



Beyond Violence

A resource on Domestic and Family Violence



Introduction

How to engage with this resource



Theological Reflection (p5)

As Christians, Jesus is a model for us, in the way we love and care for each other. Start a conversation or Bible study in your community.



Worship (p21)

We have written and collated a liturgy, prayers and a sermon that can be used in churches or small groups.



Be Informed (p7)

about Domestic and Family Violence and how to respond.



Take Action (p38)

Take practical steps to help bring justice and healing for survivors of Domestic and Family Violence.



Pastoral Care (p14)

There are tools to help us care for the survivor as well as the person offering the pastoral care.

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) is one of the greatest challenges we face in Australia, with one woman a week killed by a former husband or partner. DFV occurs in all cultural, economic, and social contexts including among our own church members and leaders.

This resource has been developed in response to the [15th Assembly resolution on Domestic and Family Violence](#) which reaffirmed our commitment to addressing DFV.

We hope this resource is a starting point to help members of our congregations and our communities begin a time of *talanoa* (conversation) with their people to raise awareness, understand what DFV is and begin to educate themselves in how they can respond to and support survivors of DFV.

This handbook includes a number of excellent resources produced by churches, government, and non-government organisations, to inform our ongoing work in the Uniting Church in response to DFV.

There are five sections in this handbook, representing five ways you can use this handbook to help our church respond as outlined above.

It is my hope that this resource will raise awareness of DFV across our church and to begin to equip church members with the tools they need to help people experiencing or fleeing DFV.

As a national church let us continue to call on God's love, healing, comfort and hope.

In the example of Jesus, may we walk alongside those who live in fear and pain, speak out with those who need our voice and proclaim a world where all women and children can flourish. It is my prayer that we make our homes and communities safe and loving spaces where we continue to witness to the love of God.



Rev Charissa Suli

National Consultant, Assembly Resourcing Unit

Introduction from the President

Welcome to this Uniting Church Assembly resource that raises awareness and promotes conversations about Domestic and Family Violence (DFV).

The Uniting Church is deeply concerned about the prevalence of DFV in our communities and its devastating effects on survivors, their families, friends and our wider society.

We are committed to support and resource the work that is needed for all people to be safe in their own homes and in their relationships.

Our commitment grows out of our understanding that the way of Jesus calls us to shape relationships of respect, equality and mutuality in which women, men and children can flourish.

*Every woman has the right to be safe in her relationships, as does every man.
Every child in Australia needs to feel safe in their own homes.*

As a Christian community we are committed to doing all we can to make that possible.

For us as a Church this includes:

- To be clear in saying no to all forms of DFV.
- To express God's desire for life-giving mutually respectful relationships, homes and communities, where all people can flourish.
- To educate our members about DFV and how we can respond, pastorally supporting those impacted by violence.
- To develop safe practices and safe and inclusive spaces within all our congregations, agencies, schools, groups and communities.
- To promote the equality of women and men, girls and boys and people of all ages.
- To receive and take seriously reports or complaints of DFV.
- To provide support and referral to appropriate support services.
- To resource the Church in how to respond to this issue, recognising and engaging with the diversity of cultures and languages that make up our communities.

We invite you to engage with this resource in ways that are helpful to you, start conversations with your faith community and help us to create a world "Beyond Violence".



Dr Deidre Palmer
President, Uniting Church in Australia



Theological Reflection

2022 Presidency
Leadership
Called by God

In providing this resource, the Uniting Church affirms the following biblical and theological understandings.

All people are created in the image of God and are known and loved by God. Every person is of infinite worth and entitled to live with dignity. Each person's life and humanity need to be protected or the human community and its reflection of God's vision are diminished.

As Christians we base our values on Jesus, who in his life and ministry loved and respected all those he encountered – of all genders and ages. We recognise Jesus' specific care for people who were powerless and those who were vulnerable.

Our commitment to the equality of men and women and respect for all people underlies our rejection of any form of violence.

People grow into their fullest humanity when they are nurtured in situations of love, trust and safety – people should not have to live in fear.

Liberation from oppression and injustice is central to the incarnation of God through Jesus Christ. God desires us to be free to make choices about our lives and to be responsible in that freedom to each other.

The *Basis of Union* (Par 11) calls us to engage with literary, historical and scientific enquiry and to stand in relationship with contemporary society in ways that will help us understand our own nature and mission. Therefore, we must listen to the voices that inform us about Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) and be in partnership with others working to overcome violence.

The *Basis of Union* (Par 18) notes the Uniting Church prays that, through the gift of the Spirit, God will constantly correct that which is erroneous in our life.

We acknowledge that:

- We live in a world where women are often treated as less than equal.
- Some violent men who are members and adherents of Christian churches have sought to biblically and theologically justify violence and reinforce their power in intimate relationships.
- Theologies and teachings which support a power imbalance in family relationship can nurture an environment in which violence and other forms of abuse are present.

- The lifelong commitment of marriage does not mean that people should stay in violent relationships. There are times when "divorce may be the only creative and life-giving direction to take" (Statement on Marriage, Eighth Assembly 1997, Uniting Church in Australia).

Christian Vision

In what ways does our Christian vision intersect with our response to people affected by DFV?

There are significant numbers of Christian communities whose theology today supports our relationships as equal, mutual, non-violent, life-giving partnerships.

As the Uniting Church, we

- Say no to violence in word and action.
- Are aware of signs of abuse, listen and believe when someone discloses abuse.
- Offer friendship and pastoral support, where appropriate, to those in and affected by situations of DFV.
- Strengthen our voice in the public space – emphasising the equality of all people, and advocating for those who have experienced gender-based violence.
- Encourage children and young people to have a voice in our Christian communities and wider society, through our ministry in local congregations, families, communities and schools.
- Use the power we have responsibly and for the well-being of all in our community, and call out those situations where power is used to abuse and diminish others.
- Address sexism and patriarchal patterns wherever they occur and live in ways that encourage equality.
- Model non-violent, loving and respectful relationships.
- Are bearers of a hope-filled and life-giving Christian story and vision in our living, education, preaching, pastoral care, worship and mission.



Be Informed

What is domestic violence?

Excerpts from the Domestic Violence Handbook for clergy and pastoral workers. First published by the Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Programme South Australian Council of Churches (Churches Together SA) 1995. Second edition published by Churches Together SA and Uniting Communities, 2010.

Domestic violence is a pattern of controlling and abusive behaviour used by an intimate partner during a relationship or after separation. Domestic violence and abuse take many forms. Whatever form domestic violence takes, fear, control and power are always components. Domestic violence occurs in all walks of life, regardless of socio-economic status, race, age, religion, culture and sexual orientation. The term domestic violence also refers to intimate partner homicide.

Domestic violence is a crime, and violence against women and children is a violation of basic human rights. It is a gender issue with roots in unequal power relations between men and women. In Australia alone, 2.56 million women (1 in 3) have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. Domestic violence directly affects women, children, family, friends and co-workers, and there are also far-reaching financial, social and health related consequences. Women who experience domestic violence and abuse suffer a range of health problems, and as such their ability to participate in daily life is diminished. Similarly, whether or not they are subjected to or witness domestic violence and abuse, there are damaging impacts on the development of children and young people.

Does domestic violence always involve physical violence?

No. Domestic violence may involve any type of abusive behaviour, all having an emotional and psychological impact on the person experiencing the abuse and their children. These impacts can include feelings of fear, shame, confusion, helplessness, hopelessness, guilt, anger, depression anxiety, anger, a sense of entrapment, low self-esteem, loneliness and a sense of failure.

Domestic violence is not limited to physical violence, it includes, emotional, verbal, sexual, economic, spiritual, and social forms of abuse. Any form of abuse has profound effects on children.

Physical violence

Physical abuse

Using any physical force or object against a woman whether it leaves a mark or not. This can include pushing, holding, shoving, shaking, twisting limbs, restraining, punching, preventing sleep, slapping or drugging.

Object damage

Throwing crockery, breaking furniture or household goods, damaging doors or walls, smashing windows, destroying treasured possessions,

Pet abuse

Hitting, kicking, punching, throwing, choking, neglecting, sexually abusing, starving, killing or threatening to kill pets.

Psychological abuse

Threats, intimidation and "mind games".

Making threats, stalking or looking, acting or speaking in ways which are frightening or intimidating. This can include yelling, screaming, threatening punishment, ignoring her and acting like she is invisible, driving dangerously with her or the children in the car, threatening suicide or to hurt or kill her, the children, family or friends.

Put downs

Using put downs regarding a woman's body shape, grooming, intelligence, mothering ability, home management skills etc. Telling her or making her think she is crazy, stupid, useless, worthless, and good for nothing. This can be alone and in front of others.

Maternal alienation

Deliberately trying to destroy the relationship between children and their mother. This can include telling the children cruel, abusive and angry things about the mother when she is not there or sometimes when she is, telling the children that the mother is incompetent, stupid or a bad parent.

Sexual abuse

Forcing or coercing the woman into sexual acts against her will, physically attacking the sexual parts of her body, demanding sex, raping her, using bondage and/or objects against her will, treating her as a sexual object and not as a person.

