

HIDDEN HURTS HEALING HEARTS

LCA PREVENTION OF
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE



PREVENTION OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN

In 2015, the Lutheran Church of Australia (and New Zealand) Synod resolved

That the Convention of Synod reaffirms its condemnation of all forms of violence in the family and authorises GCC to commit resources for a church-wide campaign to address the prevalence of Family Violence amongst us, which may include sharing of resources, education initiatives and the provision of pastoral care to the survivors of violence, as well as the perpetrators of abuse.

As a consequence, the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) launched the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence Campaign with the theme Hidden Hurts Healing Hearts.

Domestic violence is all too common in Australia and New Zealand, including within religious communities. It doesn't just happen in the homes of 'fringe members', but also in the homes of pastors, elders and other seemingly respectable members. The Lutheran Church and our congregations must admit that we too have failed to respond rightly to violence in our homes.

A commitment to respond better to domestic violence – especially in families we know – means confessing to times we failed to respond well. We might have ignored abuse, made excuses for offenders and failed to give victims the support they needed. Some among us have even misused Scripture in an attempt to justify or excuse abuse. Such failures perpetuate violence and cause further harm to victims.

The love of God compels us to do better. The Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence Campaign (Hidden Hurts Healing Hearts) will equip us with more appropriate and effective ways to identify, prevent and respond to domestic and family violence. We need to develop robust, loving, and meaningful attitudes and practices that will serve to curb this hidden violence which, despite our faith and confidence in Christ, still goes on among us.

AIMS OF THE CAMPAIGN

The campaign aims to:

- inform everyone in the LCA about domestic violence and its impact not only on victims but also on families and entire church communities
- prepare church members and pastors to respond wisely, safely and caringly to victims of abuse
- help identify wise pastoral responses to people who use violence at home
- encourage all of us, as God's justified people, to demonstrate to each other and to the wider society that there is a better way to be human. God calls Christians to live in submission to our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in peace and to live in loving service to each other, particularly in our relationships as husbands and wives, and as fathers and mothers.

This brochure is for you – the members in our church. It will help you to understand the nature of domestic violence and give you guidance when confronted with domestic violence in your church community.

For more information about the campaign and its learning and training opportunities, visit www.preventDFV.lca.org.au



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This booklet is intended to provide general information only. Readers are encouraged to consult the agencies listed on the Hidden Hurts Healing Hearts website www.preventDFV.lca.org.au

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

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 takes many forms. Some behaviours are clearly violent, and others are more difficult to recognise. Whatever form domestic violence takes, fear, control, power and a sense of entitlement 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 murder.

Family violence is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence between family members; for example, elder abuse and adolescent violence against parents.

Domestic violence is a crime. Violence against women and children is a violation of basic human rights. It is largely a gender issue with roots in unequal power relations between men and women. In the Christian sphere, Scripture is sometimes used to justify the use of power and control over women and therefore the use of violence towards women. This is a gross misuse of Scripture.

In Australia, on average one woman a week is killed by a current or former husband or partner. Thousands of women experience physical and sexual violence each year, often at the hands of someone they know.

We also know that some groups of women are more vulnerable – namely Indigenous women (both in Australia and New Zealand) and women with disabilities.

Domestic violence directly affects women, children, family, friends and co-workers. There are also far-reaching financial, social and health-related consequences. Women who experience domestic violence and abuse suffer a range of health problems; therefore, their capacity to participate in daily life is diminished. Similarly, whether or not children are subjected to or witness domestic violence and abuse, their cognitive, emotional and social development can be adversely affected.

Are only women subjected to domestic violence?

Overwhelmingly it is women who are the victims of domestic and family violence. Men are victims too, but are more likely to experience violence from another man than from a woman.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT OUR BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS OTHER PEOPLE?

It is true that the Bible, especially the Old Testament, contains many references to violence, including violent abuse of women and children. The Old Testament prophets, however, also warned of wars and violence, particularly when the Israelites rebelled against God. They also acknowledged the peace and justice that would come when the people were in harmony with God's plan for them.

The coming of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into the world revealed God's real intent for his creation. Through the reconciling love of Jesus Christ, we are free to be nonviolent, to turn the other cheek, and to love our neighbours and even our enemies. Both Christian women and men will also take on the virtues of humility, compassion, gentleness, peace and love.

Turning the other cheek and showing love and forgiveness, however, does not mean that one must continue to live in a continually violent relationship. Nor does forgiving mean forgetting. It is important that survivors remember so that they can tend to their own safety.



