“Peace, Be Still!”

Christian Resources to End Gender Violence

Father’s Day - June 21, 2015
Created by Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

Every minute, 24 people experience rape, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner in the United States.¹ Nearly one in five women has experienced rape in her lifetime.² In Pennsylvania since 2004, at least 1,678 people have died as a result of incidents related to intimate partner violence.³

These terrible crimes are an offense against God as well as our neighbors. As people of faith and disciples of the Prince of Peace, Christians must speak out, working to end violence and bring reconciliation.

This Father’s Day, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania is joining with the FISA Foundation and other community partners to say NO MORE. Domestic violence and sexual assault are not “women’s issues” – they belong to all of us, and people of all genders must work to end them. At the heart of this effort is the Father’s Day pledge, a call to men of courage and good will to participate fully in the struggle against gender violence:

I WILL WORK TO END GENDER VIOLENCE AND PLEDGE TO:

• Not use violence in any form in my relationships.

• Speak up if another man is abusing his partner or is disrespectful or abusive to women and girls. I will not remain silent!

• Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence.

• Mentor and teach boys about how to be men in ways that don’t involve degrading or abusing girls and women. I will lead by example.

This booklet provides resources for clergy to present the pledge to their congregations on Father’s Day: Sunday, June 21, 2015. Inside, you’ll find:

• liturgical suggestions,
• sermon starters,
• suggestions for future engagement, and
• resources for referral and further information.

Authors from many Christian traditions came together to contribute to this resource, and we hope that churches from all 27 of our member judicatories will find it useful.

When he stilled the storm on the Sea of Galilee, Jesus cried, “Peace, be still!” Today that is our call as well, as we pray and work for an end to gender violence. Thank you for joining us in this important project!

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
3 Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

We pray and work for an end to gender violence.
Call to Worship (based on Psalms 9 and 107):

Leader: O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!
People: Our God is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.
Leader: Let us thank the Lord for his steadfast love.
People: Let us extol him in the congregation and praise him in the assembly.
Leader: Let us come together to worship our God.

Hymns and Worship Songs:

Be Thou My Vision (text: ancient Irish, trans. Mary E. Byrne & Eleanor Hull)
Come! Live in the Light (We Are Called) (text: David Haas)
Go, My Children, With My Blessing (text: Jaroslav J. Vajda)
Happy the Home Where God Is There (text: Henry Ware)
Hope of the World (text: Georgia Harkness)
I Have Called You By Your Name (text: Daniel E. Damon)
Lord, Make Us Servants of Your Peace (text: Francis of Assisi, adapt. James Quinn)
Make Me a Channel of Your Peace (text: Francis of Assisi, adapt. Sebastian Temple)
The Storm is Strong (text: Sylvia G. Dunstan)
When the Storms of Life are Raging (text: Charles Albert Hindley)

Call to Confession

The silence of bystanders can have terrible consequences. When we refuse to speak out against injustice, when we refrain from offering a word of kindness, when we bottle up our own feelings and failings, evil can result. The Scriptures tell us that when we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us now make confession before God.

Prayer of Confession

Holy and merciful God, whom Jesus knew and trusted as Abba, we confess that we have too often been silent in the face of sin – our own failings and the misdeeds of others. We have confused true strength with violent power. We have listened to the clamor of media and culture instead of seeking your still, small voice. We have accepted stereotypes instead of seeking truth. We have doubted our own ability to make change, and so sat idle instead of working for good. Forgive us, Lord. By the power of your Holy Spirit, make us new. Help us to follow you and serve our neighbors, for your love’s sake. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Jesus said, “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” Speaking the truth of our sin has freed us to hear this good news: By the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and beloved. Let us go forth to amend our lives, to love our neighbors, and to serve our God!
Prayers of the People

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be received by you, O Lord our God.
Let us pray to the Lord, saying, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

For all fathers who strive to share your love with their children and to set an example for them of kindness, patience, courage, and hope.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For the fatherless and the widowed.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For those who suffer at the words and by the hands of domestic violence.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For those who have turned against their marriage vows to love and honor their partners.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For those who have suspected abuse or witnessed disrespect, and failed to act.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For children who live in fear of those they should be able to trust.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For men and women everywhere who cannot see the light of life and the blessings you have given them because of their own fear and insecurity.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For all men who speak out against gender violence, working as allies and advocates.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For the church, that it will stand up for the defenseless and offer comfort, food, and shelter to those in need.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For those who have died at the hands of domestic violence, let us pray to the Lord.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For those who have suffered from sexual assault and molestation. May they learn to trust in humanity once again.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
Deliver us, O Lord, from hands that intend to harm us, words that degrade us, and the weight of oppression from actions meant to keep us weak.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
For the forgiveness of our own sins, especially in ways we have fallen short to help those in need.
   Lord, hear our prayer.
Hear our every prayer, gracious Lord, and listen to us, even as you heard the disciples whom Jesus taught to pray, saying Our Father …

