

# **Domestic Violence**

Comforters Committee Report

United Methodist Church Lay Leadership Program

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## **Executive Summary**

Domestic violence is defined as physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse of an individual that is perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner. Women who are being battered are as different from each other as non-battered women. They come from all walks of life; all races, all educational backgrounds, and all religions. A battered spouse might be a corporate executive who occupies a board room or a stay-at-home mother.

The United Methodist Church seeks for women to live without violence and abuse and does not support violence in the family or other relationships. The Book of Resolutions provides an in-depth treatment of the issue and offers recommendations as to how the United Methodist community should react. These recommendations include:

- Create a church climate of openness, acceptance, and safety that encourages victims to speak out.
- Encourage clergy and lay leaders to work collaboratively with community agencies on prevention strategies.
- Adopt policies and procedures for helping children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse in church facilities and programs.
- Re-examine and change if necessary scriptural and theological messages, cultures, and traditions that validate violence or abuse or support a view of women as subordinate to men or children as property of adults.
- Participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Month every October and child abuse Prevention month each April.
- Preach on domestic violence and sexual abuse topics.

This report also provides a list of resources to support victims of domestic violence.

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## Definition of Domestic Violence

### *Defining Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence involves more than hitting, fighting, and an occasional mean argument. It is a chronic abuse of power. The abuser tortures and controls the victim by calculated threats, intimidation, and physical violence. Actual physical violence often occurs after months or years of intimidation and control. Just as the term “family” has transformed over the past fifty years, the term “domestic violence” has also changed as societies and communities change. So, the definition of domestic violence provides a moving target for law makers and care providers.

In their diagnostic and treatment guidelines for physicians, The American Medical Association defines intimate partner abuse as "the physical, sexual, and/or psychological abuse to an individual perpetrated by a current or former intimate partner. While this term is gender-neutral, women are more likely to experience physical injuries and incur psychological consequences of intimate partner abuse." Although this domestic violence definition seems simple and is widely accepted by law enforcement communities, the application of the definition varies significantly from organization to organization, state to state, and country to country. For example, the term "intimate partners" can refer to people who are cohabitating or have cohabited in the past, and this term can also refer to people who are dating or who have dated at some time in the past. Additionally, some people argue that domestic violence can occur between adult family members who are not "intimate" in the traditional sense, such as adult brothers and sisters, cousins, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law. For instance, many consider elder abuse to be a form of domestic violence. Perhaps the study by the Archives of Family Medicine provides a broader definition of domestic violence: “past or present physical

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and/or sexual violence between former or current intimate partners, adult household members, or adult children and a parent. Abused persons and perpetrators could be of either sex, and couples could be heterosexual or homosexual" (Snugg, et al).

Though the definition above clearly states "adult", there is a recent trend for states to adopt legal definitions of domestic violence that include violence toward children. In fact, more than half of states now mention children in their domestic violence laws. This broadens the definition to include violence between any of the following people: husbands, wives, ex-husbands, ex-wives, partners, ex-partners, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, children, people who have lived together (which could include cousins, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and caregivers), and people who are or have dated in the past.

### *Are You Being Abused?*

Does the person you love...

- Threaten to hurt you or your children?
- Say it is your fault if he or she hits you, then promises it won't happen again (but it does)?
- Put you down in public or keep you from contacting family or friends?
- Throw you down, push, hit, choke, kick, or slap you?
- Force you to have sex when you don't want to?

Just one "yes" means you're involved in an abusive relationship. If so, you're not alone and you have choices. No one deserves to be abused.

### *Domestic Violence Statistics*

The precise number of incidences of domestic violence in the United States is difficult to determine. The difficulty stems from the fact that domestic violence instances often go

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unreported and that there exists no nationwide organization gathers information from local police departments regarding the number of substantiated reports and calls. Additionally, the disagreement regarding the definition of domestic violence prevents some cases from being reported. However, the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics published a report in May, 2000 which sheds some light on part of domestic violence. The report results from the Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey and from homicide data collected from the FBI. The report defines domestic violence as violent crimes by current or former spouses, boyfriends, and girlfriends. Violent crimes include lethal (homicide) and nonlethal (rape, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault) offenses. The data from the report states that in 1998, women experienced at least 900,000 violent offences at the hands of an intimate partner, and men were victims of at least 160,000 violent crimes by an intimate partner. The report excluded emotional abuse, harassment and stalking. Fred C. Pampel and Kirk R. Williams warn, however, that "researchers using this database must address the problem of missing data, which typically is the result of the failure to file, inconsistent filing of reports to the FBI by local police agencies, or incomplete records about the characteristics of specific incidents of homicide (particularly, missing information about perpetrators), even when reports are filed." Even though the frequency of domestic violence is unknown, some estimates suggest that domestic violence actually occurs as much as 10 times more prevalent than reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics. However, the report helps identify the following domestic violence trends:

1. Gender trends: Women make up 3/4 of the homicide victims by an intimate partner. 33% of all women murdered (in solved cases) are murdered by an intimate partner. Women make up about 85% of the victims of non-lethal
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domestic violence. Women experience intimate partner violence approximately 5 times that of males.

2. Racial and Ethnic trends: Black women and black men suffer from the highest rates of domestic violence. "Black females experienced domestic violence at a rate 35% higher than that of white females, and about 22 times the rate of women of other races. Black males experienced domestic violence at a rate about 62% higher than that of white males and about 22 times the rate of men of other races."

#### SOURCE

3. Age trends: Domestic violence is most prominent among women between the ages of 16 to 24.
4. Economic Trends: Poorer women experience significantly more domestic violence than women with higher incomes.
5. Marital status: For both men and women, divorced or separated persons were subjected to the highest rates of intimate partner victimization, followed by never-married persons.
6. Reporting to police: The rates at which individuals report domestic violence to police vary along racial and gender lines. Hispanic and black women report domestic violence at the highest rate (approximately 65% to 67% of abuse is reported). For white females, only about 50% of the abuse is reported.

Domestic violence can take many forms, and in turn, the definition of domestic violence varies greatly. This can lead to misunderstanding and cause some domestic violence cases to be ignored.

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## Secular and Church View

Domestic violence is pervasive and crosses all socioeconomic levels, religious belief, and cultural backgrounds. Abuse affects individual lives, homes, and communities.

While abuse cuts across all ethnic and economic backgrounds, some women face particular obstacles as described in the domestic violence trends in the “Defining Domestic Violence” section of this report. To expand on those statistical trends, women of color may not view the criminal justice system as a source of help. Additionally, in some cultures, women feel pressured to keep problems within the home and to keep the family together at all costs. Victims fear for losing face in the community if they leave an abusive situation. Immigrant victims often lack familiarity with the language and legal systems of the United States and may be unaware of their rights. Victims in rural communities may find themselves with fewer resources such as shelters and information about domestic violence, and the isolation imposed by distance and lack of transportation can aggravate the situation. Isolation can also be a factor for victim who stay home a majority of the day and do not work outside the home.