Social abuse

Isolation

Constantly criticising and being suspicious of her family and friends. Using tactics that make friends and family feel uncomfortable about visiting or spending time with the woman. Not allowing her to have her own friends and keeping her isolated from social contact other than with him. Moving the family to an isolated area away from family and friends. Social isolation can also include restricting the use of a car, keeping her reliant on him for transport and not letting her use a phone or computer.

Smothering, controlling and monitoring

Controlling what she does, who she talks to and where she goes. Keeping in contact with her to "see how she's going" when it is really to check up on what she is doing. Insisting on doing everything together so that she has no life of her own and insisting on knowing her whereabouts at all times.

Put downs

Making hurtful, humiliating or embarrassing remarks about her in front of company or blatant verbal attacks on her in public.

Economic abuse

Financial dependence

Requiring her to ask him for money all the time, keeping her ignorant of available funds, excluding her from financial decisions, providing inadequate funds for household expenses, threatening or coercing her to sign legally binding financial contracts, opposing her getting or keeping a job, making her account for every dollar spent. Deliberately spending bill money to sabotage her efforts to keep on top of the household expenses. Putting accounts in her name. Urging her to abuse the system such as making false claims to Centrelink.

Gambling

Gambling the family income, selling or pawning things to pay debts, using credit cards to gamble, emptying the bank account, putting the family at financial risk.

Legal abuse

Threatening legal outcomes

Threatening her with court or a legal body, telling her she is mad and could be committed, telling her she has committed crimes which will send her to jail, threatening to give evidence against her and threatening that she will lose her children.

Forcing legal involvement

Using the family court against her. This can include lying about her mothering, calling her back to court over and over again, breaking legal agreements and blaming her.

Spiritual abuse

Using scripture, ideas about God, pastoral care and the church to justify violence and further control and abuse. These include denying access to faith communities, criticising spiritual beliefs, selective use of scripture to claim God's blessing on violence, and warning of damnation if she leaves the relationship

Male power abuse

Privilege

He thinks he is entitled to more: decisions, money and rights. He acts like "the master of the house" and treats other family members like servants. He makes all the big decisions and demands that she complies.

The Uniting Church response

Broad community concern has brought Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) into sharp focus in recent years. It is an issue impacting people and communities, including churches, in Australia and across the world. The Uniting Church acknowledges that we as a community are not immune to incidents of DFV and their consequences. We further acknowledge that Christian teachings have been used inappropriately to justify unhealthy relationships that can lead to DFV.

The Uniting Church commits itself to speak out strongly against DFV of all types.

This commitment is based on our biblical and theological understandings, including:

- All people are created in the image of God and are known and loved by God.
- As Christians we base our values on Jesus, who in his life and ministry loved and respected women and men, girls and boys, and people of all ages.
- We recognise Jesus' specific care for people who were powerless and those who were vulnerable.
- Our commitment to the equality of men and women and respect for all humans underlies our rejection of any form of violence.
- People grow into their fullest humanity when they are nurtured in situations of love, trust and safety – people should not have to live in fear.
- The Basis of Union (Par 18) notes the Uniting Church prays that, through the gift of the Spirit, God will constantly correct that which is erroneous in our life.

All women, men and children deserve to live in respectful and fulfilling relationships, free of violence, abuse and control.

It is important for the Church at this time:

- To be clear in repudiating all forms of DFV.
- To express God's desire for life-giving mutually respectful relationships, homes and communities, where all people can flourish.
- To educate our members about the reality of the situation and how they can respond by pointing people to support, resources and care.
- To develop safe practices and safe spaces within all our congregations, agencies, schools, groups and communities consistent with the commitments made in the Uniting Church's National Child Safe Policy Framework.

Being a safe Church for all

The UCA believes that being a safe church is the way in which we care for each other physically, spiritually and emotionally. We are committed to best practices to keep everyone who engages with the life of the Church safe. This includes listening and responding to complaints or concerns where people do not feel safe or where they believe someone else is not safe. Complaints are taken seriously, responded to promptly and thoroughly in accordance with our legal and moral responsibilities.

Key statistics about the reality

Violence is extremely common in Australia. Both women and men are more than three times as likely to be physically assaulted by a man than by a woman.

A man is most likely to experience violence in a place of entertainment and a woman is most likely to experience violence in her home.



Killed by partner
(between 2014-2015 and 2015-2016)



26,500
children



were assisted by specialist homelessness services due to domestic violence in 2017-18



as likely

to have experienced workplace sexual harassment



People in Remote and Very Remote areas were

24x 

as likely to be hospitalised for domestic violence as people in Major Cities

Further recent statistics of Domestic and Family Violence in Australia:

Have experienced emotional abuse from a previous partner and have also been assaulted or threatened with assault	1 in 2 women 57% or 958,000	1 in 4 men 24% or 247,000
Have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner since the age of 15	1 in 4 women 23% or 2.2 million	1 in 6 men 16% or 1.4 million
Have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or previous partner since the age of 15	1 in 6 women 17% or 1.6 million	1 in 16 men 6.1% or 548,000
Have experienced stalking since the age of 15	1 in 6 women 17% or 1.6 million	1 in 15 men 6.5% or 587,000

Domestic Violence and minority groups

Excerpts from the Domestic Violence Handbook for clergy and pastoral workers. First published by the Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Programme South Australian Council of Churches (Churches Together SA) 1995. Second edition published by Churches Together SA and Uniting Communities, 2010.

Gay, lesbian and bi-sexual relationships

Domestic violence occurs in same sex relationships.

What is different in Gay, Lesbian and Bi-Sexual relationships is the social context surrounding the relationship. In same sex relationships both partners experience discrimination, rejection and isolation from the mainstream community because of their sexual preference. This acts as a barrier to accessing support. They may also fear isolation from their own community if they end the relationship, or they may struggle to end a relationship that affirms their sexuality. One partner may use threats to 'out' the other partner to family, friends or work.

Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities are more at risk of experiencing domestic violence than other women and also more likely to experience sexual violence and to sustain injury. For these women, home can be a vulnerable environment in terms of physical, sexual and psychological violence, whether they reside in their own home, a boarding house or supported accommodation.

These women are vulnerable to violence and abuse from paid and unpaid carers and can have greater difficulty in accessing support services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are over-represented in domestic violence statistics and are at far greater risk of hospitalisation and death due to violence.

Many Aboriginal women experience violence combined with issues such as legacies of loss and grief, historic trauma, white privilege, discrimination,

poverty, alcohol, drugs, and physical isolation. Many have also found it difficult to break away from their families when violence affects their lives, due to cultural and traditional laws and beliefs. Leaving can result in alienation from the spiritual home and the family and can mean a lifetime of never belonging; it is literally "like dying".

When Aboriginal women approach mainstream services for support, they are often fearful that the services will not understand their circumstances or provide culturally appropriate support. Aboriginal women can also be reluctant to seek support from their own community where there are strong networks and a possible conflict of interest.

'Family violence' can be a preferred term to refer to violence in Aboriginal communities, as many Aboriginal people believe it suggests the need for a holistic understanding of violence.

Migrant women from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB)

For newly arrived women and women of non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) the effects of violence and abuse are made worse by the isolation of moving to a new country where they may have no family or support networks or do not know of any domestic violence support services. Migrant women and women from NESB can face barriers such as language and literacy difficulties, lack of knowledge of Australian laws, racist community attitudes, culturally inappropriate services, physical and cultural isolation if they leave a violent relationship, lack of financial help from the government and changes to immigration or residency status.



Pastoral Care

Responding to Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)

As a church we have a responsibility to begin a conversation in our communities as we work towards:

- Changing attitudes so that domestic or gender-based violence is never seen as acceptable in our churches.
- Ensuring our churches are safe places for vulnerable people.
- Greater awareness of the services available in our community to support and empower survivors, and to help perpetrators break the cycle of violence.
- Developing resources and training to equip our communities to speak, act, and work to end DFV.
- Fostering safe communities and healthy relationships.

When you are the first point of contact for a woman who is experiencing violence and abuse, it is important you create a safe, respectful and supportive environment for them to share their experience.

They may feel fear, shame, embarrassment, confusion and guilt when they tell you they are living with domestic violence and abuse. They may fear being judged, blamed or dismissed. You may need to be aware of smaller signs of DFV, as it is unlikely that you will be directly told of abuse.

They may refer to relationship problems, anger in intimate relationships, or present with questions or concerns related to forgiveness or commitment. If you notice these, ask direct questions: "How does he behave when he is angry?" "Do you become frightened?" "Are you worried about your safety or that of the children?" "Does this happen often?"

The Role of Ministry Agents and Clergy

Clergy and ministry agents may be the first point of contact for anyone who discloses DFV in your communities. It's important to recognise your role in the situation and acknowledge that you are not a social or front-line worker and so will need to refer the person on for professional help. Alongside this, you can support someone by offering a safe space to share their experience and appropriate pastoral care.

Below are some recommended steps you can take to help with the safety of anyone who discloses to you.

