



The Church's Response to Domestic Family Abuse:

A Guideline to Policies, Procedures and Practices©

*No longer will violence be heard in your land, nor ruin or destruction
within your borders. You will call your walls Salvation and your gates
Praise. Isaiah 60:18 (NIV)*



Created and Provided by

The Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse, Inc.

a 501(c)3 non-profit ministry

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"Oh, God, Creator of us all, I do not aspire to comprehend You, nor Your creation, nor to understand pain or suffering. I aspire only to relieve the pain and suffering of others, and I trust in doing so, I may understand more clearly Your nature, that You are the Parent of all humankind, and that the hairs of my head are numbered."

St. Francis of Assisi

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You will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise.
Isaiah 60:18 (NIV)*

A Note from Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (CCADA):

The Coalition was formed in an effort to bring together many voices to face the evil of domestic abuse that is within our midst, both within and outside our congregations. No one is immune, not the pre-born baby or the near death adult. God commands us to intervene and help the oppressed, and there is nothing as oppressing as living with abuse. It is a daunting task given the prevalence of abuse in our society, and it will take all of us working together to stem the tide of evil this sin has wreaked. We welcome your participation.

*"Learn to do right. Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, and correct the oppressor.
Defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." Isaiah 1:17 (Amp)*

"But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; The victim commits himself to you; You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more." Psalm 10:14, 17, 18 (NIV)

A few editorial notes:

We have chosen the word "abuse" in our name and refer to domestic abuse in most of our literature. This is done deliberately to bring attention back to the issues of all forms of abuse. As a society, we have begun to focus attention on the violent acts, rather than the subtle forms of abuse that are so pervasive, and it has been to our detriment. No abuse should be tolerated or overlooked. All is damaging and an evil in God's eyes.

The following is a sample of The Church's Response to Domestic Family Abuse, The Church's Policy and Guidelines for Domestic Abuse, and a Plan for the Implementation of Training and Christian Education. Please feel free to adapt as needed to fit your church's structure. Also included are ways to help those affected. It is our prayer that these resources will empower you to minister effectively to those affected by domestic abuse. Should you require additional information, we will be glad to assist. My God bless your endeavor.

*"Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace,
so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."
Hebrews 4:16 (NASB)*

Preface

Thank you for your care and concern for those suffering from Domestic Abuse. This manual is being offered to your congregation and church leadership as a guide to beginning a Domestic Abuse Ministry. It also offers suggestions on what you and those in your sphere of ministry can do to address the complex issues of the domestic abuse that are present in the congregations of every church and community. Not one is immune. Although it is difficult to look into the pain of family abuse and other forms of victimization, it cannot be denied that such suffering is an ever present reality.

In considering the needs of those being abused, you are, in a very real way, identifying with the prophets of Israel: with Ezekiel who "sat among them" ¹ and with Jeremiah who, out of the depths of compassion, cried, "for the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded; I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?" ²

Research shows that seven out of ten people seek help from their place of worship first. When these places are safe and inviting and are educated in the issues of abuse, they can be the balm of Gilead, offering the salve of human kindness and the oil of godly compassion. However, when they are not educated on the issues, they can be more harmful and place the people being abused in more danger. Of those who have gone to their church for help, only 4% would recommend that someone else seek assistance in this way ³. As stated by the Department of Defense in addressing domestic abuse:

In hearing after hearing across the country, victims identified the religious community as a vital and largely untapped source of support for crime victims. The government may compensate for economic loss; the state may punish; doctors may physically heal; but the lasting scars of spirit and faith are not so easily treated. Many victims question the faith they thought secure or have no faith on which to rely. Frequently, ministers and their congregations can be a source of solace that no other sector of society can provide....

All too often, representatives from the religious community come to court only to give comfort, support, and assistance to the accused. This is indeed a noble endeavor, and this Task Force would not seek to discourage it. However, what we do seek, here as elsewhere, is a balance, a recognition that the victim certainly no less than the victimizer is in need of aid, comfort, and spiritual ministry. There is as great a need for a ministry to victims as there is for a ministry to prisoners. ⁴

As Christians, in choosing to minister to those suffering from abuse, you are responding to the powerful message of our Savior and Lord, as given in the often

recalled parable of the Good Samaritan. In this parable, two failed to show Christ's love and concern, but one did so and was given glory by our Lord. At the end, Jesus asked, "Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the man who fell in with the robbers?" The answer came, "The one who treated him with compassion." To which Jesus replied, "Then go and do likewise."⁵ There are numerous other accounts in Scripture of compassion, empathy and concern for fellow humans, especially if we consider the life of Christ as our example.

*The Lord is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
Those who know your name will trust in you,
for you, Lord, have never forsaken those who seek you.
Psalm 9:9-10 (NIV)*

Thank you for taking on this most important ministry.