The effects of domestic violence are impossible to measure. Domestic violence is often shrouded in silence. Many times even extended family denies that abuse exists, out of loyalty to the abuser and in order to protect the image of the family. A person’s spirit is priceless, and a broken spirit costs more than can be measured in dollars.

The National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women, an advisory board that is co-chaired by the Attorney General and the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, submit recommendations as the federal government develops policies to address domestic violence crimes. This group, in collaboration with the Polling Company, Inc., conducted two focus group studies and a telephone poll of 600 women in June 2006 to

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understand how they viewed the crime of domestic violence. The studies showed that the majority of survey respondents and focus group participants understood of the issues related to domestic violence, and when asked, they agreed domestic violence is a serious problem in the United States. Still, the issue of domestic violence did not flow freely when women were asked to cite the most pressing challenges facing women in this country. Further discussion revealed that domestic violence hides “out of sight, out of mind” in the minds of victims and non-victims. Victims of domestic violence suffer silently, often without conspicuous physical markings. The majority of the survey respondents agreed that victims are never blamed for staying with an abuser. Nearly all the group participants indicated their willingness to volunteer to help women caught in the cycle of abuse. However, many participants also confided that when faced with an opportunity to assist a victim in the past, it was often after the victim had already hit “rock bottom” or actively solicited aid on her own.

In December 2007, the National Advisory Committee met with the United States Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services to share research and recommendations. They also provided a “tool kit” to give concrete guidance to communities, policy leaders, and individuals engaged in activity to end domestic violence. One section of the National Advisory Committee’s report stated:

*“Faith-based organizations are critical front-line allies in fostering and maintaining health relationships and marriages, and combating domestic violence and sexual assault. Clergy and places of worship may serve as the first line of help for many domestic violence victims. Frequently this group is viewed as the safety net for these individuals. They should be encouraged to participate in coordinated community response teams. The clergy, as trusted members of the community, can foster a platform against domestic*

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*violence/sexual assault; stalking victim. Clergy should be better able to clarify unacceptable behaviors, without attacking belief systems. The clergy's communication to congregants, as well as their interpretation of scripture, may be better informed when they are participants in local domestic violence and sexual assault programs. A Family Justice Center approach, which includes specially trained chaplains and chaplain assistants, provide one example of collaboration and outreach for clergy and effective spiritual support to victims. Initiatives that build bridges between the domestic violence advocacy community and clergy should be encouraged."*

The report further states that clergy must be well-trained and work closely with a broad spectrum of local supervisory systems, including local victim service providers, to ensure perpetrator accountability and safety for victims and their children.

In order to better understand experienced, informed, and involved clergy in the North Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church are relating to domestic violence issues in their church or community, we prepared a short survey and sent it via email to three districts to be completed. Each responding pastor answered 8 questions relating to domestic violence. The following questions were asked:

1. Have you had a domestic violence case in the past two years? – Yes / No
2. Have you ever had a domestic violence situation in your years of ministry? – Yes/No

Note: Pastors were given the option to stop if the answer to question 1 and question 2 were both "No".

3. Have you received any domestic violence training?
4. Are you aware of resources available to domestic violence victims and their families?

Yes/No

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- 5. Do you have contact information for local domestic violence shelters? Yes/No
- 6. Are you familiar with Transitional Housing? – Yes/No
- 7. Do you have any legal contact information? – Yes/No
- 8. Do you feel a handbook on domestic violence resources would be of value to you?  
Yes/No.

Out of the 37 surveys received, 52% of the pastors said they had not experienced a domestic violence issue in their ministry. When completing the survey, we noted after question #2, which ask about any experience at all, that if their answer to questions 1 and 2 were No, then to stop and return the survey. Most did, but some continued and indicated they definitely wanted to learn more. 19 pastors did not complete the rest of the survey. We then looked at the 48% (18 pastors) who replied with having some experience with a domestic violence case. Below are the results of the survey:

**LEADERSHIP UMC  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE EXPERIENCE STUDY  
NORTH GEORGIA PASTORAL SURVEY RESPONSE**

Question #	YES	NO
1	48%	52%
2	48%	52%
3	47%	53%
4	80%	20%
5	73%	27%
6	73%	27%
7	33%	67%
8	93%	7%

For the 48% (18) who acknowledged having an experience with a domestic violence case, we found the following:  
 53% have no domestic violence training.  
 80% are aware of resources available.  
 73% have contact information for local shelters.  
 73% are familiar with Transitional housing  
 67% do not have any legal contact information.  
 93% feel a handbook of resources would be beneficial

## Scriptural Perspective

The Christian faced with domestic violence in their home can turn to scripture for support and guidance from the teachings in the Bible. They may also seek the counsel of a pastor. This section, focuses on domestic violence from a scriptural perspective as well as from a United Methodist perspective found in the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church (Church, 2004a) and the Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church (Church, 2004b). Below, several questions relating to domestic violence are answered through scripture:

*Does God understand what I am going through?*

*“For it is not an enemy who reproaches me,  
Then I could bear it;  
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me,  
Then I could hide myself from him.  
But it is you, a man my equal,  
My companion and familiar friend;  
We who had sweet fellowship together . . .”  
Psalms 55:11-12*

For the victim of domestic violence, the person who is hurting them is not a stranger. It is someone very with whom they have a close relationship, someone who thought of as a companion, a familiar friend. So, the scripture above indicates, this makes the hurt much more painful. At times like this a victim needs to be able to go to a pastor who can be a source of comfort and spiritual clarity in dealing with issues of abuse. Today, victims also face the possibility that they may wind up meeting with someone who does not understand or does not want to know about her experience as a battered woman. In this scenario, she may feel doubly hurt by familiar friends—both her spouse and the church. Many times, victims turn to silence instead of turning towards others for help. At this time, the victim needs to feel they can rely on

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her faith as sources of support, comfort, and clarity. If the church can create dialogue around the subject of domestic violence, it can create a more open environment, allowing a victim to feel that they will be understood.

*Does God condone violence?*

Jesus offers a higher standard of behavior that applies to how families should live together (Nason-Clark, 2001). Throughout the Bible, there are several references to verbal and physical abuse. In Matthew 5:22, Jesus speaks out against verbal abuse:

*But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.*

In Psalms, the Bible speaks out against psychological abuse, or abusive speech:

*My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me  
With speech smoother than butter, but with a heart set on war;  
With words that were softer than oil, but in fact were drawn swords. (Psalms  
55:20-21)*

In 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6, Paul writes to counsel against sexual immorality:

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality;  
That each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,  
Not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God;  
And that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you.*

Additionally, the Bible provides a list of characteristic patterns of abusers (Nason-Clark, 2001), and these characteristics are condemned:

*In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak . . .  
He lies in wait in the villages;  
From ambush he murders the innocent, watching in secret for his victims.  
He lies in wait like a lion in cover;  
He lies in wait to catch the helpless;  
He catches the helpless and drags them off in his net.*

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*His victims are crushed, they collapse;  
They fall under his strength.  
(Psalms 10:2, 8-10)*

The above scriptures all help us to understand that God does not condone violence. God values every human life and wishes to bring each one to rest in the peace of God's love. Jesus instructs His followers to love God and our neighbors. The abuser in domestic violence does not demonstrate love towards the victim. Paul elaborates on the treatment of human bodies in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: "Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If any one destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are." Paul preaches that humans are valuable to God. God does not want any human body to be harmed through domestic violence. God wants our bodies, His holy temples, to be pure and free from harm. God does not condone violence.