Repentance, moreover, is much more than saying sorry. True repentance will be shown in changes in attitude and behaviour. Sadly, the evidence tells us that the user of violence will often say sorry but will soon return to abuse and violence if the behaviour is unchallenged or even condoned.

Too often past practices in church communities were built on false myths of male domination and control. And, too often, this meant that men were excused for their violent and abusive behaviour, and women were blamed and/or forced to return to very unsafe relationships. It is therefore imperative that we re-examine the ways in which we provide support to victims of abuse and challenge the values and behaviours of those who perpetrate it. What better way to begin our re-examination of male attitudes to women than by considering Jesus' relationship with women.

In his 'Heartland' eNews (November 2016), LCA Bishop John Henderson wrote:

In a society and time when women were regarded as the property of men, Jesus treated women with equality and dignity. He numbered them among his followers; when women were not allowed to speak with men in public Jesus spoke freely with them; when women were not allowed to be educated Jesus let them sit at his feet and learn. In his kingdom women are equal citizens. 'Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother' (Mark 3:35).

As Jesus fully accepts women into his kingdom without distinction, we will also seek to give all women and girls that same acceptance, respect, dignity and love, beginning with the members of our families, our partners, and members of our church, work and social communities.



One of the New Testament texts that has often been used to support male headship in marriage, and therefore male dominance, is Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Saviour. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her (Ephesians 5:21–25).

There are two observations that can be made about this text. Firstly, Jesus' understanding of headship has nothing to do with dominance. Rather, it is the complete inverse. Jesus instructs his disciples: 'the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like one who serves ... But I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:26,27). Secondly, the Ephesians text is circumscribed by verse 21: 'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ'. There is no notion of headship here in the way the world may understand it.

The Lutheran Church's Statement on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage states that the purpose of marriage is 'to unite one man and one woman (that is, husband and wife) so that they become "one flesh". In this relationship the one person is the complement of the other (Matthew 19:5)'.

This statement is clear. There is no reference to male headship or subordination. The inference is that the marriage relationship is one of mutuality and should honour what each person brings to the relationship. It is these values of mutual love and service that will inform the way we support women, who are most often the victims of domestic abuse, and the way we confront men, who are most often the perpetrators.



WHAT DOES OUR CHURCH SAY ABOUT OUR BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS OTHERS?

In 2017, the LCA released its Standards of Ethical Behaviour across the entire church. It builds on the mission of Jesus Christ to bring love to life in God's creation:

God created the church to continue his work on earth. Its task is to celebrate love and life, and be the vehicle for God's continued work of bringing love to life in the world. The church lives on the gifts of God – God's forgiveness, God's love, God's own life ...

The life of a Christian is a life of faith active in love, empowered by the love of Christ himself. Indeed we have no other obligation, except to participate in this world transforming gift of God's love.

Love changes people. The experience of being loved brings with it a kind of newness that brings out the best in us. We become more open to the gifts of life and the needs of others, and we live in a new way. Love brings life.

In our personal behaviour we demonstrate God's love by:

- setting a good example of Christian living
- treating each other with dignity and respect
- being courteous, kind and compassionate in our words and actions
- not abusing people (including members of our own family), verbally, physically, emotionally, sexually or spiritually ...

In our pastoral caring we demonstrate God's love by:

- ensuring that our caring ministry is for the benefit of the other and not for ourselves
- undertaking relevant training on a regular basis
- considering the needs of vulnerable people.

The LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour concludes:

Life in the church is a preparation and empowerment for a life of love in the world. Our families and our communities, our workplaces and cultural settings might well experience through us something of God's love as it comes to life again in us.

So, we will be mindful to reflect how God's love comes to life for those who have been abused, or have perpetrated abuse, and have come to us for confession, support and healing.



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of God – God’s forgiveness,
God’s love, God’s own life ...

WHAT ARE THE PATTERNS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence does not always involve physical violence.

It includes any type of abusive behaviour which has an emotional and psychological impact on the person, and their children, experiencing the abuse. These impacts can include feelings of:

- fear
- shame
- confusion
- helplessness
- hopelessness
- guilt
- anger
- depression
- anxiety
- entrapment
- low self-esteem
- loneliness
- failure.

