and torture. The church, as well, should recognize it as such, for it desecrates rejoicing and destroys the capacity for delight.

Domestic violence is always an abuse of power. This violence (whether physical, sexual, psychological/emotional, or verbal; whether perpetrated against children or adults) represents a violation of what it means to be human in the presence of God.

III. Why Should the Church Be Involved in the Issue of Domestic Violence?

A. *Biblical principles*

Through caregiving individuals and justice-making congregations, victims can seek and find the healing power of God. Four biblical principles can guide us in our efforts to help them.

1. *The church is called to be a place of sanctuary.*

Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings, I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by. (Ps. 57:1).

The God of the Psalms is a God who provides shelter; God even parts the waters so the Israelites can flee to safety. We, who are created in God’s image, are called to share this responsibility for the safety of neighbors and strangers alike (Ex. 22:21; Mark 12:31). The Bible calls for cities of refuge. Historically, churches have been considered places of sanctuary. We should take our sanctuary role seriously and explore its meaning for this issue.

Providing sanctuary to victims of domestic violence means

offering a place, sometimes physical space, sometimes emotional space, where they feel safe from the abuser. They need a place where it is safe to cry out and speak the truth, where they can consider alternatives for their future, where they can reconnect with community, and where they can recover.

We are thankful for churches that have become places of shelter and grace; that have partnered with rape crisis centers, battered women’s shelters, child and elder abuse prevention programs, and other organizations in their communities; that have become advocates for policies to end domestic violence.

2. *The church is called to be an empathetic community.*

I have observed the misery of my people . . . I have heard their cry . . . I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them . . . and to bring them . . . to a land flowing with milk and honey. (Ex. 3:7–8a)

Being the church means extending hospitality, welcoming the presence of abused persons and welcoming their cry/complaint of suffering. Too often, even when the church knows about the abuse, members shy away from acknowledging it. Some people feel awkward about approaching the topic; others, assuming the victim will feel shame, believe that saying nothing is the sensitive approach. We must break the silence that often hides abuse. When we allow the silence to be broken, we are practicing hospitality.

For the church, the grace of hospitality is deeply connected with empathy, the power of listening and feeling with another. The narrative of the Exodus begins when God calls on Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery. God’s power is, first, the power of empathy. Empathy is required of the human community as well. Again and again, the prophets challenge the people to have eyes to see the misery and ears to hear the cries of the wounded left for dead by the side of the road. Again, the power of the Holy Spirit, the Power present in Pentecost (Acts 2) and in the Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), represents a new power of speaking and listening that simultaneously affirms differences and breaks down dividing walls.

We do not, however, break down walls simply by listening and feeling sorry. We must use the power of “hearing-to-speech.”²² Hearing-to-speech means paying attention to three aspects of abused persons’ stories. They are the pain, fear and anger over the violation experienced; the sometimes ingenious coping skills victims have developed; and the faith that sustains them. Our empathy becomes empowerment for victims/survivors as they bless us with their story, as they find the courage to speak, as they reveal their resourcefulness, and as they witness to the faith that has sustained them.

As pastors and church members welcome abused persons to be fully present among us, we may find it difficult to listen and understand truths that are beyond our experiences. Besides, our culture has little tolerance for complainers or people who allow themselves to be revictimized. Empathy can

be still more difficult if the victim is of an ethnicity or class different than the one we are part of. Whether or not we share common experiences of abuse, whether or not the victims and we share cultural heritages, we can practice hospitality by allowing the silence to be broken and by responding to the victim's sense of abandonment and isolation.

3. *The church is called to be a covenantal community.*

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God” (Eph. 2:19).

Ultimately, hospitality leads to covenantal relationships. Having been isolated, the victims of domestic violence need community and solidarity.

We must remember that the covenant between God and the Israelites at Sinai is inseparable from the exodus; it presupposes the liberation from oppression. It was not a covenant between the Israelites and Pharaoh but, rather, a covenant of God that represents the formation of a people who choose and promise to bow down to no other god. Biblical covenant-making ought not be invoked to send spouses back into battering and other abusive relationships.

Being in covenant with victims is not just a matter of incorporating them into our way of being. In covenant we open our own life to interruption. Stanley Hauerwas says that churches often fail to fully understand that the welcoming, the hospitality, of baptism involves not only responsibility (the giving of care and nurture) but vulnerability to God, received through this new order. Likewise, ministry with those who experience domestic violence is a ministry of reciprocity. It requires our being vulnerable to another, our being willing to be changed by another.

Covenant relations presuppose responsibility. Sometimes this is expressed in ways that overstate a woman's duty to endure—or single-handedly transform—abusive relationships. But responsibility is increasingly recognized as the key to abusers' capacities to change. Don Shriver, a Presbyterian minister and president emeritus of Union Theological Seminary in New York, argues, “Forgiveness begins with memory suffused with moral judgment . . . a moral judgment of wrong, injustice, and injury.” Truth-telling, together with a judgment of wrong-doing, is basic. Accepting responsibility is key. This is the insight—and it is a theologically grounded insight—at the heart of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. Abusers are notoriously reluctant to acknowledge responsibility for their actions. Until they do, there is no healing for them nor safety for the abused.

Of course, this covenant tradition has been used against women, as if covenantal fidelity means maintaining a marriage at any cost. Over against this interpretation, we must explore whether the idea of covenant might suggest some important dimensions of justice for women, and between women and men in situations of domestic violence.

In covenant we commit ourselves and our resources. At the same time we open ourselves to being changed and challenged, for we are learning from those who have been abused as well as caring for them.

4. *The church is called to be a healing community.*

“You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy” (Ps. 30:11, NRSV).

Domestic violence can be life-threatening; it is an act of terror. Violence within the family betrays our most basic relationships. It is a violation of the integrity of body and spirit; it destroys trust, well-being, connection, joy. It isolates as it desecrates. For persons of faith, this is a spiritual crisis as well as a physical or emotional one.

Yet the testimony of persons who have been abused is this: healing happens. But healing is not instantaneous. It is hard work. It is spiritual work.

B. *Healing as transformation*

As the victim engages in this spiritual struggle of life-death proportions, the church community offers hope. It continuously reminds the victim in word and deed that God's plan is for all to have abundant life. The church witnesses to God's steadfast and empowering love as it offers presence and patience in the victim's/survivor's hard work of remembering, mourning, and forging a renewed sense of self as a person of integrity, dignity, worth, and future. In a church that has courageously broken the silence, survivors who have found healing feel free to share their stories, which in turn become powerful resources of hope for those who do not yet see possibilities for their own lives.

As the abuser seeks healing, the church community offers hope, the hope of transformation through accountability. For the abuser, healing happens not with an early and easy forgiveness but with the struggle to acknowledge accountability for the abuse of power. Remembering the words of the prophet Nathan to King David: “You are the man,” the church community may be called to confront even as it supports the journey from violence and denial to responsibility for turning to a new way of life. The church witnesses to Jesus Christ's ministry of grace and judgment as it struggles in its own life to model the new life to which Jesus' disciples are called. As it does so, it offers to others the hope that change is possible. For the abuser, accepting responsibility becomes a path to healing, to reclaiming one's self as a person of integrity, dignity, worth, and future.

Healing happens as those who have been abused participate in communities of mutual nurture. It does not come in a month, not even in a year or two. For many victims it is a lifelong struggle. Therefore, the church, too must be willing to offer nurture and hope for however long it takes.

The church can be a healing community when preaching

and teaching are seen through the eyes of the victim/survivor. For example, a sermon on forgiveness can be traumatic (and premature) for someone coming out of an abusive relationship. In healing faith communities pastors preach of God's love for people who are suffering; congregations and individuals lift up prayers on behalf of those who hurt and sing hymns of comfort and assurance.

Many survivors have testified to the importance healing rituals have played in their lives. For some these have been personalized services in which the abuse has been named and the victim blessed. For others they have been services of cleansing and prayer.

Ultimately the power of God is the power of turning mourning into dancing. Not that we join with the survivor in one then the other. No, healing occurs when mourning and dancing embrace, when we are able to dance as we mourn. While dancing is an energy that affirms the integrity of one's own being and life plans, it is also the energy to work with others for justice. Dancing refers to the affirmation that joy has returned.

Indeed healing warrants celebration, for we are witnessing transformation.

C. *Healing and forgiveness*

In situations of domestic violence the doctrine of forgiveness has often become a part of the problem rather than part of the solution because forgiveness is automatically and unconditionally given to everyone without the work of repentance and restitution. For example, abusers have developed a reputation for going to their pastors after disclosure of their violence and asking for prayers and forgiveness. In too many cases, pastors are willing to engage in this empty ritual and send the abuser back to the family to continue his terror. As a result, many survivors have rejected forgiveness as an important part of their healing process. Rather than forgiveness as the restoration of a relationship with God, forgiveness has become a tool of abuse and stigma. Survivors who are angry are frequently told to stay out of the church until they are willing to forgive. Many survivors have left the church for their own spiritual health, while the men who abused them continue to serve in leadership positions, having interpreted the church's forgiveness as wiping clean all memories of the past.

Yet, in spite of this false theology of forgiveness, Christian survivors are offering a reinterpretation of the true meaning of forgiveness. Rejecting forgiveness as forgetting, as false reconciliation, as covering up the past, as an obligation laid on those who are vulnerable, some survivors are seeing forgiveness as one of the last steps in the healing process. After a former victim is safe from violence, after she has grieved the many losses caused by her experiences of violence, after she has reorganized her life to the way she wants it to be, after she has gained inner strength and a relationship with God, then the work of forgiveness can be considered.

For the victim, forgiveness is letting go of the immediacy

of the trauma, the memory of which continues to terrorize the victim and limit possibilities. The memory is the lens through which the world is viewed. Forgiving involves putting that lens aside but keeping it close at hand. It is the choice to no longer allow the memory of the abuse to continue to abuse. But this step of healing must be carried out according to the victim's timetable.

In this context, forgiveness is redefined as an aspect of healing, not only inner healing of the spirituality of the survivor, but also healing of the relational web that includes other people. Violence rends God's web of relational love that holds people together. Forgiveness as healing creates new webs of relational love through solidarity between victim/survivors and their advocates. This reinterpretation of forgiveness moves beyond a naive desire for forgetting and overlooking that many offenders wish for but is often reabusive for the survivor. In this context, forgiveness does not mean one-to-one reconciliation, but it means that the internalized hatred that resulted from the violence has been overcome in the loving spirit of the survivor. Healing has progressed to a spiritual depth where hatred of abusers is no longer the primary force in one's life.

1. *The church is called to be a place of grace.*

The church proclaims God's steadfast and gracious love. God's grace is expressed in God's care—ears that hear the cry of the oppressed; eyes that see violation and injustice; hands that shelter and deliver; smell that turns away from oppression-coverup sacrifices; tongue that comforts and commands to act justly, love tenderly, walk humbly. God's grace is expressed as a love that will not let us go and the promise that nothing, no one, stands beyond the reach of God's gracious love. God's grace is expressed in God's passion for justice and peace in the world of God's creation. In its proclamation, the church becomes a place of grace.

The church is most deeply itself at prayer. In its cry of lament and its song of praise, the church becomes a place of grace. The Psalms, especially the Psalms of lament, are an insightful and powerful resource in biblically based work to end and heal domestic violence. They are the voice of people who cry out, who bring their pain, anger, and confusion to God. They reveal an active rather than a submissive people who speak up, try to change God's mind, and thus the situation in which they find themselves. They model a people who claim the hope and joy of the covenant-relation with God. They chant for survival, and they sing.

2. *The church is called to be an advisor and advocate to the state for the welfare of the weak and vulnerable.*

The recently published *Presbyterian Social Witness Policy Compilation* is testimony to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s historic commitment to "speak truth to power" and to stand with and speak on behalf of the weak and vulnerable on a wide range of challenges to our common life. In this document, we have called upon the previous documents of the church on issues of domestic violence as well as *Peacemaking: The Believers' Calling*. This witness is grounded in the

church's reading of the biblical prophets and the ministry of Jesus Christ; it continues and builds on the witness of the church as every generation responds anew to ancient and newborn injustices and abuses of power. A Brief Statement of Faith reminds us that "the Spirit gives us courage . . . to unmask idolatries in Church and culture" (*The Book of Confessions*, 10.4).

Such advocacy to public institutions is undertaken not only with careful study but also with care for the whole church. Thus this policy statement and rationale embody the commitment of the church to processes of churchwide cooperation, consultation, and accountability deeply rooted in the Reformed Tradition's understanding of the church as a community of discernment (*Why and How the Church Makes a Social Policy Witness*, 1994).

Healing domestic violence requires justicemaking and peacemaking. Domestic violence is systemic; it affects every area of life—and the weak and vulnerable are its especial targets. Thus it is imperative to develop public processes that protect them and to change the social conditions that render them vulnerable and deny them recourse to effective help. It is imperative to establish processes that promote the accountability of the abuser. The covenantal nature of life leads to us to work to restore the human dignity and well-being of persons and communities. We seek reconciliation characterized by love and justice, truth and peace: shalom. But, as Genevieve Jacques observes, there can be "no reconciliation without transformation."³ Drawing on the experience of South Africa, the practice of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and the wisdom of Mandela, she describes reconciliation as multiple processes of transformation: personal and communal, spiritual and moral, social and political.⁴ So we are called to advise and advocate in the public realm. We are called to promote "social righteousness."

Finally, we affirm God's sovereign powers of creating and covenanting; the whole world is in God's hands. Thus we are emboldened to speak not only to the church but to governing authorities and all people of conscience.

IV. Our Tradition

A Brief Statement of Faith reminds all Presbyterians that in sovereign love, God created the world good. Our understanding of God's intentions for this world is that God in Jesus Christ has given the gift of abundant life to all. Our other statements of faith call us to unmask idolatry; our Sunday worship includes a confession of sin; the ritual of baptism includes the renunciation of evil. Indeed, the interlocking systems of suffering and oppression require such an analysis.

The church has a tradition that calls for hospitality to the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (Heb. 13:2, NRSV). For centuries the church has been offering care and nurture not only to friends but also to strangers, not only to the healthy but also to the sick, not only to the influential but also to the least

of these. We know that Jesus, who was himself the guest, turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana, thus offering his host a blessing. So, too, the church has found that whether serving the stranger in a hospital or at Eucharist, hospitality is not a burden to be taken on but a blessing, for like Jesus, the guest becomes the host. Ultimately we receive more from the guest than we have given.

On the issue of domestic violence, we are guided by the work of the church in the wider sphere of political action and cultural change. The Presbyterian Church and its ecumenical partners have been involved in a sustained and imaginative engagement with peacemaking, nonviolent strategies of conflict-resolution, and justicemaking. These have included concern for domestic violence as well as international conflicts.

The covenant tradition also directs us. This tradition offers a model for families and other domestic relationships. In 1999 the Presbyterian Church, in *Building Community Among Strangers*, affirmed "that Jesus Christ has the power to guide the churches, both national and local, in the goal of affirming equality between men and women" (Recommendation 4). It is an equality grounded in the biblical creation account, articulated in the A Brief Statement of Faith, "In sovereign love God created the world good and makes everyone equally in God's image, male and female, of every race and people, to live as one community" (*The Book of Confessions*, 10.3).

We know too well that people—some from our congregations, some from the world beyond our church doors—are hurting. This realization is at the heart of the call for the policy statement. In the past the church has acknowledged this pain in its midst and has responded by developing written policies and resources: *Study Paper on Family Violence* (1991); *Pornography: Far from the Song of Songs* (1988); *Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence* (1997); and, *Surely Heed Their Cries* (1993). The most recent attempt at developing a denominational resource was the national satellite telecast produced and sponsored by the Presbyterian Men of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The teleconference focused on "Men and Women Working Together to Stop Violence Against Women." It was received directly by approximately sixty downlinks and viewed by approximately two thousand people. The church is in a good position, perhaps more than any other institution, to provide these kinds of educational resources within its comprehensive educational ministry. Thus, it can be a primary means of the prevention of domestic violence or violence in the family.

The church is proclaiming the gospel when it offers an alternative to the generational cycle of abuse in families and relationships.

V. What Is Our Confession?

Our tradition calls us to confess our sin and acknowledge our complicity.

As a people who believe that God intends for all to live with integrity of body and spirit, in freedom, in relationships, and in joy, we confess that, unlike the Good Samaritan, we have not always followed the rocky path down into the ravine where our neighbor lies injured. God calls us to make a difference in the world.

We confess that we have not always heeded the victims/survivors' cries for help. Too often, we have tossed their pain back at them, claiming they have brought the problem on themselves. We have underestimated the physical and emotional damage done, often encouraging an abused spouse, because of the sanctity of marriage, to stay in a destructive relationship. Not wanting to get involved, we have turned our face rather than look at a child's bruises or frightened looks. Believing an older person to be no longer of sound mind, we have ignored the complaint of abuse. God calls the church to be a place of refuge, a sanctuary where all victims are heard and heeded, seen and acknowledged, a place of healing and help.

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. God calls the church to name sin and thereby to open the possibility of reform and renewal.

We acknowledge that we have not challenged a society that legitimates abuse through the portrayals of women and children as objects in entertainment (movies, videos, television) and in advertisements. God calls the church to remember and proclaim that we are created in the image of God, and that image is to be honored.

We acknowledge that throughout history the theology of the church has been replete with representations of woman as the cause of sin, deserving of her demise, secondary in nature, needing to be controlled. This understanding has fostered the oppression and abuse of women. God calls the church to acknowledge the equality and partnership manifest in creation.

We acknowledge that we have misused the Holy Scriptures. We have emphasized the role of women to be subject to 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 (especially in the context of marriage), children and other vulnerable people.

Having confessed our complicity, the PC(USA) affirms God's gift of abundant life in Jesus Christ to all. It promotes the respect and human dignity of all persons and through God's love and grace, their right to safety, nurture, care, and freedom from abuse and violence. The church names all forms of domestic violence as sin and commits to work for their eradication. The church commits itself to listen to the stories of the victims of spouse/partner abuse, child abuse, teen violence, date rape and sexual assault, elderly who are abused by their

children or caregivers, children who are abused by siblings, those who because of their disability are particularly vulnerable to abuse—all whose bodies and souls are violated. The church further commits itself and its resources to provide leadership in creating a just and compassionate society that promotes healing and works for systemic change so that domestic violence is prevented.