#### *How Does God Respond to Violence Against Women and Children?*

God hears the cries of the oppressed and desires that they experience release. Scripture records several cries for deliverance. While the Israelites were oppressed in Egypt for centuries, they cried out to God:

*The Lord said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their suffering. (Exodus 3:9)*

And the great salvation story in the Old Testament is of their deliverance:

*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. (Psalms 10:17-18)*

Psalms 119 is full of cries for deliverance from violence and from oppression:

*Redeem me from human oppression that I may keep your precepts. (v. 134)  
Look on my misery and rescue me for I do not forget your law. (v. 153)  
Many are my persecutors and adversaries. (v. 157)  
I hope for your salvation, O Lord (v. 166)*

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David's prayer in Psalm 140 could have been written by an abused spouse or child:

*Deliver me, O Lord, from evildoers; protect me from those who are violent, who plan evil things in their minds and stir up wars continually.  
They make their tongues sharp as a snake's, and under their lips is the venom of vipers.  
Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from the violent who have planned my downfall.  
The arrogant have hidden a trap for me, and with cords they have spread a net, along the road they have set snares for me. (Psalms 140:1-5)*

Psalms 55:4-8 provides encouragement to women desiring to leave a dangerous situation (Fortune):

*"My heart is in anguish within me, the terrors of death have fallen upon me.  
Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me.  
And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.  
Yea, I would wander afar, I would lodge in the wilderness.  
I would haste to find me a shelter from the raging wind and tempest."*

God hears the cries of those victimized by domestic violence, and God knows exactly what these victims are going through. God desires for the suffering to be freed from oppression. The Bible tells us that even though some people come as "the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy", Jesus came so that we "may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10b). God's deliverance from domestic violence can take place in many forms: a pastor, a women's transitional housing program, YMCA, and several other resources discussed throughout this paper.

*What about the marriage covenant? Is a woman bound to stay in an abusive relationship?*

The Bible offers instruction on how men and women are to live together. The Bible calls for loving relationships between members of the family with each in honor and industry providing for the needs of the other (Nason-Clark, 2001).

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*How blessed is everyone who fears the Lord,  
Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands,  
You will be happy and it will be well with you.  
Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house,  
Your children like olive plants around your table.  
Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord.  
(Psalm 129:1-4)*

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!  
It is like the precious oil upon the head, coming down upon the beard,  
Even Aaron's beard, coming down upon the edge of his robes.  
It is like the dew of Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion;  
For there the Lord commanded the blessing—life forever.  
(Psalm 133:1-3)*

Furthermore, in 1 Peter 3:7, the wife is an equal heir of the grace of life and not the possession of her husband:

*You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.*

The covenant of marriage is one of love. God joins Man and woman to love one another, live together, procreate children, and support one another on their journeys through life. When violence enters the relationship, the covenant is already broken. The Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Thessalonians teaches on the nature of the marriage relationship, when he writes:

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to control your own body in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one wrong or exploit a brother or sister in this matter; because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, just as we have already told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God did not call us to impurity but in holiness. Therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God, who also gives his Holy Spirit to you. (1 Thessalonians 4:-5-6)*

Marriage is a covenant of love and mutual trust. When trust is broken, the covenant is broken. Violence breaks the covenant. Many children in a Christian home have known the agony of betrayal by those they trusted. Abusers have all been guilty of manipulating naïve

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children for their own sexual gratification or to exercise control over a frightened spouse. All too often Christian sentiments and twisted Scriptures are utilized to serve the offender's purpose.

*If any of you should put a stumbling block {cause to sin, shock, fill with disgust, fill with despair or fear} before one of these little ones who believe on me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea. (Matthew 18:6)*

Any kind of abuse destroys the joyous spontaneity that should characterize marital union.

*It is not 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. (Psalms 55:12-14)*

ELABORATE ON THIS SOURCE .... Not just quotation... “In 1992, U. S. Roman Catholic bishops announced that ‘women should not consider themselves religiously bound to remain in abusive relationships.’ The bishops said that an area that particularly concerns them as church leaders is the way biblical passages encouraging wives to be submissive to their husbands have been taken out of context to justify spousal abuse. Abused women say, ‘I can’t leave this relationship. The Bible says it would be wrong.’ Abusive men say, ‘The Bible says my wife should be submissive to me.’ They take the biblical text and distort it to support their right to batter, the bishops said. The bishops said that violence against women is never justified and that the parish must be a place where abused women and men who batter can come for help.” (Nason-Clark, 2001)

“From the perspective of the cross, violence against women is exposed as sin that divides humankind, violates the dignity of God’s creation, abuses power, and obstructs the gospel message of salvation and freedom.” (Nason-Clark, 2001)

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*How are Christians to react to Threats of violence?*

Another tool in the abuser's arsenal is the threat. The psalmist notes, "Loftily they threaten oppression." (Psalms 73:8) Often forgotten, abuse also hurts the abuser in addition to the person being abused. Ignoring or minimizing the severity of the problem hurts both the abuser and those he abuses. Those who sweep domestic violence under the rug avoid opportunities to help bring victims and abusers to Christ.

*The trouble he causes recoils on himself; his violence comes down on his own head. Psalms 7:16*

*They say . . . "Let us lie in wait for blood; let us wantonly ambush the innocent." Yet they lie in wait—to kill themselves! and set an ambush for their own lives. Proverbs 1:11, 18*

Those who have been victims of physical violence typically think of the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' instructions to "turn the other cheek" because this scripture has been misinterpreted and used to condone violence and abuse:

*"But I say to you, do not resist an evil person;  
But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also."  
(Matthew 5:39)*

*"Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also"  
Luke 6:29a*

The scripture from Matthew and Luke, if not understood in terms of the Jewish customs of the time, seems to suggest that one should allow oneself to be abused by another. However, when put in the context of the culture, these statements tell a different story. In the time of Jesus, there was no such thing as indoor plumbing. The left hand, reserved for bodily functions, was considered "unclean"; it was the right hand which was used to eat, shake hands, and for other forms of social discourse. Therefore, it was a strong punishment for a thief to have his right hand cut off. Losing the right hand removed the person from social discourse and effectively

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ostracized him. Jewish law also forbid someone to strike someone with the back of their hand. Therefore, when Jesus instructed people to “turn the other cheek”, He was teaching a form of resistance to violence. In order to strike the face of a person who has turned the other cheek, it would be necessary to strike with the back of one’s hand—something that was prohibited under Jewish law. So, this helps us understand that Jesus is not instructing Christians to welcome violence. Instead, Jesus teaches us to resist violence.