- Ensure the safety and empowerment of survivors.
- Believe the person and let them know abuse is never okay.
- Meet practical needs by offering safe housing, food and clothing and other necessities to those who experience violence and need to start over.
- Refer the person on to professionals.
- Offer to organise a 'warm referral' which means instead of giving the person the name and contact of a domestic violence service you contact the service after gaining permission from the survivor, offer to attend with them and follow up with the person to see if the service is helping.
- Educate yourself and find out who your local domestic family violence specialist is in your church and community.

You may experience a personal toll from engaging in this work. Give yourself space and time to process emotional reactions, with the aid of spiritual disciplines such as journaling and prayer. Debrief with someone you trust. Engage the support of professionals.

Asking the questions may be the beginning of a new life that is safe and free from violence and abuse for the woman and her children.

What to Do

Excerpts from the Domestic Violence Handbook for clergy and pastoral workers. First published by the Joint Churches Domestic Violence Prevention Programme South Australian Council of Churches (Churches Together SA) 1995. Second edition published by Churches Together SA and Uniting Communities, 2010.

A woman may approach you at very different stages of thinking and planning about their relationship. She may be weighing up the risks for the children and herself, and the implications for her partner when considering the situation and deciding whether to leave or remain. Conversations with women who have experienced violence require a range of responses, these are briefly outlined below.

Believe her! One of her fears is that she will not be believed, particularly when her partner is well respected. She is likely to be minimising what is happening rather than exaggerating and may not yet have the understanding that she is living with domestic violence. To believe her is to begin a process of empowering her. It is particularly important to take her assessment of the situation seriously and never minimise her experience. Her partner will usually have broken her confidence and self-esteem, and she may feel stupid or responsible for the abuse. Do not blame or judge her, as criticism is already a part of the abusive relationship, so do not contribute to it further.

Listen to her! That means be patient and allow her to share with you the pain that has probably been going on for many years. In listening find out what it is that she is asking of you. Validate her feelings and her responses and show compassion for her. Do not spiritualise the situation or the process. You can ask simple questions for clarification, but the less said the better.

Unequivocally challenge the violence. Domestic violence and abuse cannot be excused or justified. Assure the woman that she does not deserve the abuse, and that the violence is not her fault. "No one deserves to be abused", "I do not believe God wants you to live in fear." There is nothing she can do to stop his violence, nor is she responsible for his choice to use violence. She needs to know she can trust you, so reassure her that confidentiality will be maintained, but explain its limitations. Let her know she has your continuing support.

Confront the seriousness of the situation and raise her awareness about the abuse. "Are you afraid to go home tonight? I'm concerned for your safety". Encourage consideration for the wellbeing and safety of herself and her children as the first priority: "I'm afraid for the safety of your children". Emphasise that violence towards women usually gets worse and highlight the effects of domestic violence on children. When highlighting the effects on children do so in a way that will ensure that she does not feel blamed for the effects. While sharing your concerns, acknowledge her strength, resilience and wisdom.

Explore options. Be guided by what she wants, not by what you think she needs. She is the expert on her life as she is the only one who knows the full circumstances of her situation. You can demonstrate through your questions and responses that you not only believe that she is in a precarious position, but

that she has the strength, resourcefulness and ability to make her own decisions.

Have a conversation about safety planning and explore other possible options that would keep her and her children safe. Offer her information about domestic violence services and encourage or support her to access them if necessary.

Respect her decisions, whether she chooses to stay or leave the abusive relationship. She needs your support. She may surprise you and return to the relationship, and sometimes she will leave and return many times before making a complete break or before arranging a safe reconciliation. Offer your continuing support in whatever decision she makes.

Make appropriate referrals, depending on her needs and decisions. Make a referral on the woman's behalf (with her permission) if this is wanted. Options may include referral for individual counselling, a support group, shelter or other accommodation, legal and financial assistance or counselling and support for children. If she is considering marriage/relationship counselling, have a discussion with her about what evidence of change the man has demonstrated. Until he stops his use of violence and abuse, no other relationship issues can be addressed. Offer genuine ongoing support alongside an appropriate domestic violence service. Maintain contact in a way that does not place her at increased risk, see how she is going, and offer further information. Ensure you offer support, whether or not separation occurs.

What Not to Do

- Do not ask 'What did you do or say to provoke him?' The man cannot blame the woman for his use of violence.
- Do not suggest she try to be a better partner and not make him angry. Remember the issue is the man's choice to use violence and abuse.
- Do not ask 'Why do you stay?' Leaving a violent and abusive situation is dangerous and a very difficult decision to make, emotionally and practically.
- Do not advise the woman to return to a violent relationship. The safety of women and children must always take priority.
- Do not ask for proof of the violence. This is disempowering for the woman and she will likely feel that you do not believe her or support her.

- Do not attempt to mediate a couple or challenge the abusive partner. This can place you and the woman at serious risk.

Recognising DFV

Below is an outline of common patterns in DFV situations. It may help you identify where domestic violence is occurring. It also provides useful information to help people identify that they may be experiencing DFV, as violence can often emerge unanticipated later in a relationship and/or be subtle.

Early in the relationship all seems fine. He is attentive and charming.

As the relationship develops, he becomes more possessive, jealous, controlling.

Different forms of abuse may develop: physical, verbal, sexual, social, economic etc.

A physical and/or verbal incident of violence occurs. He believes it is deserved or appropriate and may not name it as abuse.

It happens again and again. It usually increases in severity and in frequency.

The woman realises that something is not right; however, she may believe she is responsible for her partner's happiness and wellbeing and that she is responsible for the family's stability. The man believes that she "provoked" the behaviour, or that something else is responsible for his behaviour, such as stress, financial pressures or alcohol.

She may consider telling someone, but this is difficult because he is charming to others. She doubts her judgement (he tells her she is crazy, too sensitive, etc.) and she has kept the secret so long that others might ask why she has not left him, or they might doubt her truthfulness.

She considers leaving him, but

- She believes he and the children should have a relationship so she may not want to split the family.
- People may not believe her or believe that the problem is as bad as she says.
- He apologises and says that he will never abuse her again.
- She may have no money and nowhere to go or fear loneliness and believe that she will not be able to cope on her own.

- She may believe he will not be able to manage on his own.
- She may still love him, or she may have made a marriage vow or commitment that she feels is binding, despite the violence and abuse.
- He may have threatened dire consequences if she leaves.
- She may be ostracised from her family, friends and community.

She tries harder to please him, not to provoke him, to make things the way he wants and to work out what she or the children could do differently.

The violence and abuse continues or escalates, in spite of her efforts.

When she has done everything possible, and the violence and abuse continues, **she might leave**. Or some other incident might bring home the seriousness of the situation and prompt her to leave (e.g., he hits the children, or the police are involved).

Once she leaves, she may experience

- Guilt from feeling that she has "failed" as a partner and mother.
- Fear of being alone.
- Humiliation from family and friends or her Church, who do not believe her or who blame her for the marriage/relationship breakup.

The man responds to her leaving by using various tactics to regain power and control, such as:

- Pursuing her, buying presents, promising holidays, promising that he has changed, or by subtle "buy-back" e.g., telling her he loves her, paying lots of attention and saying she looks nice.

And/or

- Getting angry about the fact that she is not there.
- Making the woman feel like his state of wellbeing is determined by her presence or absence. He may not eat, shower, sleep or go to work and may escalate claims of suicide if she does not return.
- Using the children to manipulate her into returning by telling her the children need them to be together as a family.
- Recruiting others to work with him/take sides with him.
- Becoming more violent and abusive.

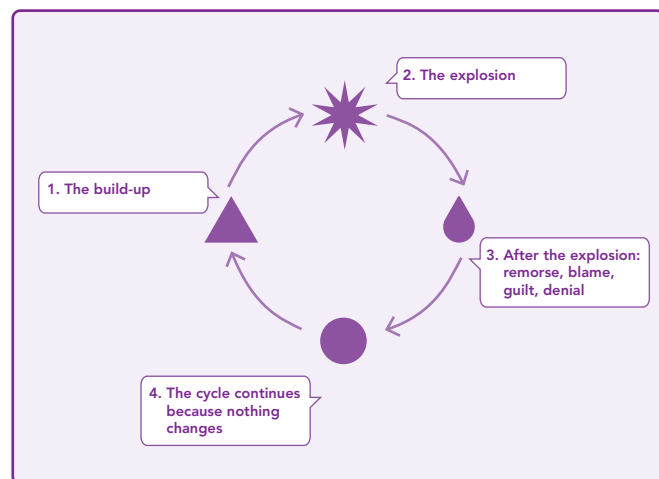
She wants to believe his promises. She is feeling pressure to go home. This may be due to finances, housing or isolation, or pressure from the children and possibly from other family members or her church.

If she does not go home, he may escalate his pursuit. He may threaten her or the children with bodily harm or death if they do not return, he may stalk her, watch her every move, he may visit and behave violently, he may threaten to destroy the house and belongings, he may phone up regularly to check on her. He may try to extend the time for property settlement, residency, custody and contact of children and make the separation as difficult as possible, financially, legally and psychologically.

