

Domestic Violence

*Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress. . . I have become like a broken vessel. . .
But I trust in you, O Lord; I say, "You are my God."
—Psalm 31:9-14*

One in four women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. An estimated 1.3 million women are victims of physical assault by an intimate partner each year. Eighty-five percent of domestic violence victims are women, with women aged 22 to 24 being at the greatest risk. More than three women and one man are murdered by their intimate partners in the United States every day. According to the National Domestic Violence Center, only one-fourth of physical assaults against females by intimate partners are reported to the police. Surveys indicate that domestic violence occurs in 28 percent of all marriages.

Domestic violence refers to a pattern of violence and coercive behavior by one adult in an intimate relationship over another. It is not "marital conflict," "a lovers quarrel" or "private family matter." It may consist of repeated, severe beatings or subtle forms of abuse, including threats and control. The four basic types of domestic violence are physical assault, sexual assault, psychological assault and attacks against property and pets. In spite of its prevalence, blatant impunity for violence against women still exists—too often rooted in a misinterpretation of biblical texts and a patriarchal view of relationships toward women and children that asserts control over cooperation and mutuality.

Our Vision

Reconciliation and the building of community affirm the value and quality of every member of the human family and his or her right to respect and freedom from violence. Our task is to work for a world free of destructive stereotypes and to work for laws that protect women and children who are victims of abuse and hold abusers accountable while at the same time creating opportunities for their counseling and rehabilitation.

United Methodist Church Policy

"People of faith should take the lead in calling for a just response by the community in the face of domestic violence and sexual abuse" (Resolution 3423, "Violence Against Women and Children," *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2012*).

What United Methodist Women Members Can Do

Domestic Violence Initiative challenges:

- Explore the biblical and theological understandings of the nature of love and Jesus' example of non-violence in relationships.
- Work to raise awareness of domestic violence—causes and responses—in both church and community. "What Churches Can Do" DVD produced by Faith Trust Institute (www.faitrust.org).



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faithtrustinstitute.org) is a key resource that has been shared with each conference United Methodist Women vice president and social action coordinator.

- Distribute the “What Every Congregation Needs to Know about Domestic Violence” brochure.
- Post the United Methodist Women Domestic Violence infographic: www.flickr.com/photos/umwomen/5264222728.
- Promote church and community resources for domestic violence victims and abusers utilizing shelters, counselors, the judicial system and first responders.
- Convene house/church gatherings to watch *I Believe You, Faith's Response to Intimate Partner Violence* DVD, produced by Diva Communications and financed, in part, by United Methodist Women. (DVD available for purchase: <http://www.divacommunications.com/programs/i-believe-you/>). Utilize a study guide which was created and is available for free download from United Methodist Women: www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/domestic-violence.
- Post the National Domestic Violence Hotline, 1-800-799-7233, in church and public restrooms.
- Gather a small group of men, women and youth from your congregation to explore the United Methodist Women's Toolkit to see how you might work with your pastor and congregation to create a safe space for people—including training and ongoing awareness.
- Support the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence annually, from November 25 to December 10: 16dayscwg.rutgers.edu.
- Plan to observe Domestic Violence Awareness Month each October: <http://dvam.vawnet.org>.
- Urge the passing of the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA). Demand strong enforcement of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Title IX, the law prohibiting sex discrimination in education. For more information see United Methodist Women Action Alerts at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org.

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