VI. What Is Domestic Violence?

While the church's concern for violence extends across oceans and continents, the policy we recommend to the 213th General Assembly (2001) focuses on domestic violence in the United States. In developing definitions of terms related to our policy recommendations, the Task Force relies on and in this section quotes from materials developed by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence (CPSDV) in Seattle, Washington.

Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behavior, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners or vulnerable family members. In abusive relationships, perpetrators use their power in ways that inflict harm on others for the perpetrators' own need for power and control.

Violence can take many forms. Among the most common are physical, emotional (also known as psychological maltreatment), sexual, and neglectful. Physical abuse is the use of brute force, such as hitting, biting, kicking, slapping, burning or scalding, to damage a person's body. The weapon may be a fist, a knife, a gun, or other object. Physical abuse generally involves willful acts by a perpetrator, resulting in injury to the victim; however, it may also result when the perpetrator's intent is not to injure or harm the victim, as in corporal punishment.

I have holes in my shoes and pants. The kids at school say I'm stupid. My Dad drinks up the money. He beats me and my brother when he drinks. The fights are so loud in our house between my Mom and Dad that I never get my homework finished. I feel scared to be at home. Why can't I have a normal family like other kids?

A Child Abuse Victim

Emotional abuse is an attempt to control or intimidate a vulnerable person. Though it is often used in combination with physical abuse, it can be inflicted without the perpetrator ever touching the body. This form of abuse generally involves verbal behavior in which a perpetrator attacks the victim's self-esteem and social competence, as in making comments with the intent of ridiculing, insulting, threatening, or belittling the victim. Nonverbal forms of emotional abuse include isolating a victim from family and peers; manipulating a person in ways that will harm him/her; exploiting a victim, such as encouraging a child or partner to participate in illegal or dysfunctional behavior; torturing or killing a victim's pet; or destroying a victim's personal property. Emotional abuse is

difficult to document for legal purposes because of the absence of physical evidence; however, research identifies emotional abuse as the core component and major destructive force in all types of abuse.

Sexual abuse is defined as a perpetrator's use of a victim for sexual gratification. It may occur on a contact basis, such as involving the use of physical force (beating someone up, holding them down), the threat of force (such as the use of a gun or a weapon), or other forms of effective coercion. Incest is sexual contact between a parent figure or a sibling, which usually involves physical or psychological coercion. Sexual abuse may also occur on a noncontact basis, as when the abuser forces the victim to watch a sexual act.

Neglect, too, is a form of abuse. It involves the parents' or caretakers' failure to provide physical and emotional needs. Child neglect may involve "abandonment, refusal to seek treatment for illness, inadequate supervision, health hazards in the home, ignoring a child's need for contact . . . keeping a child home from school repeatedly without cause." The elderly, too, experience domestic violence through neglect, as do persons with disabilities.

VII. Who Are the Victims of Domestic Violence?

Only within the past three decades has domestic violence become a societal concern. Child abuse was brought to public attention in the 1970's through a developing awareness of the problem, culminating in the passage in 1974 of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act. In the seventies, as well as in the subsequent decade, attention also focused on other types of domestic violence: spouse abuse, elder abuse, sibling abuse and dating violence. Following the completion of two national studies of violence in American families, known as the National Family Violence Survey (1975) and the National Family Violence Resurvey (1985), the problem of violence in American families became the concern of mental health professionals, legislators and social scientists. The results of the initial study were published in a book, *Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family*. The title of this book aptly describes how domestic violence has been viewed in society; namely, that it is the private business of the family or those involved and the concern of no one else, including the church. However, the passage of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act, as well as subsequent legislation relating to the other types of domestic violence, brought the subject out into the open.

When we look at statistics related to domestic violence, we know that they represent only the tip of the iceberg. Many instances of domestic violence, such as verbal battering or partner rape, are often not recognized as abuse and go unreported. Other instances go unreported. Victims may blame themselves for the violence; they may fear yet harsher reprisals; or they may believe perpetrators' promises that they will never again abuse.

While we cannot know exactly how many cases of abuse occur, we do know that domestic violence is of epidemic

proportions. Its victims include children, youth, adults, and the elderly of every race, class, or religious affiliation. Domestic violence occurs in all types of family configurations and in every region of the United States, whether urban, suburban, or rural. There is no evading the fact, however, that domestic violence is most frequently directed against children, women, the elderly, and the disabled.

The task force draws on resources of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, Seattle, Washington, for some of the definitions that follow.

A. *Child abuse*

Child abuse refers to deliberate harmful actions by an adult, generally a parent or caregiver.

- In 1998, the latest year in which statistical data for child abuse has been compiled and published, 3,154,000 cases (physical, emotional and sexual) were reported. This means that approximately 46 out of every 1,000 U.S. children were victims of child abuse that year. In homes where partner abuse occurs, children are 1,500 times more likely to be abused.⁵

- 40–60 percent of men who abuse women also abuse children.⁶

A form of physical abuse to which infants are often subjected is shaking, called shaken baby syndrome. A frustrated parent or caregiver may shake an infant after long periods of crying, especially when the child does not respond to attempts to console. Because of a heavy head and weak neck muscles, infants who are shaken are vulnerable to head injury.

Children with psychological disabilities, such as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), or learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, are frequent targets of abuse. Not understanding that their children's hyperactivity and impulsivity are neurological in origin, parents often respond out of their own frustration. Parents who have high aspirations for their children may also, in cases where a learning disability exists, express their frustration through verbal as well as physical battering.

Sexual abuse, even more than other forms of child abuse, is usually not reported to authorities. The sexual abuse of children may or may not involve contact. In either situation the perpetrator is a person with more power, either a teenager or adult. In a nationwide sample of 2,626 adult men and women surveyed by telephone, 38 percent of the women and 16 percent of the men said they had been sexually abused as children. The median age for the abuse was approximately 9 years, with boys more likely to be abused by strangers, girls by family members. One-half of the reported perpetrators were authority figures in the children's lives.⁷

Tom, age 28, lived with his girlfriend Jane and her three-year-old child. He would babysit the child in the evening while Jane worked as a waitress. A pediatrician noted during an examination of the child that she appeared to

have been sexually molested. An investigation by Child Protective Services revealed that Tom had been sexually molesting the child.

A Perpetrator of Child Abuse

Corporal punishment can become abusive, especially when it is excessive. In fact, an abusive parent/caregiver will often defend physical abuse by claiming its purpose was to teach a lesson or to punish. Corporal punishment as a method of disciplining children is risky and needs further study. We do know, however, that it is abusive when injury occurs, when the adult's issue is power and control rather than love and guidance, when the adult's behavior is at the same time psychologically damaging, and when the punishment is motivated primarily by anger.

B. *Spouse/partner abuse*

Spouse/partner abuse is a pattern of violent and coercive behavior exercised by one adult over another. "It is not a marital conflict . . . [or] a lovers' quarrel" (CPSDV). It occurs in intimate relationships between married couples, couples who are cohabiting, and between gay and lesbian partners. Although men are also victims of domestic violence, 95 percent of victims are women.

We know that

- nearly one in three women experience at least one physical assault by a partner during adulthood;⁸
- during 1994, 21 percent of all violent victimizations against women were committed by an intimate, but only 4 percent of violent victimizations against men were committed by a woman;⁹
- in the United States, a woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, or raped by a male partner than by any other type of assailant;
- between 15 percent and 25 percent of pregnant women are battered;
- nearly half (48 percent) of all incidents of violence against women are not reported to the police;
- once a woman has been abused by a spouse/partner, her risk of being revictimized is high;¹⁰ and
- there are at least 4 million reported incidents of domestic violence against women every year;¹¹

The percentage of couples reporting abuse is between one and a half and two times greater among cohabiting couples than among married couples. Data suggest that higher levels of marital violence are found among military men as compared to their civilian counterparts.

My husband searches my purse and watches me every minute. He drives me to work and picks me up. If I go anywhere without calling him at work and telling him I am leaving the house, he immediately suspects I am having an affair. If I disobey any of the rules he has set under which I must operate, I am in danger of being beaten. It has happened often.

A Spouse/Partner Abuse Survivor

Many women are killed by intimate partners. Browne and Williams,¹² using Supplementary Homicide Report data filed between 1976 and 1987, found that the deaths of 38,649 individuals age 16 and over during this period of time were the result of one partner killing another. This included married, common-law, divorced, and dating partners. Sixty-one percent of these victims were women who were killed by male partners; 39 percent were men killed by a female partner. Women in the United States are more likely to be killed by their male partners than by all other categories of deaths by killing combined. More than half of all women murdered in the United States between 1980 and 1985 (52 percent) were victims of homicide by a partner.¹³

Domestic violence occurs within same sex relationships with the same statistical frequency as in heterosexual relationships. The prevalence of domestic violence among gay and lesbian couples is approximately 25–33 percent.¹⁴ While same-sex battering mirrors heterosexual battering both in type and prevalence, its victims receive fewer protections. Seven states define domestic violence in a way that excludes same-sex victims; twenty-one states have sodomy laws that may require same-sex victims to confess to a crime in order to prove they are in a domestic relationship. While same-sex batterers use forms of abuse similar to those of heterosexual batterers, they have an additional weapon—the threat of “outing” their partner to family, friends, employers or community.

Sexual abuse in spouse/partner abuse is referred to as marital rape. In cases of marital rape the abuser demands sexual gratification without the intimate partner's consent.

Domestic violence may affect a woman's ability to financially support herself and her children, sometimes placing families in the position of seeking welfare. Welfare studies show that abused women do seek employment, but are often unable to keep a job. The abuser may prevent them from going to work, or physical and emotional injury may make it impossible for them to keep a job. Between one- and two-thirds of welfare recipients report having suffered domestic violence at some point in their adult lives; between 15–32 percent report current domestic victimization.¹⁵ When victims are at work, they are not necessarily any safer than they would be at home, for the abusers know where to find them. In fact, domestic violence is the leading cause for women killed in the workplace. The U.S. Department of Justice reported in 1994 that each year 13,000 acts of domestic violence are perpetrated against women in their workplace.

C. *Elder abuse*

Although the tendency may exist to define elder abuse only in terms of physical maltreatment, elder abuse must be conceptualized more broadly. Elder abuse generally is defined as physical, sexual, emotional or psychological, and financial abuse. Three types of elder neglect also occur: passive neglect, active neglect, and self-neglect.

Physical abuse of the elderly implies hitting, slapping, punching, pushing, shaking, biting, pulling hair, forcefeeding, and other willful acts that may result in bruises, lacerations, fractures, or any other types of physical injury. Physical abuse in elderly marital partners may be a continuation of abuse that has occurred throughout the marital relationship or more recently occurring because of physical or mental illness.

Mrs. G., age 78, was cared for by her son, a banker who was unmarried and lived with her. In his frustration of dealing with her mental confusion and her failure to take her medications in the proper dosage and at the appropriate time, on occasion he would slap his mother as if he were disciplining a small child. One day a neighbor visiting Mrs. G. noted severe bruises on her arm. When the neighbor learned they had been inflicted by Mrs. G.'s son, the neighbor reported him to Adult Protective Services.

An Elder Abuse Victim/Survivor

Although sexual abuse is not as prevalent with the elderly as it is with children, it does occur. Sexual abuse of the elderly is defined as engaging in sexual acts with an elderly person by means of force, threat of force, or without consent, including forcing an elderly person to perform sexual acts on the perpetrator.

Emotional abuse is the most prevalent form of elder abuse and includes name-calling, derogatory comments, the use of insults, harassment, and threats or speaking to an elderly person in a childish or demeaning manner. Withholding affection, failing to provide a sense of security and the caregiver refusing to allow an elderly person access to family members and friends may also be considered emotional abuse.

Mr. S., a ninety-year-old widower, lived with his son and daughter-in-law following the death of his wife. Mr. S. had difficulty controlling his bladder and frequently would soil his bed sheets or the chair on which he sat. This was upsetting to his daughter-in-law who would resort to name-calling.

An Elder Abuse Victim/Survivor

Financial abuse is defined as the misappropriation or stealing of an elderly person's finances or personal possessions. The elderly can be victimized financially by family members, individuals hired as caregivers, or by companies taking advantage of a potential elderly customer. This form of abuse can have permanently devastating effects because it impacts on the elderly person's financial status that subsequently may effects the individual's future care. The

elderly often are susceptible to financial abuse from businesses because of impaired cognitive functioning or in the case of elderly widows where their husbands handled the finances and they are unfamiliar with their financial status.

Mrs. Z., age 87, continued to live in her home following the death of her husband. One day a furnace salesman called on her and indicated he would give her furnace a free inspection. After inspecting the furnace, the salesman spoke with alarm to Mrs. Z. about the dangerous condition of the furnace. Since winter was approaching, Mrs. Z. had the salesman replace the furnace. A few weeks later Mrs. Z.'s son visited his mother. When he learned about the new furnace, he recalled it had been replaced two years prior and had been inspected yearly by the company that had installed the furnace. A call to the company that installed the furnace that had been replaced revealed it was in perfect working condition at the time of the last inspection.

An Elder Abuse Victim/Survivor

D. *Elder neglect defined*

Neglect is also a serious problem for the elderly and may be seen in the following forms: passive neglect, active neglect, and self-neglect. Passive neglect is defined as the refusal or failure to fulfill a caretaking obligation. Abandoning a person or not providing food or health-related services are examples. Passive neglect generally is not a conscious or intentional act on the part of the caregiver. Rather, it often occurs when a caregiver is not aware of community sources that may aid the elderly person in need or disputes the value of prescribed services.

Jane's elderly mother recently moved in to live with Jane, a busy executive. Jane's mother complained repeatedly about her loneliness while Jane was away during the day or on business trips outside the city. Although a senior citizen center was available in the community, Jane never took the time to explore this option as a resource for her mother to meet other persons her age.

An Elder Neglect Victim/Survivor

Active neglect is the conscious and intentional withholding of care an elderly person needs, such as supplying proper nutrition, the meeting of toileting needs, treatment for physical conditions, and the use of restraints.

Mr. H. hired a daytime housekeeper to help Mr. H.'s elderly mother who lived in a neighboring city and was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. Mr. H. was not aware of the alcohol problem the housekeeper had when he hired her. Consequently, the housekeeper failed to cook nutritious meals for Mr. H.'s mother and often would restrain her in a chair for long periods of time.

An Elder Neglect Victim/Survivor

In self-neglect, there are no caregivers as perpetrators;

rather, elderly persons are neglecting themselves. Self-neglect is an unfortunate label for a condition affecting the elderly because it implies willful self-degradation or destruction. Self-neglect, however, is hardly ever willful but, rather the result of elderly persons being unable to care for themselves because of depleted physical or social resources.

Mrs. W. visited her elderly mother who lived over a thousand miles from her. Although she maintained regular telephone contact with her mother, it was not until she visited her personally that she became aware of her mother's deteriorating physical and mental condition and her inability to function independently.

An Elder Neglect Victim/Survivor

E. *Extent of elder abuse*

As with other types of family violence, statistical data cited for elder abuse represent only a fraction of the actual number of incidents. Approximately only 1 in 14 cases of elder abuse is ever reported because of the dependency of elderly victims on their caregivers and the lack of knowledge about the reporting of abuse. The occurrence of elder abuse varies among cultural groups. A study reported by the National Center on Elder abuse found that 66.4 percent of the victims were white, 18.7 were African American and 10 percent were Hispanic. Other groups made up less than one percent of the total number.

F. *Sibling abuse*

Sibling abuse is the abuse of one sibling by another. It may be viewed as sibling rivalry that has escalated out of control. While all siblings fight and call each other names, sibling rivalry can become abusive. Critical factors in distinguishing sibling rivalry from sibling abuse include if the behavior occurs repeatedly and if one child is a victim of the other.

Sibling abuse occurs in three forms, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse. Physical abuse is defined as willful acts of one sibling against another resulting in physical injury such as slapping, hitting, biting, kicking, or more violent behavior that may include the use of an instrument, such as a stick, bat, gun, or knife.

Mrs. J., a 45 year old married woman on looking back at her childhood reported to a friend, "I can't ever remember not being physically abused by my brother. He beat on me ever day. It was just part of existing to me. He would punch, pinch, and kick me. There were times that he pulled out my hair. At times he would use anything else close to hit me.

A Sibling Abuse Victim/Survivor

Sibling emotional abuse, also referred to as psychological maltreatment, may be defined as verbal attacks of one sibling toward another including name-calling, ridiculing, insulting,

degrading or threatening another sibling. Also included in the definition of emotional abuse are the exacerbation of a fear that a sibling may have and the destruction of a sibling's personal property, such as deliberately destroying a prized possession or pet. A sibling abuse survivor describes her emotional abuse:

When I was growing up, my older brother would constantly taunt me. He continually made fun of my appearance—every aspect of it—and everything I did. He always called me names. My childhood was a nightmare.

A Sibling Abuse Victim/Survivor

The sexual abuse of one sibling by another includes inappropriate sexual contact, such as unwanted touching, fondling, indecent exposure, attempted penetration, intercourse, rape or sodomy between siblings. A victim of sexual abuse from an older brother as a child describes what she experienced:

When I was a very small child, my older brother started fondling me. As I grew older it got worse.

A Sibling Abuse Victim/Survivor

G. *Extent of the problem*

Very little statistical data on sibling abuse exists, except for incidents of incest, because of the tendency of parents to excuse abusive behavior between siblings as sibling rivalry and the reluctance of parents to press charges against their children if an abusive incident occurs. However, several studies indicate the problem may be more widespread than thought.

In a nationwide survey of 2,143 American families on violence among family members, the researchers concluded that sibling violence occurs more frequently than either parent-child or husband-wife violence. This research indicated that 53 out of every 100 children per year attack a brother or sister. Likewise, findings from studies funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) indicated 138,000 children age 3 to 17 used a weapon on a sibling over a one-year period. Other researchers who have studied sibling violence conclude that sibling abuse is the most prevalent and accepted form of family violence in America that has largely been ignored. What is being referred to here is the physical abuse of one sibling by another. Even more serious is emotional abuse. Few cases of emotional abuse ever appear in court because of the absence of physical evidence making it difficult to substantiate the abuse. Regarding sexual abuse between siblings, using a randomly selected sample of 930 women, a researcher found that 16 percent (152) women reported having had at least one experience of sexual abuse from a sibling or close relative.