At this point she may go home. If she does, friends and family may think it is all sorted out or criticize her for going back. The pattern starts again.

The cycle of violence

The experience of domestic violence and abuse can be thought of as occurring in a cycle of several phases. Not all situations follow this sequence; however, it is a useful way of understanding what is happening in a domestic violence situation.



1. Build up: The man's behaviour escalates from controlling and abusive to threatening and increasingly violent and abusive. This might happen over days or minutes. He may say he feels his partner provokes him. He may show the buildup outwardly by his moods or actions, or he may be winding himself up by his own way of thinking.

2. Explosion: This is the most dangerous time. The build-up of tension comes to a head and he "explodes". The explosion is usually intense.

It may take the form of a violent assault on his partner or children and it may involve the use of weapons. He may begin shouting, slamming doors, destroying objects or hurting family pets. Some men who use violence may claim that they have "lost control". Sometimes drinking is used to excuse or explain the behaviour, but the problem is his, and his beliefs about his rights to control the woman.

3. After the explosion: Although men who use violence behave in different ways after the explosion, three typical responses have been identified:

- » **Remorse:** The man may experience and express remorse, helplessness and guilt. He may believe, and try to persuade his partner, that it will not happen again. He may make promises, buy gifts, fix things that he has damaged, and do a whole range of things to try to "make up". He generally does not take responsibility for his actions. He often does these things to alleviate his guilt and feel better about himself.
- » **Blame:** The man who uses violence and abuse often blames his partner, saying she provoked the abuse because the children were troublesome, or finances are bad. He says that the abuse would not have happened if
 - › She had been a better partner or mother.
 - › She had not nagged him.
 - › The children had been better behaved.
 - › He was not under so much financial or work pressure.
- » **Denial:** Some men will deny that the abuse ever happened. Most will probably deny
 - › Responsibility for the abuse ("she imagined it").
 - › How serious the abuse was ("it was only a push").
 - › How often the abuse occurred.
 - › How much he hurt his partner and children.
 - › That he had any control over his actions ("I just snapped").

4. The cycle continues because nothing changes

There may be a period where things appear calm and appear as though things have improved. The woman needs to be aware that actually nothing has changed,

and promises are not followed up by plans and actions to ensure that the man deals with the problem of his violence. The man is responsible for his violence and abuse no matter what he may feel.

For some women, the abuse goes on all the time and there is no identifiable cycle. The woman may not constantly be subjected to abuse; however, she continues to live with the effects of the abuse, and its potential is ever present.

If you suspect there is domestic violence, do not be afraid to ask direct questions in a caring manner such as "How does he behave when he is angry?" "Do you become frightened?" "Are you worried about your safety or that of the children?" "Does this happen often?"

It is also important that you familiarise yourself with local support services and the police.

Responding to Disclosure

If someone has disclosed an incident to you, take the following steps:

Listen to the person disclosing the violence. Believe them. Affirm that abuse is never acceptable. Do not blame the survivor or ask what they have done to contribute to the violence.

Assess the current risk for the survivor and any children. Ask the survivor what they are doing to stay safe and how you can support this.

Be sure to empower the survivor. Ask what support they want or need. Do not make decisions for them, affirm that they are the person best placed to decide a path forward, and then respect the decisions they make.

Decrease isolation. Assure them they are not alone. Support the survivor even if they decide to return to the home or an abusive situation. Let them know they have your continuing support.

Provide referrals to local or other support services and support them to access them.

After disclosure

Offer ongoing support, not counselling. We strongly recommend that you do not enter into a counselling relationship with either the survivor or the perpetrator. Refer them to trained counsellors who specialise in domestic violence. We also strongly recommend that you do not refer perpetrators to anger management

programs – these have been shown to sometimes increase the skills of a perpetrator in using more subtle forms of control over the survivor rather than decrease domestic violence. Instead speak to specialist services in your area to find if there is an approved perpetrator program.

Seek to ensure that the church continues to be a safe space for the survivor. Often the perpetrator and survivor will both attend your church. In situations where there is evidence of abuse and reconciliation is not currently deemed possible, we recommend that the survivor is not the one that has to leave the church and the support that is available there. If the perpetrator wants to continue in a faith community, we recommend working with the perpetrator and the Association to seek a resolution to how this can occur safely.

Help survivors find help. Call the Domestic Violence Line for help on 1800 656 463.

Help perpetrators find help. Call the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491, an anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referral service to help men stop using violent and controlling behaviour.

Pastoral Care

Apply these principles for women experiencing domestic violence.

Women who have been disempowered are suffering from grief, trauma, a major loss of self-love and a difficulty in relating to the world.

The key tasks of a pastoral carer (or minister) are addressed in the following questions:

- How can I empower this woman?
- How can I assist this woman to journey towards healing?

It is important to address these two questions in every dimension of the pastoral session.

It is important for the pastoral carer (or minister)

- To provide a safe environment, a centre of hospitality, in which the woman is free to share her story in whatever way she chooses to disclose or not to disclose aspects of her experience.
- To be empathetic, compassionate (i.e. sharing pain with) and nonjudgmental.

PASTORAL CARE

- To remember that the woman will not only have difficulty sharing her story with them but also in articulating it aloud to herself.
- After listening intently to the story, to assist the woman to embrace her strengths, including the ability to survive and often an ability to hope for a better life.
- To assist this woman, understand abuse from the perspective of losses to personhood (which are enormous) and the many ways this abuse has damaged her ability to relate to the world.
- To share insights from her story and grief literature that assists her to expand her understanding of grief. It is particularly important to help her to begin to discern the difference between love (the nurturing of a person) and control (taking away a person's autonomy and integrity), love and violence, as well as love (building up self-worth) and intimidation (destruction of self-worth). It is vitally important to help the woman realise that she is not responsible for her partner's behaviour.
- To find ways together for her to strengthen her damaged personhood and explore ways to reengage with the world.
- To assist the woman with ways of providing safety for her children. Note: sometimes the partner through fear and intimidation has turned the children against her, which is a further painful and complicated grief.
- To confront injustice (noting that abuse is physical, psychological, sexual, social, economic, legal, spiritual dimensions and a misuse of male power).
- To assist her in understanding that domestic violence is not simply an individual issue or a relational issue but also a social, national and world issue.
- To assist her to slowly journey through her grief and trauma towards healing by sharing encouragement, empathy, hope and wisdom.
- To remember once again that every dimension of the pastoral session should seek to empower this woman traumatised by domestic violence to journey towards healing and wholeness.
- To decide honestly when to refer the woman to skilled practitioners in this specialized area of counselling women traumatised by domestic violence.
- Women can receive help by phoning Domestic Violence Crisis Service on 1300 782 200 and they can then be directed to the correct state for help. This service can arrange emergency accommodation as well as referrals for outreach support services. They have the contact details for all the nation-wide services so can refer women/workers to their appropriate local service. Providing options is another way of empowering women traumatised by domestic violence.



Worship

WORSHIP

Faith communities play an important role in supporting women who experience domestic violence and abuse. For many women, their trust in God and the support they receive from their faith community is integral to their healing. The faith community and its leadership can support women and children by prioritising women over men to remain in the church if a domestic violence restraining order is in place. Similarly, women should feel safe to remain in the congregation and be clear that they are supported by the faith community to do so.

Prayers by women from across the nation

We have collated prayers from women across the Uniting Church as they joined the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence campaign. We have included them here as a resource for you to use in your worship services and small groups.

Dr Deidre Palmer

Gracious and compassionate God,

Be with all those who are living in situations of violence and abuse.

Be with those whose homes are not safe places, who live in fear and pain.

May they find spaces of shelter and support, that offer healing, safety, and strength.

We give you thanks for all those agencies, workers, congregations, friends and family, who walk alongside women and children who experience violence. Sustain them in your hope and guide them with your wisdom.

Give us strength and courage as your Church to create relationships and communities of mutuality, respect and equality, where children and women can flourish, and all of us can grow into our fullest humanity.

In the name of Christ, our Liberator

Amen



Susitina Suli

Loving and Merciful God

We marvel at the way your unending love moves through and through your people. You continuously teach us and show us how to be pillars of light and hope to all generations. You teach us to speak words of love. You show us to live in a harmony way, the way of Jesus.

We pray for deep courage so that we can move and bring to light your truth in people. We pray for a loving heart, so that we can stand in solidarity with all those who face and experience gender-based violence. We pray for a bold voice so that we can speak into those spaces and bring awareness and raise ongoing support for those that face gender-based violence. Whether it is in the workplace, in public, in families or in church we ask that you help us to put our words into action.

Lead us in our local communities so that we can make a stand once and for all against gender based violence. Lead us as a wider church to be a voice for those constantly live in fear, agitation, pain and discomfort. Lead us as a nation so that we can help the emerging generations understand and comprehend that gender based violence is not okay. Lead us as your people to help those experiencing gender based violence not just one day of the week, but for the rest of our lives. For It is our duty as your children to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

Help us Lord to be a voice. Help us Lord to be love.