Charge and Benediction

Go forth from this place as bearers of the good news: Christ is risen! Jesus came to release us from violence, oppression, and fear. Empowered by his love, let us be messengers of hope and peace as we minister to neighbors and strangers. May the blessing of God, the good Father, the faithful Son, and the challenging, encouraging Holy Spirit, be with you today and forevermore. Amen.
Many of our Christian traditions use a lectionary to determine which texts are read each Sunday. These sermon starters offer ideas for lectionary texts for Father’s Day, June 21, 2015:

1 Samuel 17 (1a, 4-11, 19-23), 32-49 (Revised Common Lectionary first reading) **Young David slays Goliath**

What does it mean to have power? By most measures, David – as a youth, a youngest son, a shepherd and not a trained warrior – would not seem to have the power necessary to defeat nine-foot-tall Goliath, the Philistine giant. King Saul attempts to supply David with a suit of armor, but David refuses it, turning away from the outward trappings of brawn, which do not fit. David’s power, instead, comes from his confidence in God and his reliance on God’s righteousness. Armed with such faith, he makes Goliath fall.

Traditional models of masculinity might suggest that being a powerful man means relying on physical strength and threats of violence. This Father’s Day, let us celebrate instead the surprising power of vulnerability and faith, which subvert our expectations and lead to reconciliation. Indeed, even as we celebrate David’s victory, we wince at the outward trappings of gratuitous violence, and we remember Jesus’ words in the garden of Gethsemane: “No more of this.” The way to respond to violence in our society is not to return evil for evil. Our Savior, like David, chose the path of vulnerability; unlike David, he followed that path all the way to the cross, ultimately showing that even death and apparent defeat cannot stop God’s nonviolent resurrecting love.

Rev. Liddy Barlow, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania

Psalm 9:9-20 (Revised Common Lectionary psalm) **The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed.**

Some people seem to have it all figured out: jobs, relationships, and health. While these people gloat about their success, many others struggle to get through life. I once knew someone who seemed to have it all figured out, but his success was merely a mirage: at his core he was lost, broken and misled. Over the years, he has been humbled, broken and misled. Over the years, he has been humbled, broken and misled. But Saul fears David, a jealous rage and fear that our text depicts as madness. When the “evil spirit from God” (18:10) came upon him, only David’s music on the lyre could soothe Saul’s ravings—but eventually even that was not enough, and Saul tried to kill David (twice!). Saul’s violence stands in sharp contrast to David’s competence. The lectionary joins this reading to Psalm 133, which celebrates the blessings of peace: “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live in unity!” (Ps 133:1). True leadership comes, not from fear and violence, but from the quiet confidence that pursues peace, and prefers words to swords.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Tuell, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Psalm 133 (Revised Common Lectionary complementary psalm) **How pleasant it is for kinfolk to dwell in unity!**

This seemingly simple psalm is in fact richly complex. For instance, the phrase “the dew of Mt. Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion” does not immediately make clear that Mt. Hermon, in Samaria, and Mt. Zion, in Judah, are separated by more than a hundred miles, as well as by custom, tradition, and national borders! The psalm, then, is celebrating the unity of those who are diverse, brought together by common fidelity to God.

Southwest PA Says No More is an excellent example of kinfolk throughout our region coming together to work in unity to help our neighbors. Last year, signers of the Father’s Day Pledge included Pittsburgh mayor Bill Peduto, Pirates manager Clint Hurdle, then-governor Tom Corbett, and Post-Gazette editor John Robinson Block – a group diverse in profession and politics, but all committed to ending gender violence. By participating in the Father’s Day Pledge, Christians can enter into this wider community circle. How good and pleasant that will be!

