

The 2014 Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN) resource packet is designed to provide congregations with a variety of resources that can be used in the worship life of the church. **October 12, 2014** is a Sunday of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) calendar year set aside to address the issue of domestic/ family violence.



Enclosed you will find resources which can be used either on the appointed Sunday (or another in the calendar year). The advantage of using the resources for October 12 is that exegetical work on three of the passages of the lectionary for that day are included here, offering suggestions for preaching on the topic of domestic/family violence.

Our PC(USA) Book of Order reminds us that, “worship, witness and service are inseparable,” (Directory for Worship- Preface) and that, “as God is concerned for the events in everyday life, so members of the community in worship appropriately express concern for one another and for their ministry in the world.” (W2.6001) Violence of any kind reflects a violation of our relationship with neighbor and with God. Violence within the context of family life, not only impacts the victim and the perpetrator, but also all family members and the communities of which they are a part. It is the responsibility of the church to raise this issue routinely to break the code of silence which has often reflected the church’s response to violence within the community of faith. When we raise the issue of family violence in worship it helps the congregation to focus on the violation of God’s will for families and to recommit ourselves and our congregations to directing our worship, prayer, education, and service to addressing the brokenness in families both within and beyond the church. We commend any and all of these worship resources to be used in your congregation. Use them also as study materials in your social justice and peacemaking committees, your session and pastoral leadership, and ultimately the church membership as we worship and serve the Prince of Peace.

October 12 Domestic Violence Awareness Sunday

Call to Worship:

From Psalm 106: 1-5

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

People: God's steadfast love endures forever.

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

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

Leader: Help me when you deliver them;

People: That I may experience the blessings of your chosen ones,

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

People: That I may glory in your heritage.

Prayer of Confession:

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

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

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

Leader: Finally beloved, Whatever is true,

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

Leader: Whatever is honorable,

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

Leader: Whatever is just,

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

Leader: Whatever is pure,

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

Leader: Whatever is pleasing,

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

Leader: Whatever is commendable,

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

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

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

Leader: Think about these things.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Domestic Violence Awareness **The facts about domestic and sexual violence**

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

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

85% of victims of domestic violence are women.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Approximately 73% of rape victims know their assailants.

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

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

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

FACTS and Frequently Asked Questions

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

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

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

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

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

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

**A Look at October 12, 2014 Lectionary Passages
Domestic Violence Awareness Sunday
October 12, 2014**

Exod. 32:1-14 or **Is. 25:1-9**; Ps. 106:1-6, 19-23 or **Ps. 23**; Phil. 4:1-9; **Matt. 22:1-14**

For the purpose of this Sunday, which lifts up Domestic Violence Awareness, three of the lectionary passages: Isaiah, Psalm 23, and Matthew will be reviewed with comments about some directions sermons might take. While each can stand alone, all three have images of table/feast/banquet that can point to God's intention for all of life.

Isaiah 25: 1-9

While Isaiah 25 is within the Isaiah "Apocalypse" (24:1-27:13), this lectionary passage contains elements of praise, celebration, and God's intention for us to live life abundantly.

Walter Brueggemann, in his sermon, "A God Who Gives Wildly... and Then Insists," calls this passage a poem of praise that provides a number of images for God.

1. God is a demolition squad (verse 2)
2. God is a safe place for poor people who have no other safe place (verses 4 & 5)
3. God is the giver of the biggest dinner party you ever heard of (verse 6)
4. God is a powerful sea monster (verses 7 & 8)
5. God is like a gentle nursemaid (verse 8)

Brueggemann: "All are images of God who overpowers the threats and gives us a chance in life. Perhaps, if in some part of your life you want a new chance and you have run out of your own devices, you will resonate and take hold of one of these pictures. The news is that newness is not just an act of your willpower, but is an act God takes for us." (pg. 40)

In the New Interpreter's Bible (NIB), Gene M. Tucker writes that verses 7 & 8 "express the deepest human hopes for an end to mourning, to death itself, and to all grief..." "However one interprets these lines [literally or metaphorically], the prophetic voice declares that life, not death, is what God endorses.... Death is understood as any power that threatens life." (NIB pg. 217)

Preaching directions in the Isaiah passage:

God's intention is for life, not death or anything that threatens life. Intimate or family violence is a violation of the trust, love, and mutuality that two people pledge within the sacred bond of marriage and life partnerships. The NRSV titles this passage as "Praise

for Deliverance from Oppression." It is that and more. The absence of fear and trembling is not enough. God intends for all peoples "a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines..." The feast metaphor envisions life in abundance, where tears are wiped away, where death is swallowed up, where gladness and rejoicing takes hold.