In Jesus name, Amen.



Rhaneé Tsetsakos

Dear Arrawatanha,

This prayer is for your beautifully created *Yurartu* (Aboriginal Woman) and *Yudnynartu* (Non-Aboriginal Woman) of the world, which includes all the *Adnyani* (Grandmother), *Ngami* (Mother), *Ngarlami* (Big Mother), *Wadnami* (Little Mother), *Yaka* (Big Sister), and *Yakati* (Children).

Our prayer is that you keep them protected from violence and harm that they may experience at the hands of others.

We pray that if they are experiencing violence and harm from people who are meant to love, care and protect them, that you will place people around them that will be supportive and stand up, speak out and advocate for them and their safety when they do not have the resources, tools or strength to keep themselves safe.

We pray that the people who you have placed around them for support are also supported in a way that keeps them safe from violence and harm, and that they are adequately resourced and funded to provide culturally appropriate services that ensure the safety of these women and their children as a high priority.

We pray that violence against women comes to an end and that our communities are resourced to be better educated in the prevention of violence against women and the harmful effects that it has on the family unit as a whole. We want our children to be raised on strong healthy homes where they can experience love, kindness and respect towards one another so that we create a culture of a non-violent mindset in our future generations.

We pray that churches around Australia can continue to stand up and speak out about these such injustices, and that they can be more present in the lives of the most vulnerable people in our communities who often live on the fringes of society where there is little resources, education, support and services. May the members of the Church be the light and love that this world needs to help in eradicating violence and harm against women once and for all.

We pray that churches around Australia can continue to stand up and speak out about these such injustices, and that they can be more present in the lives of the most vulnerable people in our communities who often live on the fringes of society where there is little resources, education, support and services. May the members of the Church be the light and love that this world needs to help in eradicating violence and harm against women once and for all.

We also pray for the people who act out these violent and harmful behaviours, that they may remember that they too are part of the greater human family who need love, care and kindness in their lives. May we remember that they too may be part of the people living out on the fringes of society who are most vulnerable. May we be reminded that they too may have experienced violent and harmful behaviours towards them that have damaged their physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual selves, and that they may need our help in restoring them back to a fuller life filled with love, care and respect for themselves and others.

We give all these things to Arrawatanha our Great Creator, and we ask that these prayers may be received and dealt with accordingly in the right time.



Grace Yeon Sil Song

As I prepared my heart for prayer, I remembered this: Only three generations before, my grandmother's young contemporaries in Japanese-occupied Korea, were forcibly trafficked for the purpose of forced labour or sexual slavery during the Asia-Pacific War. Because of their gender as female, no matter how old they were and what lives they lived, a huge number of young Korean women were traded illegally. A few survivors were able to come home after war, whereas many of them died or disappeared during the war. I, as a Korean migrant woman and mother of a daughter in Australia, would say it was gender-based violence in our history.

Unfortunately, the world didn't learn from the last lesson. There are still many cases of violence, especially at a domestic level and during the pandemic, because of gender. I, with my contemporaries in our society, might be a target of this kind of violence. I wonder how long we could fight against this kind of violence and where God's call upon us as Church to speak up would be. I may invite all of you who commit this moment to pray to reflect on where Jesus would sit. I believe that Jesus would sit right next to those victims who sob silently and hide the scars on soul, spirit and body.

Let us pray:

Revealing and hiding God,

We offer the prayers to You as our action towards the world to stand up with and speak out for all victims of gender-based violence everywhere.

We are sorry, however, that our prayers did not bring to life but were superficial in our words. We didn't know how victims suffered but we pretended to understand their circumstances. We repent.

We give you thanks for those who support and provide space for victims or survivors of violence to heal their wounds. The supporters may offer Your eye to protect them, Your ear to hear their cries and stories and Your hand to touch their wounds and spirits. Lord, please work with and through them revealing your saving grace, life giving mercy, and recreating justice to them.

We pray that You call upon us, Uniting Church in Australia, to speak and act against any form of gender-based violence. All genders are created in Your image so all are precious. So we pray we are the Church who seeks and follows Your will with victims and communities affected by violence. Lord, continue to call us to be your people who walk miles with the victims.

Lord, You have called us to weep with those who weep. Please give us strength and wisdom if we are in position of living with those weeping. Let us be your instruments to comfort them. We believe that the prayers we offer this moment will make a difference in the future for my daughter and her contemporaries.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



Olivia Freeman

Lord,

I pray for those who are affected by domestic violence. Protect those who are hurting and suffering. Protect those who feel like they can't get out. Keep them safe. Show them how real love looks and feels. Protect any children that are in these situations too. Show them what safe feels like.

Lord, I pray for the offenders too. I pray that you show them that what they're doing is wrong. Help them to change their ways and to ask for help.

I thank you, Lord that you can do these things.



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Nicole Mugford

Protector God,

I pray for those people who feel voiceless in their situation.

For those who cry out in the dark and stillness of the night.

For those who try to cover their scars and mask their pain.

Lord, hear their cries.

God of Justice,

I pray for those who respond and support victims and survivors of violence.

I pray for funding and an abundance of support for these critical services.

I pray that where there is a need, there will be support.

Lord, bring an abundance.

Loving God,

I pray for those who feel broken and worthless because of the violence they have experienced.

For those who struggle to know and receive love in this world.

I pray for those who offer love and care to someone after a situation of violence – that they can love generously and carefully.

Lord, show your unconditional love.

God of all people,

I pray for people of all cultures, faiths, genders and ages who experience Domestic and Family Violence.

I pray that all people experience the inclusion and connection of your love in a world often divided.

I pray for relationships, friendship and humanity that crosses these boundaries for genuine inclusion.

Lord, join us together in community.

Amen



Joy Han

O God of mercy,

Thank you for Christ in whom all things and ALL people are created.

We especially offer up to you the cries of victims of gender-based violence.

We will not forget them and their pain and their communities' grief—our grief.

Grant us the vision to recognise Domestic and Family Violence where shame and silence, as well as changing circumstances during the pandemic may have blinded us to it.

Continue to train and empower us as transformative communities of advocacy and healing for victims and survivors of gender-based violence.

Your kingdom come: we recommit ourselves to proclaiming, in both word and action, a world without rape and violence.

May your Spirit continue to lead us in compassion and courage to bring change throughout our communities: through frontline intervention against Domestic and Family Violence; in our worship and teaching of Scripture; and in our everyday speech and interactions.

In Jesus' name

Amen



Virginia Lavaki

Father God, before we even open our mouths you already know what is in our hearts. We come before you to pray for women and girls who have experienced violence or are going through it right now. Father God we ask that you wrap your arms around them and let them know that you are with them. Let them know that you love and care for them. Bless these women and girls with the strength, the courage and the hope to keep on pushing forward, even when they want to give up. We uplift these courageous and brave women and girls into your hands for comfort, peace and love.

We also pray for your Church Lord, that may we stand firm and speak up on this very sad topic. May we as a Church community and family stand together and be the voice that these women and girls need. Bless us your Church with the courage and the confidence to speak up when needed, but to also show love and support to all victims affected by domestic violence. May our actions be just as strong and loud as our words.

Father God, we also pray for the predators. This may be a true test of our faith by praying for those who hurt others around us God, but we just really uplift these people into your mighty hands. We pray that your light will shine upon them and give them a clear mind to help them change their ways.

Lord hear our humble cries to you!

In your loving and wonderful name we pray, Amen.



Ayla Williams

Violation comes in many variations

It's a fast or slow destruction of the inner workings of your foundation

Time has no place in this condemnation,

Leading to internal starvation and serious isolation

To some, a mere accusation, reduced to a simple altercation, an act of defamation or degradation?

What were you trying to accomplish?

Was this some kind of sick demonstration?

A declaration?

A fascination?

Fuelled by an underlying motivation?

And then the separation

Following by the decimation of my reputation

I was seeking desperately for some kind of salvation

Any slither of validation

You just bought the storm in the way of abomination

The war you were fighting was fought with brutalisation

Me, collateral damage, now awaiting cross-examination

But then came the transformation

You hold no weight on my self-evaluation

You aren't above me with your intimidation or manipulation

Liberation is what is at my core

And incarceration is what I will keep fighting for.



Amy Jerome

Gracious and Ever-Loving God,

You are an Almighty Creator! You create men and women in your own image to the purpose, that you are a God who loves people more than anything. We give thanks for your gift of strength, hope and life in these difficult times. We especially give thanks for the eternal gift of your Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have great health and salvation.

Lord, we open our hearts unto you upholding all beloved women and girls who experience violence in many ways. For those who suffer in silence and alone but feel weak and powerless.

We uphold all who are supporting victims or survivors of Domestic and Family Violence. Open unto us your loving hands to provide funding, comfort and peace, enabling all opportunities for the services that support and help these strong women see the light at the end of the tunnel.

Grant us the courage to stand up against all forms of violence happening to women, happening in families, happening all around the globe today. Enlighten us to love without limits, just as you have loved us more than anything.

All this we uplift and pray throughout this '16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence,' Amen



Brina Ata

Gracious God, we come and stand together with our sisters who are experiencing violence worldwide.