H. *Dating violence*

Dating violence, as the term indicates, is abuse that occurs in the context of a dating relationship. Studies involving individuals of dating age indicate that by the age of 20, one-third of all young women will experience dating violence.

He was always so nice to me when we would go out together with friends, However, the second time we went out alone, he became very aggressive when we were watching TV in my apartment. He forced himself on me. I didn't want sex. I tried to say "No" but I saw how angry he became. I was really afraid of him.

A Dating Violence Survivor

Statistical data on this type of violence are difficult to obtain because most incidents take place in private and are never reported. Both males and females appear to engage in dating violence, with females carrying out less dangerous forms.

Teen dating abuse, like adult spouse/partner abuse, is about power and a desire to control. Despite many other similarities, several conditions differentiate the abuse experienced by adult and teens. "The first and foremost contributing factor to teen violence is adolescent reliance on peer approval. As a result many teens judge acceptable behavior and sex roles based on how these are interpreted by their peer groups."¹⁶ Secondly, a lack of experience in dating and in relationships adds to adolescent confusion. When it comes to love and relationships, the majority of teens are idealists. This has a number of implications. For example, an adolescent abuser's excessive jealousy and possessiveness is frequently romanticized by a young victim who misconstrues her partner's demands as proof of passion. Teen abusers justify the use of violence and control tactics as acts of love.

Teens are extremely reluctant to confide in adults or authority figures. Many fear their concerns about relationships will be ignored, belittled, or ridiculed because adults tend to underestimate the intensity of teen relationships. Other teens believe parental or adult intervention will result in the loss of independence or trust.

In many situations, pregnancy may be both the result of abuse and grounds for further abuse. In forcing sex upon a young woman, the abuser may refuse to use birth control. Pregnancy then creates a number of circumstances that increase her vulnerability. Twenty-six percent of pregnant teens reported being physically abused by their boyfriend. About half of them said the battering began or intensified after he learned of the pregnancy.¹⁷

I. Abuse of physically disabled persons

If violence and abuse are uses of power that inflict harm on others for the perpetrator's own ends, then it is fairly self-evident that those who have less power as a result of disabilities are more vulnerable to becoming victims simply because they have less power to protect themselves. Physically disabled persons' dependence on others (to varying degrees) makes many ready targets of abuse. Disabled children, in particular, thinking abuse is normal, often will not recognize it when it occurs, or they will assume it is their fault, that they deserve it.

Individuals who are mentally disabled are particularly at risk of being abused. Not only are they more vulnerable to

abuse, but after abuse they often face further re-victimization. For example, the testimony of a mentally disabled person is seldom admissible in court without a corroborating witness.

Those with disabilities—physical, mental, or psychological—are especially limited in finding an alternative to the abusive situation, for they have had fewer opportunities for educational and economic security. Many disabled persons stay in the abusive relationships, convinced that living with the abuse is far better than being homeless, returning to a family that no longer wants them, or being institutionalized.

Some church people would like to believe that domestic violence occurs in the lives of *other* people, that the message of justice and love insulates Christians from such offenses. However, such form of wishful thinking does not match the facts. The prevalence of all these forms of violence are well documented both in society and among church families. Families within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are not exempted from the forms of violence under discussion. In the many months that the Task Force met and prepared this paper, we have heard reports of abuse in Presbyterian Church families:

A pastor murdered his wife; a man working for the Presbyterian Foundation committed suicide after attempting to kill his ex-female friend and her new male friend.

VIII. How Does Culture Impact Abuse?

Domestic violence cuts across all cultural, social, religious, and economic lines. Yet women in some circumstances face more obstacles than men when trying to leave their abusers, seek help, or report the abuse to authorities. For example, women of color may live in communities where the police are not trusted. After seeing their sons and intimate partners unjustly arrested in other situations, they may adopt a protective response toward their male partners and decide not to report child or spouse/partner abuse. Because they have been treated unfairly by white institutions, they may resist turning to social service providers for help. The possibility of abuse within such institutions needs to be addressed. Therefore, when doing advocacy work with survivors, it is important to keep cultural differences in mind. This may mean participating in services that are created by and for a particular population.

Among undocumented immigrant women domestic violence may be more dangerous, due to their having less access to legal and social services than U.S. citizens. According to Orloff *et al*, cultural and language barriers, along with fear of deportation, prevent many from reporting abuse to the authorities. A battered woman who is not a legal resident, or whose immigration status depends on her partner, is isolated by cultural dynamics, which may prevent her from leaving her husband or seeking assistance from the legal system. The abuser may use her immigrant status as a means of abusing her, by threatening to report her for deportation by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. If she is undocumented, her susceptibility to coercion is heightened. In addition, immigrant victims may believe that the penalties and protections of the U.S. legal system would not be helpful to

them.¹⁸

Latina women, according to Myrna Zambrano, may hesitate to call police or seek services because they are not accustomed to revealing their feelings to outsiders. Furthermore, they often accept their destiny with resignation, accepting their family life as being the way God wants it to be.¹⁹ For those who fled war-torn or oppressive countries, the trauma of earlier experiences adds to their vulnerability. For example, they may fear calling on law enforcement for help or talking to others because of past experiences with informers.

Women from parts of Asia may be unwilling to break their silence about abuse for fear that they might lose the support of their extended family and community. Shame of their victimization and fear of losing face in the community keep them from sharing their experience of abuse.

Whereas, age, race/ethnicity are not indicators of who is likely to be affected by spouse/partner abuse, gender is. Because 90–95 percent of spouse/partner abuse victims are women and as many as 95 percent of spouse/partner abusers are male, a feminine pronoun is usually used to refer to victims of domestic violence. Much of female violence is committed in self defense and inflicts less injury than male violence. Male perpetrators are four times more likely to use lethal violence than females.²⁰

Intimate partner abuse and dating violence stem largely from the unequal power between partners. The use of violence in these relationships is particularly reinforced by sexism and cultural notions of male supremacy. Although relationships between women and men take on various forms in various cultures, the end result is that women as a group are in a subordinate, often dependent position relative to men as a group.

IX. What Are the Long-term Effects of Abuse?

A. *What survivors report*

Long after the verbal assaults go silent, long after the cuts and bruises fade from sight, and long after broken bones mend, the dreadful after-effects of living in terror can plague survivors for months, years, the rest of their lives.

Survivors will continue to feel profound emotions, which to others appear irrational. The fear they felt in childhood or in an adult relationship can lead to lifelong anxiety, often manifested in sleeplessness, nightmares, irritability, and social anxiety. Convinced that something else terrible is going to happen, they become hyper vigilant. It becomes impossible for them to relax and enjoy life.

Survivors have trouble managing their rage. When they were in the abusive situation, they did not dare express their anger for fear the abuser would respond with even more violence. Because they long had to push the rage into their unconscious, where it simmered, the smallest frustrations of their needs and desires can trigger an intense reaction. Survivors may lash out at the wrong person just because that person happens to be there.

A sense of shame stays with survivors long after the abuse has ended. They feel shame that they lost control over their lives, that they allowed their inherent dignity to be taken from them. Those who repeatedly enter other abusive relationships experience still more shame. (It is often, psychically speaking, easier to repeat the past than to work through it.) Feelings of unworthiness will continue to plague them.

Children commonly feel guilt, even though their abusers are the guilty ones. Too undeveloped to understand what is happening to them, they uncritically accept the abusive parent's or caretaker's judgment that they are at fault and so deserved the abuse. As adults they will continue to act out of a sense of pervasive guilt that they cannot understand. As a result abused children often suffer from low self-esteem and erratic emotional swings.

For most survivors of domestic violence, the pain simply will never go away. To have been betrayed by the one they most loved and trusted has left them with a deep sorrow. Furthermore, in most cases, the end of abuse has been accompanied by loss: the end of a marriage, the loss of home and security, the loss of a relationship with parents. Many survivors suffer from chronic depression; many attempt suicide long after the abuse has ended.

The isolation imposed by abusers often continues long after the abuse is over. Survivors find themselves unable to connect well with others, much less trust them and develop long-lasting relationships that bring true joy. It is not unusual for them to experience difficulty reconnecting with family or church community. Some, especially children, hunger for relationships but lack the social skills for friendship. Others turn inward and try to rely on their own resources. Inevitably, they run out of coping skills and can find nowhere to turn. Theirs becomes a lonely existence.

Frequently, survivors who want to be caring human beings, who want to respond appropriately to others, find that they have lost, if only temporarily, the ability to do so. They want to respond empathetically to their friends, their children, their business associates, but find that their repressed insecurities, fears, shame, guilt, and even hatred keep bubbling up out of old wounds, making it impossible. They want to be loving to their spouses and children, but find that they keep acting like the very parent who abused them. They want to leave the past behind them but find that its terrifying memories haunt them no matter where they go.

B. *What the social science literature reports*

The term "victim" generally refers to individuals experiencing any of the forms of domestic violence at the time the violence is occurring. However, individuals who in the past have been victims of the various forms of violence prefer to call themselves survivors. Being a victim implies helplessness. Being a survivor, however, implies persistence and recovery. Since the effects of abuse on survivors is similar across the different types of abuse, the effects and supporting research relative to the various types and forms of domestic violence will be identified. The effects can be grouped into three main categories, physical, economic, and psychological. (These

categories are not identified in order of importance. Spiritual effects are discussed later.)

I was taken from my parents when I was only four because of my father's abuse and my mother's drug addiction. After living in several foster homes, I became a ward of the state at age 10. Then I began to do things that got me in trouble. I killed three dogs and put a cat in a dryer for a few minutes just to see it struggle to stand up. At 14 I became interested in devil worship. Now at age 17 I have been sent to prison for threatening to cut a young woman's body into pieces as a sacrificing ritual.

A Child Abuse Victim

C. Health factor

Physical abuse can have long-term health consequences, leaving survivors with persistent health problems, such as chronic pain, and/or mental health problems. Sexual abuse carries with it the added risk of communicable disease, including AIDS, as well as the possibility of pregnancy for female victims.

I would leave my husband and take the children with me but I have no money. How would I feed the children if I leave? He controls the finances. If I leave without the children, I would never see them again. I could go to a shelter with the children but that is only temporary. I am sure people say, "Why do you stay with that man the way he treats you?" But what can I do? Who will help me?

A Spouse/Partner Abuse Survivor

D. Economic factor

Being a victim of partner abuse can have a significant impact on the victim's employment status. Research shows that victims' work performance is seriously affected by the presence of physical abuse. In one study over 50 percent of the women reported having been absent from work as a result of being physically abused. An even greater percentage indicated they had been late for work or had to leave work early, and 25 percent reported losing a job partly because of being abused. Many women reported their spouse/partner harassed them on the job to the extent that it created difficulty for them to maintain their employment.²¹

Women who have been battered by their partners often find it difficult to secure medical insurance. A congressional survey in 1994 found that 50 percent of the largest insurance companies refused to insure battered women because they were perceived as being involved in high-risk lifestyles and consequently too costly to insure. If the abusive husband is the source of health insurance for the spouse and her child and if she cannot get insurance for herself, she cannot risk leaving the marital relationship even though it is abusive. Thus, the inability to purchase health insurance becomes a factor that keeps women from leaving abusive relationships.

I was too ashamed to tell my pastor about the beatings I

was receiving from my husband. Everyone thought he was a pillar in the church, a good elder and generous Christian man. I always wore long sleeves to hide the bruises. I believed my husband when he said it was all my fault. And because I took the blame, I remained silent so that no one would ever know.

A Spouse/Partner Abuse Survivor

E. Psychological factor

High rates of depression and suicide attempts have been found in a sample of adult sibling abuse survivors.²² Depression is also a common complaint of women who have experienced physical and emotional spouse/partner abuse as well as marital and date rape.²³

Children who have been sexually abused have been shown to be more lonely, have higher rates of depression, make more suicide attempts, and have more suicidal fantasies than nonabused children.²⁴ These problems may continue into adulthood if the survivor does not receive treatment. Adult women sexually abused as children have a higher risk of becoming drug and alcohol abusers,²⁵ likely because drugs and alcohol relieve the recurring painful memories. Research also shows a relationship between being sexually abused as a child and eating disorders in adolescence and later in life.²⁶

Another serious effect of being sexually abused as a child is the inability to trust others, especially adults. In most instances the perpetrator of child sexual abuse is an adult known to the victim, such as a family member (father, mother's boyfriend, uncle, grandfather, etc) or another adult known to the family (clergy, Scout leader, coach, etc.). The perpetrator's taking advantage of the child diminishes the child's ability to trust other adults. A similar phenomenon occurs with survivors of date rape, where the perpetrator takes advantage by forcing the relationship into a setting for rape. The inability to trust others and a fear of closeness can also impact other adult relationships, such as a survivor's relationship with employment supervisors and others in authority.²⁷ Research indicates that a common effect of being physically, emotionally or sexually abused is low self-esteem and self-worth. This has been noted in children physically and emotionally abused,²⁸ children sexually abused,²⁹ individuals experiencing spouse/partner abuse,³⁰ sibling abuse,³¹ and courtship violence.³²

My brother would hit, slap and punch me continually. He would hold my arms behind my back and demand that I say "Uncle" or beg him to stop. When I did so, he would only hurt me more. I was in a no-win situation. When I told my parents, they would excuse it as simply sibling rivalry or say, "You have to learn to fight your own battles."

A Sibling Abuse Survivor

The literature identifies numerous other psychological problems encountered by individuals who have survived the

various types and forms of abuse: sleep and somatic complaints,³³ post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),³⁴ and, dissociation.³⁵ Similarly, the psychological effects of battering may include symptoms similar to PTSD, such as anxiety, depression, a re-experiencing of the traumatic event, feelings of helplessness, and sleep and appetite disturbances.³⁶ Children who experience frequent verbal aggression from their parents, emotional abuse, show higher rates of physical aggression, delinquency, and domestic problems than non-emotionally abused children.³⁷

F. *The Impact of Witnessing Parental Violence*

Increasingly, research is showing the serious impact on children who witness parental violence or spouse/partner abuse. It has found, for example, that rates of sibling violence are higher in families where parental abuse occurs.³⁸ This suggests, based on social learning theory or modeling to be discussed later, that some children learn their violence from witnessing their parents being violent, which they in turn exhibit in their domestic relationships. Thus, a cycle of violence may occur, beginning with parental violence that in turn is imitated in the children's relationships to siblings, peers, and later in dating, marital and parent/child relationships.

My older brother made comments about my developing breasts. One time when he babysat me when my parents were away for the evening, he fondled my breasts and threatened to hurt me if I told my parents. I was too scared to tell them for fear what he might do to me. I never let him babysit me again but arranged to go to a friend's house whenever my parents would go out.

A Sibling Abuse Survivor

In summary, the effects of abuse can be very severe on the psychosocial functioning of survivors. Although these effects have been individually identified, in many instances, they have long term consequences and may interact with each other. For example, individuals experiencing low self-esteem as a result of abuse may also abuse drugs, alcohol or food as they attempt to cope. Also, as children witness parental violence, they are likely to resort to violence in other domestic relationships.

X. Who Are the Abusers?

Anyone can be an abuser.³⁹ There is no profile that can explain who might be abusing someone. An abuser can be old or young, male or female, professional or working class, of any income, race, religion, or culture. Studies have found that age and race/ethnicity are not indicators. In a 1990 restraining order study, the age of abusers ranged from 17–70. Two thirds of the abusers were between the ages 24 and 40.⁴⁰

However, there are types of abusers that we need to understand. In the following paragraphs we discuss some of the research that makes us more aware of the violence that is occurring in our own families and communities.

A. *Child Molesters*

Child molesters are a diverse group of persons who sexually exploit children. There are three categories of child molesters. Fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins and trusted community leaders who molest children form the largest group, making the family and other intimate groups one of the most dangerous places for children. Some children are molested by women as well, though 95 percent of sexual assaults are by men. Second, there are adolescent molesters. They are usually abused children who act out sexually in relation to younger boys and girls with whom they have contact. Because they themselves are often seriously damaged, both the adolescents and the children they molest need help. Pedophiles are a third kind of molester. They are people who target boys and girls of specific ages for sexual abuse. Pedophiles are especially dangerous when they hide in trusted leadership roles such as pastor, teacher, and leader of children's organizations. They are also dangerous because they often have multiple victims.

B. *Rapists*

Rapists are persons who engage in coercive and exploitative sexual behaviors against other persons. In a classic study, Nicholas Groth defines rape as "all nonconsenting sexual encounters, whether the victim is pressured or forced." (p. 4) Social pressure and physical assault are two primary methods that rapists use to coerce sexual activity. We can distinguish between types of rapists according to whom they victimize—men who rape women and children within the family; men who rape within marriage and other intimate relationships; men who rape dates and acquaintances; and men who rape strangers. Rape is almost always conducted by men. Rapists are motivated primarily by a need for power over a vulnerable person, although sexuality remains an important aspect of this type of abuse.

C. *Batterers*

Batterers are persons who inflict harm upon spouse/partner and children in their families or intimate acquaintances. One type of batterer physically, psychologically, and sexually abuses a spouse/partner or date. Clinicians who work with such batterers believe that the abusers act primarily out of an expression of the need for power and control. Highly dependent, often emotionally isolated from others, they try to control and possess their spouses. Another type of batterer physically abuses children. Sometimes the abuser batters both the spouse/partner and the children, and sometimes the abuser batters only one or more children. Because they are most often the primary caregivers, women physically abuse children.

D. *Verbal abusers*

Verbal abusers use words to control and intimidate. They may be words that taunt, degrade, or threaten. Verbally abusive parents batter a child's sense of self-esteem or frighten the

child with threats to harm the child, a pet, or a favorite person. A verbally abusive spouse does more than nag or argue. He/she creates a hostile environment in which the abused party lives in fear.

In discussing ways to end abuse, researchers and activists alike argue for changes in the structural and cultural arrangements in society that perpetuate it. As of now, the consequences for most violent behavior are insufficient; therefore, abusers are not motivated to stop.

What about recidivism among abusers? Domestic violence tends to be a pattern rather than a one-time occurrence. For example, short term (6–12 weeks) psycho-educational batterer intervention programs have helped some batterers stop immediate physical violence but have been inadequate in stopping abuse over time. Some batterers simply became more sophisticated in their psychological abuse and intimidation after attending such programs. During the six months following an episode of domestic violence, 32 percent of battered women are victimized again. Other forms of abuse show similar patterns.