Read this passage through the lens of how a person being abused might hear it. Might she hear, "... you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress..." as a prayer to God to protect her? Might he hear "... the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces..." as God's hope for his life?

How might a person who violates another hear the words? How might a perpetrator hear that God stands on the side of those who are oppressed? How might those who are bystanders... people who do not speak out... hear these words? How might they use these strong words of hope with victims and survivors of abuse?

Matthew 22:1-14

The "feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines" in Isaiah becomes a wedding banquet in Matthew 22. The parable follows two others: the parable of the two sons (21:28-32) and the parable of the wicked tenants (21:33-46). While this parable appears in Luke (14:15-24), there are differences. Matthew is clearly an allegory of salvation history with harsh things to say about a final judgment. The addition of the poor man, underdressed for the banquet, in Matthew can be offensive unless it is explained allegorically as lacking the garment of righteousness (Hare, pp. 251-252).

M. Eugene Boring expands that idea by saying, "In early Christianity, the new identity of conversion was often pictured as donning a new set of clothes; the language of changing clothes was utilized to express the giving up of the old way of life and putting on the new Christian identity." (Boring, p. 418)

Brueggemann says that the kicked out guest is "a very odd turn to a lovely metaphor [banquet]." He writes, "You see, with this God, you cannot be an innocent bystander who watches with fascination and indifference as God is variously sketched. You cannot act as though the character of God had nothing to do with you. The character of God has everything to do with you... In the banquet scene and in all of these metaphors, this is talk about the God who has the power to end what is old and tired and crippling and damaging." (Brueggemann, p. 41)

Preaching directions in the Matthew passage:

The preacher might probe what it means to be clothed with Christ... to have the right garments on as appropriate of guests who have been invited to a banquet. Is there a word of judgment in this passage? Yes! And there are some persons sitting in our pews

who need to hear that word. A transformed life (wearing the right clothing) is what a banquet guest will exhibit.

A preacher might quote the Rev. Dr. Marie Fortune of the FaithTrust Institute, who always tells audiences that at every worship service, sitting in our pews, are victims/survivors, perpetrators, and bystanders. It can be a wake-up call to a congregation that thinks "it doesn't happen here." In fact, abuse happens in every community. It cuts across all spheres of life: age, color, religion, sexual orientation, economic and educational levels.

Psalm 23

This familiar Psalm is most often heard at times of death, but is rich in imagery of God's presence walking with us through troubled times. Restoration of soul... the comfort of the rod and staff... a table even in the presence of enemies... dwelling in the house of the Lord... speaks to one who is assured that God hears and acts on their behalf.

The two metaphors of shepherd and host portray "God's unrelenting love and mercy for God's people... As the shepherd, God acts as a loving guide by leading, restoring, and comforting. The second metaphor of God as host... continues to emphasize God's compassionate and merciful nature by picturing God as providing to guests sustenance in overabundance." (Smith, p.152)

Preaching directions in the Psalm:

The theme of feast/banquet/table is rich in imagery of what God intends for all of us, not only in a kingdom to come, but in the kingdom now. We pray each week, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." All three of the lectionary passages cited could be teased out to create a picture of that intention. Violence in any form diminishes God's intention for a world of peace, plenty, and blessings.

It may seem counterintuitive, but often survivors of abuse tell stories of knowing that God was with them as they struggled through the abuse. What stories might you tell to illustrate God's faithful presence during times when we walk through our valleys of death?

As You Prepare to Preach:

- Familiarize yourself with the dynamics of abuse and the Dos and Don'ts of responding to victims and perpetrators. Begin by going to PHEWA's Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network's websites, <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> or to <http://www.phewacommunity.org/>
- Take advantage of your local crisis center's educational events. Crisis workers will be happy to see a clergy person supportive of their efforts. Tell them about your plans to break the silence in your congregation. Ask them for advice.
- Remember that as you speak openly about abusive situations, there are those sitting in your pews who have experienced, are experiencing, or who have a personal connection with someone who is being abused. It is probably a good idea to have someone knowledgeable about abuse available to go out with a person who leaves, sometimes abruptly, a worship service or educational event when the realities are said aloud.
- As you prepare your sermon, view the scripture through the lens of a person who is abused. Examine carefully the context of the reading and challenge those sections that might be misinterpreted to validate violence, child abuse, or the subordination of women.
- Theology can be a road block or a resource. Pay particular attention to how suffering and forgiveness are interpreted. There are many resources that can help. The PADVN website has some sample sermons that can give you ideas of how others have preached about abuse. The commentary, *Feasting on the Word* (Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky) is an excellent resource that looks at each lectionary reading through four lenses: theological, pastoral, exegetical, and homiletical. As you prepare, add the lenses of victim/survivor, perpetrator, and bystander.
- It may be uncomfortable or unwise, at first, to do an entire sermon on abuse. Start slowly by incorporating language into prayers, making announcements about activities during October Domestic Violence Awareness Month, using a bulletin insert, or asking someone from a community organization to do a minute for mission. Any reference will be noticed by those who need to hear that you are a safe person to speak with, that this congregation is a safe place for them.
- Even though you are being urged to use October to lift these issues up, "one shot" sermons seldom raise the level of awareness to change minds and behaviors. Help

your congregation make a long-term plan for becoming a safe sanctuary, a place where truth is spoken and where troubled relationships are transformed. PADVN is here to assist; contact us through our web sites or through the PHEWA office.

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M. Eugene Boring, "Matthew," *New Interpreter's Bible*, Nashville: Abingdon Press: 1995.

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Douglas R. A. Hare, "Matthew," *Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*, Louisville: John Knox Press: 1993.

John S. McClure and Nancy J Ramsay, *Telling The Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence*, Cleveland: United Church Press: 1998.

[file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/sstack/My%20Documents/Downloads/Telling_the_Truth%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/sstack/My%20Documents/Downloads/Telling_the_Truth%20(1).pdf)

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Men in the Mirror

Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity

A new 13-Session curriculum toward addressing violence against women and children.

This new resource was developed by the Rev. Dr. Kevin E. Frederick, Moderator of PHEWA's Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN). A strong emphasis of this curriculum addresses violence against women and children; however it is also designed to help all men to address the conflicting societal messages they have learned about masculinity by refocusing their masculinity on a relational ethic of Jesus Christ found in scripture.

Free download of this 66 page resource is available online at:

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



Presbyterians Against Domestic
Violence Network

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

Case Study of a leading North Carolina County and their comprehensive plan to address domestic violence on a multidisciplinary level

Questions to address after reading this article and its plan:

- 1) How does the plan in your community for intervention and safety of victims and their children measure up against this plan?
- 2) How might faith groups and other organizations in your town work together with shelters, public safety officers, the court system, and other professional groups in your area to create a similar comprehensive plan to this one for your own community?
- 3) Are there ideas in this comprehensive plan that might be adapted to a congregational level where there is a suspicion of or knowledge of a case of domestic violence within your congregation?
- 4) What are ways by which your congregation can be supportive of the effectiveness of domestic violence shelters in your area? This should involve a conversation with the director of the shelter.
- 5) It is imperative that faith communities partner with other professional groups that are working to address domestic and family violence. How might a focus on this issue become a central emphasis of your congregation in your local mission outreach?

Buncombe County, [North Carolina] officials hail new domestic violence plan, brace for increased demand.

Asheville *Citizen-Times* article, May 19, 2014. Asheville , NC:

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2014/05/19/help-arrives-domestic-violence-victims/9294649/>

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Helpmate executive director April Burgess-Johnson, foreground, with associate director Ann Flynn, says Buncombe County's new domestic violence plan is at the forefront of curbing the problem. (Photo: Bill Sanders, wsanders@citizen-times.com)

ASHEVILLE – The cavalry is no longer on its way for victims of domestic violence. It's here.

That was the sentiment expressed by Helpmate Executive Director April Burgess-Johnson after announcing an ambitious new countywide plan last week to tackle domestic violence, marking the start of what advocates are calling the most comprehensive plan in Buncombe County's history to address the issue.

The initiative is nearly a year in the making, the result of a troubling spike in domestic violence homicides in Buncombe County, and a significant increase in reported demand for victim's services. The plan has been researched and championed by some of the highest level officials and advocates in the field, all of whom say they will work smarter and more collaboratively to tackle the issue, primarily with existing staff and resources.

Of course that cavalry will come at a cost, much of which will likely fall to an already-stretched shelter.