We ask to protect victims and bring them to safety.

We ask you Lord to free the women and girls living with abuse physically, mentally, or spiritually, from their oppression, so that they may come to a life full of Your love and light.

Lord please strengthen victims and may we provide a platform for them to speak up about domestic family violence without feeling judged or ashamed. Give them courage to speak up.

Take away the toxic cultural mindset that stop victims from leaving their oppression.

Lord have your way in them, guide them to feel respected, confident, and valued.

May these victims be reminded that no weapon formed against them shall prosper, because through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ we are free. We continue to pray for victims who have not spoken up or who are still struggling.

God bind your holy spirit in everyone of them to know that you are by their side in every situation!

In Jesus name. Amen.



Dr Joanna Palmer

God of light and life,

We are living through a time of pandemic

And at the same time, we are seeing rising rates of Domestic and Family Violence

This has become known as the shadow pandemic

May your light shine into all the dark places, where power and control seek to entrap and diminish women and children

May you be with those who suffer, and give them strength in their survivorship

Jesus was inclusive and wanted all to have abundant life - may this be so for all women and children, as we seek to end gender-based violence in our communities

In Christ, our light we pray,

Amen



Hannah Walker

Dear Lord,

I pray that you open our ears, our eyes and our hearts to be more aware, outreaching and supportive to woman and girls in abusive situations, so that they won't feel alone and know that someone cares. Help us love them as you have loved us. Lord please touch the hearts of those who abuse others. Heal their thinking, so that they may turn to you and seek your ways. Help them to know that every human being is a treasure to you. Help them to know that you are a forgiving God and can lead them on a path to new life. Help us Lord to be strong stewards of all you have entrusted to us. Give us the courage and your strength to stand against violence inflicted upon your precious people. Thank you Lord that you never leave us nor forsake us and that your grace is sufficient for us all. I uplift this prayer unto you in Jesus name! Amen.



Steph Teh

Gracious Father,

We thank you for all the women and children in this world you have beautifully created. We thank you for all the goodness they bring to those around them and the light they reflect that shines into the darkness of this world.

Please be with all of the women who have lives surrounded by violence and abuse, especially in this time when some have limited choices. Be with them in their pain, heartache and fear. May you heal them and provide your peace. May they find Your strength that sustains them.

We pray that you would bring boundless resources to support agencies, families, friends, social workers and churches to be with these women and provide what they need.

We pray for a change in the culture that excuses and downplays violence against women and children throughout this world. To change education and implement early interventions. We pray that any one of us would have the courage to speak out against these acts, to be a voice of change, build relationships of trust, respect and equality, and be a light to those that experience darkness everyday.

In Jesus' name,

Amen



Rev Charissa Suli

Gracious and Loving God

We are reminded of the words of your son Jesus who says to us all, "come to me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

It can be difficult for us humans to find rest in times of uncertainty, abuse, pain and violence. We often do not know who to turn too for comfort, hope and healing.

But you oh God continue to shine your light of love to show us the way to live a life abundantly in your love.

We pray for all victims of Domestic and Family Violence who despite their suffering from violence, continue to care for family and to offer support to others.

Bring healing upon those who feel unworthy or inferior and may they come to know your abundant love that surrounds them.

We pray that your light of love, justice and healing is poured out on our society so that we can speak out in your truth bringing justice to those who have become voiceless and are afraid to seek help.

May you knit our hearts and our actions together across our global Church so that we may all work towards making our homes and Church, safe and loving spaces where all people can flourish and live life abundantly.

Thank you for hearing the prayers of your people during our 16 Days campaign and ask that you continue to lead us forward in your truth and love in Jesus name we pray, Amen.



Beyond Violence Liturgy

Written and prepared by Dr Deidre Palmer and Rev Charissa Suli

For use in Worship and small groups

A short liturgy expressing the UCA's commitment to saying no to all forms Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). It can be used in worship, as a personal devotion, or as part of a group study. We acknowledge the sensitivities related to DFV and invite the worship leader to be aware of the sensitivities that are present for your context and to use what is helpful for you in your context of worship. You will need: a candle, a jug filled with water and a bowl.

Introduction and Acknowledgment of Country

In light of Jesus' message of non-violence, liberation and inclusion, the Uniting Church is committed to living and shaping relationships of equality, mutuality, respect and dignity for all people.

In our gathering we acknowledge the sovereign First Peoples of these lands and waters where we meet, the _____ Nation (of the _____ peoples). We pay our respects to their elders past and present and to all descendants of this/these nations who have cared for this place since time immemorial. We also honour all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples here today.

Call to Worship

Come to God

Who in Christ welcomes all;

Bring to God

All you are and long to be;

Entrust to God

Your burdens, hopes and fears.

*From the Methodist Church in the UK, Service for Women Against Violence
Sunday*

Lighting the Candle

Jesus said, I am the light of the world; those who follow me will not walk-in darkness but will have the light of life.

We light this candle as a symbol of Christ's light who is with us. We call upon Jesus to shine his light and banish our fear as we work towards being the light of Christ to all people who experience seasons of darkness and despair.

Light the candle

Prayer of Confession

O God, you know our hearts, our minds, our feelings and thoughts. You know the heavy stones that weigh down our spirits. We cry for all those who are survivors of Domestic and Family Violence. Comfort us as we mourn the loss of lives to violence. Strengthen us as we break the silence, confront evil and cry out for justice. Set us

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free to walk in the fullness of life that is promised to all people. Let us live into that promise with every moment of our lives. Amen.

Adapted from: From Striking Terror No More, The Church Responds to Domestic Violence by Beth Basham and Sarah Lisherness ed. pg 92.

Readings

Amos 5:21-24, Luke 13:10-17 OR Luke 24: 13-35 OR John 10:10b, Galatians 3: 26-29 (NRSV)

Reflection

You may like to use the sermon called "Break the Silence" written by Dr Deidre Palmer for use in your worship services.

Bible Reading: Luke 24: 13-35

As I reflected on the message to share with you on "Beyond Violence", at the forefront of my mind and heart are those women and children who are not safe in their own homes, or in their communities. Many of them are our neighbours, a friend, a classmate, a work colleague, a member of our church, or a member of our extended family.

People in our communities, who are living with fear, uncertainty and walking on eggshells, with a controlling and violent partner, or an abusive parent.

During this global pandemic, we have been hearing of an increase in calls to Domestic and Family Violence helplines across the globe from women who are more isolated than ever, and whose social supports and safety plans are in jeopardy.

The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres has "...urged all governments to put women's safety first as they respond to the pandemic."

As the isolation has continued, we have also heard reports that some domestic violence support services are not receiving as many calls. The disturbing concerns around this development is that women and children are now isolated at home with their violent abusers and are not able to phone or contact support people, because of the control the perpetrator has over what they are doing.

This is a time of uncertainty, confusion and fear for many of us.

An important message that we are hearing from our political, health and faith leaders, is that in response to the COVID19 pandemic, we need to work at supporting each other.

Being part of community, being connected is important for our flourishing as human beings.

In Adelaide, late last year, a 35-year-old woman was murdered. The police arrested and charged her ex-partner. Sadly, some of the witnesses interviewed by police had heard a disturbance on the night before, and a woman crying for help, but the police were not contacted.

The police officer, who reported to the media and public noted that it was a sad reflection on society, that people would hear a cry for help and not call police. "I am at a complete loss as to why somebody would not go to the aid of a woman crying for help."

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As we face this global pandemic crisis together, we are called to speak up about those who are victims and survivors of domestic violence. We are called to open our ears and hearts, when women and children speak up. We are called to listen and to hear them.

Our Gospel reading today is from the Gospel of Luke.

In this story of Jesus from Luke's Gospel, two disciples are walking on the road to the village of Emmaus. It is on the evening of the day when Jesus had risen. These disciples are afraid and confused. They are talking intently. Jesus walks alongside them and asks them a simple question: "What are you discussing with each other as you walk along?"

He listens to their story. It is a story of hope: "Jesus of Nazareth, was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people".

It is a story of violence and distress: "our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him".

It is a story of sadness and disappointed hope: "But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel".

It is a story of astonishment and what seemed an impossible hope: "Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive".

Jesus comes alongside the disciples in their fear and confusion and brings a message that indicates perhaps this impossible hope, is not so impossible after all!

In our sadness and confusion, in our distress and isolation, the risen Christ comes alongside and reminds us of who and whose we are.

We are beloved children of God – created in God's image, of infinite value.

Jesus comes alongside us and listens to our grief, our hopes and dreams, and reminds us of God's transforming love and liberation.

There are many ways in which the Spirit of Christ continues to journey with us, opening our eyes and hearts and transforming our lives and the lives of the people around us.

As we follow in the way of Christ, as Jesus journeys with us, we are called to walk alongside others, offering hope and compassion.

Compassion is "to notice the suffering of another and to take action to alleviate that suffering."

We are invited to join others across the world, in Australia and in our neighbourhoods, and notice the suffering of those who are experiencing Domestic and Family Violence. We are called to see others through the lens of God's love and liberation and be agents of that love and liberation ourselves.

