

Plant...Harvest...Eat...Multiply...LIVE

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7

On this day we remember victims and celebrate survivors of domestic violence. The Jeremiah passage is a good one to turn to. One does not go to the pages of Jeremiah lightly. Probably not the prophet you'd be tempted to invite to dinner! He railed against all forms of injustice. Sometimes called "the weeping prophet," he turned his wrath on those who preyed upon the most vulnerable members of society.

The people of Judah were living in exile in Babylon, longing to be back home in Jerusalem. As the psalmist wrote, "By the rivers of Babylon - there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion." (Ps 137:1)

One of the dynamics of abuse, power, and control is that one lives in isolation and exile. Exiled from the joy of simply living without fear, exiled from family and friends, exiled from even the one who had pledged their lasting love. Jeremiah would certainly call to

account those who abuse, but he would also hold accountable those who witness and say nothing, who stand by silently, who turn from the one who longs to be safe in their own home. He would most certainly remind us all to "seek the welfare of the city."

Like those in captivity in Babylon, God speaks words of comfort, hope, and promise to those held captive by abuse...

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In the midst of trouble, seize life, because God's will for all is...peace...shalom.

How can we "seek the welfare of the city" and all who dwell therein?

Stand with her if and when she chooses to seek refuge...

Make your congregation a place of learning, truth telling, silence breaking, and safety...

Join advocates in your community in a coordinated response...

Hold government accountable for laws that truly protect and for effective services rendered...

Looking for ways to be a Jeremiah in your own city? Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), a ministry of the Presbyterian Health, Education and Welfare Association (PHEWA) will help:

<http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/presbyterians-against-domestic-violence/> and
<http://www.phewacommunity.org/>

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The Rev. Nancy K. Troy is the Pastor of Briargate Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky and serves on the PADVN Leadership Team.