“It’s hard to express how significant the impact of this plan will be, and I am incredibly excited at the level of enthusiasm and willingness to do this work,” Burgess-Johnson said. “It’s truly like nothing I’ve ever seen.

“But the service needs were rising before we decided to implement this plan, so it is something we’re concerned about, trying to stretch an already lean system even further,” she said. “We have to get it right, though. This is something where you don’t often get a second chance.”

The plan will roll out over the next few months, with the full implementation of the plan set for October.

It involves lethality assessments of offenders to evaluate danger to victims, the creation of a high-risk intervention team, a public awareness campaign, focused deterrence on previous offenders, dialogue across different agencies and electronic monitoring of offenders.

“This is an incredibly aggressive plan, with a lot of players who know this problem very intimately, and have given it an enormous amount of thought,” Commissioner Holly Jones said. “It’s very ambitious, but the cost of doing something that isn’t ambitious is just too high.”

Growing demand, new research

Sheriff Van Duncan recounted at the May 13 announcement a day in December when he left one crime scene where a man killed his wife to go to another crime scene where a man killed his wife and was eluding police.

In all, the county had eight domestic violence-related deaths in 2013, the third most of the state’s 100 counties.

“We never want to see another year like that in Buncombe County,” Duncan said.

Unfortunately that spike in domestic violence turned deadly was not an anomaly.

Those numbers were mirrored in the county’s only shelter for victims of domestic violence, Helpmate, which reported a dramatic increase in both the number of victims seeking help and the severity of their situations, Burgess-Johnson said.

From July through December, the shelter took 63 percent more crisis calls than it had for that period the previous year. The shelter also saw a 12 percent increase in the number of nights clients were staying, meaning it’s taking longer to find safe housing for victims after they arrive.

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2014/05/19/help-arrives-domestic-violence-victims/9294649/>

The organization serves about 38 percent more clients per capita than the state average, with about 40 percent less staff than in similar sized counties.

Nationwide, domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women — more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined — and it is the seventh leading cause of death.

While the data showing the need for domestic violence services are clear, tracking data for successful programming is still in its infancy, Burgess-Johnson said.

“The system we’ve been working with is really standard for this field, and that’s part of a movement that has existed for about 30 years,” she said. “Unfortunately the research part of that is much younger, and much of the data on what works has only been available to us in very recent years.”

Even some of the most basic, least technologically complex elements of the plan — like the cross system dialogue — have only shown up in other counties in recent years, Burgess-Johnson said.

“Buncombe County really is on the front end of curbing this issue,” she said. “I think it has taken a long time for society to grapple with the fact that this is not a private family matter.

“But this is a social justice matter, a crime and punishment matter, and an equal rights issue. It’s having equal rights to safety.”

Officials say the financial cost of the plan will be relatively small, focusing more on overhauling reporting protocols and existing resources to work smarter and communicate better.

The “eNOugh Campaign,” for public awareness and cross-agency dialogue will to begin immediately. Electronic monitoring, lethality assessments, the high-risk team and focused deterrence will follow.

Tracking violence, predicting risk

Burgess-Johnson said the flow of communication between the shelter and law enforcement as it exists is fairly informal, with no concrete assessment tools or common language to relay urgency or risk with any given case.

The lethality assessment, based off of research from Johns Hopkins nursing professor Jacquelyn Campbell, will assign victims a score based on a questionnaire that indicates her risk of an attempt on her life.

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2014/05/19/help-arrives-domestic-violence-victims/9294649/>

If a woman has a score of 18, for instance, she carries an 84 percent risk of a homicide attempt. A score of 23 or higher carries a 94 percent risk, and so on.

“Essentially it levels the playing field, allowing us to speak a language everyone understands,” Burgess-Johnson said, rather than advocates asking law enforcement to just take their word for it.

A major part of each branch of the plan will rely on smarter data tracking.

By keeping track of the individual and general patterns of abuse perpetrators display, they can predict the most dangerous factors and even times of the week or month in any given case.

Many factors can increase the risk of an attack, ranging from unemployment to gun access and substance abuse, whether or not a child is biologically related to the perpetrator, and income.

In some cases abuse is more likely around the perpetrator’s payday, for example, if the abuser is getting paid and feeding a substance abuse habit, then coming home high or drunk.

Many offenders have already come into contact with law enforcement, the court system, hospitals or DSS before a homicide or an abusive incident.

