



“It is not my enemies who taunt me—I could bear that; it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—I could hide from them. But it is you, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend, with whom I kept pleasant company; we walked in the house of God with the throng.”

Psalm 55: 12-14

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is a pattern of violent behaviors used to control an intimate partner. It may be physical, but it may also take on more subtle forms such as emotional, verbal, or financial intimidation and control.

1 in 4 women and **1 in 9 men** in the U.S. are **victims of domestic violence** at some point in their lives.¹

In the U.S., at least **3 women** are **murdered** by their husbands or boyfriends each day.²

Females 20-24 are at the **greatest risk** of nonfatal intimate partner violence.³

Sarah and Sam

Sarah met and married Sam, an intelligent, successful lawyer from her hometown. Sam asked her to relocate to pursue a job, and Sarah agreed. She left her family, social circle, and her own private practice.

A year later, Sarah became pregnant with their son. Sam became unbearably controlling and verbally abusive. He would repeatedly call her names. During her second trimester, Sam threw his first punch. Sarah’s son was born with mental and physical disabilities, and she feels an intense need to protect him. There is little she can do with no career of her own and no way to provide for her baby’s needs.

Is your congregation prepared to receive Sarah in the way she needs to be received?

What can your congregation do to be prepared for the “Sarahs” in your community?



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Who is called to do this work? We are *all* called.

Jesus Christ calls each Christian and the whole church into a mission of love and compassion toward all people, and scripture repeatedly calls the people of God to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Therefore, we are *all* to:



- *denounce and combat* the beating, sexual abuse, raping, and killing that threaten the life and safety of women everywhere;
- *encourage greater awareness* among members of our congregations about all forms of violence that threaten the life and safety of all.

Adapted from Social Policy Action "Violence Against Women," passed by the 1995 ELCA Churchwide Assembly.

Take Action

- *Post information* for local domestic violence abuse assistance in church restrooms.
- *Learn more* through resources. Visit www.faithtrustinstitute.org.
- *Volunteer to lead* a Bible study on the root causes of domestic violence, such as, "Speaking of Sexism: Called to Trust & Risk," available in the resource section at www.elca.org/justiceforwomen.
- *Make your congregation a safe space* for victims of domestic violence, and make it known.

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What should I do if I believe I am victim?

- *Trust your instincts.* Seek help.
- *The abuse is not your fault.*
- *You are not alone.* Help is available.
- *Talk in confidence with someone you trust:* a relative, a friend, or your pastor.
- *Set up a safety plan of action* for yourself and your children (i.e. hide a car key, keep money in a safe place, locate somewhere to go in case of emergency).



National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-888-799-SAFE

(Assistance is available in English, Spanish, and 170 other languages)

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¹"Adverse Health Conditions and Health Risk Behaviors Associated with Intimate Partner Violence," Centers for Disease Control, 2005

²"Intimate Partner Violence," Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief, 2003

³"Intimate Partner Violence in the United States," Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006