All abusers need accountability for their actions, and after all potential victims are safe, they need programs of reeducation and healing so they will not abuse again. Abusers are children of God who need the love and justice of God to save them from harming others.

XI. Why Do People Abuse Others?

Why would a parent beat a child? How can one explain a husband calling his wife a sexually degrading term? Why would a parent be emotionally abusive toward a child? Why would an adult child withhold medication from an elderly parent? Extensive research on the question of understanding as well as treating and preventing domestic violence has occurred during the past several decades and currently continues. This research represents the efforts of individuals from many disciplines including psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, social work, nursing, and pastoral counseling, as well as observations of therapists working with victims and survivors of domestic violence. While one may be tempted to search for a single reason or cause that explains any of the types or forms of domestic violence, the complexity of this social problem as well as the complexity of understanding human behavior as such prevents posing such a singular explanation or cause. Also, the concept of cause in terms of the question “What causes this behavior?” is generally not sought in the study of human behavior. Human behavior, including violent behavior, is very complex and a single cause or even multiple causes cannot be identified. Social scientists, rather than speaking of causes of behavior, prefer to identify factors associated with the behavior. If an attempt were made to list all of the factors shown to be associated with the various types and forms of domestic violence, the list would be exceedingly lengthy. Therefore, for the purposes of this policy statement, these

factors will be summarized under several major theoretical perspectives that aid in understanding violence or aggression; namely, violence as a learned behavior, violence as power and control, violence as a result of frustration, psychological/psychodynamic factors, and biological factors. Examples of research studies reflecting each of these major theoretical perspectives relevant to the various types of abuse will be cited.

My adult sister emotionally abused my elderly mother. My 80-year-old mother could not remember if she had taken her medicine or not. Mother said my sister would call her “Stupid” if she couldn’t remember if she had taken her pills. The problem could have been avoided if my sister had simply set out the amount of medicine mother was to take each day. Unfortunately, I was living 600 miles away and could not help my mother.

An Observer of Elder Abuse

A. Violence as learned behavior

Violence may be a behavior that a perpetrator has learned from observing others being violent. This is referred to as modeling the behavior. When movies, videos, TV programs, and computer games present violent behavior as a way of solving conflicts, such behavior is modeled by others as seen in the various types of domestic violence. Parental aggression in the form of corporal punishment presents children with an example or model that hitting or slapping is an acceptable method of problem solving. Children punished in this manner have been shown to model physically aggressive behavior in their relationships with others.

The modeling of aggressive behavior in part explains the intergenerational theory of abuse; namely, that violence begets violence. Children who have been physically abused may, although not necessarily, in turn be abusive in dating relationships and later in their own parenting roles. However, corrective emotional experiences can prevent such abuse from being transferred from generation to generation.

B. Violence as power and control

Domestic violence also can be understood from the theoretical perspective that focuses on the power and control that males exert over females. Just as males dominate females at the societal level, this also occurs in the context of the home, family, and in domestic relationships in general.

I must admit I wasn’t the neatest kid when I was growing up; however, the constant struggle my parents had with me about the way I kept my room hurts me to this day. My father would inspect my room every few days and if he found clothes lying on the floor or my desk being messy, he would slap me very hard, once even in the face when I told him I didn’t think my room looked that bad. The names my parents called me—slob, Ms. Piggy—I guess were supposed to motivate me to be neater but they ruined my self-esteem.

Violence as power and control can be seen in physical and emotional spouse/partner abuse, in dating violence, and in marital and date rape. Some males use physical and emotional abuse in order to maintain their position of power in the spouse/partner and dating relationship. Sex on demand, or marital and date rape, is seen as appropriate behavior by some males. Some biblical passages, when taken literally and without regard to the social and cultural context in which these passages were written, are used to inappropriately reinforce the view that women must be subordinate to men.

C. *Violence as a result of frustration*

This theoretical perspective suggests that violence may stem from frustration resulting from a person experiencing blockage or interference in attaining a goal. Frustration is also conceptualized as stress occurring in a person's life. For example, an unemployed parent frustrated by an inability to find work to support the family may physically or verbally lash out at a spouse/partner or the children. Statistical data on child and spouse abuse indicate that in times of high unemployment or economic downturn, reports of child and spouse/partner abuse often increase.

External conditions are also factors that can affect the relationship between frustration and aggression. The presence or ease with which weapons are available in the United States may contribute to guns being a factor in homicides that occur among family members, especially in the context of spouse/partner abuse. "In 1992 handguns were used to murder 13 people in Australia, 33 people in Great Britain; 60 people in Japan, 128 in Canada; and more than 13,000 in the United States."⁴¹ A portion of these individuals in the United States who were murdered by guns lost their lives in the context of domestic violence.

D. *Psychological/psychodynamic factors*

Studies of personality characteristics of men who are abusive to partners/spouses show evidence of marked personality disorders, mood and other symptom disturbances, and cognitive and affect problems. The personality profiles of men who batter give the impression that abusive males may tend to regard as threatening, situations that most individuals would not regard as such. Similarly, perpetrators of elder abuse have been shown to exhibit severe problems in psychosocial functioning, as reflected in a high incidence of prior arrests, problems with substance abuse, depression, previous hospitalizations for psychiatric illness, and past involvement in violent behavior.⁴²

My younger brother and sister called me names as I was growing up because I was overweight. My parents ignored their abusive behavior. It was humiliating the names they called me, even in front of my friends. I couldn't wait to leave home. As an adult I have poor self-esteem that I think stems in large part from what I experienced from my siblings.

Empathy is regarded in psychological literature as a moderating variable in the display of aggression. Research identifies child abuse perpetrators as less empathic than non-abusers.⁴³ The absence of empathy has also been noted in mothers who are provoked to anger by their infants' crying, culminating at times in these mothers abusing the infant by violent shaking. Other psychological variables, such as depression and sadness, may also relate to the absence of empathy in physically abusive mothers.

Some psychotherapists working with men engaged in abusive behavior with partners/spouses view these individuals as having violence-prone personalities. They have learned to use violence as a way of keeping themselves psychologically intact. Attachment theory suggests that the aggression demonstrated by perpetrators in intimate relationships, such as in spouse/partner abuse and dating violence, stems from the anger and anxiety they experience over the fear of abandonment and over a failure to bond in early parent-child relationships.

E. *Biological factors*

Biochemical changes, as seen in the effects of alcohol and drugs on the brain, are a contributing factor to domestic violence. Research shows that substance abuse is a significant factor in child abuse, spouse/partner abuse, elder abuse, and dating violence.

Physical injury in the form of severe trauma to the head may account for the rage demonstrated by some perpetrators of physical abuse against their partners/spouses. Research also has shown that lead residues from lead-based paints can act as a brain poison that interferes with a person's ability to restrain aggressive impulses. Genetic differences, as in differences in temperament, also can impact aggressiveness. This may in part explain why some siblings are physically aggressive toward their sisters and brothers.

In summary, these are theoretical perspectives that assist in an understanding of the factors associated with the various types and forms of domestic violence. These perspectives and the research that supports them do not in any way condone domestic violence in whatever form it may appear. Although we can perhaps understand the roots of abusive behavior by looking at characteristics abusers have in common, each incidence of violence must be uniquely viewed in terms of the contributing factors.

I didn't make a police report or go to the hospital. I didn't think anyone would believe that I was raped by someone I knew—my boyfriend.

A Dating Violence Survivor

XII. How Can Victims and Abusers Find Healing and Transformation?

No doubt, all victims of domestic violence would like to

simply do as friends, even the church, advise them and forget the past, forget the abuse. However, therapists, advocates, survivors themselves, all testify that the only way to deal with the past is to go through it. To heal, that is to be transformed from a victim into a survivor, the abused need to face the manifold ways in which their psyches/spirits have become fragmented. Instead of expending their energy by trying to repress the painful emotions and terrifying memories, they need to allow themselves to feel and remember what happened to them. The path to transformation is integrating the repressed emotions, memories, even fragments of their true selves that were never allowed to develop, into their consciousness. Once those emotions, memories, and fragments become conscious, the abused person can decide to build upon the good ones.

This is a slow, frequently agonizing process, and it can only be endured in the presence of those willing and able to nurture victims back into wholeness, those with the patience to listen and the love to empathetically endure the unendurable with them. To heal, victims need to be encouraged to remember and retell the horrors they have endured, sometimes over and over, until what has been repressed is fully integrated into the consciousness. They begin to find healing when they understand that their depression, anger, irrational fears, and insecurities are the painful legacy of a past they did not choose but still threatens to destroy them. While a therapist must be among those who listen and respond, who guide and encourage, a therapist is not enough. In their quests for healing and transformation, many survivors bear witness to the power of God and the love of God's people.

As Paul wrote, "Love is patient; love is kind . . . it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" (1 Cor. 13:4, 6-8a). The church, as it expresses the love that bears the burdens of the past and endures patiently with the survivor struggling to heal, also mediates the hope of the resurrection. After the suffering that all but kills the spirit, through the empowering love of God, rebirth and new life emerges. And through this power, the church can nurture the survivor back into wholeness, for as Paul also wrote, "Love builds up" (1 Cor. 8:1b). It empowers the survivor to act with integrity and to love once again.

Abusers too need healing and transformation. They too need the power of God and the love of God's people. Current evidence, however, suggests that the route to their transformation comes not so much from listening and supporting as from confrontation and accountability.

XIII. How Can The Church Respond?

To take seriously its theological and ethical understanding of domestic violence and its responsibility to be a healing and nurturing community, the church is called to be God's instrument for preventing further harm to God's people who are particularly vulnerable. Thus the church is called to claim its pastoral and prophetic role to be a sanctuary for victims and survivors and to call abusers to accountability. This ministry is done both in personal and social dimensions.

These tasks, put forth in "Peacemaking in a Violent World, Session V, First Steps Toward Nonviolence," are four-fold:

1. Restore hope: present a new vision for a new future. This is the area where the church is uniquely qualified to make a difference. As people of faith, we are a people of vision. We are called not simply to assure our own salvation but to present the vision to a hope-starved world.
2. Own the problem. We cannot separate ourselves from the society around us. The sin of the church has often been to shut out the world. As Jesus identified with the least of these, so must we. We must acknowledge the violence within ourselves and our congregations and our complicity with the world's way of violence.
3. Show another way. We can model alternatives to violence by choosing a different way for ourselves and our families and by providing alternative activities within our communities.
4. Become an agent of healing in the midst of pain. We can reach out to victims and perpetrators of violence, offering support, and when needed, confrontation.

In these tasks, the church is empowered to live up to its pastoral and prophetic role to hear the abuse, hold the abuser accountable, and be God's good instrument of healing. Yet the church's role goes beyond keeping those who have been harmed from sustaining additional personal harm. The church must work for changes in society so that violence is not accepted or in any way legitimated by the social and cultural realities—working for systemic change. While the church always places an emphasis on the care of victims and the vulnerable, it does this care in the broader sense as well—working to ensure the changes necessary to prevent there ever being victims! The church is empowered to share in the transformation of individuals and society.

XIV. A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence

A. Pastoral response

Grounded in an understanding of domestic violence, a pastoral response should have the following three goals:

Goal One: Protect the victim or victims from further abuse

Although the form of this response will depend on the degree of danger faced by the victims, it is the number one priority. The immediate safety of the person harmed or threatened must be secured.

Goal Two: Stop the abuser's violence and hold the abuser accountable

Again, the circumstances will dictate the form of response. This goal encompasses two dimensions: first, insisting upon the immediate cessation of the abusive behavior, and second,

calling the abuser to accountability.

Immediate, temporary cessation may be accomplished by helping the victim get to a safe place, but the abuser's violent behavior must also be confronted. Research now suggests that arrest is the single most effective deterrent to future abusive behavior. It may be the first time that anyone with authority has made it clear to the abuser that this behavior is wrong, criminal, and intolerable. The criminal justice system can play a critical role in informing victims of available options and communicating to offenders the message that this behavior is wrong—while helping to protect victims in the short-term from further abuse. The abuser must assume full responsibility for the abuse.

Goal Three: Restore the family relationship or mourn the loss of the relationship.

The third goal of ministry with victims and abusers presents the possibility of reconciliation and the healing of individuals and relationships. This goal, however, is entirely dependent on the successful accomplishment of Goals One and Two. It is the victim, not the pastor or other person(s) in a supporting relationship, who judges whether Goals One and Two have been met. Whether to proceed to Goal Three is a decision that the victim/survivor makes voluntarily. Restoration of a relationship is impossible prior to the authentic accomplishment of these more urgent goals.

It is possible to create the appearance of restoration at an earlier point, as by encouraging a couple to live together in the same house, and to attend church together. Genuine restoration is not accomplished by such superficial signs. The process of achieving Goals One and Two may take months or years. Even so, any circumvention of this agenda will prevent family members from reaching Goal Three and will result in the ultimate loss of the relationship. Restoration cannot be based on partial success or on the promises of the abuser. It is dependent on clear evidence of change in the abuser's behavior. Even then, there is only the possibility of restoration; there are no guarantees. The outcome depends on how severe the damage has been to the relationship.

If it is against spouse or intimate partner, the abuser's violence has broken the relationship and destroyed the safety and trust that make for intimacy and covenant. The certainty and evidence that coercion and violence are no longer part of an abuser's repertoire are prerequisites for considering the possibility of reconciliation.

If, for whatever reason, Goals One and Two are not accomplished, then the only remaining option is mourning the loss of the relationship. This amounts to an acknowledgment that the positive dimensions of the relationship and its future possibilities are irretrievably lost. Hence, the victim, the abuser, and the community they are a part of will experience grief. Still, for the victim, out of this loss comes the possibility for healing and for a new life.

If one of the priorities of ministry is to restore what was

broken and to reconcile ruptured relationships, then sincere attention to protect the victim and call the abuser to accountability are the means by which we may help people accomplish restoration. To ignore Goals One and Two would preclude any possibility of a genuine healing of the relationship.⁴⁴

B. *On child abuse and neglect*

As in spouse/partner abuse, the goals of any effective response to suspected child abuse and neglect are the following:

1. Protect the child from further abuse.
2. Stop the offender's abuse.
3. Heal the victim's brokenness and, if possible, restore the family or, if not possible, to mourn the loss of family relationships.

These goals can be accomplished best by the early reporting of suspected child abuse to appropriate legal authorities. Anyone may report suspected child abuse and will not be liable for an unfounded report if it is made in good faith. In every state, persons in helping professions—teachers, doctors, counselors, police officers, social workers, health professionals—are legally mandated to report a suspicion of child abuse or neglect to child abuse authorities.

In some states in the United States, ordained clergy are exempt from this statutory requirement. People serving in a pastoral role, however, are encouraged to report suspected child abuse regardless of statutory requirements. Presbyterians should learn the specifics of the law by calling their state attorney general's office. Church leaders, lay or clergy, should not attempt to gather detailed evidence from the person who discloses the abuse. If child abuse is suspected, the children's protective services agency should be contacted to discuss concerns or to file a formal report concerning the welfare of a child or teenager. The children's protective services agency will investigate and determine the level of risk to the child.

Every state provides a mechanism at the state level for reporting, investigating, and assessing situations. It is obligated to assist victims, abusers, and other family members in addressing the three goals for intervention.

XV. A Prophetic Response: Justicemaking

Whether we are victim, abuser, friend, helper, or church community, we long for healing. We long for justice. Several steps are necessary for healing and justice to become reality:⁴⁵

Truth-telling is essential. The silence that surrounds the violence must be broken. Truth-telling is not merely a rendering of facts; it is giving voice to reality. It is also about naming the violence. Carol J. Adams suggests that "the care

provider creates the climate for moving from silence to naming the violence, thus offering an invitation to healing and liberation.”⁴⁶ The violence needs to be named for what it is—a sin before God.

Truth spoken must also be truth heard. Hearing the truth means acknowledging that violence has occurred. This acknowledgment needs to be spoken simply and clearly. “You have been harmed by this person. It was not your fault. This is wrong and should never have happened.” This acknowledgment can come from a friend, a pastor, or the legal system, but it needs to come from somewhere.

Compassion is the willingness to suffer with the victim, combined with efforts to alleviate the suffering. Rather than trying to minimize, explain away or avoid the suffering of another, we should be present to share the suffering with that person.

Protecting the vulnerable from further abuse means doing whatever is necessary to protect the victim and others from further harm. It is about ensuring the safety of the victim.

Accountability involves confronting the one responsible for violence, which hopefully will result in confession or acknowledgment of his/her responsibility.

Restitution, making payment for damage done by violence, is a concrete means of renewing right-relation. Not only does material restitution help pay for expenses incurred as a result of the victimization, it is also highly symbolic. It is a tangible sign of an attempt to restore that which was lost due to an assault.

Vindication for victims is the essence of justice and mercy. Vindication refers not to vengeance and retaliation but to the exoneration and justification of those harmed. The root meaning of vindication is to set free; hence, to be vindicated is to be set free from the bondage of victimization.

XVI. Education for Prevention

The third dimension for nurturing a responsive church community is prevention. The church’s preventive role is, in the long run, the most important one, as the church remains a significant center for education, new awareness, and ethical standards for people in the community. We propose a curriculum that includes and supports healthy, loving, and just family relationships and prevents abusive and violent ones.

“Children need prevention education to prepare them to deal with the strong likelihood of attempted sexual abuse. Teaching them self-respect and self-confidence and giving them permission to say ‘no’ to any adult who would harm them is both practical and a theological priority.”⁴⁷ In addition, teach children ways to deal with anger, stress, feelings of powerlessness, and how to relate in healthy ways to others.

Teenagers need straightforward information about relationships and sexuality in order to have expectations of

mutuality, choice, and respect in relationship. “Providing them with communication and assertiveness skills and with support for their development within a context of religious values is a priority.”⁴⁸

Adults who are approaching marriage or commitment face an excellent opportunity to reflect carefully on their expectations of each other and of their relationship. In addition to a long list of other concerns, the minister can—and should—raise questions concerning conflict, expression of anger, previous experiences of coercion or abuse in relationships, and growing-up experiences in the family of origin. To provide an opportunity for this discussion as a preparation for commitment is vital and much appreciated by couples.