In His Service,

*Kate Johnson, President
The Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse*

¹ Ezekiel 3:15 NIV

² Jeremiah 8:21, 22 ESV

³ Nancy Nason-Clark, 2006, "When Terror Strikes the Christian Home"

⁴ quoted in "A Manual for Clergy and Congregations" from the Department of Defense

⁵ Luke 10:36, 37 NAB

The Church's Response to Domestic Family Abuse

When abuse occurs between family members, it not only damages the life of the person being abused, it destroys the well-being of every member of the family, including the person abusing. It is important for the congregation of this church to understand the church's position on domestic abuse.

Domestic violence in any form - physical, sexual, emotional, psychological or spiritual - violates the covenantal relationship God establishes with all human beings and is always damaging to the spirituality of all persons involved. When it is between a husband and a wife, it further violates the one-flesh covenantal relationship that God established. Under no circumstance is abuse ever justified. Neither is it ever the fault of the victim. Domestic abuse is an abuse of power, motivated by a desire to control or manipulate the life of another human being. It severely damages relationships and often destroys the relationship beyond repair. An act of abuse is never an act of Christian love. Christ's self-giving love encourages the full growth of the individual, while domestic abuse seeks to stifle the victim's autonomy through dominance, replacing love with violence and fear.

Given this acknowledgement, this church:

- holds that domestic abuse in all its forms is unacceptable, inconsistent and incompatible with the Christian faith and a Christian way of living;
- holds that all abuse is spiritually damaging for both the person being abused and the person who is abusing,
- accepts that domestic abuse is a serious problem which occurs in church families as well as in wider society;
- undertakes to listen, support and care for those affected by domestic violence;
- urges abused persons to consider their own safety and that of family members first and to seek help from the church and, as necessary, professional and legal resources, to bring healing to the individuals and, if possible, to the marriage relationship.
- will work with the support agencies, will learn from them and support them in appropriate ways, and will publicize their work;
- will play its part in teaching that domestic abuse is a sin;
- will teach what it means to be male and female, equally made in God's image;
- will seek to utilize advisors to encourage the use of good practice guidelines and keep the Church informed about the implementation and development of our Domestic Abuse Ministry,
- believes in a God of love, justice, mercy, and forgiveness;

This church is committed to raising awareness through teaching and worship. Some of the ways we will be doing this are that:

- Pastors and Worship leaders will speak out against domestic abuse in preaching, teaching and prayers, not just during National Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October) or National Child Abuse Awareness Month (April), but also throughout the year.
- Ministers, deacons and ministry leaders are offered resources and training so that they can give clear statements that domestic abuse is wrong, and tackle the myths that perpetuate disregard of abuse.
- As all males and females are made in the image of God, unequal treatment due to gender will continually be challenged in all aspects of the life of the Church. This is not to imply an egalitarian or complementarian view of roles or functions. Rather, as individuals made in His image each is deserving of respect and dignity in all communications and interactions. Opportunity to discuss these issues within the church community will be offered and all are encouraged to discuss this within the greater community.
- All of our language will reflect our beliefs in equality, dignity, and all persons being made in the image of God. We are committed to not marginalizing those who may already feel of little value.
- We will take seriously the way we use the Bible, and how theological emphases can be affirming or damaging to those caught up in abusive situations.

The church leadership wants the congregation to know that when any of them or someone they know is faced with domestic abuse, being faithful to Christ's ministry of love and justice means the following for this congregation:

- We are called to oppose family abuse in all its forms and to break the cycle of family abuse whenever it occurs.
- Regardless of the identity, age or gender of either the person who is committing abuse or the victim of family abuse, every situation that arises will be treated with confidentiality (except when otherwise *legally* required), respect and care for each of the parties involved.
- This church will respect the autonomy of able adults who are suffering abuse by acknowledging their right to control their own lives; by offering information, resources and support; and by honoring their decisions. The ultimate decision of an adult abused by a family member resides with that person; there will be no efforts to tell the person what she or he should do. (This is as long as it does not conflict with mandated reporting laws regarding children, the elderly and vulnerable adults, which will *always* be followed.) However, as ones who care deeply for the welfare of those being oppressed, we will help them by exploring options with them and by providing assistance whenever we can for the safety of those concerned.
- This church takes seriously our mandate to help the oppressed and abused children, elderly and vulnerable adults and will offer assistance to family caretakers who use abuse in the home. We also understand our legal responsibilities to report such abuse when the law mandates us to do so.