Rev. Liddy Barlow, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania
**Psalm 107:1-3, 23-32** (Revised Common Lectionary alternate first reading) **Mark 4:35-41** (Revised Common Lectionary second reading) **Psalm 107:23-31** (Roman Catholic Lectionary responsorial psalm) **2 Corinthians 5:14-17** (Revised Common Lectionary) **Romans 5:1-10** (Orthodox/Byzantine Catholic Lectionary first reading) **Joshua Bullock, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania**

**The Lord makes the storm be still.**

If you were to describe your life as a ship in the ocean, what would the picture look like? For some the water is clear as glass, and the sailing is smooth. For others, one false, Titanic, move could begin the onset of a slow sinking vessel, unable to be repaired until one mistake after another swallows you up. Then again, for many, life is one perfect storm of wind, rain, and massive waves crashing down with the heaviest blows a person can bear. The tides ebb and flow but the storm never ceases. For those who live in situations of trauma, as victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, a stormy life is the only life they know. Our work in opposing gender violence is not only to provide life rafts for those who are battered by the waves, but also to call on the storm itself to cease. Not only can we help those who are already victims of violence, but we can work to change the climate, so that destructive storms are never able to form. By addressing the root causes of gender violence, with God’s help, we can make the storm be still and hush the waves of the sea.

*Joshua Bullock, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania*

**2 Corinthians 6:1-13** (Revised Common Lectionary second reading) **Anyone in Christ is a new creation.**

How many more must die? How many more must suffer violence? Society makes too many excuses for the perpetrators. “She shares some of the responsibility… She deserved that… She’s just crazy.” These excuses are viewpoints that only aid perpetrators. These excuses are old and worn out. They prop up old regimes whose time is long overdue.

Paul turns to new perspectives: now is the acceptable time, the day of salvation! Why? Because there is one who has died who has taken all of the abuse and scorn humanity can throw at him and that did not lead to his end. Jesus now stands in the place of all who suffer. How might that change our vision for the way we respond to violence that we witness? Can we allow the old structures to remain knowing that Christ’s death and resurrection has brought them to an end?

*Rev. Brian Bennett, Lutheran University Center, Pittsburgh*

**2 Corinthians 5:14-17** (Roman Catholic Lectionary second reading) **Jesus stills the storm.**

“One man died for everyone.” It’s as clear as that. There’s no wiggle room, no pretending that some groups don’t count, no allowance for our prejudices to creep in. Saint Paul clearly states that Christ died for all and that this changes everything. “The old has gone, the new is here!”

Gender-based violence has pervaded our culture for too long and deserves to be overcome by courageous men and women acting and speaking in ways that overturn the old. Eugene Peterson’s The Message paraphrases the familiar verse 17 as “Because of this decision we don’t evaluate people by what they have or how they look.” What a powerful message for us today when we still struggle with sexism, racism, ageism, xenophobia, and other bigotries.

On this Father’s Day, let us jettison our old ways of thinking and embrace the new: Christ has died for all. Let us stand together and proclaim that the old ways of thinking are no more: that gender-based violence is unacceptable. Let us not disregard the *imago dei* in others; let us not be a bystander when violence is occurring around us. Give us, O God, the courage to speak up and speak out.

*Rev. Kimberly Greway, Foundation of HOPE*

**Romans 5:1-10** (Orthodox/Byzantine Catholic Lectionary first reading) **While we were sinners, Christ died for us.**

My father and I used to banter around the words from Romans 5:5 as we lived with the challenges caring for my elderly grandfather. The bit about rejoicing in our suffering because it produces all kinds of good things, especially hope, was cathartic. We jokingly said we “didn’t quite know how far along we were in the hope building process, except that we were certainly a bunch of characters.”

The full depth of the text is nothing to joke about. Enduring peace is only possible through justification by faith. Consequently, the suffering and character building we endure throughout life are best viewed through Christ’s own suffering and death.

On this Sunday where we say “No more!” to gender violence, we shouldn’t miss the irony that Paul and the church have contributed to the suffering of women: Paul’s words to wives, asking them to submit to their husbands, have been falsely applied to justify abuse. Paul reminds us that Christ’s death is for the ungodly. How might this give hope to the victims and perpetrators of abuse? And more pressingly for the church, how might repentance for the sins of male hegemony bring abundant life to our world?

*Rev. J. Matthew Deal, St. Paul’s United Church of Christ, Somerset*

**Mark 4:35-41** (Revised Common Lectionary, Roman Catholic Lectionary) **Jesus stills the storm.**

Male dependence on God admits weakness. Boys and men are socialized to be aggressive, assertive. Men are ridiculed for fear and emotional expression. Social expectations of men promote domination and control over external forces that
do not lend themselves to dependency. Male self-reliance can express idolatry - trusting in self rather than depending on God as the source for life.