### *The United Methodist Perspective*

The United Methodist Church provides guidance to the Church on the subject of domestic violence in the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church and the Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church. Paragraph 162 of The Book of Discipline states the following regarding the Rights of Women:

*F) Rights of Women—We affirm women and men to be equal in every aspect of their common life. We therefore urge that every effort be made to eliminate sex-role stereotypes in activity and portrayal of family life and in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the Church and society. We affirm the right of women to equal treatment in employment, responsibility, promotion, and compensation. We affirm the importance of women in decision-making positions at all levels of Church and society and urge such bodies to guarantee their presence through policies of employment and recruitment. We support affirmative action as one method of addressing the inequalities and discriminatory practices within our Church and society. We urge employers of persons in dual career families, both in the Church and society, to apply proper consideration of both parties when relocation is considered. We affirm the right of women to live free from violence and abuse and urge governments to enact policies that protect women against all forms of violence and discrimination in any sector of society. (Church, 2004a)*

The United Methodist Church seeks for women to live without violence and abuse and does not support violence in the family or other relationships. The Book of Resolutions provides a more in depth look at domestic violence, which is called out as a sin, and how the United Methodist community should react. The Book of Resolutions cites Judges 19 to instruct

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Christians to not be silent. In Judges, a Levite violently murders his concubine, and the community witnessing the violence speaks out saying: “Such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day they Israelites came up out of Egypt. Think about it! Consider it! Tell us what to do” (Judges 19:30). The Book of Resolutions states that, “we are commanded to break the silence, to give credence to the stories, to be agents of wholeness and justice” (Church, 2004b, p. 469). Christians should not ignore violence in our communities, but instead, speak out and help to bring about justice.

The Book of Resolutions also acknowledges that domestic violence exists in “virtually every congregation.” Therefore, churches need to create environments where victims can seek refuge. Churches can form this environment by listening to victims without judgement and taking seriously stories of domestic violence. The Book of Resolutions provides ten recommendations of action to local church congregations in Section 186 “Violence Against Women and Children”:

- 1. Create a church climate of openness, acceptance, and safety that encourages victims to speak of their pain and seek relief and healing.*
  - 2. Encourage all clergy and lay leaders to work collaboratively with community agencies on prevention strategies and to provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of victims, offenders, and other family members.*
  - 3. Adopt policy and procedures for keeping children and vulnerable adults safe from abuse in church facilities and programs.*
  - 4. Assess currently available prevention and response resources in the community and, where indicated as appropriate, initiate new programs and services. Wherever possible, undertake new programs ecumenically or as part of a community coalition.*
  - 5. Set up peer support groups for battered spouses, for adults who were sexually abused as children, and for rape victims. A trained resource person or professional counselor should be consulted for assistance in setting up peer support groups.*
  - 6. Encourage church members to volunteer their services to existing shelters, crisis centers, and other community services. Insist upon training for volunteers.*
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*7. Re-examine, and change if necessary, scriptural and theological messages, cultures, and traditions that validate violence or abuse or support a view of women as subordinate to men or children as property of adults. Pay particular attention to church teachings on repentance and forgiveness.*

*8. Maintain a library of printed and video resources on domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and the role of the church. Develop a utilization plan.*

*9. Participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Month each October and Child Abuse Prevention Month each April in the United States, or similar emphases in other countries.*

*10. Urge clergy to preach on domestic violence and sexual abuse topics; urge congregants to host or cooperate in community education events and to highlight opportunities for involvement in prevention and service activities.*

When victims come to the church, the congregation is called to welcome them and care for these victims. The Bible provides clear instruction in the story of the Good Samaritan found in Luke 10:25-37. As Christians, we are called to follow Christ's instructions to love and care for those who have been beaten down. The Good Samaritan demonstrated how we are to care for those in need. God has provided us each with gifts and graces which He can use to provide care, encouragement, and compassion to victims of domestic violence.

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## **Training for Clergy**

As described in the Secular and Church Views, the group surveyed pastors in the North Georgia Conference and 52% of the respondents indicated they have never been consulted about domestic violence. Since statistics indicated that at any point in time 25% of the female members of a given congregation are in situations where domestic violence is occurring, it begs the question, “Why do victims of domestic violence avoid discussing the issue with some of our pastors?”

Reverend Al Miles (2000) in his book, “Domestic Violence: What Every Pastor Needs to Know” describes in 1992 having participated in an all-day conference entitled, “Working Toward Family Peace—A Walk Together.” Invitations were sent to 1200 pastors in and around the vicinity where the conference was being held. When a show of hands was requested at the start of the conference, Miles was dismayed to find that of 120 attendees only 10 were pastors. The lack of pastoral response to the conference led Miles to write his book. Since that time, the number of pastors who have come up against the topic of domestic violence has increased. More recent data suggests that as pastors become more informed about the topic of domestic violence, their willingness to discuss it and effectiveness in counseling its victims improves.

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church states (2004a):—“We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms--verbal, psychological, physical, sexual--is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim.”<sup>1</sup> With the intent of giving pastors the information they need to successfully provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the

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victims of domestic violence, the following clergy development program has been developed based on existing resources and the research found in this report.

*Design considerations.*

The needs of clergy with regard to domestic violence are complex. Today, pastors who give advice without true understanding of the complexity of domestic violence can either (a) place the victim in danger, (b) miss an opportunity to change people for Christ, or (c) alienate the woman from Christ. A development program that simply offers information is insufficient to achieve the type of transformational learning that is necessary for true behavioral change to occur.

Incorporated into the design will be opportunities to draw on the wisdom of UMC pastors and apply lessons learned to effectively helping them cope with the complexity and range of domestic violence present in their congregations. This design utilizes best practices in both adult learning (Merriam, 1999) and leadership development: (1) Adult learning requires that the material be seen by participants as highly relevant to the work they do as pastors. (2) If the material does not allow the participants to make this connection, then learning is inhibited. (3) Adult learners understand that their experience represents a significant amount of the content that they will be learning. (4) The ability to immediately apply what has been learned is critical to the adult learner. (5) Adult learners' motivation to learn is based upon all of the preceding factors. When material is relevant, immediately applicable, and utilizes their experience, pastors will learn by co-constructing solutions to problems. Adult learning occurs on three levels:

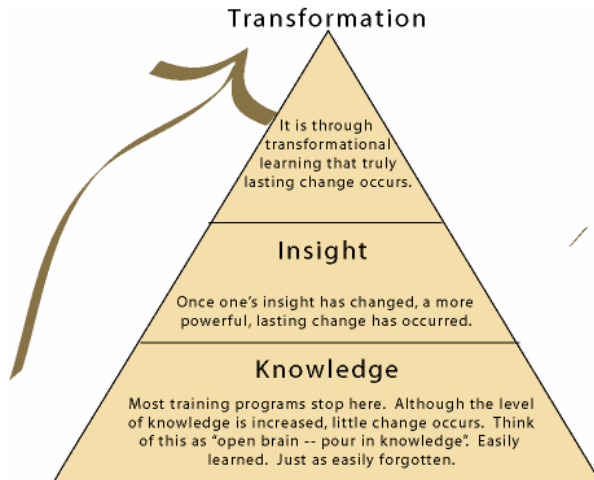
**Level 1 is Knowledge** – Most development programs stop here. Although such learners have increased their fund of information, the underlying form of their relationship to knowing remains

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unaltered. Knowledge is added, but change—lasting change—has not occurred. This program will provide knowledge of basic skills and competencies; however it will go beyond that.