- All pastors, educators, and select members of the congregation have been trained to serve as constructive resources to those abused, their family members and the perpetrators of family violence. These trained individuals can help families take immediate steps to address the crisis. They can make referrals for long-term intervention and counseling. They will provide ongoing spiritual and emotional support for all parties involved.
- Those being abused or using abuse, as well as their families, are encouraged to look to the church leaders for help. Abuse is not a secret to be kept within the family. The pastors and the educators in the church will maintain confidentiality within the congregational community and will help the family access the resources that are essential to the safety and healing of all involved.
- The church will support all members of the family in crisis. For the victim this means providing a safe haven; helping with needed emergency resources; making referrals for counseling; and providing ongoing spiritual and emotional support. For the perpetrator this means maintaining a pastoral relationship of care while simultaneously holding the person accountable for his or her actions. It also includes making referrals for counseling. Other family members, especially children, must know they did not cause the abuse, that they are deeply loved and will be spiritually supported by this congregation at all times.
- The church staff also realizes that it will not always be possible to minister effectively to all members of a family where domestic abuse is occurring. There are times when the person abusing is not desirous of change or accountability, or misuses the pastoral relationship in order to manipulate the situation to their advantage. In those cases that both abuser and abused cannot be supported in the same church community, the abuser will be referred elsewhere for support. Mutual support (not couples counseling) will only occur when it is the express, independent wish of each party. We also realize that both cannot be supported pastorally by the same person and every effort will be made to appoint separate pastoral support.
- Marriage counseling for a couple struggling with spousal or relationship abuse is never a viable or safe option. Instead, those abusing and those abused will be encouraged to seek separate counseling from professionals trained in the field of family violence. It is not until there has been a cessation in ALL FORMS OF ABUSE for a minimum of 6 months that couples counseling will be considered, if appropriate and the desire of both parties.

A complete copy of the Church policy regarding domestic abuse and the Domestic Abuse Ministry is available through the church office upon request.

Available resources for help within the church:
(those who have been specifically trained in domestic abuse):

The church professional staff (*list contact information*)

Domestic Abuse Ministry (*list contact information*)

THE CHURCH'S GUIDELINES, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR DOMESTIC ABUSE

Principles behind the guidelines and policies on domestic abuse

- ◆ Belief in God as love expressed in relationships.
- ◆ Understanding of humanity (female and male) as made in God's image, and possessing equal worth.
- ◆ Belief in dignified and respectful treatment amongst people and within relationships because of this equality of worth.
- ◆ Refusal to condone any form of abuse or violence.
- ◆ Recognition that domestic abuse is prevalent among Christians, as among other groups.
- ◆ Acceptance that survivors may choose anyone they trust to talk to, and not necessarily those with pastoral responsibilities.
- ◆ Awareness that training for all is essential.
- ◆ Partnership with other agencies is the best way to provide informed pastoral care to any child, young person or adult suffering abuse.
- ◆ Support, supervision, appraisal and ongoing training for those with pastoral responsibilities is essential.

SAFETY:

Safety of ministers, deacons and church workers

The safety of anyone ministering in the area of domestic abuse is important. In considering safety and good practice in pastoral listening, whether by a minister, deacon, lay leader, or another member of the church community, we make safe accommodations a priority. This means:

- ◆ That there will always be more than one person on the premises during planned meetings with anyone involved in domestic abuse (whether it is the victim or the abuser).
- ◆ That quiet and confidential places should be available for listening, but ideally someone else should also be aware of where and when confidential listening is taking place.

This protection is for both the person ministering and the one seeking help. It is important that those who listen know when it is essential to say that they must talk to someone else, whether it is for their own need, or for that of the seeker or when it is mandatory. (e.g. awareness of child abuse, elder abuse or other safety issues or criminal actions). Those who are listening need to be aware of the nature of, and constraints of pastoral relationships.

Safety for the Abused:

Believing what is being said is the starting point when someone makes a disclosure of domestic abuse, whether it is child abuse, adult abuse or teen dating abuse.

The next step is to determine what type of support the person is looking for or needing. This will depend on many factors not least the emotional state of the person and the nearness of the perpetrator. Trust and confidentiality are vital for the safety and well-being of the victim and those who are supporting them. Once a support relationship has been established between victim and listener, other agencies may be contacted for more specific advice and help. It is important to realize that from the moment of disclosure the victim can usually only cope with taking one step at a time.

A safety plan will be presented and discussed with each person who comes forward and discloses suffering abuse. We will not wait for them to ask, but will offer a plan as part of ongoing concern for their safety. This plan will be reviewed periodically to ensure as much safety given each situation. It will also be reviewed each time their circumstances change.

Essential for maintaining the safety of the person reporting abuse and the family are:

- ◆ Confidentiality (as legally allowed)
- ◆ One pastoral caregiver should not try to support both partners in one fellowship. Trying to support both partners makes the church unsafe for the victim and may be seen to condone the behavior of the abuser. Even when this is the expressed wish of each individual, realize that the victim may think this is what is best when in fact it is dangerous, or they may be pressured by the abuser to concede. It should never be the victim who has to leave the church unless this is the only safe option. Even then, pastoral support should continue.
- ◆ Working with other agencies – it is essential that the church members, ministers and pastoral workers do not take on a role outside their competence. With all good intentions, more harm may be done to the person being abused.
- ◆ In the case of allegations against ministers, or staff members, the Church will take each allegation seriously, investigate (unless required by law to notify proper authorities) and church discipline will be followed in accordance with Matthew 18.

RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC ABUSE: Guidelines for Pastors and Ministry Leaders

Our church affirms the following guidelines as appropriate responses to those who are or have been abused and those who are abusing others.

The Goals:

1. SAFETY for the people suffering abuse, both adults and children
2. ACCOUNTABILITY for the abusive person
3. RESTORATION of individuals and, IF POSSIBLE, relationships

OR

MOURNING the loss of the relationships

We begin with these principles:

- ◆ We affirm that, although we desire to see the best in people, our desires must not obscure realistic expectations and perceptions. We must not focus on what we want to occur, but on what is reality.
- ◆ We also acknowledge that working in the area of domestic abuse is challenging and that those who are providing support will need their own ongoing support, and opportunity to ensure they remain comfortable with that role, and the issues that may be raised. We commit to helping the “helpers” and providing whatever support they may need.

Pastoral Support For Those Who Perpetrate Abuse: Guidelines for Pastoral Care

One of the main gifts the church can bring into a situation of domestic abuse is the gift of accountability and confrontation. (Note: confrontation is never done without the consent of the adult victim who discloses abuse, but anything witnessed by leadership will be confronted immediately.) Challenging those who abuse to take responsibility for their attitudes and actions is part of extending Christ’s example of confronting and addressing sin. It also demonstrates that the church considers domestic abuse unacceptable.

As previously stated, working with perpetrators of abuse is extraordinarily difficult work, which ministers and deacons are not trained to do. Many times ministers feel that this is a part of pastoral care, or the person who is abusing tries to convince the pastor to counsel for “the good of the marriage” or because they want a Christian whom they “respect.” These are often manipulative tactics on the part of the one who is abusing. If they are truly repentant and want to change their behavior, then they will do whatever is required for that to occur, which usually means attending some sort of batterer’s intervention group program. Pastors and the marriage are better served when professionals who are specially trained in this area undertake the work. Appropriate pastoral support in the form of accountability can be offered in addition to this, preferably with the knowledge and co-operation of the specialist, or agency concerned.

Keeping safety and well-being in mind, we realize that pastoral care for those who abuse should be provided by supporters who are not at the same time providing care and support for the victims or survivors. Therefore, every effort will be made to assign a separate minister to help the person abusing and the person being abused. We also realize that to walk with someone on this journey requires commitment.

Our church leadership realizes that the process of healing for someone who is abusing is an ongoing, long-term process, just as is sanctification. Recovery from the sin of abuse takes time and is not a quick conversion experience. Therefore:

- Those who are providing support should feel able to work alongside agencies or services working with the individual in a specialized intervention program, with the knowledge of the individual concerned. (This may be a probation officer, counselor, or batterers intervention program.)
- It will be made clear that it is expected that individuals who are known to be perpetrators of abuse will accept whatever discipline the church deems appropriate, according to the principles of church discipline and Matthew 18.
- There are clear guidelines on recruitment and discipline, with reference to domestic abuse, as there are for child abuse and for sex offenders within our congregation and leadership. This includes limiting those individuals from holding specific offices or leadership roles.
- Church discipline and care for the abused person may mean that the abuser is asked to worship at a different church or during a different service time, not attend a particular group or function, or not take leadership roles. This should be seen as part of the acceptance of the need for repentance and the desire to lead a new life in a different way.
- To facilitate accountability and assist in changing behaviors, the abusive person will be required to meet with an accountability group whose members have been trained in understanding the dynamics of abuse.
- Another way to facilitate accountability and clarity of understanding and expectations may be to draw up a contract between the church and the abusive person, which outlines any activities, roles or behavior which are proscribed and any agreed activities. The contract will be known only to the minister, those who are providing support, and any essential officers of the church, and to whoever is working immediately with the individual concerned (eg probation officer).

- We will use the document entitled “Helping Someone Who Abuses” and follow its recommendations.

DOs and DON'Ts with an abusive partner**

If they have been arrested, DO approach them and express your concern and support for them to be accountable and to deal with their violence.

DON'T meet with him/her alone and in private. Meet in a public place or in the church with several other people around (not necessarily in the same room, but same proximity).

DON'T approach the abusive person or let them know that you know about the violence unless a) you have the victim's permission, b) s/he is aware that you plan to talk to the partner and c) you are certain that the abused person is safely separated from the abuser.

DON'T allow him/her to use religious excuses for their behavior.

DO address any religious rationalizations that may be offered or questions they may have.

DO name the violence as their problem, not their partner's. Tell them that only they can stop it; and you are willing to help.

DO refer them to a program which specifically addresses the abusive person's behaviors and beliefs.

DO assess the person abusing for suicide or threats of homicide. DO warn the victim if specific threats are made towards them.

DON'T pursue couples' counseling with the abusive person and their partner if you are aware that there is violence in the relationship. If the abusive person suggests it, tell them it is inappropriate, that they need to work on their behavior.

DON'T go to the abusive person to confirm the victim's story.

DON'T give them any information about their partner or their whereabouts.