In Buncombe in 2012, there were 752 domestic violence orders of arrest. County officials say 65 percent of domestic violence victims had contact with the criminal justice system or a health care professional before they were murdered, and 58 percent of perpetrators had been arrested before they killed their partners and 22 percent had seen a mental health professional.

Rebecca Knight, the county’s first female district court judge and an early advocate for a family court system in the county, has been heavily involved in those discussions and research.

“This is a very unique crime, where often we know the identity of both the perpetrator and the victim before the crime is ever committed,” Knight said. “If we can identify the victims early on, we can actually stop that murder.”

The “high-risk team,” which will assess risk and lethality, is modeled after work done in Massachusetts.

From 2005-11, the state tracked all the domestic violence cases they handled in counties that had a high-risk team. No domestic violence homicides were reported in those counties, Knight said. In counties without a high-risk team in Massachusetts, 249 domestic violence homicides were reported during the same period.

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2014/05/19/help-arrives-domestic-violence-victims/9294649/>

Monitoring

The most tangible, and most directly expensive part of the plan will be the introduction of 20 new monitoring devices designated specifically for domestic violence cases.

The GPS tracking system is already in place in the county, but none is designated for this use, and none has involved giving victims a way to see the whereabouts of the abuser. The 20 new units will cost around \$100,000, Jones said.

The GPS monitoring units would alert police and the victim immediately if the offender violated pretrial release conditions, such as getting too close to a victim or that person's place of employment.

Law enforcement can draw boundaries surrounding a victim's home, school and place of work. If any of the boundaries is crossed, police and the victim would be notified.

Authorities caution against thinking that the monitoring units would end fatal incidents, but research has shown it is a deterrent.

The Buncombe plan is based off of a Pitt County initiative, which has reported a decrease in recidivism because of it.

Help for Helpmate

The other financial impact to the county may be increased support for Helpmate.

The county has allocated just under \$17,000 a year to the organization in recent years, and Jones said she will advocate for closer to \$50,000 this year to meet the predicted increase in demand.

"This is an organization that's already stretched extremely thin, and at least in the short term we will be asking even more of them," Jones said. "We just have to give them more support."

The organization operates on a relatively tight budget of \$792,257 a year. To put that in perspective, the Humane Society operates with about \$1.8 million a year.

The six-bedroom facility has been full for all but three days over the past six months, sometimes with five or more women and children living in a dorm-sized bedroom.

Burgess-Johnson said one shelter in the Charlotte area recently implemented one leg of the plan — the lethality assessment — and reported 80-100 more calls per month on their crisis line.

“Anywhere that has had success in implementing a plan, especially one with a significant public awareness campaign, has seen an increase in demand,” Burgess-Johnson said. “We’re certainly bracing for that, and I do have concerns. I hope our donors and our community will meet us there.”

Helpmate by the numbers

\$792,257 annual budget

6 bedrooms in its facility

63 percent more crisis calls July-December 2013 over same period in 2012

12 percent increase in number of nights clients needed shelter

38 percent more clients served by Helpmate per capita than state average

40 percent less staff at Helpmate than organizations in similar-sized counties.

County’s plan

Buncombe County’s plan to address domestic violence has six main components including:

- **Lethality Assessments — evaluating danger to victims**

Evidence-based assessments administered at all levels, from first responders to victim advocates to screen for high risk

- **High Risk Team — offender and victim interventions**

Offender containment tactics including: Case monitoring; Court advocacy; Compliance checks & Treatment/Interventions

Victim supports including: Safety planning; Legal support; Case management and Service connections

- **Electronic Monitoring — tracking offenders for victim safety**

Location tracking devices placed on offenders

Inclusion/exclusion zones regarding where offenders can and can't go

Compliance monitoring and communication to victims

• **Focused Deterrence — prevention strategies for previous offenders**

Watch list of offenders

Increased security measures

Strict punishments

Notifications and call-ins

Treatment/Interventions

• **Cross System Dialogue — improving communication**

Neutrally facilitated internal and external communication review of partner entities

• **Public Education Campaign — increasing awareness and community engagement**

“It’s time to say eNOugh” campaign:

<http://www.buncombcounty.org/Staying-Connected/Campaigns/Enough.aspx?redirect=enough>

Helpmate, Ashville, NC: <http://www.helpmateonline.org/>

Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN) is a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA), a ministry of the Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministry, Presbyterian Mission Agency, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
<http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org>

<http://www.citizen-times.com/story/news/local/2014/05/19/help-arrives-domestic-violence-victims/9294649/>