**Level 2 is Insight**—throughout the design of this course we will create opportunities for pastors to gain insight. When one’s insight is changed, a more powerful, lasting change has occurred.

**Level 3 is Transformation**—when transformation (Mezirow, 2000) has occurred, what is



*Figure 1 - Levels of Learning*

changed is not only what leaders know but also the way they come to know things (Kegan, 1994). It is through this process that lasting change evolves. To accomplish this objective, we will utilize dialogue and action journaling to drive learning deeper into the DNA of each participant.

The specifics of this approach are outlined below.

## Simulations

Pastors learn best in an environment that is relevant to the challenges facing them in their churches. Pastors learn through experience. It is the single most cost-effective way of development, yet few take advantage of it. This design will include liberal use of simulations containing domestic violence cases, to create the critical experiences we want pastors to have.

The learning experience envisioned in this approach centers on a case studies simulating the experiences a pastor will have when attempting to deal with issues of domestic violence.

## Dialogue

Pastors learn best in an environment that is developmentally rich, highly relevant and emotionally intense. They learn by working in teams and drawing on the collective knowledge

of the group. To create an intense learning environment it is important to give pastors an opportunity to enter into dialogue. Dialogue is the art of thinking together in groups. Coming from the Greek, “dia logos”, it literally means through the meaning of the word. Dialogue is a powerful tool in one’s development arsenal. Through effective use of dialogue deep and lasting learning can occur. Using dialogue, pastors will co-construct unique solutions to domestic violence problems—solutions that they will be able to implement once they return to their churches. The problems presented will be customized to reflect the range of domestic violence issues that might present themselves in the churches.

### *Learning Objectives*

After having completed the United Methodist Church Domestic Violence Clergy Development Program, pastors will be able to:

1. Name the thirteen symptoms of domestic violence and identify the key signals they might receive from potential victims;
  2. Develop and deliver a sermon that offers Biblical teaching on the purpose of marriage and speaks out against domestic violence;
  3. Offer support to victims of domestic violence and provide clarity on what scripture does indeed teach through pastoral counseling on domestic violence.
  4. Provide safety to victims of domestic violence by referring them to facilities in their area that provide shelter.
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<b>Module &amp; Time</b>	<b>Performance Objectives</b>	<b>Instructional Methods</b>	<b>Content Resources &amp; Workshop Materials</b>
8:00–8:10 Introduction		Welcome and Logistics	
8:10–8:30 Worship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	<p>Pastors participate in a brief worship setting that sets the tone for the introduction of the topic of domestic violence.</p> <p>Scriptural readings should set the tone for the topics to be covered.</p>	
8:30—10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name thirteen symptoms of domestic violence</li> <li>▪ Describe how they might appear in conversation</li> </ul>	<p>Pastors view DVD called “Wings Like a Dove”</p> <p>Facilitated small group dialogue after each of the six parts of the DVD.</p>	<p>DVD “Wings Like a Dove” (Faith Trust Institute)</p> <p>Discussion guide</p>
Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>		
10:45—12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Name the five myths pastors hold regarding issues of domestic violence</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitator provides information regarding the five myths pastors hold regarding issues of domestic violence.</p> <p>Simulations provided for pastors to interact with that depict examples of myths in action.</p> <p>Pastors enter into discussion regarding how to handle these issues properly.</p>	
12:00—1:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	Lunch	
1:00—3:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Describe the dynamics of domestic violence</li> </ul>	<p>Broken Vows – Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence – Part I</p> <p>Pastors view part 1 of this DVD and then break into small groups to discuss what they heard.</p> <p>Facilitator gives the group a set of questions to discuss &amp; report out.</p>	DVD “Broken Vows” (Faith Trust Institute)
3:00—5:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Describe common</li> </ul>	Broken Vows – Religious Perspectives on Domestic Violence – Part II	DVD “Broken Vows”

<b>Module &amp; Time</b>	<b>Performance Objectives</b>	<b>Instructional Methods</b>	<b>Content Resources &amp; Workshop Materials</b>
	mistakes made by the faith community when dealing with domestic violence	Pastors view part 2 of the DVD which discusses how a congregation can and should respond to domestic violence. Small group breakout and facilitated discussion.	(Faith Trust Institute) God's Reconciling Love: A Pastor's Handbook on Domestic Violence
5:00—5:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Worship</li> </ul>	Worship Service	
<b>Day 2</b>			
8:30—12:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Role play effective pastoral care for victims of domestic violence</li> </ul>	Case Studies for Clergy on Domestic Violence Small groups role play effective pastoral counseling for victims of domestic violence. Facilitated debrief	DVD Series "Pastoral Care for Domestic Violence" Pastoral Workbook
12:00—1:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	Lunch	
1:00—2:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Counsel Premarital couples spelling out rights and responsibilities</li> </ul>	Changing premarital counseling to effectively address domestic abuse Presentation on topic. Facilitated small group discussion/report out/debrief.	Opening the Door: A Pastor's Guide to Addressing Domestic Violence Handbook
2:00—2:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Action planning</li> </ul>	Summarization of learnings and planning for what specific actions they will take when they return to churches.  Homework assignment: Prepare a sermon that speaks out against domestic violence, to be delivered in your church during the month of October (domestic violence awareness month).	
2:30—2:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪</li> </ul>	Closing worship session. Lighting a candle for women; perhaps have victims come and speak to them.	

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## Available Domestic Violence Resources in Georgia

The position of the United Methodist Church with respect to Domestic Violence is stated in the Book of Discipline, H) Family Violence and Abuse, page 142:—"We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms--verbal, psychological, physical, sexual--is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim."(Church, 2004a)

Given this position, the following pages provide a listing of resources, national, state and local, available to assist in cases of domestic violence. This is a brief reference that can be used when domestic violence issues occur. The possibility exists that some of our churches are better prepared than others to deal with Domestic Violence. Accordingly, this information may primarily benefit those pastors and churches that seldom have domestic violence issues arise.

Between 2 and 4 million women are annually victimized by domestic violence. When domestic violence occurs, most children witness the violence and suffer secondary psychological effects. Male children who witness abuse are more likely to become abusers themselves as adults (ABA Domestic Violence Commission). For those persons encountering domestic violence, there are measures to take in order to prevent further harm. Victims of domestic violence are strongly urged create a safety plan for a time of emergency, and the domestic shelters listed below will be helpful to obtain assistance (Divorcesource.com®, 2008).

Generally, local, short-term shelters (listed later in this document) support ending the violence and abuse, not ending the marriage. The local, short-term shelters guide the abused person(s) towards ending the violence. Average stay lasts between 30 and 60 days for the victims at a local shelter. Divorce in domestic violence cases can take up to 18 months to enact

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thru the court system. For this reason, local shelters typically cannot support helping with divorce due to staffing constraints. The shelters normally focus on safety planning, not divorce counseling.