DON'T be taken in by the abuser's minimization, denial or lying about the violence.

DON'T accept them blaming their partner or other rationalizations for abusive behavior.

DON'T be taken in by a "conversion" experience. If it is genuine, it will be a tremendous resource as the abuser proceeds with accountability. If it is phony, it is only another way to manipulate you and the system/church and maintain control of the process to avoid accountability.

DON'T advocate for the abuser to avoid the legal consequences of their violence. God forgives them, but does not protect them from the consequences of their actions.

DON'T provide a character witness for this purpose in any legal proceedings.

DON'T forgive an abuser quickly and easily. DON'T confuse their remorse with true repentance.

DON'T send them home with a prayer. Work with others in the community to hold the abuser accountable, and refer him/**her** to / set up an accountability group.

DO pray with them. Ask God to help them stop their abuse, repent and find a new way. DO assure them of your support in this endeavor.

DO find ways to collaborate with community agencies and law enforcement to hold him accountable.

Our hope and prayer in working with those who are abusive is to deepen their relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. When true repentance takes place and the hard necessary work is done, we pray for a restoration of their marital relationship.

Pastoral Support for Those Who Suffer Domestic Abuse: Guidelines for Pastoral Care

The damage done by abuse can be devastating. The damage is often psychological, physical and emotional, and, most assuredly spiritual. Those who suffer abuse are in need of support, encouragement and concern. This support may be tangible – such as through help with basic necessities, housing, childcare, and food. It may also be intangible – such as spiritual support, prayer and someone to listen to their cries.

Keeping safety and well-being in mind, we realize that pastoral care for those who are abused should be provided by supporters who are not at the same time providing care and support for the abuser. Therefore, every effort will be made to assign a separate minister to help the person(s) being abused and the person who is abusing. We realize that the abused person(s) may need professional help and counseling to address issues related to the abuse from someone specially trained in issues of domestic abuse. We support their decision to seek outside assistance when needed. To walk with someone on this journey requires commitment and our church commits to this journey to the best of our ability.

Our church leadership realizes that the process of healing for someone who has been abused may take time. We also understand that the healing journey may be different for each person. Our commitment to them is not limited by time, but rather by need, and we will be available to provide spiritual and pastoral support.

We acknowledge that:

- ◆ Those who have been abused have been denied the right to be decision makers in their own lives.

- ◆ The best way to help those who have been abused is to empower them to make decisions that directly affect them. We do not want to take the place

of the abusive person by telling them what they can and cannot do or what they should and should not do. Therefore, we will help them explore options and voice our concerns whenever appropriate.

- ◆ We affirm their need for safety in all relationships, and that includes within the congregational community. Part of our responsibility is to protect them from those who would seek to harm them in the church, intentionally or, more usually, unintentionally.
- ◆ We will implement the recommendations outlined in the document, "Helping Someone Who Discloses Domestic Abuse."

DOs and DON'Ts with an abused person**

DO believe her/him. The description of the abuse is only the tip of the iceberg.

DO reassure the person that this is not their fault, s/he doesn't deserve this treatment, it is not God's will for her/him.

DO give her/him referral information; primary resources are the Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (www.ccada.org), local battered women's services or shelters, Florida Hotline 800-500-1119 or the National Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), 1-800-787-3224 (TDD)

DO support and respect the person's choices. Even if s/he chooses initially to return to the abuser, it is their choice. S/he has the most information about how to survive.

DO encourage them to think about a safety plan: set aside some money; copies of important papers for them and children; a change of clothes hidden or in care of a friend if s/he decides to go to a shelter. Plan how to exit the house the next time the abuser is violent. Plan what to do about the children if they are at school; if they are asleep, etc. (This is both practical and helps her stay in touch with the reality of the abuser's violence. Safety planning is a process that is ongoing.)

DO protect their confidentiality. DO NOT give information about them or their whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser. Do not discuss with the congregation council/session/elders who might inadvertently pass information on to the abuser.

DO help them with any religious concerns.

DO emphasize that the marriage covenant is broken by the violence from the partner. DO assure her/him of God's love and presence, of your commitment to walk with them through this valley of the shadow of death.

DO help her/him see that the partner's violence has broken the marriage covenant and that God does not want them to remain in a situation where their life and the lives of the children are in danger.

If s/he decides to separate from the abusive person,

DO support them and help them to mourn the loss to themselves and their children. Remember, separation may be the safest option.

DO pray with her/him. Ask God to give them the guidance and courage they need.

DON'T minimize the danger. You can be a reality check. "From what you have told me, I am very much concerned for your safety ..."

DON'T tell them what to do. Give information and support. Help them explore options.

DON'T react with disbelief, disgust, or anger at what s/he tells you. But don't react passively either. Let them know that you are concerned and that what the abuser has done is wrong and not deserved.

DON'T blame her/him for the abuser's violence. If they are blaming themselves, try to reframe: "I don't care if you did have supper late or forget to water the lawn, that is no reason for him to be violent with you. This is his problem."

