

A CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

TURN MOURNING INTO DANCING!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A note from the author...

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

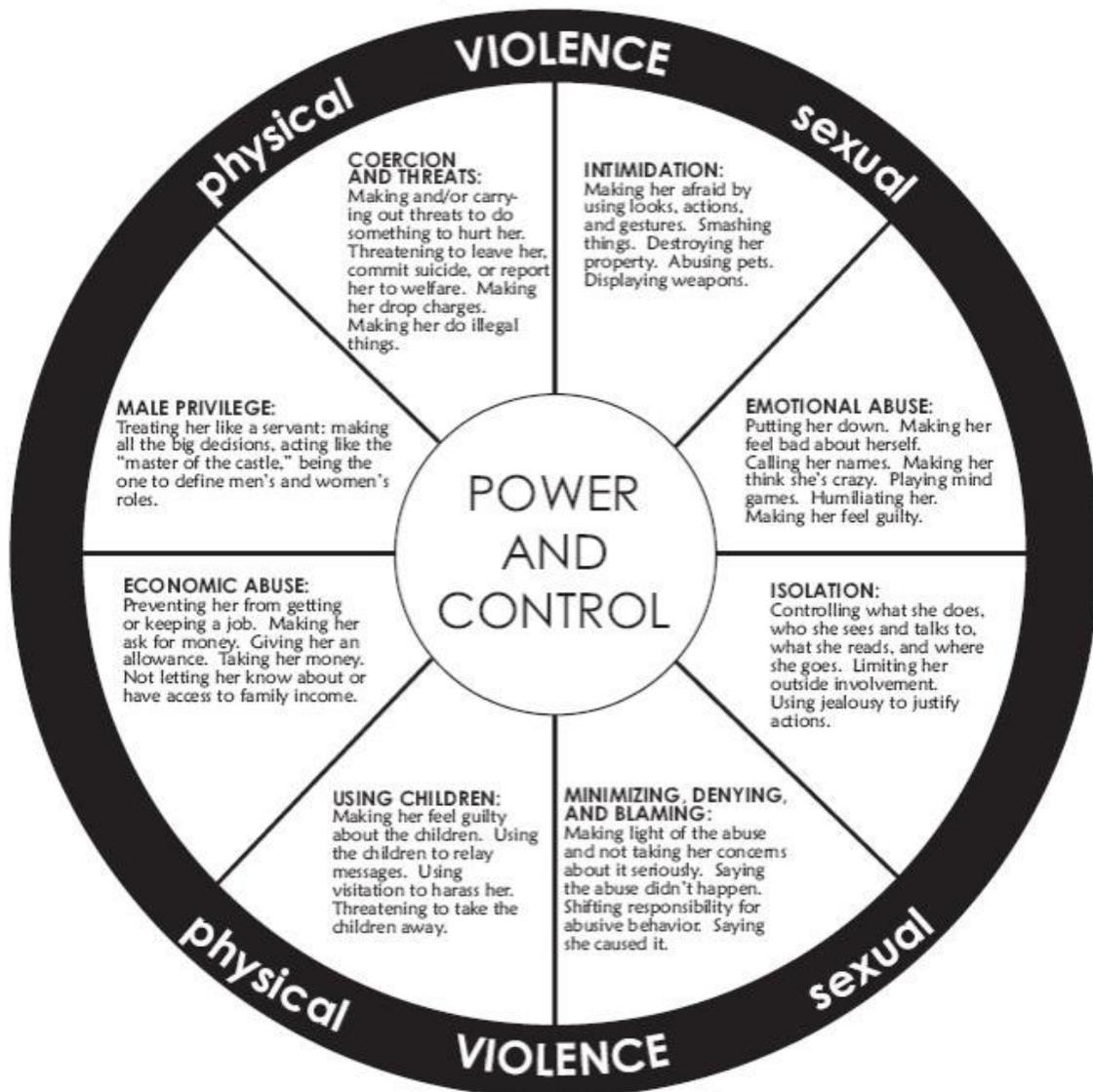
I am a founding member and serve in the leadership of the Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN), a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA): <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org>

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What is Domestic Violence?

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

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



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

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

What are the laws regarding domestic violence?

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

Who are the victims?

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

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

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

Why doesn't she just leave?

- ✚ She stays primarily because her abuser will not let her go. 75% of the domestic violence homicides occur when a victim tries to leave.
- ✚ She may not have the financial resources to care for herself and her children apart from her partner. Nationally, 50% of homeless women and children are on the street because of violence in their home. http://www.kdva.org/dv_info/myths.html
<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/domestic.html>

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

Who are the perpetrators?

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

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

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



Frequently Asked Questions

Does domestic violence occur in religious homes?

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

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

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

Isn't domestic violence really a private family matter?