Our local churches are unavoidably involved and acknowledge domestic violence as an issue. Victims of domestic violence need a strong support system, much stronger than the short-term shelters can provide:

“The local Women’s Shelter is recognized as the last resort for the abused person(s). All other safety nets have been removed when a shelter is utilized (e.g., family, friends, church, etc.). Due to demand for space, daily contacts occur among the shelters for capacity to place an abused person/family, and people are turned away every day for lack of space. Domestic Violence does not happen only in poor families, or families subject to drug abuse and alcoholism. Domestic Violence happens even where money is not an issue. Domestic Violence is about control, and the threat of violence is the means by which an abuser maintains and exhibits control. In 90% of Domestic Violence cases, the male is the abuser. Being submissive does not stop the controlling which leads to violence.”(Promise Place Women’s Shelter, 11/28/07)

Fortunately, churches are in position, as a first responder to the abused person, to provide counseling, support, finances, child care, transportation to work/school, mentoring, etc., to abused persons.

#### Governmental and Other Resources

- A statewide toll-free 24-hour crisis line: 1-800-33-HAVEN (334-2836) will automatically connect the caller to the nearest family violence agency. (Georgia Department of Human Resources, 2008)  
[http://dhr.georgia.gov/DHR/DHR\\_FactSheets/FactSheetDomesticViolence04.pdf](http://dhr.georgia.gov/DHR/DHR_FactSheets/FactSheetDomesticViolence04.pdf)
  - North Georgia has more than 45 certified family violence shelters, operated by private, nonprofit organizations. These shelters provide 24-hour crisis lines; legal and social service advocacy; children's programs; parenting support and
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education; emotional support; and community education. All of these agencies also offer emergency safe shelters. All services are free and confidential.

- To report Domestic Violence to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS) call: 1-800-869-1150. (Division of Family and Children Services, 2008)  
All county DFCS offices have domestic violence assessors who assist DFCS staff to identify and provide crisis intervention and relocation services to domestic violence victims receiving or applying for TANF assistance.  
<http://dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/portal/site/DHR-DFCS/>
  - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services( The National Women’s Health Information Center, 2008) and the Georgia Coalition against Domestic Violence(Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence, **2008**)  
<http://www.4women.gov/violence/state/StateResourcesDetail.cfm?ID=3736>  
<http://www.gcadv.org/>
-

114 New St. Suite B

Decatur, GA 30030

Toll-free phone number(s):  
(800) 33-HAVEN

Phone number(s):  
(404) 209-0280

Fax: (404) 776-3800

E-mail address: [inof@gcadv.org](mailto:inof@gcadv.org)

Web site address: <http://www.gcadv.org/>

For free legal aid and assistance in Georgia,  
also check:  
<http://www.usattorneylegalservices.com/free-legal-aid-georgia.html> ( US  
Attorney Legal Services, 2008)

If you're a victim of abuse or violence at the hands of someone you know or love, or you are recovering from an assault by a stranger, you are not alone.

To get immediate help and support call the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#)

at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

or the [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) at 1-800-656-4673.

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*Georgia Domestic Violence Shelters*

The Women's Shelters listed below understand domestic violence and safety concerns. Community organizations like these Women Shelters provide programs, services, and resources to people who have been victims of intimate partner violence or abused. These organizations can help prepare the court papers necessary to get legal help and protection.

Note: These shelters generally provide space on an available basis for the first 30-60 days following an abused spouse leaving home.

[http://www.womenslaw.org/GA/GA\\_links.htm](http://www.womenslaw.org/GA/GA_links.htm)(Women's Law, 2008)

**ALBANY**

- Liberty House of Albany - Women Shelters Georgia
  - PO Box 2046 Albany, GA 31702
  - Hotline: 229-439-7065
  - Phone: 229-439-7094

**ATHENS**

- Project Safe
  - PO Box 7532 Athens, GA 30604
  - Hotline: 706-543-3331
  - Phone: 706-549-0922

**ATLANTA**

- Face To Face YWCA of Greater Atlanta
    - 599 Mitchell St. Atlanta, GA 30314
    - Hotline: 404-752-6199
    - Office: 404-614-2029
  - Raksha: A Non-Profit Support Network for South Asians
    - PO Box 12337 Atlanta, GA 30355
    - Hotline: 404-842-0725
    - Toll-free: 866-725-7423 or 877-672-5742
  - Shalom Bayit (JFCS)
    - 4549 Chamblee Dunwoody Road, NE Atlanta, GA 30338
    - Phone: 770-677-9300
  - Baitul Salaam Network
    - PO Box 11041 Atlanta, GA 30310
-

- Phone: 404-366-6610
- Toll Free: 800-285-9489 (Enter Pin number "00" when prompted).
  
- Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence
  - P.O. Box 171 Atlanta, GA 30031
  - Hotline: 404-688-9436
  - Phone: 404-508-9717
  
- The Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute
  - 2740 Greenbriar Parkway Suite 256 Atlanta, GA 30331
  - Phone: 770-909-0715
  - Fax: 770-907-4069
  
- Partnership Against Domestic Violence (PADV)
  - 619 Edgewood Ave., Suite 101 Atlanta, GA 30312
  - Fulton County Hotline: 404-873-1766
  - Gwinnett County Hotline: 770-963-9799
  
- Georgia State Victim Assistance Academy (GSVAA) Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
  - 503 Oak Place, Suite 540 Atlanta, Georgia 30349
  - Phone: 404-559-4949
  - Fax: 404-559-4960
  
- State Bar of Georgia Pro Bono Project
  - 104 Marietta Street, NW Suite 100 Atlanta, Georgia 30303
  - Phone: 404-527-8763
  
- Georgia Advocates for Battered Women and Children
  - 250 Georgia Avenue, S.E., Suite 308 Atlanta, GA 30312
  - Toll free: 800-334-2836
  - Phone: 404-524-3847
  - Fax: 404-524-5959

#### AUGUSTA

- Safe Homes of Augusta PO Box 3187 Augusta, GA 30914
- Hotline: 706-736-2499
- 800-33-HAVEN (800-334-2836)

#### BLAIRSVILLE

- Support in Abusive Family Emergencies (SAFE)
    - PO Box 11 Blairsville, GA 30514
    - Office: 706-379-1901
    - Hotline: 706-379-3000
    - E-mail: [safedir@alltell.net](mailto:safedir@alltell.net)
-

**BLUE RIDGE**

- North Georgia Mountain Crisis Network
  - PO Box 1249 Blue Ridge, GA 30513
  - Office: 706-632-8401
  - Hotline: 706-632-8400

**BRUNSWICK**

- Glynn Community Crisis Center Amity House
  - PO Box 278 Brunswick, GA 31521
  - Phone: 912-264-4363
  - Hotline: 912-264-4357

**CALHOUN**

- Calhoun/Gordon County Council on Battered Women
  - P.O. Box 2315 Calhoun GA 30703
  - Phone: 706-629-6065
  - Hotline: 706-629-1111