DON'T recommend couples counseling or approach the abuser and ask for "his side of the story." These actions will endanger the abused even more.

DON'T recommend "marriage enrichment," "mediation," or a "communications workshop." None of these will address the goals listed above.

DON'T send them home with a prayer and directive to submit to her husband, bring him to church, or be a better Christian wife.

DON'T encourage the abused to immediately forgive the abuser and take him back as her duty. Forgiveness is a process that is between the abused and God.

DO NOT encourage the abused to be dependent on you OR BECOME EMOTIONALLY OR SEXUALLY INVOLVED WITH THEM.

DON'T do nothing.

DO consult with colleagues in the wider community who may have expertise and be able to assist you in your response.

** adapted from the FaithTrust Institute Guidelines

Steps to Creating a Domestic Abuse Ministry

“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” Hebrews 4:16 (NASB)

The CCADA is available to help you begin your ministry to those affected by abuse. Whether beginning a Level One Ministry or more in depth Level Two or Three Ministry, our goal is to help you in helping others. Working together, we can end and prevent abusive behaviors so that His peace reigns.

Suggested Ministry Practices:

Level One Ministry:

(Shows acknowledgement of issue and exposes it to the Light):

- Create and adopt a policy/procedure for your church for handling abuse when it is brought forward in the congregation. (A sample is available from CCADA). This will better be understood after attending the training
- Post literature (posters, brochures) around campus (church office, bathrooms, foyer/lobby, etc.)
- Have list of resources in church office and given to leaders, prayer counselors, etc.
- Support ministries that serve the abused (like CCADA) and have them listed as a missions ministry that the congregation supports
- Speak about domestic abuse from the pulpit
- It is suggested for leaders to attend seminars offered by CCADA

Level Two Ministry:

(Shows acknowledgement of the issue, exposes it to the Light, and takes further steps to actively reach those who are hurting and those who are sinfully hurting others).

Includes all of the above plus:

- Appoint one person as the liaison to the Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse or, if not in the local area, a point person to be in contact with CCADA for support.
- Organize a training date for pastors, staff, ministry leaders, and volunteers to be trained on how to effectively address domestic abuse issues in your congregation and community.
- Create a ministry committee led by the CCADA liaison that will implement the SAFE Ministry as discussed in the training seminar. The committee may include pastoral staff, elders, deacons, Sunday school teachers, youth, security, prayer counselors, women's ministry leaders/members, men's ministry leaders/members.

- Make a commitment to financially support the Coalition training seminars, print materials, resources, consulting, and ministry of synergistic mobilization and impact on the issue of domestic abuse in the Christian community.
- Other important opportunities include:
 - Being sure local hotline number is in church bulletin/newsletters
 - Having a link to ccada.org on church website
 - Organize food, personal needs drives for local shelter
 - Institute background checks for all leaders, including small group leaders and Sunday School teachers
 - Create support groups for those who need healing from abuse. (help available through CCADA)
 - Create accountability group for those who abuse (help available through CCADA)
 - Speak about domestic abuse at ministerial meetings and Sessions
 - Encourage training at yearly conventions

Level Three Ministry:

(Shows acknowledgement of the issue, exposes it to the Light, takes further steps to actively reach those who are hurting and those who are sinfully hurting others, and begins to break the generational cycle of abuse)

Includes all of the above plus,

- Include lessons and teachings on abuse and respectful relationships quarterly in all classes (Adult, teen and children’s Sunday school, Bible study, small groups, youth group)
- Incorporate teachings about respectful relationships in all lessons and sermons (this can be done through emphasizing the healthy relationship aspect of what ever is being taught)
- Implement “A Model for Domestic Abuse Prevention and Intervention” (development to be completed by CCADA in 2008)

Plan for the Implementation of Training and Christian Education

The Church's Response to Domestic Family Abuse and The Church's Guidelines, Policies and Procedures For Domestic Abuse, adopted by the leadership on _____, calls for implementing a comprehensive program of training and education that will:

1. collaborate with the Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (CCADA)
2. prepare the church staff and select members of the congregation to serve as knowledgeable and effective domestic abuse advocates
3. ensure that leadership and ministers have a basic understanding of family abuse issues and are thoroughly familiar with The Church's Policy for Domestic/Family Abuse
4. educate the congregation about domestic abuse
5. provide age-appropriate curricula about safe and healthy relationships for all ages, including youth, children and adults

In order to meet those ends, the Church Domestic Abuse Ministry recommends the following training strategies.

1. Collaborate with the Christian Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (CCADA)

To assist with organizing trainings for the church and the Domestic Abuse Ministry and provide a liaison to CCADA to address the needs of our church and the wider community.

