

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

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

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

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

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

1. Pray for victims, survivors, and perpetrators during prayers of the people. Address domestic violence from the pulpit.
2. Print the local domestic violence helpline in the church bulletin at least once a month, preferably every week.
3. Put domestic violence posters, with local telephone numbers to call, in the stalls of the rest rooms. Your local domestic violence agency will be happy to provide them to you.
4. Educate, educate, educate. Do a Bible study on domestic violence. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) provides *Anguished Hearts*, a seven-session study for congregations on domestic violence may be ordered at [www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/anguished-hearts/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/anguished-hearts/). A 13-session study called *Men in the Mirror, Orienting Our Lives Toward a Christ-Centered Masculinity*, written by the Rev. Dr. Kevin Frederick, is available at [www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/meninthemirror.pdf](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/meninthemirror.pdf)
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. The shelter 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: [www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/padvn/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/phewa/padvn/). Take 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.

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