**CAROLLTON**

- Carroll County Emergency Shelter PO Box 2192 Carrollton, GA 30116
- Hotline: 770-834-1141

**CARTERSVILLE**

- Christian League for Battered Women Tranquility House
  - PO Box 1383 Cartersville, GA 30120
  - Office: 770-386-8093
  - Hotline: 770-386-8779

**CEDARTOWN**

- Polk County Women's Shelter
  - PO Box 1647 Cedartown, GA 30125
  - Phone: 770-748-2300
  - Hotline: 770-749-9330

**CLARKSVILLE**

- Habersham Circle of Hope
  - P.O. Box 371 Clarksville GA 30523
  - Phone: 706-776-3406
  - Hotline: 706-776-3406

**CLAYTON**

- Fight Abuse in the Home (FAITH)
    - PO Box 1964 Clayton, GA 30525
    - Phone: 706-782-1003
    - Hotline: 706-782-1338
-

**CLAYTON COUNTY**

- Women Shelters Georgia Association of Battered Women
  - Hotline: 404-996-HELP (996-4357)

**COLLEGE PARK**

- The Women's Crisis Center of the Masters Inn, Inc.
  - P.O. Box 87515 College Park, GA 30337
  - Office: 404-969-6421
  - Hotline: 404-969-6423

**COLUMBUS**

- Columbus Alliance for Battered Women
  - PO Box 4182 Columbus, GA 31904
  - Hotline: 706-324-3850

**CONLEY**

- Safe Haven Transitional
  - PO Box 501 Conley, GA 30288
  - Phone: 404-241-8740

**CONYERS**

- Project Renewal
  - PO Box 1205 Conyers, GA 30012
  - Phone: 770-860-9770
  - Hotline: 770-860-1666

**CORNELIA**

- Circle of Hope
  - PO Box 833 Cornelia, GA 30531
  - Phone: 706-776-3406
  - Hotline: 706-776-4673

**COVINGTON**

- Women's Support Network Route
  - 3 Box 685 Covington GA 30209 706-929-6789
  - Hotline: 706-929-6789

**CUMMING**

- Forsyth County Family Haven
  - PO Box 1160 Cumming, GA 30028
  - Phone: 770-889-9431
  - Hotline: 770-887-1121

**DAHLONEGA**

- Noah's Ark
    - PO Box 685 Dahlonega, GA 30533
-

- Phone: 706-864-1306
- Hotline: 706-864-1986

#### DALLAS

- Shepherd's Rest Ministries
  - PO Box 737 Dallas, GA 30132
  - Hotline: 770-443-5213

#### DALTON

- Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center
  - PO Box 554 Dalton, GA 30722
  - Phone: 706-278-6595
  - Hotline: 706-278-5586

#### DECATUR

- Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
  - 114 New St., Suite B Decatur, GA 30030
  - Phone: 404-209-0280
  - 800-33-HAVEN (800-334-2836)
- International Women's House
  - P.O. Box 1327
  - Phone: 770-413-5557
  - Fax: 678-476-6804
  - Hotline: 770-413-5557
- Women's Resource Center to End Domestic Violence
  - PO Box 171 Decatur, GA 30031
  - Phone: 404-508-9717
  - Hotline: 404-688-9436

#### DOUGLASVILLE

- SHARE House
  - PO Box 723 Douglasville, GA 30133
  - Phone: 770-949-0626
  - Hotline: 770-489-7513

#### DUBLIN

- Women in Need of God's Shelter (WINGS)
  - Phone: 478-272-5880
  - Hotlines: 478-272-8000
  - 800-WINGS-03 (946-4703)

#### FAYETTEVILLE

- Promise Place
    - P.O. Box 854 Fayetteville, GA 30214
-

- Phone: 770.460.1604
- Fax: 770.460.6591

#### FORT BENNING

- Army Family Advocacy Shelter Building
  - #2640 Fort Benning GA 31905
  - Phone: 706-545-5516
  - Hotline: 706-545-6969

#### GAINESVILLE

- Gateway House (shelter and legal assistance)
  - PO Box 2962 Gainesville, GA 30503
  - Office: 770-539-9080
  - Hotline: 770-536-5860

#### GREENSBORO

- Circle of Love Center, Inc.
  - PO Box 641 Greensboro, GA 30642
  - Hotline: 706-453-4017

#### GRIFFIN

- Christian Women's Center
  - 174 School Road Griffin GA 30223
  - Phone: 770-227-3700

#### HARTWELL

- Northeast Georgia Council on Domestic Violence
  - PO Box 814 Hartwell, GA 30643
  - Office: 706-377-4141 or 706-377-4879
  - Hotline: 706-376-7111 (collect calls accepted)

#### HINESVILLE

- Coastal Area Support Team Phone: 912-877-2506
- Tri-County Protective Agency
  - PO Box 1937 Hinesville 31313
  - Hotlines: 912-368-9200
  - 800-334-2836

#### JESUP

- Wayne County Protective Agency Fair Haven
  - PO Box 1153 Jesup, GA 31598
  - Phone: 912-588-9999
  - Hotline: 912-588-0382

#### LAFAYETTE

- Family Crisis Center of Walker, Dade, Catoosa & Chattanooga Counties
-

- PO Box 252 Lafayette, GA 30728
- Phone: 706-375-7180
- Hotline: 706-375-7630

#### LaGRANGE

- Project LOVE
  - PO Box 2107 LaGrange, GA 30241
  - Hotline: 706-882-1000

#### LAWRENCEVILLE

- Partnership Against Domestic Violence - Women Shelters Georgia
  - Hotline: 770-963-9799

#### LEBANON

- Cherokee Family Violence Center
  - PO Box 424 Lebanon, GA 30146
  - Phone: 770-479-1804
  - Hotline: 770-479-1703

#### MACON

- Crisis Line & Safe House of Central Georgia, Inc.
  - 277 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Suite 204 Macon, GA 31201
  - Administration: 478-745-9292
  - Hotline: 478-738-9800
- Macon Rescue Mission Women's Division
  - 774 Hazel St. Macon, GA 31202
  - Phone: 478-743-5445

#### MARIETTA

- YWCA of Cobb County Crisis Intervention
  - 48 Henderson Street Marietta, GA 30064
  - Phone: 770-427-3390

#### MCDONOUGH

- Haven House
  - PO Box 1150 McDonough, Georgia 30253
  - Phone: 770-954-1008
  - Hotline: 770-954-9229
  - TTY: 770-954-9229

#### MORROW

- Clayton County Association on Battered Women Securus House
    - PO Box 870386 Morrow, GA 30287-0386
    - Phone: 770-960-7153
    - Hotline: 770-961-7233
-

## NEWNAN

- The Community Welcome House
  - 147 Jackson Street Newnan, GA 30264
  - Hotline: 770-304-0966

## ROME

- Hospitality House for Women
  - PO Box 6163 Rome, GA 30162
  - Phone: 706-235-4608
  - Hotline: 706-235-4673