*Samantha Power worked for President Barack Obama advising on human rights policy and served as the US Ambassador to the United Nations. In her Pulitzer Prize winning book: **A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide**. Power reflects on the situations of genocide around the world, including Armenia, Sarajevo, and Rwanda. In this study of genocide, she coined the word "upstander". She describes those who try to prevent genocide or stand up against the 'genocide' as "upstanders" – contrasting them with "bystanders".*

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While she notes that many of us will not be victims or perpetrators of genocide, there are small ways in which we can choose to be “upstanders”, rather than “bystanders”.

*“But every day, almost all of us find ourselves weighing whether we can or should do something to help others. We decide, on issues large and small, whether we will be bystanders or upstanders.” (Samantha Power, *The Education of an Idealist*, William Collins publishers, 2019, p.132)*

Now, more than ever, is an important time for us to be “upstanders” actively engaged in supporting the most vulnerable in our communities.

Now, more than ever, we are called to attend to our neighbours, friends, and family members.

I encourage you as members of the Uniting Church, to stay connected with your neighbours, your friends, family and people in your communities.

Please continue to reach out and support people who are at risk during times of isolation.

We are called to listen, to hear, and believe the cries of those who are in situations of Domestic and Family Violence.

As the people of God, embodying God’s compassion and liberation, we are called to shape environments, personal relationships and communities that are safe havens, where there is mutual respect, care and nonviolence. Environments where people are able to flourish.

As Christians, we have a narrative of hope to which we witness, of a God who loves us infinitely and desires us to be in loving, life-giving relationships with others. We have a responsibility, as followers of Jesus, to be bearers of this hope.

Our teaching and preaching, the ideas we uphold about God, relationships and ourselves, can contribute to our understanding of equality and partnership between women and men, and to a healthy sense of mutual, respectful relationships.

During my lifetime, I have had the privilege to hear women’s narratives from around the world. They are often narratives of hope, of women exercising their gifts, of being invited into their fullest humanity, contributing to the wellbeing of church and wider communities. I have also heard narratives of harm, from women whose sense of identity and giftedness have been undermined by those who have sought to diminish the voices of women and girls and limited their opportunities. I am deeply saddened when the diminishing of these women’s voices has been through an interpretation of Scripture that has sought to justify this as God’s intention for them.

When we promote or support Biblical interpretations and theological understandings that contribute to the inequality of women, to their submission, their subservience, it leaves the door open for the abuse of women and children.

The Uniting Church is among a significant number of Christian communities and churches, whose theology and Biblical understanding affirms that all people are created in the image of God, all are called to express their gifts and are invited into human relationships that are equal, mutual, respectful life-giving partnerships. We are part of global and local movements promoting the equality of all people.

I urge you to listen to the cries of those who are in situations of Domestic and Family Violence, and I urge you to break the silence with narratives of hope, of the inclusive, liberating love of Christ.

Or

If not using a sermon you may like to have a small group discussion beginning with the following affirmation.

Use this Affirmation for Women Survivors to Trust Again

As I learn to trust again, there is so much to learn.

God, I'm learning to trust myself. What a surprise, that there is so much inside of me to learn to trust. I'm learning to listen to me inside, to pay attention, to really hear.

I'm learning about my own wisdom, that I do know what is at the heart of me, what I want, what I feel, what I need.

God, I'm learning to trust other people. There are people in this world who do what they say they will do. I'm learning to sort through people. I'm learning the difference between those who have hurt me and those who have not. I'm learning, gingerly, carefully, to put my weight down fully on that which can hold me up.

God, I'm learning to trust you. I'm learning to put into words things I have been afraid to tell you. I'm learning that your steadfast love endures forever, that you will not abandon me, that you do not lie to me. I'm learning that you do not hurt me, call me stupid, run out of patience, forget to do what you said you would, change your mind, change the rules.

God, I'm learning to trust the truth. I'm learning its power, its freedom.

I'm learning that I can speak truth, believe truth, believe me. Amen.

Catherine J. Foote, Survivor Prayers Westminster/John Knox Press

Question for small group discussion:

What does the God whom we know in Jesus call upon us, as a church, to do, to eliminate DFV?

Ritual Action

After the sermon or small group discussion, a ritual action provides an opportunity for a quiet space and meditation

In the Bible, water is used for cleansing and is spoken of as living water that springs up into eternal life. Water also represents life, refreshment, fertility and birth. In this space we acknowledge the hurt and distress of families and individuals who have experienced any form of violence. We take the time now to name the grief and pain as we seek Gods peace, reconciliation, justice and healing.

Quiet time of meditation

Water is poured into a bowl as an act of acknowledging survivors and any person who has experienced DFV.

Let us pray

Lord you hear the prayers of your people as they are prayed to you silently in their hearts. We acknowledge the grief and pain of those who have experienced any form of Domestic and Family Violence. We seek your peace, reconciliation, justice and healing as we work together to bring voice to the voiceless and raise the awareness of Domestic and Family Violence, so that we continue to create safe places of worship and build healthy and life-giving relationships in our homes and in our

communities. May the symbol of water poured out today empower us to continue in this work of advocacy to bring justice and healing to all survivors by God's strength and wisdom leading us forward, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Or

Prayer

God with us, we have gathered with a sense of the sacredness of this space, aware of your presence flowing from one person to another. We come with our wounds wide open, with our defenses down, wearing our personal needs like placards, calling to you as did so many who approached Jesus, saying "Heal me, help me, touch me! "We work hard at being happy, at coping, at surviving, at holding on, but we have come here hoping to let go and to open ourselves to Christ's healing flow. Touch our lives, our God, as we worship here today, and cast your sunlight through our tears till rainbows rise, and plant dreams where wounds leave scars like furrows in broken ground, rekindling our hope, reviving our strength, refreshing our faith.

Amen.

*Ruth Duck, **Touch Holiness**, The Pilgrim Press*

You may like to invite people to come forward in a COVID-safe way and touch the water and put the sign of the cross on their forehead or hand. You may also consider playing some soft music in the background.

Prayers for DFV survivors and their families, friends and communities

We invite church members to join in praying for anyone who has been, or continues to be, subjected to or affected by DFV. We pray that as a church we create safe, respectful and supportive environments so that women, men and children experiencing domestic violence feel safe to seek help.

Gracious and compassionate God,

We give thanks for the way you encounter us – bringing hope in the midst of despair and comfort and strength, when we are at our most vulnerable.

Be with all those who are living in situations of violence and abuse.

Be with all those whose homes are not safe places, who live in fear and pain.

May they find spaces of shelter and support, that offer healing, safety and strength.

We give you thanks for all those agencies, workers, congregations, friends and family, who walk alongside women and children who experience violence. Sustain them in hope and guide them with your wisdom.

Open our eyes and give us wisdom, to see where we can bring your healing and hope, safety and liberation in our families, neighbourhoods, churches and communities.

Through Christ, our Hope and Light we pray, Amen.

And/Or

Great God we give you thanks that you call us out of silence to name hidden and domestic violence. Today we pray for all those women who despite suffering from violence, continue to care for family and children, to grow and prepare food, carry water, earn a living and offer support to others.

WORSHIP

We pray for women who are trafficked as domestic or sex workers; for women who are raped and do not know how to find words to name their pain or a way into the future. We pray for transformation of our societies which often find it easier to judge the victims of violence than to solve the problems of injustice.

We pray that women's voices may be heard and taken into account in all peace and reconciliation work. We pray for a transformation in the violent way many men act towards and think about women.

We pray for right and just relations between women and men that together we may transform and overcome violence in all its forms and learn to celebrate our diversity and interdependence. We look forward to the age of peace, when violence is banished, both women and men are able to love and to be loved, and the work and wealth of our world is justly shared.

Jane Stranz for the World Council of Churches

What can I do?

Remind your community of the following DFV support services that are available:

1800 RESPECT National Helpline: 1800 737 732

Lifeline (24-hour crisis line): 131 114

Women's Crisis Line: 1800 811 811

Men's Referral Service: 1300 766 491

Emergency: 000

Call on your group to remember the following ways they can understand and respond to domestic violence:

CHECK IN. Check in with anyone you know, or suspect has experienced DFV and see how they are doing but do it sensitively and carefully. Make sure it's a safe space for the survivor whilst checking in with them.

LISTEN. Be open to learning from others who have more expertise and experience before you speak, think: have you really listened?

SPEAK OUT. Join the conversation and use your voice to speak out against DFV. We all have role to play in ending violence.

ACT. Give your time to an organisation or group that works to prevent and address gender-based violence. Raise the awareness in your local church community and where to get help.

Blessing and Benediction

Let us pray:

We are the Church:

And we choose life

Overflowing and abundant,

In all its variations of light and shade.

We are called to work for justice:

Set our feet on the journey of justice-making

Ready to walk the road when action against injustice is required.

WORSHIP

We are called to compassion:

Open our arms to embrace the suffering world

And to stand with those in need.