Mark 4:35-41 faces male anxiety over powerlessness. Natural forces cannot be harnessed by masculine power and strength. At the moment the disciples become aware of their mortality, they cry for a Savior. Fear of death, powerlessness that defies male strength and control, arouse an awareness of weakness. Jesus doesn’t define the disciples’ weakness as their failure to be courageous in the face of their fate. That could promote self-idolatry. The disciples’ sudden awareness of mortality exposes self-idolatry in what Jesus describes as faithlessness to God. By daily trusting God’s love and care, faithful men learn how others in their lives depend upon masculine love and care for assurance. Daily submission to God cultivates quiet conviction and devotion that overcomes life’s storms. It enables men to practice healthy relationships with God’s blessings – their spouses and children.

Rev. Dr. John Lolla, Northmont Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh

Using the Father’s Day Pledge

Duplicate the Father’s Day Pledge cards on the following page. You might choose to insert them into your weekly bulletin, pass them out during worship, or have them available for signing before or after worship.

Alternatively, print the Father’s Day Pledge on a church bulletin board or a large posterboard on display in the sanctuary. Invite members of the congregation to add their signatures around the pledge.

Introduce the pledge during worship, perhaps during a time of announcements or a “Moment for Mission.” Be sure to emphasize that any person who affirms the pledge can sign it: men do not need to be fathers, to be married, or in a relationship in order to sign, and women who affirm its message may sign too.

If you have audiovisual capacity in your sanctuary, you might show the introductory Southwest PA Says No More video (www.southwestpasaysnomore.org) during worship. It features a diversity of male leaders in our community explaining the importance of this initiative.

If you use these materials and invite your congregation to sign the pledge, let us know:

Take photographs of your pledge-dedication, share your sermon, mail us your worship bulletin!

You can send materials by email to lbarlow@casp.org or by mail to Christian Associates of Southwest PA, 204 37th St, Suite 201, Pittsburgh, PA 15201.

If you have a time of special music after the sermon and invite the congregation to reflect on the pledge. Then, ask men of the congregation to come forward with their signed pledge cards while the music continues. After each man places his signed pledge in a basket, a woman from the congregation will present him with a white flower as a symbol of the partnership between men and women that seeks to heal gender violence. When all have returned to their seats, lead the congregation in this litany of dedication:

**Leader:** Loving and merciful God, we give thanks for the high calling of being peacemakers. We are grateful for the men of our congregation who have committed themselves to peace today by signing the Father’s Day Pledge.

**Men:** We dedicate ourselves to relationships without violence, households free from fear, and partnerships built on respect and love.

**Women:** We honor your commitment and welcome you as our allies in ending gender violence.

**Leader (lifting the basket of pledge cards):** Holy One, bring life to the words spoken and heard, read and signed, here this morning. Bless these pledges, and help us all to live out these hopeful promises, so that we may see an end to gender violence.

**All:** Bless us, Lord, and empower us to become peace-making disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Following the worship service, the signed pledge cards might be displayed in the sanctuary or on a nearby bulletin board.

Create and distribute wallet-sized versions of the Father’s Day Pledge for men to carry with them as a reminder of their promises.

Not every tradition will find it appropriate or feasible to sign and celebrate the pledge cards during worship. In that case, you might have the pledges available at a table in the narthex or the fellowship hall for signing before worship or during coffee hour.

Although the resources in this booklet suggest Father’s Day as an appropriate timing for this project, of course they can also be used on any Sunday of the year that you choose.
Father’s Day Pledge

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”
- - Matthew 5:9

Men of all ages – both fathers and men without children – are invited to join with men from all over Southwest Pennsylvania in signing this pledge today. Women who affirm the aims of the pledge are also welcome to sign.

I WILL WORK TO END GENDER VIOLENCE AND PLEDGE TO:

• Not use violence of any form in my relationships
• Speak up if another man is abusing his partner or is disrespectful or abusive to women and girls. I will not remain silent.
• Be an ally to women who are working to end all forms of gender violence.
• Mentor and teach boys about how to be men in ways that don’t involve degrading or abusing girls and women. I will lead by example.

__________________________________
Signature

__________________________________
Printed Name
Next Steps and Deeper Engagement

To fully engage the promise of the Father’s Day Pledge, keep the conversation alive with these options for further congregational work to resist gender violence:

• Invite a guest from a local agency specializing in gender violence prevention to speak during a worship service, to an adult education class, or to a youth group.