Adult children, who are facing the illness or disability of an adult parent, also need the information, resources, and support that the church can provide. The open discussion of ways to deal with the stress that such a family crisis often creates can mitigate against the possibility of elder abuse or neglect.

Parents of disabled children and children of disabled parents need information about the potential for abuse. The disabled themselves need strategies for resisting and identifying abuse.

The church is in a position, perhaps more than any other institution, to provide these kinds of resources within its comprehensive educational ministry. Thus, it can be a primary means of preventing domestic violence.

The church is proclaiming the gospel when it offers an alternative to the generational cycle of abuse in families and relationships. The church is proclaiming the gospel when it takes the initiative in providing prevention education at the congregational level.

XVII. How Do We Address Religious Issues and Abuse?

The church also needs to address the religious issues with which victims and abusers struggle. We have already discussed how the crisis of domestic violence affects people psychologically and physically. The spiritual dimension needs to be addressed as well, both for victims and for the abusers.

The misinterpretation and misuse of the Christian traditions have often had a harmful effect on families, particularly those dealing with domestic violence. Misinterpretation of the traditions can contribute substantially to the guilt, self-blame, and suffering that victims experience and to the rationalizations often used by those who abuse, “But the bible says . . .” is frequently used to explain, excuse, or justify abuse between family members.

If a woman’s tradition teaches that she must be subordinate to her husband and cannot divorce him under any circumstance, she will have a difficult time dealing with an

abusive husband. She may be afraid to use the resources of the community services and worry that a shelter will not respect her beliefs. She may go to her minister and be told to go home, to pray harder and be a better wife. Either way she is isolated which only further endangers her. If her minister is unethical and exploitative, he may take advantage of her circumstances, manipulating her into a sexual relationship or sexually assaulting her. She turned to the church because she trusted its representative to help her, but her trust has been betrayed. She has received no help for her original problem and she has an additional one—an abusive minister.

Victims and survivors struggle with many religious issues, among them

- If God is good, why does God let this happen to me?
- I watched my mother get beaten by my father. My boyfriend has beaten me from the time I began to date him. Shouldn't I just accept it and live with it? This must be God's will for me.
- I am not a good Christian. I have done some bad things in the past. Maybe this abuse is God's way of punishing me. This must be my cross to bear.
- The Bible says that the wife must submit to her husband. Does this mean that I must submit to abuse?
- If Jesus calls us to forgive our enemies should I not go back to my spouse/partner/sibling/child who abused me?
- When my family, friends, colleagues at work, even the church community, turn away from me and blame me for being abused, then why should I believe that God has not abandoned me?
- If Jesus prohibited divorce, then how can I leave my husband/wife?
- I was abused by my father. I was an incest victim. How can I honor my father?

On the other hand, the religious community and its leaders can be a tremendous resource when a person has been victimized. The church can offer support—spiritual, financial, material—a safe place to share feelings, advocacy as the victim attempts to use the judicial system, and, for the abuser, a calling to accountability. The church's task is to minimize the roadblocks to the victim's religious beliefs and to be a resource. Our task is to ensure that the victim not be forced to choose between safety and the support of the faith community. She needs both.

To the victims of abuse, religious concerns represent meaning and purpose, salvation, and eternity. Again, the presence and counsel of the minister and the congregations in giving attention to these issues is critical.

XVIII. What Have Some Congregations Done?

Reverend Bob Owens, former minister of the First Presbyterian Church in Honolulu, not only preached on domestic violence but also led his congregation in a compassionate and prophetic response to it. The congregation helped start an ecumenical safe home for victims and survivors. A lay person from the church, who attended the Presbyterian Training on Domestic Violence, has continued to raise awareness in the congregations and is active in the interfaith community response to domestic violence on the island.

Many local congregations are breaking the silence around domestic violence issues, especially around intimate partner and child abuse. Some are preparing their churches to be able to respond appropriately when there are disclosures, while others have developed policies of making their churches safer for children.

Presbyterian Women has been taking the lead in increasing awareness of the issue. Through the organization's birthday offering, women have been contributing to the development of educational resources, such as videos, and funding training events. A teen-dating video, featuring healthy relationships and guidance in the prevention of violent ones, has also been made possible through the contributions of Presbyterian Women. Presbyterian Men as well have just begun to play a leadership role. They have held a national video teleconference on spouse/partner abuse and held one on the effects of domestic violence on children in early 2001.

In the past the church has responded to the issue of domestic violence by developing written resources: *Resolution on Family Violence*; *Song of Songs* (on Pornography); *Striking Terror No More*, and *Surely Heed Their Cries*. The most recent attempt at developing a denominational resource was the national satellite telecast produced and sponsored by the Presbyterian Men. The teleconference focused on "Men and Women Working Together to Stop Violence Against Women." It was received directly by approximately sixty downlinks and viewed by more than two thousand people in twenty-four states.

The church is proclaiming the gospel when it offers an alternative to the generational cycle of abuse in families and relationships.

XIX. What About Confidentiality and Reporting?

Information shared in confidence can usually be held in trust unless it leads one to believe that someone is being hurt or abused, is in danger of injury, or the perpetrator/abuser or victim/survivor presents a risk to self or others.

Christians, in general, are called to be the voice for the voiceless and for those without power. This calling takes on added relevance when clergy are aware of child/youth abuse. It is in this context that persons in ministry, especially clergy, assume their responsibility in the reporting of child abuse, the

elderly, and those disabled in ways that prevent them from reporting the abuse themselves. They speak for those without voice and power.

The 212th General Assembly (2000) legislated G-6.0204 and G-14.0801f, which mandate that ministers and commissioned lay pastors keep pastoral confidentiality. The amendments read as follows:

In the exercise of pastoral care, ministers of the Word and Sacrament shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing such care and all information relating to the exercise of such care. When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a minister of the Word and Sacrament may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information. A minister of the Word and Sacrament may reveal confidential information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person. (*Book of Order*, 2000–2001, G-6.0204)

f. In the exercise of pastoral care, commissioned lay pastors shall maintain a relationship of trust and confidentiality, and shall hold in confidence all information revealed to them in the course of providing such care and all information relating to the exercise of such care. When the person whose confidences are at issue gives express consent to reveal confidential information, then a commissioned lay pastor may, but cannot be compelled to, reveal confidential information. A commissioned lay pastor may reveal confidential information when she or he reasonably believes that there is risk of imminent bodily harm to any person. (*Book of Order*, 2000–2001, G-14.0801f)

Those sections specifically provide that a minister or commissioned lay pastor may “. . . reveal confidential information when she/he reasonably believes there is a risk of imminent bodily harm to any person.”

In addition to helping the victim, reporting may result in effective intervention for the abuser. The behavior of offenders often escalates over time if it is not stopped. Abusers need psychological treatment along with spiritual guidance. Repentance, conversion, prayer, and spiritual counsel can help the abuser, but outside intervention must also occur in order to hold the perpetrator accountable for his/her actions.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy has recommended that the General Assembly encourage all clergy, elders, church members, other church staff, and volunteers to always report to the appropriate authority the abuse of children, the elderly, and those disabled in ways that prevent them from reporting the abuse themselves; and after appropriate training, discuss with all victims/survivors their risk and safety options, and refer the victims/survivors to appropriate resources.

The church is called to adequately equip itself for ministry to persons experiencing domestic violence and abuse.

XX. Conclusion

The 192nd General Assembly (1980) adopted *Peacemaking: the Believers' Calling*. In that statement we find these words: “Peace is the intended order of the world with life abundant for all God's children.” Today the church's challenge

is to work at peacemaking in the most fundamental contexts: in homes across our country, in people's most intimate relationships.

Yes, we are talking about family values, about lifting up every member of every family—all are precious in God's eyes, all deserving to live a life free of fear.

Yes, we are talking about transformation, about changing a society in which power is defined as control and where rage destroys our most precious relationships.

Yes, we are talking about hope. Our hope rests in Jesus Christ, who himself died at the hands of violent people. Yet in his brief lifetime, as he blessed children, as he honored women, as he healed the sick and disabled, he taught us how to live together in peace.

Yes, we are talking about resurrection. The wounded will be made whole.

A Prayer for Domestic Violence Healing

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.

Amen.

Appendix A: The Journey of the Task Force on “Healing Domestic Violence: Nurturing a Responsive Church Community”

Charge and Purpose

The charge given the Task Force on “Healing Domestic Violence: Nurturing a Responsive Church Community” in their prospectus prepared by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) was “to explore the root causes of domestic violence, to assess the church's complicity and response to the

problem, and to propose a new policy statement with principles and recommendations to educate, develop preventive strategies and response criteria, and suggest ways to nurture a responsive church community.”

Who are Members of the Task Force?

The Task Force members included seven women and five men with significant experience and/or training in issues of interpersonal violence. They are African American, Asian American, and Anglo American with ages ranging from 30 to 75 years. They are evenly balanced laity and clergy. Among them were lay professionals working in the church: a Presbytery staff member with interest in issues of violence, a parish nurse and founder of a church-initiated support group for battered women, and the founder of a battered women’s shelter.

Three of the members are professors at the university and seminary level. A social scientist at the University of Kentucky, a psychologist whose work is focused on working with victims/survivors and perpetrators of interpersonal violence at Northwestern University, and a systematic theologian teaching at Detroit Mercy Seminary.

Among the seven clergy members, two are pastors serving congregations; each has interest and experience with domestic violence issues in the church. One clergy member is in ministry with troubled youth, many of whom are deeply affected by issues of violence in the home.

One member is an attorney with experience as a domestic violence prosecutor, and another member has served as director of a victim witness assistance program where the majority of those assisted were victims of domestic violence and other forms of interpersonal violence.

Among them were several victim/survivors of interpersonal violence: spouse abuse, sibling abuse, and child sexual abuse.

Two of the committee were former members of the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy, having begun their service while serving on the ACSWP.

We have been assisted by several liaisons and consultants: Peter Sulyok, our primary staff from the ACSWP, Judy Wrought, liaison from Women’s Ministries of the National Ministries Division, Thelma Burgonio-Watson, consultant, who works with the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence (CPSDV) in Seattle, Washington. The Task Force drew extensively on the resources of the CPSDV for the definitions and guidance in formulating the church’s pastoral response. In addition, Lois Gehr Livezey, ethicist and professor at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois, served as a consultant to the task force. Indeed, the title of the policy statement, *Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence*, emerged from a similar title for a book Dr. Livezey is currently writing for Chalice Press. Sandi Thompson-Royer, staff for the GAC’s Domestic Violence Network, also consulted with the task force.

Each time we meet we learned more about the horrible cost and the enormous impact of interpersonal violence in all our lives—in our relationships with one another and with our Creator, and in the physical, psychological, and spiritual pain of being so far from the life intended for each and every one of God’s children.

The Task Force Process

The Task Force has been working for two years, meeting together five times in various locations to gather information and grapple with the issues and the church’s role.

1. November 1998 in Louisville: Orientation for the task force took place with an examination of the prospectus, domestic violence and current work being done, and the task of policy making. The meeting included a visit to the Center for Women and Families, a discussion of definitions, themes, and the categories of violence. The group developed its time line for the work complete with small group discussions focusing on a possible churchwide study and churchwide survey.

2. March 1999 in Chicago: Framing biblical and theological issues was a main focus as the group examined various perspectives, the complexity of issues/ no single solution or message fits all situations. The task force also considered sociological and practical issues such as the location of factors: individual, family, society/culture; and a focus on the church role/problems and the need to claim and hold accountable. Discussion also focused on abusers/perpetrators (molesters, rapists, batterers, and professional abusers. Among the guests received included a leader from Korean American Women In Need on the implications of ethnicity and culture on domestic violence and Lois Gehr Livezey lifting up some theological and biblical resources. The small groups worked on the completion of planning the churchwide study, feedback and response utilizing the General Assembly Council’s resource *Striking Terror No More* and a survey of the church. In addition there were research and presentation assignments presented by task force members on areas of their expertise.

3. October 1999 in Atlanta: The task force visited or heard from the Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute, Men Stopping Violence, and an attorney with the Child Advocacy Center’s Crimes Against Women and Children, Atlanta Judicial Circuit Court’s Office of the District Attorney. Task force member offered reports on Juveniles and Issues of Abuse, Elder Abuse, Church and Community Cooperation, Restorative Justice, and the Presbytery’s Role in Domestic Violence. Brainstorming together as a whole was followed by small group discussion of possible elements of a proposed policy statement in the following areas: biblical, historical, theological aspects; social factors; categories of interpersonal violence; and the church’s response—suggestions and strategies.

4. June 2000 in Chicago: There was a review of Presbyterian Panel survey findings and a review of the first draft for the policy statement followed by further working discussion sessions of small groups on Christology, Bible and family, and truth and reconciliation issues. Feedback from the churchwide study was reviewed.

5. September 2000 in Louisville: The task force reviewed the second draft of the proposed policy statement and background paper, offering further final editing and adjustments and reviewed the task force process and time together.

In addition to its work as a task force, the chair and several members of the task force shared in presentations of its work to the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy at their summer and fall meetings 2000, to a Synod Consultation on Turning Mourning Into Dancing January 12–14, 2001, to the commissioners at the 213th General Assembly (2001) in Louisville.

Appendix B: Disability and Abuse

If violence and abuse are uses of power that inflict harm on others for the perpetrator’s own ends, then it is fairly self-evident that

those who have less power as a result of disabilities are more vulnerable to becoming victims simply because they have less power to protect themselves from harm. While physical disability serves as the paradigm for most persons' attitudes and beliefs toward the disabled, mental and psychological disabilities also exist. Needless to say, each type of disability renders those living with a disability vulnerable in a different sort of way, and multiple forms of disability can render a person profoundly vulnerable to multiple forms of abuse.

The physically disabled person's fairly obvious vulnerability to violence becomes surcharged by our culture's simultaneous idealization and devaluation of the body. The body is expected to achieve ideal standards of both physical appearance and responsiveness—in other words, it is supposed to fulfill high expectations for physical beauty and to do what its possessor wishes it to do. Since few people measure up to these high standards, most feel somewhat alienated from their bodies. This alienation contributes to the common refusal to see violence toward the body as a fundamentally spiritual issue; as a result, violence devalues the actual bodies in which we live and move and have our being.⁴⁹ The greater our alienation from the body and the more repressed our emotions and feelings, the greater our difficulties in experiencing concern or empathy for others, particularly for those who suffer, and the more likely we are to treat them violently.

Marvin Ellison has argued that this idealization of the body also contributes to our culture's expectations that people should achieve physical mastery and control over themselves. The way persons with a physical disability struggle almost moment to moment with their bodies serves as an effective reminder to others of the limits of their own bodily control. This reminder is not always welcome. Those most resistant to it are likely to judge those with a disability as morally deficient and, quite irrationally, blame them for their problems. "Disabled persons, culturally designated as the Other, symbolize a dreaded loss of body control, diminished autonomy, and death, all things that people in a body- and death-denying culture seek to evade."⁵⁰ Precisely as symbols for the dreaded loss of what many persons hold most valuable—their autonomy and self-control—those with physical disabilities frequently become targets of hostility. They will particularly become targets for those who repress their own terror of losing control and who project those unwanted feelings onto the disabled by ridiculing them, ostracizing them, marginalizing them, and attacking them in a variety of ways—in a word, scapegoating them for the perpetrator's own unresolved fears and hatred of his or her own body.⁵¹ The dependence on others by persons with physical disabilities, sometimes for meeting even elementary needs, make them ready targets upon which others might project and objectify their own repressed violence. This is also true of persons suffering from more hidden chronic disabling illnesses, such as multiple sclerosis, chronic fatigue syndrome, HIV, lupus, and Lyme disease. Such persons are frequently both stigmatized and blamed for their illness. Still, while far too many people in our culture believe that a life lived with a disability is hardly worth the effort, the vast majority of persons with a disability would counter that their main obstacle to living a fulfilling life is not the disability itself but the culture that so emphasizes autonomous individuality, and rejects as "unpleasant, unhappy, helpless, hopeless, and burdensome" those who cannot achieve it.⁵²

Needless to say, disabilities cut across all age groups. When we consider age groups, disabled newborns and children are surely the most vulnerable. Local state and federal agencies frequently step in to protect the disabled newborns whose parents would rather withhold treatment, thus precipitating their death, than to raise them as disabled. Unfortunately, it is much more difficult for governing agencies to protect a newborn or child in the privacy of its own home than when it is still on a hospital ward. Children, particularly infants,

always need much care, and test the limits of any parent's energy and patience. All the more so with children whose disabilities demand that they receive even more care and attention. Parents who are reluctant or unwilling to shoulder the burden of nurturing a disabled child are perhaps more likely to succumb to the temptation to neglect the child's needs or be abusive when trying to meet them.

Furthermore, all children are likely to split psychically when they encounter an abusive parent: they will split off the "bad" part of the parent from the "good" and internalize it as part of themselves, rather than face the reality that the parent upon whom they are dependent for survival is really malevolent. Such psychic splitting makes children more vulnerable to further abuse because it makes it harder for them to recognize abuse when it occurs anywhere, even into adulthood. When people abuse them, they will often not recognize it as abuse at all, or they will assume that it is somehow their fault, that they deserved it. Psychically speaking, it is much easier to be a demon living in a world ruled by a benevolent god than to be good living in a world ruled by the devil.⁵³ This tendency to split is intensified for the child with disabilities, who is even more dependent upon the parent for love and nurture than the normal child, and who, aware that it has a disability, is often even more desperate to feel valued and loved by its parents.⁵⁴ Hence, the physical disability has profound psychological effects that set such children up for further abuse.

Gender difference, of course, also plays a role in determining who among the disabled is most liable to be abused. "[O]ur culture views being female and disabled as 'redundant,' whereas being male and disabled is a contradiction. . . ." Women in the best of circumstances struggle to gain equality of power in loving relationships. There is little question that those with disabilities of any sort—physical, mental or psychological—are especially handicapped in their attempts to achieve relationships of loving mutuality. It has already been noted that women in general have difficulty giving up abusive relationships because they sometimes have no job skills or economic resources by which to support themselves and their children outside of that relationship. This difficulty is redoubled for disabled women who have even fewer opportunities for educational and economic security than able bodied women. Many such women stay, convinced that living with the abuse is still far better than returning to a family that no longer wants them or to an institution where they will likely be subjected to even worse treatment. Even a woman with resources for hiring personal care attendants, thus enabling her to stay in her own home, risks being abused by them. Furthermore, the negative self-images that conspire to keep persons of both genders in abusive relationships are far more common among women than men.⁵⁶

Needless to say, the disabled elderly are also an especially high risk group for abuse. The slow decline in capacities that mark the move from maturity to old age hits those physically disabled especially hard. In addition, there is a sense in which the elderly "threaten" us as they remind us of our own impending frailty and death. Often adult children of the elderly are called upon to "parent" their own parents as the aging process renders them more and more powerless. Adult children who experience their parents becoming less able physically and mentally often feel "betrayed" by their parents—a loss of the parent/care-taker image. It is a situation ripe for abuse.