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

Don't victims provoke their partners' violence?

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

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

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

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

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

Can marriage or couple counseling help to stop the violence?

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

What about confidentiality in the clergy/congregant relationship?

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

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

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



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

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

- ✚ Maintain ongoing relationships with staff of domestic violence programs so that if the occasion arises, you will know who can best help, and they will know that you can be a trusted partner.
- ✚ Invite shelter workers to make presentations at teen and adult education sessions.



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

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

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

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

- ✚ Establish a relationship with an advocate who can tutor you on state laws and what changes need to be made to strengthen them.
- ✚ Speak with or write to legislative representatives to ensure their support of laws that protect women from partner abuse.
- ✚ Join advocates from domestic violence services as they accompany victims during court sessions.

- ✚ Attend the training sessions provided by domestic violence services so that you can be an educated participant and advocate.
- ✚ Encourage attorneys who worship in your congregation to participate in pro-bono work on behalf of victims.

The Crisis of Faith

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

Suffering

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

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

Covenant (or Sacrament) of Marriage

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

Repentance

Just as forgiveness is a process, so too is repentance. Repentance means turning from sin. In *A Theological Word Book of the Bible*, Alan Richardson writes that repentance implies much more than a mere change of mind. “It involves a whole reorientation of the personality, a ‘conversion.’” If the abuser seeks forgiveness, the pastor needs to keep in mind that safety of the victim and children is the primary concern. The abuser can show true repentance by changing the behaviors,

relinquishing his need for power and control, accepting any judgments imposed by the legal system, and making restitution for his actions. **To dig deeper...**

Pastoral Care for Domestic Violence: Case Studies for Clergy

Abandonment by God

Throughout the Bible we hear the plea of utter forsakenness. Moses, Job, the psalmist, and Jesus himself cried out when feeling God's abandonment. Victims may acknowledge a variety of feelings, even anger, at God and the community who failed to keep them safe. James Leehan writes, "God creates and sustains, but does not control." He goes on to say that our Judeo-Christian tradition affirms a wide variety of images of God. Perhaps the idea of *Emmanuel*, God with us, can be most helpful. God chose to come to us in the form of Jesus; God incarnate.

To dig deeper...

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

Forgiveness

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

Violence against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook ("Structures of Forgiveness in the New Testament" – Keene; "Forgiveness: The Last Step" – Fortune)

Defiant Hope: Spirituality for Survivors of Family Abuse (Chapter 6 – "Tough Forgiveness"), James Leehan

Suggested Resources

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

Hotlines:

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

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



Books:

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

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

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

Fortune, Marie M. *Keeping the Faith: Questions and Answers for the Abused Woman*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. Dr. Fortune gives answers to many of the challenging questions that arise for Christian women who are being abused. This low cost booklet makes it possible for pastors to maintain a supply to give to persons when contacted concerning abuse. English, Spanish, Korean

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

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

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

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

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

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

Curriculum:

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

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

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



PRESBYTERIANS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE NETWORK

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

In Her Shoes: Living with Domestic Violence. This two hour fast-paced interactive simulation helps participants experience the ups and downs a battered woman might experience over the course of several years. It also allows reflection on what the community can do. It is published by the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, www.wscadv.org
<http://wscadv2.org/resourcespublications.cfm?aid=6388541a-c298-58f6-02a2a6cf514e6448>

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

Troy, Nancy, ed. *Anguished Hearts: A Study Guide to Accompany Turn Mourning into Dancing!* Louisville: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 2003. Seven sessions, designed for one hour time frames, cover topics of the church's calling, partner abuse, child abuse, elder abuse, sibling abuse, dating violence, and vulnerable populations.
<http://store.pcusa.org/7027003025>

Organizations:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Organizations working with men:

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



Videos and DVDs:

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

www.faithtrustinstitute.org

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

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

<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/store/01tA0000000M7rWIAS>

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

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *Turn Mourning into Dancing!* A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence. Louisville: Office of the General Assembly, 2001.

<http://www.pcusa.org/resource/turn-mourning-dancing-policy-statement-healing-dom/>

American Baptist Churches USA, *Resolution on Family Violence*, adopted in 1982, modified by the Executive Committee of the General Board – September 1993:

<http://www.religioustinstitute.org/american-baptist-resolution-of-family-violence/>

Episcopal Church, General Convention Statements:

1991, Renew Commitment to Address Violence in Society:

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

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

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

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

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

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

2009, Encourage Training for Prevention of Domestic Violence:

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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a network of the Presbyterian Health, Education & Welfare Association (PHEWA)
A program of the Compassion, Peace & Justice Ministry, Presbyterian Mission Agency
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Websites: <http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn> and <http://www.phewacommunity.org/>