



Confronting the crisis of violence against women.

**AMENDING Through Faith**

## The Role of the Faith Community in Gender Violence Prevention



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## As life-long United Methodist Lay Person

- We are a connectional Church, and “methodical”
- Clergy are trained, many attend seminary which is beyond an undergraduate degree.
- In smaller congregations there may be a Lay Pastor, who is required to be involved in training as they serve.
- Every church is part of a District which is supervised by an experienced trained pastor.
- We have both male and female pastors
- Pastors are assigned- “sent” not “called”



## As life-long Muslim Lay Person

- Clergy (Imams) go through a formal educational training/ degree.
- In smaller congregations their may be a Lay Pastor
- The Islamic Center of Nashville was founded in 1979  
(Rock N Roll Hall of Famer Yusuf Islam/ Cat Stevens donated part of the seed money)
- ~10 Mosques in the Nashville area and other areas of congregation





# 1. Creating a Culture that Values/Respects Women

- Must be intentional
- Must be three dimensional- lived out in the life of the church
- Should be collegial
- Must have ramifications, when persons step outside the expectations of appropriate behavior



# 1. Creating a Culture that Values/Respects Women

- Know the DV statistics
- Educate with the faith teachings on respect towards women
- Tie the two together to help make a change



## 2. Scriptures that Support Ending of DV

- In the New Testament, there are several situations where Jesus interacts with women within and outside his culture.
- Paul letters have been used by many to “justify” DV. But in Roman 16, one of his later letters, there is a whole host of folk he thanks for their assistance in ministry- most are women.
- In Galatians 3, “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus.”
- Even in the Old Testament- Joel- “your sons and daughters will prophesy...Even my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit....”



## 2. Scriptures that Support Ending of DV

A. Define healthy relationships, based on love & mercy NOT violence or hatred.

**“And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may live in tranquility with them; and He has brought between you love and mercy. Truly, in this are signs for those who reflect.” (Holy Qur’an, 30:21)**

***Prophet Muhammad said, “the best of you are those who are best to their wives.”***

**“Men are the protectors/ caretakers of women...” (Holy Qur’an, 4:34)**

***Prophet Muhammad said, “only an honorable man treats women with honor and integrity.”***



## 2. Scriptures that Support Ending of DV

B. Share the equality of women from the spirituality side:

**“Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.” (Holy Qur'an, 16:97)**

**“For devout men and devout women...for men who give in charity and women who give in charity” 10 virtues are mentioned for both men and women, and the verse ends with “for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.” (Holy Qur'an, 33:35)**

***Prophet Muhammad said, "To seek knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim (male and female)."***

Prophet Muhammad's final sermon mentioned treatment of women

***Prophet Muhammad said, "O People ... Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners."***





## 2. Scriptures that Support Ending of DV

### C. Share how both physical & emotional abuse are forbidden

*Prophet Muhammad said, “never hit your wives, they are your partners and sincere helpers.”*

**“and you should not treat them (women) with harshness” (Holy Qur’an, 4:19)**

Verbal, psychological, emotional, and physical violence are forbidden, and even false accusations against women’s chastity and honor. Men are reminded: **“Do not annoy women as to make their lives miserable.” (Holy Qur’an, 65:6)**

**“Those who slander chaste women, indiscreet but believing are cursed in this life and in the Hereafter: for them is a grievous penalty” (Holy Qur’an, 24:22)**

*Prophet Muhammad said, “And only a mean, deceitful and dishonest man humiliates and insults women.”*

**“...and do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames” (Holy Qur’an, 49:11)**



## 2. Scriptures that Support Ending of DV

D. Share a believer's responsibility in protecting people and stopping injustice:

***Prophet Muhammad said, "Part of a branch of one's faith is to remove something injurious from a path where people could get hurt."***

(so we must remove women from harms way, both physically and emotionally, if we are indeed to be a believer)

***Prophet Muhammad said, "If any of you sees something wrong he should change it with his hand, but if he cannot, he should do it with his tongue, and if he cannot, he should do it in his heart, that being the weakest form of faith."***



### 3. What are the steps to create a safe place for all?

- Don't be afraid to talk about DV.
- It is easier to talk about this when they have heard it as a youth.
- Use of safe small groups
- Be a good listener.
- Facts are facts- the incidents of DV in your faith community are the same as outside your faith community.



### 3. What are the steps to create a safe place for all?

**Create safe spaces/ small spaces for this discussion to take place (one for men and one for women).**



## 4. What are barriers within the faith community dealing with prevention?

- In many faith communities we don't have any barriers, because we don't talk about DV.
- “This could never happen here...” I have heard that from both men and women.
- “This is really uncomfortable” from many men.
- If your faith community does not have “safe” small group ministries, particularly for men, that would be a barrier.