Persons with mental disabilities fall into at least two groups: the developmentally disabled who have what are considered subnormal intelligence quotients, and those disabled as a result of accidents or disease processes, such as brain aneurysms, strokes, and Alzheimer's. The developmentally disabled are, needless to say, particularly at risk for being abused. They are often more gullible when others wish to

use them for their own purposes. This point becomes particularly salient when one considers the limited social and communication skills of women with a mental disability: their attempts to become engaged in mature social and sexual relationships are too often taken advantage of by men. Such persons will find it harder to distinguish appropriately affectionate behavior expressed by parents or siblings from sexually abusive behavior. When abuse does happen, those with a mental disability—no matter what the cause or gender—find it difficult to protest the abuse, much less to end it. Furthermore, because they have a mental disability, their testimony is seldom admissible in court without a corroborating witness—and that is even less likely to be available in the home than in an institutional context.⁵⁷

While mental disabilities are usually fairly apparent, psychological disabilities are often hidden. By psychological disability is meant not mental illness, but other sorts of mental impairments, such as attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficient hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Tourette's Syndrome, and dyslexia. Persons who are intelligent but still cannot seem to exercise normal control over their impulses, or to perform apparently simple tasks, or to accomplish them in anything but strange, "dysfunctional" ways are frequently misunderstood and blamed for their difficulties.

ADHD children, in particular, have often been subjected to severe abuse. Such children suffer from deficits in attention and effort, and an inability to control their impulses and levels of arousal; they also have need for immediate reinforcement in all that they do well. Too often, parents do not understand that their hyperactivity and impulsiveness are a result of a bioneurological disorder, and so repeatedly punish the child and call the child names when it is behaving "badly." Because these children frequently fail at completing tasks, they are called "dumb" or "lazy." Such name-calling affects their self-esteem and leads to more acting-out and aberrant behaviors. Because of obvious problems coping with normal stresses, activities and tasks, and because the parents become increasingly impatient with the behaviors, the ADD/ADHD child becomes their "problem" child. Hence, he or she serves as a ready scapegoat for all sorts of problems in the family.⁵⁸ Finally, the child's tendency to constantly dissociate from one focus of attention to another makes it difficult to connect with others and to focus on painful events and memories long enough to put all the pieces of an abusive situation together in a recognizable way. Needless to say, these problems can continue into adulthood and become intensified by the normal everyday demands and expectations placed upon mature adults.

It is important to realize that many persons diagnosed with ADD or ADHD also have histories of extreme violence and abuse, particularly sexual abuse at an early age. Indeed, many of ADD/ADHD's symptoms are identical to those of individuals suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome: inability to focus and/or sit still, heightened anxiety, hyper vigilance, and an inability to filter out distractions. This makes proper diagnosis all the more imperative. Discerning whether these symptoms are the result of bioneurological dysfunction or abuse is essential in determining the appropriate immediate response to the person's problems as well as long-term treatment. Everyone from social workers to church members must refrain from jumping to conclusions about the cause of the person's problems.

A final note: though they speak the truth, many victims of violence and abuse are not believed. This problem is exacerbated for

those with disabilities. Often viewed as somehow subhuman, they find that their testimony regarding instances of violence and abuse are rendered doubly suspect. Just as the perpetrator refused to listen to their pleas to stop, so the "innocent" bystander continues that perpetrator's violation of the victim's body and soul by refusing to listen with belief. Jesus came to save not the righteous but the poor and the oppressed. The Church of Christ will only fulfill its mission when it serves as a sanctuary for those who are oppressed, not just by violence and abuse, but also by the added vulnerabilities that disabilities bring with them. The first step in any victim's path to healing is to tell the story of violation over and over again until it is fully integrated into consciousness and can be let go. This process can happen in the midst of the open and empathic listener who affirms the abused person's right to rage against the abuser, so that ultimately the victim may come to forgive and let go of it. For love is patient and kind. . . . (1 Cor. 13). Our churches must become sanctuaries where all are compassionately listened to and believed, engaged and affirmed.

Appendix C: Bibliography

SUGGESTED RESOURCE LIST

This list is a collection of resources gathered from our committee, other bibliographies and web sites, as well as referrals received from individuals. There are some resources that will be listed in multiple places.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) RESOURCES

Basham, Beth and Sara Lisherness, eds. *Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence*. Louisville, Ky.: Bridge Resources, 1997. This book is a wealth of information, including articles introducing the types of abuses which might be found within a congregation, class outlines, suggested courses of action, an extended bibliography and a discussion on ways to bring these themes into worship and Bible study. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Amazing Stuff*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 4-5. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Wonderfully Made*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 2-3. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Confronting Violence Against Women: The Church's Calling This resource packet was prepared by the Society Violence Initiative Team to help the church find creative and faithful solutions to address domestic violence. Includes *Striking Terror No More*. PDS # 72 700 98 003 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Family Violence. Study Paper approved by the 203rd General Assembly PDS# OGA-91019; *Study Guide to the General Assembly Study Paper on Family Violence*. Prepared by the Committee of Women of Color. PDS#28391001. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Fowler, Leah. "Violence Against Women." *Church & Society* magazine, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), September/October 1999.

PDS #72-630-99-605. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

God's Gift of Sexuality: A Study for Young People in the Reformed Tradition. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1989. As so many voices are shouting messages about sexuality to our youth, this resource helps youth hear the voice of scripture and the church as they examine their own sexuality. Two separate curriculums are written for Younger Youth (grades 6–8) and Older Youth (grades 9–12), both of which can be used with a small or large group, in a class or retreat setting. Resources are also available for a parent class. DSM# 962201 (grades 6–8), DSM# 962202 (grades 9–12), and DSM# 962203 (Parent's Guide). To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

King, Annie Wu. "Confronting Violence Against Women: The Church's Calling?" *Church & Society* magazine, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), May/June 1999. PDS #72-630-99-603. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

MacDonald, Bonnie Glass. *Surely Heed Their Cry: A Presbyterian Guide to Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Healing.* Published by the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network, 1003. PDC # 257-93-010 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Nesbit, John B., III. *Intervening in all Domestic Violence Cases: A Call to Restorative Justice.* A compelling piece written from the legal perspective. Available from: Office of Criminal Justice, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202. 1.888.728.7228, ext 5803.

Parrot, Andrea. "Coping with Date Rape and Acquaintance Rape" and *Acquaintance Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Training Manual.* These articles are part of the packet *Young Women Speak: Issues for Study by College Women*, eds. Katie Jacobs and Rebecca Todd Peters, 1994. DMS #72 700 94 991 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

"Surely Heed Their Cry," *Horizons* magazine PDS# 25793010

Sutton, Jeanette Reed. "Silent No More." *Church & Society* magazine, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), May/June 1996. PDS# 72-630-96-603 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Toughtalk: Men Confronting Men Who Abuse. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This curriculum offers men the opportunities to discuss and to speak up about family abuse. Item #092003. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

"Under His Thumb: Violence Against Women." *Current Issues*, Adult Foundational Curriculum, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Ed. Frank Hainer. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, 1992–93.

"Violence". *Church & Society* magazine, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Jan/Feb. 1995. PDS# 72-630-95-601. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

A Vision for Children and the Church. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly. PDS 7028094076.

Youngs, Sharon K. *Confronting Domestic Violence: Not Just for Adults.* Louisville, KY: Presbyterian church (U.S.A.), 1996. This course, designed for older youth, takes a close look at the dynamics of violence and ways to confront it. PDS #043584. To order, call

1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.) MINISTRY UNITS INVOLVED IN INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE ISSUES:

Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)

www.pcusa.org/acswp

Older Adult Ministries

www.pcusa.org/olderadults

Presbyterian Men

<http://horeb.pcusa.org/men>

Societal Violence Network, a division of Women's ministries.

Under the direction of Sandi Thompson-Royer, this ministry unit has interpreted interpersonal violence issues before the church and trained several persons throughout the country so that they might continue the education and intervention efforts. It also puts out the Societal Violence Network News. Sandy can be reached at 976 E. 10th, Spokane, WA 99202 (509) 534.2307 sandit@hotmail.com

Women's Ministries Unit

www.pcusa.org/women

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Books & Curriculum

Adams, Carol J. *Women Battering.* Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1994. A practical book written specifically for pastors and congregations involved in the pastoral care of domestic abuse survivors and perpetrators.

Basham, Beth and Sara Lisherness, eds. *Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence.* Louisville, Ky: Bridge Resources, 1997. This book is a wealth of information, including articles introducing the types of abuses which might be found within a congregation, class outlines, suggested courses of action, an extended bibliography and a discussion on ways to bring these themes into worship and Bible study. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Confronting Violence Against Women: The Church's Calling. This resource packet was prepared by the Society Violence Initiative Team to help the church find creative and faithful solutions to address domestic violence. Includes *Striking Terror No More.* PDS # 72 700 98 003 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Cooper-White, Pamela. *The Cry of Tamar: Violence Against Women and the Church's Response.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995. This is a comprehensive and practical assessment of various forms of violence against women and includes appropriate pastoral responses to each.

Eiseland, Nancy L., *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994

Family Violence. Study Paper approved by the 203rd General Assembly. PDS# OGA-91019; *Study Guide to the General Assembly Study Paper on Family Violence.* Prepared by the Committee of Women of Color. PDS#28391001. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Fortune, Marie M. *Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for Abused Women*. San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 1987. This book addresses issues of faith for abused women. It is an essential resource for victims, pastors and anyone providing pastoral care. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Abuse. (206)634.1903 or www.cpsdv.org

Fortune, Marie M. *Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers*. Cleveland, Ohio: Pilgrim Press, 1991. These materials are designed for clergy and those who are seeking to understand the religious issues involved in an abusive relationship. It includes and extensive appendix, resource sections and worship materials. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Abuse. (206)634.1903 or www.cpsdv.org

Fowler, Leah. "Violence Against Women." *Church & Society* magazine, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), September/October 1999. PDS #72-630-99-605. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

God's Gift of Sexuality: A Study for Young People in the Reformed Tradition. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1989. As so many voices are shouting messages about sexuality to our youth, this resource helps youth hear the voice of scripture and the church as they examine their own sexuality. Two separate curriculums are written for Younger Youth (grades 6-8) and Older Youth (grades 9-12), both of which can be used with a small or large group, in a class or retreat setting. Resources are also available for a parent class. DSM# 962201 (grades 6-8), DSM# 962202 (grades 9-12), and DSM# 962203 (Parent's Guide). To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Horton, Anne L. and Judith A. Williamson, eds. *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1988. This extensive anthology takes a comprehensive look at abuse and religious issues. It covers all forms of family violence and its authors include both secular and religious leaders working in these fields.

In Her Shoes: Living with Domestic Violence. This is a fast-paced interactive education tool that helps participants experience the ups and downs a battered woman might experience over the course of several years. It also allows reflection on what the community can do. It is published by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence and is available through the PC(USA) Societal Violence Network, by calling Sandi at (509)534.2307 or sandit@hotmail.com

King, Annie Wu. *Confronting Violence Against Women: The Church's Calling?* *Church and Society Magazine*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), May/June 1999. PDS #72-630-99-603 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Miles, Al. *Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 2000. This book is written by a pastor who sensed the need for more information and theological background.

Nesbit, John B., III. *Intervening in all Domestic Violence Cases: A Call to Restorative Justice*. A compelling piece written from the legal perspective. Available from: Office of Criminal Justice, The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202. 1.888.728.7228, ext 5803.

Poling, James N. *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991. Pastoral Theology addressing sexual violence and the abuse of the vulnerable. This is essential reading for pastors, therapists, and educators.

Renzetti, Claire M. and Charles Miley (eds). *Violence (in Gay and Lesbian Domestic Partnerships)*. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, Volume 4, #1, 1996.

Sutton, Jeanette Reed. *Silent No More*. *Church and Society Magazine*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), May/June 1996. PDS # 72-630-96-603. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Toughtalk: Men Confronting Men Who Abuse. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This curriculum offers men the opportunities to discuss and to speak up about family abuse. Item #092003. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Hainer, Frank. "Under His Thumb: Violence Against Women." *Current Issues*, Adult Foundational Curriculum, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Ed. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, 1992-93.

"Violence." *Church & Society Magazine*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Jan/Feb. 1995. PDS# 72-630-95-601. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Webb-Mitchell, Brett, *Dancing with Disabilities: Opening the Church to All God's Children*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1996; also other publications on this subject.

Weihe, Vernon. *Understanding Family Violence: Treating and Preventing Partner, Child, Sibling and Elder Abuse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998. An Excellent "primer" on several areas and issues of abuse.

Wendell, Susan, *The Rejected Body: Feminist Philosophical Reflections on the Body*. NY: Routledge, 1996

Videos

Broken Vows: Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence. This documentary film is a two-part (37 minutes and 22 minutes) presentation on the religious issues of domestic violence. Includes a study guide and educational brochures. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Abuse. (206)634.1903 or www.cpsdv.org

Wings Like a Dove: Healing for the Christian Abused Women. This 34-minute video offers hope and healing to abused women and provides educational information to religious groups. Includes a study guide and educational brochures. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Abuse. (206)634.1903 or www.cpsdv.org

Men and Women Working Together to Stop Violence Against Women. On October 3, 1999, the National Council of Presbyterian Men presented this nationwide teleconference at the request of the General Assembly. In this video, a panel of experts present information about domestic violence and suggestions as to how men and women, working together, can help work toward the elimination of this blight on our relationships. The second half of the tape is of the panel responding to questions from the nationwide audience. PDS #705001603. To order, call 1-800-524-2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Web sites and Organizations

The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
www.cpsdv.org

"The Center" is the place to begin when looking for resources on faith and violence. It offers pioneer work in the many areas of violence

which touch the family and the church. The materials are faith-based (Jewish and Christian) and are offered in English and Spanish. The resources include books, curriculum, a news journal and videos for sale or to rent. Speakers and conference leaders are also on staff. 936 N 34th Street, Ste. 200, Seattle, WA 98103 (206)634.1903

Men Stopping Violence

www.menstoppingviolence.org

Some very progressive work is coming out of this organization which is oriented towards men. This site not only offers information, but includes many articles which can be downloaded. Hard copies of the articles are also available at a nominal fee. 1020 DeKalb Avenue, #25 Atlanta, GA 30307 (404) 688.1376

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence

www.ncadv.com

This organization provides a national network for state coalitions and local programs serving battered women and their children, public policy at the national level, technical assistance, community awareness campaigns, general information and referrals and publications on domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-537-2238

CHILD ABUSE

Books and Curriculum

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

Bass, Ellen (ed). *I Never Told Anyone: A Collection of Writings by Women Survivors of Sexual Child Abuse*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Bass, Ellen and Laura Davis. *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. This handbook has become a classic for those in the healing process.

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Amazing Stuff*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 4-5. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Wonderfully Made*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 2-3. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Crary, Elizabeth. *Without Spanking or Spoiling*. Seattle: Parenting Press, 1979.

Family Violence. Study Paper approved by the 203rd General Assembly PDS# OGA-91019; *Study Guide to the General Assembly Study Paper on Family Violence*. Prepared by the Committee of Women of Color. PDS#28391001. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

God's Gift of Sexuality: A Study for Young People in the Reformed Tradition. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1989. As so many voices are shouting messages about sexuality to our youth, this resource helps youth hear the voice of scripture and the church as they examine their own sexuality. Two separate curriculums are written for Younger Youth (grades 6-8) and Older Youth (grades 9-12), both of which can be used with a small or

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Horton, Anne L. and Judith A. Williamson, eds. *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1988. This extensive anthology takes a comprehensive look at abuse and religious issues. It covers all forms of family violence and its authors include both secular and religious leaders working in these fields.

Lew, Mike. *Victims No Longer*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. The first comprehensive resource for male survivors of child sexual abuse.

MacDonald, Bonnie Glass. *Surely Heed Their Cry: A Presbyterian Guide to Child Abuse Prevention, Intervention, and Healing*. Published by the Presbyterian Child Advocacy Network, 1003. PDC # 257-93-010 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

"Surely Heed Their Cry." *HORIZONS Magazine* PDS# 25793010

"Violence." *Church and Society Magazine*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Jan/Feb. 1995. PDS# 72-630-95-601. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

A Vision for Children and the Church. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly. PDS 7028094076. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Weihe, Vernon. *Understanding Family Violence: Treating and Preventing Partner, Child, Sibling and Elder Abuse*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage, 1998. An Excellent "primer" on several areas and issues of abuse.

Youngs, Sharon K. *Confronting Domestic Violence: Not Just for Adults*. Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This course, designed for older youth, takes a close look at the dynamics of violence and ways to confront it. PDS #043584. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Videos

Hear Their Cries. This 40-minute documentary provides definitions, signs for recognizing child abuse, stories of adult survivors, discussion of theological issues including forgiveness and confidentiality, and example of how to respond. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. (206)634.1903 or www.cpsdv.org

Bless our Children: Preventing Sexual Abuse This powerful video tells the story of one congregation's efforts to include sexual abuse prevention in their children's religious education. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence (206-634-1903) or www.cpsdv.org

The Effects of Domestic Violence on Children. On February 25, 2001, a second teleconference was presented dealing with domestic violence and its effects upon children. Following the same format as the first teleconference, a panel of experts address this problem from several different directions and respond to questions from the nationwide audience. Time is approximately 2 hours. PDS #7025001604. To order, call 1-800-524-2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Websites and Organizations

The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
www.cpsdv.org

“The Center” is the place to begin when looking for resources on faith and violence. It offers pioneer work in the many areas of violence which touch the family and the church. The materials are faith-based (Jewish and Christian) and are offered in English and Spanish. The resources include books, curriculum, a news journal and videos for sale or to rent. Speakers and conference leaders are also on staff. 936 N 34th Street, Ste. 200, Seattle, WA 98103 (206)634.1903

Prevent Child Abuse America (PCA)
www.preventchildabuse.org

This site provides good background to abuse issues, opportunities for networking and seminars, and reading lists.