Physical abuse

- **Physical abuse** – pushing, holding, shoving, shaking, twisting limbs, restraining, punching, preventing sleep, slapping, choking or grabbing the neck, pulling the hair, 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 the victim and acting like they are invisible, driving dangerously with the victim or the children in the car, threatening suicide or threatening to hurt or kill the victim, the children, family or friends.
- **Putdowns** – using putdowns regarding the victim's body shape, grooming, intelligence, parenting ability, home management skills etc; telling the victim or making them think they are crazy, stupid, useless, worthless and good for nothing. This can be in front of others or when they are alone with the victim.
- **Parental alienation** – deliberately trying to destroy the relationship between children and their parent. This can include telling the children cruel, abusive and angry things about the parent when they are not there or sometimes when they are, or telling the children that the parent is incompetent, stupid or bad.
- **Sexual abuse** – forcing or coercing the victim into sexual acts against their will, physically attacking the sexual parts of their body, demanding sex, raping, using bondage and/or objects against the victim's will, treating them as a sexual object and not as a person.

Social abuse

- **Isolation** – constantly criticising and being suspicious of the victim's family and friends. This can include using tactics that make friends and family feel uncomfortable about visiting or spending time with the victim; not allowing them to have their own friends and keeping them isolated from social contact other than with the partner; and moving the family to an isolated area away from family and friends. Social isolation can also include restricting the use of a car, keeping the victim reliant on the partner for transport, and not letting them use the phone or computer.
- **Smothering, controlling and monitoring** – controlling what the victim does, who they talk to and where they go. This can include keeping in contact with them to 'see how you are going' when it is really to check up on what they are doing; insisting on doing everything together so that the victim has no life of their own; and insisting on knowing their whereabouts at all times.
- **Putdowns** – making hurtful, humiliating or embarrassing remarks about the victim in front of company or making blatant verbal attacks on them in public.

Economic abuse

- **Financial dependence** – making the victim ask the partner whenever they need money and having to account for every dollar spent; excluding them from financial decisions; spending the money that has been allocated for household expenses; threatening or coercing the victim to sign legally binding financial contracts or to make false claims (eg Centrelink); disallowing them from getting or keeping a job.
- **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 the victim with court or legal action, telling the victim they are mad and could be committed, telling them they have committed crimes which will send them to jail, threatening to give evidence against them and threatening that they will lose their children.
- **Forcing legal involvement** – using the Family Court against the victim. It can include lying about their parenting, calling them back to court over and over again, breaking legal agreements and blaming the victim.

Spiritual abuse

- **Spiritual abuse** – using Scripture, ideas about God, pastoral 'care' and the church to justify violence and further control and abuse. Spiritual abuse includes denying access to faith communities; using Scripture to claim God's blessing on an abusive relationship; misusing spiritual beliefs and practices to justify other forms of abuse and violence; forcing the victim to act against their spiritual obligations; accusing the victim of being too religious or not religious enough; ridiculing or criticising the victim's understanding of their spiritual beliefs and practices; and warning of damnation if they leave the relationship.

Technological abuse

- Sending abusive text messages or emails, making threatening phone calls, spying on and monitoring with tracking systems, abusing on social media sites, and sharing intimate photos without consent ('revenge porn').

Male privilege

- **Male entitlement and privilege** – thinking he is entitled to more in terms of 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 CHURCH AND HEALING

Faith communities play an important role in supporting people who experience domestic violence and abuse. For many victim-survivors their faith community is integral to their healing. The faith community can support victim-survivors by providing, as far as possible, safety for them within the church. For the users of violence, however, it may be necessary to make other provisions, for example, referring them to another congregation. If a domestic violence restraining order is in place, victim-survivors should feel safe to remain in the congregation and be clear that they are supported by the faith community to do so. The church can also raise awareness about domestic violence through prayerful collaboration, education and interventions. It can do such things as:

- Create a policy and procedure for the congregation in relation to issues surrounding domestic violence. It should be consistent with the LCA Standards of Ethical Behaviour. The LCA Professional Standards Department will be able to guide you.
- Place literature, posters and brochures around the church office and bathrooms etc.
- Have a list of domestic violence resources in the church office and give these to pastoral workers.
- Organise domestic violence training for pastors, staff, ministry leaders and volunteers on how to effectively address domestic violence issues.
- List the domestic violence helpline phone numbers in the church bulletin/newsletters.
- Speak about domestic violence at gatherings of pastoral workers and sessions.
- Provide teachings on domestic violence and respectful relationships in classes (adult, teen and children), Bible studies, small groups and youth groups.
- Where possible incorporate teachings about respectful relationships in lessons and sermons.