2. Conduct an In-depth Training for Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Leadership, Church Educators and Church Members

To educate the leadership and church members on the issues of abuse and to prepare the staff and select congregation members to serve as domestic abuse advocates within the Domestic Abuse Ministry: a minimum of 12 hours of training utilizing experts from CCADA covering the following topics:

- ◆ Spousal and Intimate Partner Abuse
- ◆ Teen Dating Violence and Abuse
- ◆ Child Abuse
- ◆ Elder Abuse

Within these topics, areas to be covered include, but are not limited to:

- ◆ Defining and recognizing family abuse
- ◆ Abuse and society
- ◆ The empowerment model of working with those who suffer or have suffered abuse
- ◆ Accountability and working with those who abuse
- ◆ Dynamics of domestic abuse:
 - Forms of Spiritual Abuse

- Emotional, physical, mental and spiritual effects of abuse
- Power and control
- The generational cycle of violence
- Why do abusers do it?
- What keeps people in abusive relationships?
- Affects of family violence on children
- ◆ Family abuse, Scripture and theology
- ◆ Safety planning
- ◆ Criminal and civil legal recourse
- ◆ Community resources
- ◆ Crisis intervention

3. Provide a Brief Educational Workshop for Church Leadership

To ensure that Pastors, elders and deacons understand the fundamental dynamics of family abuse and are familiar with the church's family abuse policies and procedures: A short, 2-4 hour workshop for the leadership.

4. Educate the Congregation

The Domestic Abuse Ministry recommends a whole-church e-mailing/ mailing to introduce and explain the fundamental points in The Church Response to Domestic Family Abuse, and distributing a copy of it to all members/attenders. After the initial e- mailing, information about domestic/family abuse and the church's response will appear periodically in the Weekly Worship inserts. A copy of the complete policy will be available when requested.

An introduction to the policy will be included in New Member classes and materials as well as all premarital counseling. The emailing and information will be repeated at least yearly and may be repeated during Child Abuse Awareness month (April), World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (June 15) and Domestic Violence Awareness month (October). Posters and brochures addressing domestic abuse will be utilized in the facilities and be easily visible and accessible.

5. Develop Age-Appropriate Curricula About Healthy Relationships for Adult, Youth and Children Classes

Offer a presentation to all adult classes detailing The Church Response to Domestic Family Abuse and providing general information about family abuse. Research and obtain curriculum materials for use with children and young people.

Additional Information

Helping Someone Who Discloses Domestic Abuse

It is important to acknowledge where you can and cannot help. Please refer to the **Disclosure Flow Chart** (Appendix A) for immediate responses. The main role of ministering to someone suffering abuse is to walk along side him or her in the healing journey. Some of the ways to do this are to:

- Validate their experiences – believe unless proven otherwise
- Identify their strengths used to survive
- Ask open ended questions that will help them talk
- Don't ask why questions with survivors as that denotes blame (i.e. why do you stay?)
- Don't make promises you can't keep. They are safer in your office, but you cannot keep them safe outside your office.
- Watch your terminology and words. They are not addicted to the relationship or codependent, but someone who is suffering from the effects of abuse.

Remember, there are key elements to healing from abuse. These include:

- Having social support and gaining emotional acceptance
- Needing to feel forgiven and accepted to overcome self-blame caused by separating and/or divorcing
- Rebuilding of their spiritual identity
- Believing who God is whether they feel it or not (loving, not distant)

Do NOT say things like ...

- I understand... because you don't.
- You're lucky that... maybe they don't feel lucky at all.
- Calm down and try to relax... this may be the first time they have talked about it.
- I can imagine how you feel... no you can't, even if you've been through similar.
- I'm glad you can share those feelings... rather say I'm glad you are talking with me.
- It'll take some time, but you'll get over it.... They may not get over it fully.
- Don't worry, it's going to be alright.... How do you know?
- Try to be strong for your children... she has been strong for her children. How do you think she has survived to this point?

Do say things like ...

- "You are safe now, in this room with me." (if true)
- "I'm glad you're talking with me now."
- "I am sorry it happened" (can be very powerful)
- "It wasn't your fault." (no matter what they did or did not do)

- “Your reaction is not an uncommon response to such a terrible thing.”
- “It must have been really upsetting to see that ” (or hear, feel, smell, touch, etc.)
- “I can not imagine how terrible you must feel.”
- “You are not going crazy.”
- “Things may never be the same but they can get better.”

Steps to take once Domestic Abuse is identified:

- Assess for immediate danger.
- Follow emergency protocol if indicated; Safety planning, etc.
- Ask about the impact of abuse on ability to seek help.
- Refer to a domestic violence center for assessment and services.
- Utilize the safety plan. A safety plan should be offered to each person abused.
- Express ongoing concern and support.