DATING VIOLENCE

Adams, Carol, et al. 1984. *No Is Not Enough*. San Louis Obispo, CA: Impact.
Readable and good on date rape.

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Amazing Stuff*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 4-5. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Wonderfully Made*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 2-3. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

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Horton, Anne L. and Judith A. Williamson, eds. *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1988. This extensive anthology takes a comprehensive look at abuse and religious issues. It covers all forms of family violence and its authors include both secular and religious leaders working in these fields.

King, Annie Wu. “Confronting Violence Against Women: The Church's Calling?” *Church & Society Magazine*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), May/June 1999. PDS #72-630-99-603. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Levy, Barrie, (ed). *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1991.
Addresses abuse in intimate relationships among adolescents. Provides intervention and prevention strategies.

Levy, Barrie. *In Love & In Danger*. Seattle, Wash: Seal Press, 1993.

Levy, Barrie and Patricia Occhiuzzo Giggans. *What Parents Need to Know About Dating Violence*. Seattle, WA: Seal Press, 1995.

Parrot, Andrea. “Coping with Date Rape and Acquaintance Rape” and *Acquaintance Rape and Sexual Assault Prevention Training Manual*. These articles are part of the packet *Young Women Speak: Issues for Study by College Women*, eds. Katie Jacobs and Rebecca Todd Peters, 1994. DMS #72 700 94 991 To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Violence. Church & Society Magazine, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Jan/Feb. 1995. PDS# 72-630-95-601. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

A Vision for Children and the Church. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly. PDS # 7028094076.

Youngs, Sharon K. *Confronting Domestic Violence: Not Just for Adults*. Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This course, designed for older youth, takes a close look at the dynamics of violence and ways to confront it. PDS #043584. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Videos

Love—All That and More. A video series and six session curriculum for youth about healthy relationships. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 206-634-1903 or www.cpsdv.org

In Love and In Danger: Teen Dating Violence. The Junior League of Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1997. Designed for teachers, parents and teens, this award-winning video provides a compelling and informative look into dating violence. Study guide included. Available through **Intermedia**, 1700 Westlake Ave., N., #724, Seattle, WA 98109. 1-800-553-8336 or www.intermedia-inc.com.

Organizations and Websites

National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
www.ncadv.com

This organization provides a national network for state coalitions and local programs serving battered women and their children, public policy at the national level, technical assistance, community awareness campaigns, general information and referrals and publications on domestic violence. Includes a good section on dating violence. www.ncadv.com

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~girlsown/>

This site, designed for girls, provides guides and opportunities for reflection on love, respect and abuse in relationships. It is a casual web site with opportunities for interaction.

www.Rape101.com

This site provides resources and education for stopping rape, as well as good information for victims, parents, and friends.

ELDER ABUSE **Books & Curriculum**

Decalmer, Peter and Frank Glendenning. Eds. *The Mistreatment of Elderly People*. Seattle: Sage Publications, 1997. This practical guide to elder abuse offers discussions around discernment and response, emphasizing the clinical, legal and psychological impact on a family.

Family Violence. Study Paper approved by the 203rd General Assembly. PDS# OGA-91019; *Study Guide to the General Assembly Study Paper on Family Violence*. Prepared by the Committee of Women of Color. PDS#28391001. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpub/

Horton, Anne L. and Judith A. Williamson, eds. *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1988. This extensive anthology takes a comprehensive look at abuse and religious issues. It covers all forms of family violence and its authors include both secular and religious leaders working in these fields.

Weihe, Vernon (1998) *Understanding Family Violence: Treating and Preventing Partner, Child, Sibling and Elder Abuse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. An Excellent "primer" on several areas and issues of abuse.

Web sites and Organizations

National Center on Elder Abuse (NCEA)

www.gwjapan.com/ncea

An excellent site with general information, state contacts, and discussions of legal issues.

Minnesota Center Against Violence and Abuse

www.mincava.umn.edu

This web site offers excellent information on all types of abuse, and has a particularly good section on elder abuse.

Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence

This organization has done pioneering work in the area of elder abuse and is continually coming out with progressive ideas and legal information on the issue. 307 S. Paterson St., Suite 1. Madison, WI 53703, 608.255.0539

SIBLING VIOLENCE

Books & Curriculum

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Amazing Stuff*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 4–5. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpublish/

Burdick, Faye, ed. *God's Plan for Growing Up: Wonderfully Made*. Louisville: Curriculum Publishing, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This faith-based curriculum is designed to assist parents in teaching sexuality to their children in grades 2–3. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpublish/

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Surely Heed Their Cry, *HORIZONS Magazine* PDS# 25793010

A Vision for Children and the Church. Adopted by the 205th General Assembly. PDS # 7028094076.

Weihe, Vernon (1998) *Understanding Family Violence: Treating and Preventing Partner, Child, Sibling and Elder Abuse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. An Excellent "primer" on several areas and issues of abuse.

Youngs, Sharon K. *Confronting Domestic Violence: Not Just for Adults*. Louisville, Ky: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1996. This course, designed for older youth, takes a close look at the dynamics of violence and ways to confront it. PDS #043584. To order, call 1.800.524.2612 or www.pcusa.org/pcusa/currpublish/

Websites and Organizations

www.sasian.org

This highly informative web site offers background information, bibliographies and links to other sites. Information is available in English, French, Spanish and German.

MULTICULTURAL RESOURCES

Books and Curriculum

Agtuca, Jacqueline. *A Community Secret: For the Filipina in an Abusive Relationship*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1994.

Burns, Maryviolet (ed). 1986. *The Speaking Profits Us: Violence in the Lives of Women of Color*. Seattle: The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Abuse. This anthology of articles discusses sexual and domestic violence in the lives of Native American, Asian, Black and Latina women.

Eugene, Toinette M. and James Newton Poling. *Balm in Gilead: Pastoral Advocacy for African-American Families Experiencing Abuse*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1998. Using case studies from individuals who experienced abuse, this cross-cultural work explores theological and ethical themes that are crucial for understanding and revitalizing pastoral care.

National American Indian Court Judges Association. 1991. *Child Sexual Abuse in Native American Communities*. Petaluma, CA: National Indian Justice Center. This brochure communicates basic information concerning Native American communities and can be ordered from National Indian Law Library, 707.762.8113.

White, Evelyn C. *Chain Chain Change: For Black Women in Abusive Relationships*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1994. Second Edition. This resource examines the influences of racism and sexism in domestic violence, and includes updated resources and statistics.

Wilson, Melba. *Crossing the Boundary: Black Women Survive Incest*. Seattle: Seal Press, 1993. Focuses on the dynamics of sexual abuse as it intersects with gender, class, and race by exploring autobiographical and fictional works.

Zambrano, Myrna M. *Mejor Sola Que Mal Acompañada* (For the Latina in an Abusive Relationship). Seattle: Seal Press, 1985.

Web sites and Organizations

The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence
www.cpsdv.org

Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence: "The Center" offers pioneer work in many areas of violence which touch the family and the church. The materials are faith-based (Jewish and Christian) and are offered in English and Spanish. The resources include books, curriculum and videos for sale or to rent. Speakers and conference leaders are also on staff. (206)634.1903

National Korean America Service and Education Consortium.

www.nakasek.org

This organization writes the issue paper, "Korean American Women and Domestic Violence," which examines the barriers that battered

women face in seeking help and present a series of recommendations. Available in English and Korean.

National Center for Victims of Crime

www.ncvc.org

Includes a very helpful Spanish language link.

National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence. P.O. Box 623, Dunn Loving, VA 22027 703.205.9040 or 800.342.9080 Rhidalgo@dvalianza.org

WORSHIP AND BIBLE STUDY

Fortune, Marie M. *Violence in the Family: A Workshop Curriculum for Clergy and Other Helpers*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1991. These materials are designed for clergy and those who are seeking to understand the religious issues involved in an abusive relationship. It includes and extensive appendix, resource sections and worship materials. Available through the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Abuse. (206)634.1903 or www.cpsdv.org

McClure, John S. and Nancy J. Ramsey, (eds). *Telling the Truth: Preaching About Sexual and Domestic Violence*. Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1998.

Shantz, Kathy. 1994. *Lord Hear Our Prayers: Domestic Violence Worship Resources*. Kitchener, Ontario: Mennonite Central Committee, Canada. This resource is an excellent collection of litanies, prayers, hymns, and sermon themes and resources for Christian Education.

Endnotes

1. The definitions developed in this policy statement are developed from those generally understood among people who work with these issues. We have relied on the resources of the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence (CPSDV) in Seattle, Washington, as we developed the definitions. [This endnote appears in the Recommendations portion of the report.]

2. Nelle Morton, *The Journey Is Home* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 29.

3. Genevieve Jacques, *Beyond Impunity: An Ecumenical Approach to Truth, Justice and Reconciliation*, 55. Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2000.

4. *Ibid*, 57.

5. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Family Violence: Interventions for the Justice System, 1993.

6. American Psychological Association, Violence and the Family: Report of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family (1996), 80.

7. Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, *Child Abuse and Neglect*, (1990), 14.

8. American Psychological Association, Violence and the Family: Report of the American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Violence and the Family (1996), 10.

9. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report: Sex Differences in Violent Victimization, 1994 (NCJ 164508), September, 1997, 13.

10. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey*, Washington, D.C., (1995).

11. The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (1995). Membership and other information available from the coalition at P.O. Box 18749, Denver, CO 80218-0749.

12. A. Browne & K. Williams (1993), *Law and Society Review* 23, 75–94.

13. M. Koss, L. Goodman, A. Browne, L. Fitzgerald, G.Keita, and N. Russo, (1994). *No Safe Haven: Male Violence Against Women at Home, at Work, and in the Community*, Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

14. Bames, “It’s Just a Quarrel,” *American Bar Association Journal*, February 1998, p. 25.

15. Raphael & Tolman, Trapped by Poverty, Trapped by Abuse: New Evidence Documenting the Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Welfare, p. 21 (1997).

16. Domestic and Teen Dating Violence, An information and resource handbook, Metropolitan King County Council, July (1998).

17. Brustin, S., Legal Response to Teen Dating Violence, *Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 333334 (Summer 1995) (citing Worcester, A More Hidden Crime: Adolescent Battered Women, The Network News, July/Aug., National Women’s Health Network 1993.

18. Orloff et al., With No Place to Turn: Improving Advocacy for Battered Immigrant Women, *Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 2, 313 (Summer 1995).

19. 1985 Mejor Sola que Mal Acompañada: For the Latina in an Abusive Relationship, Seattle, Seal Press.

20. Florida Governor’s Task Force on Domestic and Sexual Violence, Florida Mortality Review Project, 1997, p. 44, table 7.

21. M. Shepard & E. Pence, *Affilia*, 3 (1988).

22. V. Wiehe, *Sibling Abuse: Hidden Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Trauma (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications (1997).

23. M.Cascardi & K. O’Leary, *Journal of Family Violence* (1992), 7.

24. L. Feinauer, E. Callahan, & H. Hilton, *American Journal of Family Therapy* (1996), 24.

25. C. Boyd, B. Guthrie, J. Pohl, J. Whitmarsh, & D. Henderson, *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 26 (1994) 243; and C. Wisdom, T. Ireland, & P. Glynn, *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 56 (1995), 207.

26. J. Kern & T. Hastings, “Eating Disturbance and Incest,” *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 51, (1995); S. Wonderlich, et al., *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 11 (1996).

27. N. Shields & C. Hanneke, “Comparing the Psychological Impact of Battering, Marital Rape and Stranger Rape. *Clinical Sociology Review*, 10 (1992), 151–69.

28. M. Cerezo & D. Frias, “Emotional and Cognitive

Adjustment in Abused Children,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 18, (1994) 923–32; P. Kurtz, J. Gaudin, J. Wodarski & P. Howing, “Maltreatment and the School-Aged Child: School Performance Consequences,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 17, (1993), 581–89.

29. J. Briere, “Treating Adults Severely Abused As Children: The Self-Trauma Model,” *Child Abuse: New Directions in Prevention and Treatment Across the Lifespan*, (1997), 177–204.

30. R. Aguilar & N. Nightingale, “The Impact of Specific Battering Experiences on the Self-Esteem of Abused Women.” *Journal of Family Violence* 9, (1994).

31. V. Wiehe, 1997.

32. V. Wiehe & A. Richards, *Intimate Betrayal: Understanding and Responding to the Trauma of Acquaintance Rape*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications (1995).

33. H. Dubowitz, M. Black, D. Harrington, & A. Verschoore, “A Follow-up Study of Behavior Problems Associated with Child Sexual Abuse,” *Child Abuse and Neglect* 17, (1993), 743–54.

34. N. Rodriguez, H. Kemp, S. Ryan & D. Foy, “Post-traumatic Stress Disorder in Adult Female Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse: A Comparison Study,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 65 (1997), 53–59.

35. L. Young, Sexual Abuse and the Problem of Embodiment,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 16, (1992), 89–100.

36. K. Lawrence & D. Foy, “Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Among Battered Women: Risk and Resiliency Factors,” *Violence and Victims* 8, (1993), 17–28.

37. Y. Vissing, M. Straus, R. Gelles, & J. Harrop, “Verbal Aggression by Parents and Psychosocial Problems of Children,” *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 15, (1991), 223–38.

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TURN MOURNING INTO DANCING! A STUDY GUIDE IN THREE SESSIONS

Prepared by Nancy Werking Poling

Introduction to the Guide

In June 2001, the 213th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved “Turn Mourning Into Dancing! A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence,” developed by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP). This study guide relies on material in that policy statement.

Its purposes are to

- introduce the policy statement to members and friends of the PC(USA)
- to encourage further study of the issue of domestic violence
- motivate congregations and groups within the church to become active participants in the church’s mission of healing and preventing domestic violence.

The three suggested sessions DO NOT offer a comprehensive study of the issue.

To the Leader

Because they are or have been members of families, and because they likely watch television and/or read the newspapers, most participants in your group will come with prior knowledge and wisdom on the subject of domestic violence. This guide's proposed discussions and activities center around helping them share that understanding. Furthermore, it is hoped that participants will read assigned sections of the policy statement approved by the General Assembly. Therefore, it is your task as leader to create a safe environment for sharing wisdom and clarifying issues, rather than personally informing people through lecture or similar means.

Often when we begin to talk openly about issues of domestic violence, the likelihood exists that a victim/survivor might come forward seeking support. You will want to be familiar with appropriate referral resources and to have those available if needed. Alert the pastor (or other appropriate pastoral care provider) as to the time of the study and that potentially sensitive issues will be discussed.

Prepare Yourself By

1. Praying for God’s guidance and wisdom in your efforts, that you may lead others in seeing the urgency of the topic and in taking steps toward action.
2. Studying the policy statement.
3. Reading other materials related to domestic violence. If you do not have time, ask regular participants of the group to become better informed. Appendix C of the policy statement offers a helpful resource list.

Overview

Each session is divided into two sections: “Preparing for the Group” and “Guiding the Group.” It is necessary to be familiar with both sections prior to leading the discussion.

The three sessions will ask participants to consider the following issues:

1. What is abuse and who are its victims?
2. Who are the abusers? What factors lead them to harm people they love? Does readily forgiving them aid in their healing?
3. What can the church do to further the healing process of the abused and the abuser?

Materials Needed for All Sessions

- A copy of the policy statement for every participant (If this is not possible, the full text can be found at the denominational Web site: <http://www.pcusa.org/ga213/default.htm>)
- Bibles
- Newsprint (A large writing surface visible to the group can, in some cases, substitute.)
- Markers or chalk

Several activities offer the opportunity for participants to move around the room and interact one-on-one. It may be that your space does not allow this or that you already have your own pattern of studying together. Modify activities to fit your context. The focus question accompanying each activity is for your clarification; it is not intended to be asked of the participants.

It is likely that members of your congregation or group will, either personally, through their job or community involvement, have experience and knowledge about domestic violence. Make an effort to utilize that experience. If you personally know a professional who works with victims/survivors of abuse, you may want to add a session and invite that person to the class either to be interviewed or to speak.

Though this guide is designed for three sessions, it is strongly recommended that you consider expanding the study. *Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence*, edited by Beth Basham and Sara Lisherness, published by Bridge Resources (\$9.95), Louisville, Kentucky, offers excellent supplemental sessions and furnishes helpful background information. (Call 1-800-524-2612 and ask for Item # 095516.) Additional sessions can also be centered around videos, such as those produced by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, Washington, as well as others listed in the appendix. These informative materials are valuable in generating discussion (see Appendix C: Bibliography: Suggested Resource List).

Those planning to study the statement on a weekend retreat can easily adapt the plan. You, too, might add the resources mentioned in the preceding paragraph. It may also be adapted for use in governing body committee settings.

SESSION I

The Victims: Real People, a Real Problem

Preparing for the Group

Scripture Focus

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

—Jeremiah 29:11

Objectives

To increase participants' understanding of

- what constitutes domestic violence
- who the victims are of domestic violence

Materials Needed

- A copy of page 53 (“We have been created”)
- Small pieces of paper for each participant to use for the closing prayer
- Copies of several personal witness remarks (italicized, beginning on page 21) from the policy statement on domestic violence. Each should be on its own sheet of paper, to be handed out to individual readers.
- Copies of the words of confession (page 54)
- Pens or pencils

Preparation

1. Read and study Sections II, VI, and VIII of the policy statement.
2. Display the Scripture Focus for all to see.
3. Tape six sheets of newsprint to the walls or arrange on tables. On each sheet write one of these headings: “examples of child abuse,” “examples of spousal/partner abuse,” “examples of elder abuse,” “examples of sibling abuse,” “examples of dating abuse,” “examples of abuse of physically disabled persons.”
4. On poster board, newsprint, or a chalk board write the following:

“Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behavior, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners or vulnerable family members.”

5. If participants do not have copies of this study guide, display the following statistics in a prominent place:
 - In the U.S. 3,154,000 cases of child abuse are reported each year.
 - During adulthood nearly one in three women experience at least one physical assault by a partner.
 - Indications are that sibling violence occurs more frequently than parent-child or husband-wife violence.
 - Because they are often unreported, the number of cases of elder abuse, dating violence, and abuse against physically disabled persons are not known.
 - Domestic violence occurs in Christian homes as well as in non-Christian homes.
6. As participants enter the room, ask for volunteers to read a short passage later in the session. Give them one of the slips of paper on which the experiences of victims/observers have been written.