WHAT CAN CHURCH MEMBERS DO TO SUPPORT VICTIM-SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

It is important that you:

- provide a safe place to talk, if that is what the victim wants to do
- have someone else present, if that is acceptable to the victim
- listen to what they have to say and take it seriously; don't disclose anything that they have told you in confidence
- remember that you are not a trained professional counsellor so, with the victim's permission, refer them to an appropriate practitioner or a domestic violence support service
- inform the victim that they can receive help by phoning 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or a state/territory domestic violence helpline
- be aware of your limitations; attempting to do more than you are capable of may do more harm than good. The aim is to provide a safe place for those affected and to refer them to the appropriate professionals
- continue to support them and the choices they make regarding leaving or staying in the relationship
- refer male victim-survivors to MensLine Australia mensline.org.au 1300 789 978.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP

Each state and territory of Australia, and New Zealand, has support services for victims of domestic violence. For an up-to-date listing of services, go to the Hidden Hurts Healing Hearts website www.preventDFV.lca.org.au

Remember that it is not only the adult victim that may need help. Children also may have been traumatised by the domestic violence in the home and may need support and counselling. (Even pets may need special care.)

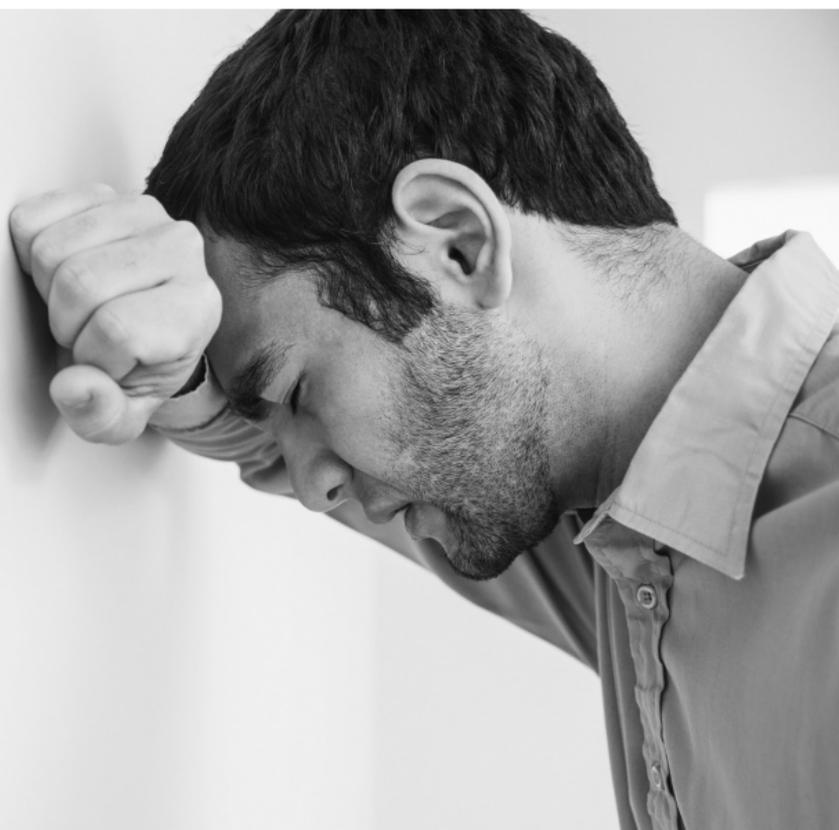
Visit the Hidden Hurts Healing Hearts website to find appropriate services.

HELP FOR THE MALE PERPETRATOR

Responding to a perpetrator may be even more challenging than responding to the victim.

- Always remember that the victim's safety (and that of any of the children) is your first priority.
- Do not speak to him alone; do not confront him about his violence, and do not ask him to confirm the victim's story.
- If meeting him is appropriate, meet him in a public space with several other people around. Always have the victim's permission before meeting with him and ensure that she is safely separated from him.
- If the perpetrator is seeking help, refer him to a trained professional. Do not refer him or his partner to couples counselling if you are aware of violence in the relationship.
- Remember that domestic violence is always the responsibility of the perpetrator. It was his choice to use violence.
- Pray for him, but not in his presence. He may perceive that to be a quick and easy absolution for his violence. Ask God to help him cease his violence, change his behaviour and find a new way of living.

Go to the Hidden Hurts Healing Hearts website www.preventDFV.lca.org.au for a listing of men's services for your locality.





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