Supporting an abused person:

- Be the opposite of the person abusing them (not just say the opposite, but do the opposite). Some of the ways to be the opposite:
 - Patience vs. pressure.
 - Address her as an equal vs. talking down.
 - Listen more, talk less vs. dominate conversations.
 - Treat her as the expert on her own life vs. she needs someone else to be the expert.
 - Respect her right to self-determination vs. the right to control her life.
 - Assume she is a competent mother vs. incompetent and needs someone to tell her how to raise kids.
 - Think with her vs. thinking for her.
- Some Specific Needs of Abused Person upon disclosure
 - Respectful listening, talking and reassurance form the basis of appropriate pastoral care. In many ways it is a multiple and complex loss or bereavement with many of the same emotions attached and the same exhaustion and loss of confidence.
 - Survivors are in control of their decisions and options. They need to lead rather than be told what to do and need to choose the person they talk to. Considerations such as gender and age need to be taken into account.
 - People begin to move from feeling like a victim to feeling like a survivor when they are believed and not blamed, when they begin not to take responsibility for the abuser’s behavior.
 - Trust takes time to build. Survivors may disclose little by little.
 - Survivors might need support in telling the children’s school, family members such as grandparents, and the church about what is happening.
 - A safety plan, including personal safety devices (e.g. alarm, mobile phone, improved locks).

- A list of items to take with them, e.g. money, birth and marriage certificates, passports, benefit books, checkbooks, address book containing names and addresses of friends and family, children's favorite toys.
- Other items, such as: expert professional help; childcare while seeking help; furniture, household and baby equipment, toys, etc. in cases of moving; care for pets.
- Advocacy and support during the legal or financial processes such as getting benefits.

Our Church acknowledges that:

- People who have been abused, especially children; need to know there are safe places, where they can receive help. They need to be assured all information they reveal is confidential (and to know the limits of confidentiality as required by law).
- People who are abused, especially children, should be reassured that they are not responsible for the abuse, and that they will be safe in revealing all matters pertaining to the abuse.
- Medical care and counseling should be readily available to victims of abuse so you may need to help with finding these resources. In cases where the victim of abuse has been raped she should receive physical attention immediately. Children who have been sexually abused require immediate medical attention. As child sexual abuse examinations are invasive and traumatic the child should be accompanied by a caring person.
- Counseling should be made available to victim, child and perpetrator. Families should be made aware of community resources available for counseling.
- People who have been abused need to be made aware of available services in the community, including Child Protective Services, Law Enforcement, and the courts in order to receive assistance with a restraining order against the perpetrator, child custody and support.
- As verbal abuse and neglect are forms of abuse frequently over looked by helpers, every attempt is made to insure these important issues are addressed.
- It may become necessary for a child to be removed from his/her home to a "safe" home. This will be traumatic to the child, as well as to the parents. Counseling is recommended for child, parents, and persons responsible for the child's safety. This person could be a relative, friend or if other resources are not available, foster parents. So the child does not feel abandoned any more than already experienced, the church family, especially the child's Sunday school teacher, should make every effort to stay in contact with the child to offer support.
- Because of changes in the family system, the family may suffer financial difficulties. Families, both victim, and perpetrator need to receive help in planning to meet their families basic needs. They may also need assistance from social service agencies, as well as non-profit agencies. At this time, the church may see becoming involved with the family as a mission of the church.

We cannot know what each family will need and where they will end up. The relationship may or may not be restored, but we can walk with them through this painful process of rebuilding. The healing process begins with the first contact they make with someone whom they can tell about the abuse and continues for a very long time.

Helping Someone Who Abuses

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Ephesians 4:30-31 (NKJV)

People who abuse can change *if* certain conditions exist:

1. they must be held fully accountable for their abusive behaviors and faulty belief system by a community that establishes and reinforces consequences for continued acts of abuse.
2. they must have an environment that is non-violent, non-judgmental, and respectful of women and children in which to start making those changes
3. they must be willing to work through a long process during which he/she is painfully honest with him/herself and becomes accountable to the woman/man he/she has harmed. (a process of at least 3-4 years)
4. those who change most are those who have an intrinsic desire to change.

The process of change is long and demanding. A person must be committed to change and the necessary steps to repent and make restitution. True repentance can not be forced or coerced. Conversely, forgiveness of the abusive acts cannot be forced or coerced. Therefore, helping the abusive person includes exploring with them issues of:

- dignity and worth of women made in the image of God
- a right interpretation of Scripture and confronting their misuse of teachings
- forgiveness that cannot be demanded or coerced
- repentance that is real and lasting, including taking full responsibility for their actions
- a true change of heart and becoming Christ-like in all relationships
- restitution for the harm done
- a right relationship with the Lord and need for the Savior

There must be accountability from the church to hold the abusive person's actions up to scrutiny. People who abuse must take full responsibility for their actions and the church, as Christ's ambassador, can accept nothing less.

To do anything else is to offer what Dietrich Bonhoeffer identified as 'cheap grace.

The person who is abusing needs to restore their relationship with Jesus Christ by getting to know Him in a personal way. This is the most life changing of all and cannot be rushed or miraculously implemented. Quick conversions do not create deep and personal relationships. It takes time, commitment and, most of all, a desire.

Prayer for Ministering to the Abused and Abusive



*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

Amen

St. Francis of Assisi – 13th Century