Guiding the Group

ACTIVITY 1 (begins as participants enter and continues until scheduled session time—15 minutes)

Focus Question: *What kind of life does God intend for us all?*

As participants enter the room, hand each of them a piece of paper on which the four theological statements are written (page 53) and a pen or pencil. Suggest that they work in pairs, preferably with someone they do not know well, and that they record thoughts they have in response to each question.

Alternate Plan: After the opening prayer (see below), divide the participants into four smaller groups—more, if you will have over six participants in each small group—and assign each small group one of the statements on which to reflect.

After participants seem to have had an opportunity to reflect on the theological statements, ask everyone to be seated.

Opening Prayer

God, we come together this (morning, evening, day) to talk about family values, about your plan that the home be a safe and loving place. We ask that you open our eyes to the abuse and pain around us, even in our Christian homes, and that you give us courage to offer protection and comfort to those who suffer at the hands of others in their family.

Allow a few minutes for the participants to share what they wrote about the theological reflection papers. Ask what new insights people had.

Announce that in addition to looking at God’s plan for all of us, the group will be discussing the forms of domestic violence and their impact on individuals.



ACTIVITY 2 (15 minutes)

Focus Question: *What is domestic violence?*

For this activity, use the sheets of newsprint on which you have written “examples of . . .” Read or have someone else read aloud the statement’s definition of domestic violence, located on page 20 or displayed in the room. Divide the participants into small groups of three or four, assigning each group the responsibility of identifying examples of one kind of abuse and recording their ideas on the newsprint. Remind them to refer to the definition. Walk among the groups, suggesting areas on which there may be disagreement (such as spanking, under “child abuse”). After a reasonable time, bring the participants into one large group to discuss the lists.

Alternate Plan: Compile each list as a larger group.



ACTIVITY 3 (10 minutes)

Focus Question: How does domestic violence affect victims?

Say to the participants, “We’ve spent some time thinking about the many ways in which violence occurs in the family. But who are the people we’re talking about?”

Then, ask individuals to read the papers they’ve been given about cases cited in the policy statement.

Share with the participants that domestic violence impacts victims physically, emotionally, economically, psychologically, and spiritually. Invite them to discuss the specific ways in which victims’ lives might be impacted spiritually. Be sure the discussion includes the problem of using masculine terms to identify/describe God. If they have copies of the policy statement, suggest that they refer to pages 7–8.

If you have time, include a discussion of the other four ways in which abuse impacts victims.

Summarizing Statement

Say the following or something similar to the participants:

We’ve talked today about God’s intentions for all our lives and of ways in which various forms of domestic violence go against God’s plan. We have sought an understanding of the victims themselves, how they feel about their experiences and how violence impacts their lives. In the next two sessions we’ll be looking for some answers to why anyone would harm a person he or she loves and how the church can respond to violence in the family.

Assignment for the Next Session

1. Ask participants to bring newspaper, magazine, or Internet articles related to abuse.
2. Suggest that participants research domestic violence prevention and healing efforts in your community.
3. Request six volunteers to perform a role play. After the session, provide them with the following instructions: three of them are to be batterers (be sure not all are men): the batterer of a wife, the batterer of a child, and someone who has been abusing an older parent. The other three actors are to be concerned church members who have heard about the abuse and are confronting the abusers. In the presentation the church member is to say that he or she has heard about the abuse. The abuser is to deny and/or defend the behavior. The church member’s response to the abuser can either demonstrate an appropriate or inappropriate way to deal with the person.
4. If everyone has a copy of the policy statement, assign sections IX, X, and XI for their reading and study.

Concluding Confession and Prayer

Provide the participants with the small sheets of paper, pens or pencils, and copies of the confession. Give the following instructions:

On your piece of paper, write the name of someone who is or has been a victim of domestic violence. If you do not know anyone personally, think of someone who has been spoken of in the media. If still no one comes to mind, write something that specifies where such a person might be found, for example “children in my neighborhood.” Fold the paper. As you hold this paper in your hand, let us read together the words of confession.

(After reading the confession) Now pray silently for the victim you have named.

SESSION I

Group Handout 1

Scripture Focus

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.

—Jeremiah 29:11

Theological Statements

1. We have been created to have integrity of body and spirit.

- What does this mean?
- How does domestic violence violate this intent?

2. We have been created to be free people.

- What does this mean?
- How does domestic violence violate this intent?

3. We have been created to be in relationship with God and people.

- What does this mean?
- How does domestic violence violate this intent?

4. We have been created to rejoice.

- What does this mean?
- How does domestic violence violate this intent?

SESSION I

Group Handout 2

Concluding Confession and Prayer

As a people who believe that God intends for all to live with integrity of body and spirit, in freedom, in relationships, and in joy, we confess that, unlike the Good Samaritan, we have not always followed the rocky path down into the ravine where our neighbor lies injured.

We confess that we have not always heeded the victims'/survivors' cries for help. Too often we have tossed their pain back at them, claiming they have brought the problem on themselves. We have underestimated the physical and emotional damage done. Not wanting to get involved, we have turned our face rather than look at bruises or frightened looks.

SESSION II

The Perpetrators: Naming Sin

Preparing for the Group

Scripture Focus

Nathan said to David, “You are the man! . . . Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in [God’s] sight?”

—2 Samuel 12:7, 9

Objectives

- Identify Scriptures that are sometimes a hindrance to victims seeking help and/or an abuser’s defense
- Recognize that abusers come from every social, economic, and racial group
- Recognize abusers’ pattern of denial
- Struggle with the problem of easy grace for abusers

Materials Needed

- An 8½-by-11-inch sheet of blank paper for each participant
- Pens or pencils
- Enough copies of the Scripture passages on page 59 for every participant to have one passage. This will mean that for groups of more than six participants, more than one person will have the same passage.
- Copies of the quiz on page 60
- Copies of the closing confession (page 61) for each participant

Preparation

1. Read and study Sections IX, X, and XI of the policy statement.
2. Display the Scripture Focus for all to see.
3. Photocopy and separate the Bible verses on page 59.

Guiding the Group

ACTIVITY 1 (10 minutes)

Focus Question: *How might some passages of Scripture be obstacles to preventing domestic violence?*

As participants enter the room, if they brought with them a newspaper, magazine, or Internet article, have them tape them to a sheet of newsprint forming a collage for later use. Then, give each of them a slip of paper on which is written a Bible verse. Instruct them to discuss their passage with one or two other people, using the suggested questions.

Alternate Plan: Bible passages can be discussed as a group after the opening prayer.

Opening Prayer

Creator of us all, we do not understand why people—even we ourselves—turn their anger upon those they care about the most. Neither do we understand why we in the church so often turn away from the pain of survivors and fail to confront the abusers. We pray now that you will offer us insight and courage in our work for justice and healing.

Allow time for participants to discuss the Scriptures they were assigned. Ask what insights they gained.

Direct the participants' attention to the collage of news articles or ask if anyone found news related to abuse during the week. Ask the participants to seek connections between the Scripture passages and the news articles. Offer an opportunity for the group to discuss these.

ACTIVITY 2 (15 minutes)

Focus Question: *What are some of the facts about abusers?*

Tell the group that in this session we will be discussing perpetrators of domestic violence—what they do, why they do it, and what the church can do to help them in their healing process.

Hand out pens and pencils and copies of the quiz printed on page 60 to participants and ask them to complete it.

When everyone has finished, announce the correct responses, allowing opportunity for discussion. When appropriate, insert information you have learned from reading the policy statement. The answers to the quiz and some comments you can make related to them are as follows:

- | | | |
|----------|----------|--|
| Question | 1. False | People in religious groups are abusive at the same rate as in the general population. |
| | 2. True | Not infrequently does someone say, "Well, women batter men too." This is true, but in only about 5 percent of the cases. |
| | 3. True | Neglect of basic health and safety needs, such as providing food, heat, or medical care, is injurious and, therefore, abusive. |
| | 4. True | This information came out in a 2001 study by the Harvard School of Public Health. |

5. True Some studies estimate that only 10 percent of abusive incidents are reported. In any case, no one really knows the extent of the problem.
 6. False Alcohol does not cause abuse, but it does lower inhibitions for some abusers.
 7. False There are women who are abused emotionally/psychologically; for example, they are isolated from family and friends, forced into financial dependence, told what they can do and where they can go, made to endure verbal abuse in the form of threats or intimidation. Their bruises are invisible.
 8. True Abusers often claim it only happened once, but research shows that in most cases, by the time abuse is reported, multiple incidents have, in fact, already occurred.
 9. False Children are more likely to be sexually abused by members of their family or by someone in the community they know and trust.
 10. False Marital rape is defined as the abuser demanding sexual gratification without the intimate partner's consent.
 11. False Heterosexuals and homosexuals are equally likely to abuse someone sexually.
 12. False Race/ethnicity is not an indicator of who is likely to be affected by spouse/partner abuse.
 13. False Although sibling rivalry is normal, physically violent behavior and a pattern of degrading speech are not normal and can be destructive, even from a sibling.
 14. False Domestic violence occurs in all social, economic, and racial groups with similar prevalence.
 15. True Again, domestic violence occurs in all social, economic, and racial groups with similar prevalence.
 16. Depends Answers will vary. Invite participants to share what they know is already being done in your community.
-

ACTIVITY 3 (20 minutes)

Focus Question: What do perpetrators say to those who question their behavior?

Have the previous session's volunteers perform role plays in which a perpetrator denies/defends his/her actions. Afterward, ask each performer how he/she felt. Ask participants what they noticed.

After the actors have returned to their seats, tell the group that survivors and people who work with them sometimes refer to “easy grace.” Ask the participants what they think that means. What is the church’s responsibility to the abuser? Point out that the policy statement strongly discourages offering quick forgiveness. Share how in *Striking Terror No More*, Marie Fortune describes meeting with a group of incest offenders who had been ordered by the court to be in treatment. The men told her this: “Whenever you talk with church people, tell them not to forgive us so quickly.” They spoke of going to their pastors, being prayed over, and forgiven. According to Fortune, “They said it was the worst thing anyone could have done to them because it allowed them to continue to avoid responsibility for the harm they had done” (*Striking Terror No More*, page 18).

You may also wish to have Section III, C of the policy statement, “Healing and Forgiveness,” read aloud.

Ask for a volunteer to read 2 Samuel 12:1–10. Ask the participants to discuss briefly how God dealt with the evil that David had done.

Summarizing Statement

Say the following or something similar to the group:

We've looked at the abuser of domestic violence and tried to understand a little about why he/she commits the evil. We have looked at how certain passages of Scripture can hinder victims and abusers from seeking help. We briefly touched upon the problem of offering forgiveness too quickly to the perpetrator.

Assignment for the Next Session

1. Continue to collect news articles related to abuse.
2. Continue to do research related to what is already being done in your community to heal and prevent domestic violence.
3. Search for subtle and not-so-subtle cultural messages that violence is okay. Remind participants not to overlook the comic section of the newspaper.
4. Read sections XII–XIX of the policy statement.

Closing Confession and Prayer (printed on page 61)

Distribute copies of the closing confession and prayer to participants. Invite the group to read it in unison.

SESSION II

Group Handout 1

Scripture Passages

1. **Genesis 3:6** *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.*

- What thoughts might a victim of domestic violence have when reading this Scripture?
- What thoughts might an abuser have when reading it?

2. **Matthew 5:39** *But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.*

- What thoughts might a victim of domestic violence have when reading this Scripture?
- What thoughts might an abuser have when reading it?

3. **Matthew 18:21–22** *Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times."*

- What thoughts might a victim of domestic violence have when reading this Scripture?
- What thoughts might an abuser have when reading it?

4. **Ephesians 5:22–23** *Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior.*

- What thoughts might a victim of domestic violence have when reading this Scripture?
- What thoughts might an abuser have when reading it?

5. **Colossians 3:20** *Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord.*

Exodus 20:12 *Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.*

- What thoughts might a victim of domestic violence have when reading these Scriptures?
- What thoughts might an abuser have when reading them?

6. **Hebrews 13:4a** *Let marriage be held in honor by all.*

- What thoughts might a victim of domestic violence have when reading this Scripture?
- What thoughts might an abuser have when reading it?

SESSION II

Group Handout 2

True or False Quiz

Write T before those statements you believe to be true and F beside those statements you believe to be false. You may discuss the statements with others.

1. ____ People with strong religious beliefs are less likely to abuse.
2. ____ More than 95 percent of victims of spousal abuse are women.
3. ____ If a caregiver neglects the health needs of an older person, the caregiver is, in fact, abusive.
4. ____ About 1 in 5 teenage girls says a dating partner has physically or sexually hurt her.
5. ____ Half or more of all incidents of violence against women are not reported to police.
6. ____ Alcohol causes abuse.
7. ____ You can tell a woman is abused because she has bruises.
8. ____ Domestic violence is seldom just a one- or two-time occurrence.
9. ____ Children are sexually abused most often by strangers.
10. ____ A man who forces his wife to have sex is not raping her.
11. ____ Homosexuals are more likely than heterosexuals to be sex offenders.
12. ____ Some races or ethnic groups are more prone to abuse than others.
13. ____ Because sibling rivalry is a natural part of growing up, cases in which older siblings injure younger ones do not constitute abuse.
14. ____ People from lower socioeconomic groups are more likely to be abusive.
15. ____ Some people who abuse are respected adults in their community.
16. ____ Many schools and agencies in my community are heavily involved in healing and preventing domestic violence.

SESSION II

Group Handout 3

Confession and Prayer

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.

SESSION III

The Church's Response: Listening Hearts, Extended Hands

Preparing for the Group

Scripture Focus

You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

—Psalm 30:11

Objectives

- increase awareness of the faith community's responsibility
- minister to victims
- minister to perpetrators
- advocate for peace and justice in society

Materials Needed

- Pens or pencils
- Copies of case studies (preferably enlarged) from page 65 for newsprint
- Copies of the closing prayer for each participant

Preparation

1. Read and study Section XII to the conclusion of the policy statement.
2. Display the Scripture Focus for all to see.
3. Place five sheets of newsprint along the walls or on tables. Attach to each sheet the "Case Studies" on page 65 (enlarged, so they can be more easily read). Across the top of the newsprint write, "What can the church do?"

Alternate Plan: You may prefer to forego the writing and discuss the situations.

Guiding the Group

Opening Prayer

Dear God, may we commit ourselves to listen to the stories of those whose bodies and souls are violated. In this time we have together, give us, we pray, the courage to search for ways in which we can work toward creating a just and compassionate society. Amen.

Sharing Time

Invite participants to share what they have seen or heard in the media related to domestic violence. What have they learned about local efforts to heal and prevent domestic violence?

ACTIVITY 1 (20 minutes)

Focus Question: Why should the church be involved in the issue of domestic violence?

Ask participants the focus question. Then explain that the policy statement on healing domestic violence says that (At this point read only the statements, not the Scriptures that follow them):

- **The church is called to be a place of sanctuary.**

Psalms 57:1 Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me, for in you my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of your wings, I will take refuge, until the destroying storms pass by.

- **The church is called to be an empathetic community.**

Exodus 3:7–8a Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people. . .; I have heard their cry. . . I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them. . . and to bring them. . . [to] a land flowing with milk and honey.

- **The church is called to be a covenantal community.**

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God.

- **The church is called to be a healing community.**

Psalms 30:11 You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

Invite the group to consider each statement, one at a time. With each statement either read to the group or have a volunteer read the accompanying Scripture. Ask: In light of the Scripture, what might it mean for the church to be a place of sanctuary? An empathic community? A covenantal community? A healing community?

ACTIVITY 2 (30 minutes)

Focus Question: What can the church do to bring about healing and justice?

Invite the group to use the concepts they've just discussed to examine some domestic violence situations. Divide the participants into five small groups, more if each small group will have more than six participants. Give each small group pens or pencils, a copy of the case studies on page 65, and newsprint and markers. Assign each group one of the cases. Invite the groups to generate as many ideas as they can that answer the question about what the church can do. Explain that they are not to think necessarily in terms of what is practical, that some of their ideas can stretch reality. Remind them that the task is not the church's alone: schools and community agencies working to prevent and heal domestic violence need wider support. Have each group record its ideas on newsprint. After groups have had sufficient time to work with their case, reconvene for reports from each small group and a large-group discussion.

If time allows, invite the participants to identify those ideas that your church could quickly implement, as well as those that might involve more thought and planning. Share these ideas with your church session and/or presbytery.

Alternate Plan: Discuss the case studies as a large group. Ask for a volunteer to record all ideas on sheets of newsprint.

Closing Prayer

Conclude the study by distributing copies of the closing prayer and inviting participants to say the closing prayer in unison.

SESSION III

Group Handout 1

Case Studies

1. I discovered that my husband was sexually molesting my seven-year-old daughter from a former marriage. I left him and moved into an apartment. Because it's summer, I can't leave her alone. Also, we only own one car, which he has. My boss has told me that if I miss any more days of work, she'll have to fire me.

What can the church do?

2. I am a ninety-year old widower who continues to live alone. This is possible because my daughter brings me dinner every day, does my laundry, and cleans the house once a week. Within the last year she's started to yell at me for not being able to control my bladder. Several times she's thrown my meal on the floor before I've had a chance to eat it.

What can the church do?

3. I am a seventeen-year-old girl. My boyfriend has become very possessive. He insists that we spend every evening together and doesn't let me go out with friends. After I saw a poster about dating abuse at school, I told him I don't like the way he treats me. He slapped me, but then he felt really bad and apologized over and over. I don't know though. . . .

What can the church do?

4. I would leave my husband and take the children with me, but I have no money. How would I feed the children if I leave? He controls the finances. If I leave without the children, I will probably never see them again. I could go to a shelter with the children, but that is only temporary.

What can the church do?

5. My brother hits, slaps, and punches me continually. He holds my arms behind my back and demands that I say "Uncle" or beg him to stop. When I do, he only hurts me more. I told my parents but they say, "You have to learn to fight your own battles."

What can the church do?

SESSION III

Group Handout 2

Closing Unison Prayer*

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 policy statement, page 36.