We are called to be bringers of hope and joy:

Give us the courageous voices of prophets and visionaries

With the imagination to dream of what might be

Not settle for what is.

We are called to love the world:

Audaciously, boldly, overtly, publicly –

So much so that it truly makes a difference.

Come Holy Spirit, flow in and around us,

Through and throughout us,

Overflow and flood

Into every nook and cranny of our lives.

Come Holy Spirit, Light a burning desire within us

To be the Church at its best. Amen.

Worship Resource Life Overflowing 13th Triennial Assembly

May God the Source of Life, renew and heal us,

May Christ our Liberator, lead us into life abundant,

May the Holy Spirit, bless us with courage to be bearers of God's compassion
and hope in our world, Amen.

Or

May the God of Eve teach you to dance. May the God of Hagar bring you comfort in the desert. May the God of Miriam bring companions to you when you struggle. May the God of Deborah teach you courage for your battles. May the Christ who knew Mary and Martha show you the way of balance. May the Christ who healed the bent-over woman heal your pain. May the Christ of Mary Magdala send you out to proclaim your story. In the name of Christ who is the memory, hope and authority of the future.

Jane Stranz for the World Council of Churches



Take Action

TAKE ACTION

There are many ways we can take action as a Church to respond to Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). We have a responsibility to raise awareness, create safe spaces, provide people with emotional, spiritual and physical support, pray around this issue, and advocate in our local community.

The Church can also raise awareness about DFV through prayerful collaboration and education. Here are a number of ways to become involved:

1. Download the "UCA Says No to Violence" Poster.

Place a "Say NO to DFV" Poster in a prominent place where you gather with your congregation, agency, school or small group. Write in the contact person so that members of your group will know who they can contact in your organisation if they need to speak to someone about DFV.

You can download the poster from the Uniting Church Assembly website uniting.church/dfv

2. Take part in the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

– an international campaign that kicks off each year on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. Take 10 minutes during your worship services to highlight the need to pray for survivors of DFV and send through your prayers to the National Assembly office to be included in an annual prayer book for those in the Church seeking prayers around this issue. Take a selfie with #16days and show your support by posting it on your social media platforms during the 16 days campaign.

3. Join with churches around the country to take action against DFV in the church and in the community.

There are a host of resources and ideas available at:

<https://www.ajustcause.com.au/no-place-for-violence/>

<https://www.saferresource.org.au>

<https://sa.uca.org.au/beyond-violence/>

<https://www.preventdfv.lca.org.au>

4. Begin the conversation in your community

in how you can respond to DFV. Find out from your Presbytery or Synod what work is being done in this area.

5. Organise a fundraiser or donate

to organisations in your community who are doing work in the area of DFV and support their efforts in bringing refuge to women and children.

6. Organise domestic violence training

for pastors, staff, ministry leaders, and volunteers on how to effectively address domestic violence issues. A workshop is available from the Assembly which will:

- Raise awareness and encourage discussion around DFV and its effects on people living in situations of violence.
- Promote advocacy in the public space in addressing DFV.
- Encourage reflection on the Biblical and theological foundations that intersect with DFV.
- Encouraging conversation on the foundations and practice of respectful, mutual and equal relationships.
- Affirm and strengthen our commitment as the Uniting Church to shaping communities and families, where children are loved and feel safe in their own homes Where all people can flourish and grow into their fullest humanity.

For more information about this workshop go to uniting.church/dfv

7. Create a church policy/procedure for handling domestic violence

Go to the following [link](#) for an example of a church policy from the Anglican Diocese of Sydney.

8. Have a list of domestic violence resources in the Church Office

and provide these to clergy and pastoral workers.

9. List the domestic violence helpline phone numbers in your Church bulletin or newsletters.

10. Speak about domestic violence

at ministerial meetings and sessions.

11. Provide teachings

on domestic violence and respectful relationships in classes (adult, teen and children's Sunday School, Bible study, small groups and youth groups). Where possible incorporate teachings about respectful relationships in lessons and sermons.



*The Uniting Church
in Australia says*

NO TO VIOLENCE

Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)
is against the will of God.

**As a national church we are committed to supporting people
experiencing domestic and family violence and making
our churches and communities safe places for all people.**

BEYOND VIOLENCE

If you are experiencing any form of domestic and family violence, it is okay to ask for help.

Your Local Contact _____

Contact Number _____

FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES:

- 1800 RESPECT national helpline: **1800 737 732**
- Lifeline (24-hour crisis line): **131 114**
- Relationships Australia: **1300 364 277**
- Men's Referral Service: **1300 766 491**

**In the case of an emergency
call 000 for police or ambulance**

Further Resources

Our watch <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/>

Headspace <https://headspace.org.au/young-people/responding-to-family-conflict-yp/>

A Just Cause <https://www.ajustcause.com.au>

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria <https://www.dvrcv.org.au>

Domestic Violence Handbook for Clergy and Pastoral Workers <https://churchestogethersa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Domestic-Violence-Handbook.pdf>

Australian Government Support Services <https://www.respect.gov.au/services/>

UnitingCare Agencies who work in DFV <http://uniting.church/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DFV-Services-delivered-by-UCA-network.pdf>

Uniting World Work in Gender Justice <https://www.unitingworld.org.au/>

Uniting Church QLD <https://www.unitingcareqld.com.au/services-and-support/family-support/domestic-and-family-violence>

Sharing Strength – A toolkit to engage culturally and linguistically diverse communities experiencing domestic and family violence <https://indd.adobe.com/view/6eb914c6-cbcf-4441-ad8e-138d7ffd02d9>

NSW Police Domestic and Family Violence Fact Sheet translated into Arabic, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional), Dari, Dinka, Farsi, Fijian, French, Hindi, Korean, Samoan, Swahili, Tongan. <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/domestic-violence/services-and-support/resources/factsheets>

A Pacific conceptual framework for addressing family violence <https://pasefikaproud.co.nz/resources/nga-vaka-o-kaiga-tapu/>

A Samoan Conceptual Framework for Addressing Family Violence <https://library.nzfvc.org.nz/cgi-bin/koha/opac-detail.pl?biblionumber=3851>

Problems for Women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds – and domestic violence <https://www.ncsmc.org.au/family-domestic-violence/>

Further Reading

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (Federal Dept. of Social Services) <https://www.dss.gov.au/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children-2010-2022>

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), "Violence against women in Australia: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, 2012", 22.10/2015 <https://www.anrows.org.au/publications/>

Jess Hill, "Home Truths – The costs and causes of domestic violence", The Monthly Essays, March 2015 https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2015/march/1425128400/jess-hill/home-truths?utm_source=Respect+List&utm_campaign=03a99dd705-Email+update+june+2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_d269b3ebab-03a99dd705-379407321#mtr

Jess Hill, "See What you Made me Do" <https://www.jesshill.net>

'For Christians who missed the memo: The Bible abhors all domestic abuse' – Sandy Grant, 4/3/2015 <https://www.smh.com.au/opinion/for-christians-who-missed-the-memo-the-bible-abhors-all-domestic-abuse-20150303-13tlwn.html>

'The church must confront domestic abuse' – John Dickson and Natasha Moore, 12/3/15 <https://www.publicchristianity.org/the-church-must-confront-domestic-abuse/#.Ve5A1NOqqko>

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Dignity in Humanity, *A UCA Statement on Human Rights* (2006)

DFV Liturgy Adapted from a worship created by Jane Stranz for the World Council of Churches. A 2010 Lenten Study compiled by the World Council of Churches, the World Student Christian Federation and the World YWCA <http://women.overcomingviolence.org>

Families and Communities – Families SA

Dr Lynne Baker's 2010 book, *Counselling Christian Women on How to Deal with Domestic Violence* and Julia Baird with Hayley Gleeson, *'Submit to your husbands': Women told to endure domestic violence in the name of God*, ABC News, last updated 23 January 2018

Lutheran Community Care

National Assembly Transforming Worship Circle Panel Members:

Rev Alison Whish, Rev Jennifer Hughes, Rev Alex Sangster

Ruth Duck, *Touch Holiness*, The Pilgrim Press

South Australian Council of Churches

South Australia Government of South Australia through SA Health & Department for

Tina Rendell from Uniting

The Church Responds to Domestic Violence by Beth Basham and Sarah Lisherness ed. pg 92

The Methodist Church in the UK, Service for Women Against Violence Sunday

Uniting Care Wesley Adelaide

White Ribbon

Worship Resource Life Overflowing 13th Triennial Assembly

We'd also like to thank Rob Floyd and Bethany Broadstock for bringing the proposal to adopt the Statement on Domestic and Family Violence to the 15th Assembly meeting.

AUSTRALIA WIDE SUPPORT SERVICES

For any person in immediate danger, or in an emergency call 000

1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732

www.1800respect.org.au

LIFELINE

13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

KIDS HELPLINE (for children & young people)

1800 55 1800

www.kidshelp.com.au

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

1800 810 784

MENSLINE AUSTRALIA

1300 789 978

www.mensline.org.au

MEN'S REFERRAL SERVICE

1300 766 491

www.mrs.org.au