## 4. What are barriers within the faith community dealing with prevention?

- Overall well-received
- “What about abuse against men by women?”
- Taboo topic



## 5. How to bring awareness of a changing culture within a faith community...

- There is plenty of evidence that DV is a learned behavior.
- Changing/challenging this culture is a teachable skill.
- Men can be taught to stand up and speak out.
- There is a particular fast food restaurant that I have not entered for the last 8 years.
- There are ways to confront these issues inappropriate behaviors and comments in a non-aggressive way.



## 5. How to bring awareness of a changing culture within a faith community...

- Education!
- Volunteer
- Sermons
- Add more women to leadership roles
- Forums on DV
- Bring resources to your places of worship
- Marriage workshops
- Youth groups
- Weekend Schools
- Pre marital counseling
- Healthy Relationships
- Cultural Statements for places of worship
- Unconscious bias facilitated program





## 6. What are model behaviors that promote change

- I will cover these in the discussion of Amending through Faith



## 6. What are model behaviors that promote change

- Character
- Servant leader/ selfless
- Healthy relationships
- Use religious figures through faith teaching
  - Islam – Prophet Muhammad
    - Changed the status of women in short period of time
    - **Prophet Muhammad said, 'If anyone has 3 daughters and gave proper education and took care in a proper way, he will get Jannat (Paradise).'**
- Use present day heroes (global or generational) who people look up to
  - Eddie George, Terry Crews, Muhammad Ali, etc.



## 7-8. What needs to shift in Faith Communities? What is being done?

- DV is a subject that has to be approached openly. It is as easily as including in our public prayers in worship, prayers for “those who are impacted in our community by domestic violence.”
- Discuss DV with youth, it is much easier to change at that age-
- “All” means ALL-
  - Leadership
  - Participation
  - Input
  - Celebration
  - Mission- provide assistance to the women and children in the Shelter



## 7-8. What needs to shift in Faith Communities? What is being done?

Culture leading to women being victims and not having a voice.

- Socio-economic barriers, along with cultural & generational
- Victims being told to be patient
- Feeling to be responsible for the violent actions of the abuser
- Male dominated boards/ leadership not understanding the sensitivity of the issues
- Taboos – can't talk about it, afraid of repercussions
  - Divorces - **'For divorced women maintenance (should be provided) on a reasonable (scale). This is a duty on the righteous.'** (Holy Qur'an, 2:241)
- Holding Clergy and Leadership accountable for DV (any sort – physical, emotional, financial, spiritual, words (free-passes), etc.) – and allowing women to come out without any repercussions



## 7-8. What needs to shift in Faith Communities? What is being done?

- Cycle of abuse
- Misunderstanding of religion
- Not understanding divorce
- Lack of premarital counseling
- Learning the rights and responsibilities in marriage without abusing them
- Not addressing the problems early on as they arise before one misdemeanor leads to another (shouting...hitting)
- Sharing information without endangering each other
- Getting elderly and children to play a role
- Not seeking professional help



## 7-8. What needs to shift in Faith Communities? What is being done?

- AMENDING THROUGH FAITH!!!
- Sermons & Forums
- Pre-marital counseling
- Imams engagement
- Identify people that can be trusted
- Women Shelters being established by the Islamic Center of NYU



## Amending Through Faith

- 8 week/8 session study for men and boys.
- Teaches about DV and actions they can take or avoid to promote a healthy and safe environment for women and girls
- It is blatantly Christian, but not blatantly United Methodist
- Creates a “safe place” to do this vital work
- Small group experience of 8-10 guys
- Typically meet once a week for 60-90 minutes.
- Can meet face to face in the same room or via Zoom (but not phone)



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## What you need to do this

- There is a printed “participant’s guide” You will need one for each person in the group.
- The Leader’s guide is on a jump drive, has everything in the participants guide plus
- A video on how to teach this
- All the links to the videos for the study (there short videos each session)
- Other resources which are updated
- So the ideal situation is to project (or screen share if using Zoom) or use a TV/large monitor to teach the material.



## Our first class- I designed to test the limits

- 100% Zoom
- Men who did not know each other
- All Christian, but of several denominations
- Different educational backgrounds
- Different ages
- Dr. Vance taught the first session which seem to go fairly well.
- I taught the second session, and began by asking, “how was your week?” I got an earful.



## It works!!!!

- We have about 400 churches that are using the study
- We have also used the study, face to face, with the Trevecca University Basketball team.
- We get feedback when the 8 sessions are completed
- We also get feedback several months after, asking “what is different in your life because you attended this training?”
- It is transformational and challenging.
- Rashed feels it would work in his context by simply changing the Bible verses for verses within the Qur’an.