• Post information about gender violence in your church. (Women’s restrooms are an especially important place to display crisis hotline phone numbers.) Downloadable fact sheets for faith communities about domestic violence are available at www.pcadv.org/Learn-More/Domestic-Violence-Topics/Faith-And-Religion/.

• Raise funds or collect in-kind donations for local organizations that work to prevent gender violence and help victims. Publicize and participate in these organizations’ educational events.


• Engage parents of the congregation in a conversation about raising children free from the influence of hurtful gender stereotypes. The group might read and discuss Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Lives of Boys by Dan Kindlon and/or Michael Thompson or Cinderella Ate My Daughter by Peggy Orenstein.

• Remember that alcohol abuse is involved in approximately half of all sexual assaults. Open your congregation’s space to recovery and 12-step groups. Use prudence if including alcohol in congregational activities, and always have non-alcoholic beverages available.

• Don’t save this discussion for only one Sunday per year. Write newsletter columns and pastoral letters addressing these topics. Pray and preach regularly about intimate partner violence and sexual assault: be sure to pray not only for the well-being of victims, but also that bystanders would be empowered to stop such crimes from occurring.

• Be sure to address intimate partner violence during premarital counseling. The book Opening the Door by Susan Yarrow Morris (available at www.faithtrust.org) offers suggestions for this process.

• Discuss dating violence and sexual harassment with youth groups. Educate teens about healthy relationships and mutual respect.
Clergy who discuss gender violence may find that people experiencing abuse will approach them seeking help. Be sure to keep this list of resources at hand so that you can refer directly to agencies that specialize in gender violence. For more information about the programs and offerings of each of these agencies, consult www.southwestpasaysnomore.org/help.

For immediate help, call 911.
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233)
National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-HOPE (4673)
Teen Dating Violence Hotline: 866-331-9474 or text “loveis” to 22522

To connect to community, health, and disaster services in Southwest Pennsylvania, call 211.
A listing of domestic violence programs in PA by county is available at www.pcadv.org; and rape crisis programs by county is available at www.pcar.org.

ALLEGHENY COUNTY:


BATTERING INTERVENTION: Those who have used violence in their relationships and want to get help can contact the following approved providers of Battering Intervention Programming in Allegheny County:
- Women’s Center and Shelter, 412-687-8017, ext. 301
- Renewal, 412-605-4432
- Family Resources, 412-363-1702, ext. 1302

EAST: ARMSTRONG, INDIANA, AND WESTMORELAND COUNTIES:


WEST: BEAVER, BUTLER, AND LAWRENCE COUNTIES:

WOMEN’S CENTER OF BEAVER COUNTY, Beaver. www.womenscenterbc.org 24-hr HELPLINE: 724-775-0131 or 877-629-1841. Shelter, counseling, support, advocacy, and education.

VOICE, Butler. www.voiceforvictims.com 24-Hour Hotline: 800-400-8551. Medical and legal advocacy, counseling, emergency shelter, transitional housing, empowerment programs.


SOUTH: FAYETTE, GREENE, and WASHINGTON COUNTIES:

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES OF SOUTHWESTERN PA www.peacefromdv.org Washington County: 724-223-9190; Greene County: 724-852-2463; Fayette County: 724-439-9500; 24-Hour Hotline: 800-791-4000. Medical and legal advocacy, emergency shelter, counseling and support, educational programs.


Resources for further study and information:

Books:
- *Understanding Male Violence: Pastoral Care Issues* by James Newton Poling
- *Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse* by Marie M. Fortune
- *Proverbs of Ashes: Violence, Redemptive Suffering, and the Search for What Saves Us* by Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Parker
- *Trauma and Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World* by Serene Jones

Web Sites:
- Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence: www.pcadv.org
- Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape: www.pcar.org
- Faith Trust Institute: www.faithtrustinstitute.org
- Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence: www.interfaithpartners.org
- Catholics for Family Peace: www.catholicsforfamilypeace.org
- Violence Against Women: It’s a Men’s Issue: www.youtube.com/watch?v=KtvSfeCRxe8
- Men Stopping Violence: www.menstoppingviolence.org
- A Call to Men: www.acalltomen.org

Curricula:
- Breaking the Silence (United Methodist): http://umc-gbc.org/resources-websites/breaking-the-silence
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