## SAINT MARY'S

- Camden House
  - PO Box 5159 St. Mary's, GA 31558
  - Hotline: 912-882-7858

## SAVANNAH

- Savannah Area Family Emergency (SAFE)
  - PO Box 61119 Savannah, GA 31420
  - 3025 Bull St. Savannah, GA 31404
  - Office: 912-651-0004
  - Hotline: 912-629-8888
  - Toll-free: 866-390-SAFE (7233)

## STATESBORO

- Safe Haven
  - PO Box 2494 Statesboro, GA 30459
  - Hotline: 912-764-4605 or 912-764-9366

## THOMASVILLE

- Halcyon Home for Battered Women
  - PO Box 1838 Thomasville, GA 31799
  - Phone: 229-226-6682
  - Hotline: 800-284-9980 or 229-226-6666

## TIFTON

- Brother Charlie Rescue Center
  - P.O. Box 783 Tifton GA 31793
  - Phone: (229) 382-0577

## TAPESTRI

- Tapestri, Inc. PMB 362
    - 3939 Lavista Road, Suite E Tucker, GA 30084
    - Phone: (404) 299-2185
    - Fax: (770) 270-4184
-

- Hotline: 1-866-56-ABUSE (866-562-2873)

#### VALDOSTA

- The Haven
  - PO Box 5382 Valdosta, GA 31603
  - Hotline: 800-334-2836
  - Office: 229-244-4477

#### VIDALIA

- The Refuge Domestic Violence Shelter
  - P.O. Box 853 Vidalia, GA 30475
  - Hotline: 912-538-9935
  - Toll Free 866-8REFUGE (873-3843)

#### WARNER ROBINS

- The Warner Robins Salvation Army Safe House
  - PO Box 2408 Warner Robins, GA 31099
  - Phone: 478-923-2348
  - Hotline: 478-923-6294

#### WAYCROSS

- Concerted Services Magnolia House
  - PO Box 1964 Waycross, GA 31502-1965
  - Phone: 912-285-5840
  - Hotline: 912-285-5850

#### WINDER

- Peace Place
    - PO Box 948 Winder, GA 30680
    - Phone: 770-307-3633
    - Hotline: 770-586-0927
-

Transitional Housing(Transitional Ministries, 2/05/05)

Transitional Ministries can be reached on the web at the following addresses:

[http://www.ngumc.org/ministries/related\\_agencies](http://www.ngumc.org/ministries/related_agencies), then look for the ‘Action Ministries’ link, or enter the following URL: <http://www.actionministries.net/Default.aspx?tabid=783>

For information on admission, please contact the Action Ministries Case Management Director at 404-881-1991, ext. 118 ([amtjohnston@yahoo.com](mailto:amtjohnston@yahoo.com)). Regarding donations, volunteers, or other involvement, please contact Sara Evans, Director of Community Relations, Transitional Housing and Support, at 404-881-1991, ext. 174 ([sevans@actionministries.net](mailto:sevans@actionministries.net)).

Generally following the 30 to 60 day stay at a Women’s Shelter (listed above), should the family still need shelter, Transitional Housing may be of assistance. It is important to understand that that Transitional Housing is for families with children . Note below that documentation of both homelessness and children under 18 years is required.

Identified as a ‘Related Agency’ on the North Georgia UMC’s Connectional Ministries website, Action Ministries receives contributions from the North Georgia UMC Conference, and it has also received the Bishop’s Initiative for the past several years. Other sources of funds include, HUD, local churches (both UMC and non-UMC), and internal fund raising activities. Transitional Housing is multi-denominational.

Action Ministries serves people in need across North Georgia through programs tailored to local communities. Among these programs are the following:

- Operating soup kitchens in Athens, Atlanta and Rome;
  - Dispensing emergency help with rent, utilities, groceries, furniture, clothing, transportation and prescription drugs in Atlanta, Augusta, Gainesville and Rome.
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- Providing children's programs to assist homeless and low-income children in Atlanta and Augusta to provide
- Life-enriching experiences and opportunities for a better future.
- Positive relationships with volunteer mentors.
- Awareness to prevent substance abuse and teen pregnancy.
- Assisting families and individuals in Atlanta and Augusta develop the basic skills to manage their circumstances and become self-sufficient;
- Helping women to overcome the grip of drugs and alcohol at the Residential Addiction Treatment Center;
- Providing Christmas season toy and food distribution; and finally,
- Implementing and operating Transitional Ministries/Transitional Housing throughout North Georgia to assist homeless families with children to obtain safe, decent housing.

Action Ministries' Transitional Housing Program has been in existence since 1984 and serves homeless families with children through a systematic approach that aims to end the cycle of poverty. The objective of the program is to place homeless families into the Transitional Housing so that they may begin efforts towards securing permanent housing and gaining self-sufficiency. Once homeless families are placed into Transitional Housing sites, the program connects each family with a caseworker who provides intensive, individualized attention. Through this approach, life-skills training is provided which leads to learning new ways of facing the difficult challenges presented to these families. In turn, the families have a better chance of success upon graduation from the program.

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Because the program serves only families with children, countless youth have benefited from the services. Transitional Housing affords families the opportunity for stability and a greater sense of wellness as their families work towards independence. This program has a great potential to break the cycle of poverty that so often repeats itself in future generations.

One social problem addressed by Action Ministries' Transitional Housing program is domestic violence. Over half of the participants in the program originate from temporary domestic violence shelters (previously listed) or are fleeing from their homes. It is imperative that these individuals and their children have access to a safe place to live and a chance at stability. In addition, Transitional Housing case managers are able to ensure that everyone in the family has access to the necessary healthcare and counseling opportunities.

Finally, a unique aspect of the program is its wide range of services. Action Ministries' corporate headquarters are located in Atlanta and we currently have four properties in Atlanta that house homeless families with children. The rest of the Transitional homes, however, are located outside of the metro-Atlanta area, in regions that have very few resources for the homeless population. Many of the counties we serve have absolutely no other services or shelters and those that do often do not serve families with children. The need for the services provided by the Transitional Housing program is great and is ever-growing, especially in rural areas of Georgia.

Since 1984, Transitional Ministries has been helping homeless families with children escape homelessness and become self-sufficient. In 1997, the Transitional Housing program was expanded beyond Atlanta and Augusta into rural communities throughout North Georgia. Now Transitional Ministries has grown to serve not only families who are homeless, but also families

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who are homeless and have disabilities that require them to have assistance to be able to live on their own.

Today, Transitional Ministries manages 28 sites in the following communities: Atlanta, Augusta, Gainesville, Jasper, Ellijay, Dalton, Cartersville, Rome, Carrollton, LaGrange, Griffin, Greensboro, Washington, Thomson, and Harlem (See map below). Transitional Housing follows the DFACS guidelines.

Referrals are received by Transitional Ministries from the short-term shelters and from local churches, such as North Georgia Conference churches. Transitional Ministries generally sees the short-term Women's shelters (listed previously) as the first responders in domestic abuse cases. That is, it frequently falls to the short-term Shelters to take initial action to help the abused spouse and family consider options, needs and next steps for the initial 30-60 days. Of course, the local church is often involved with these cases, as well.

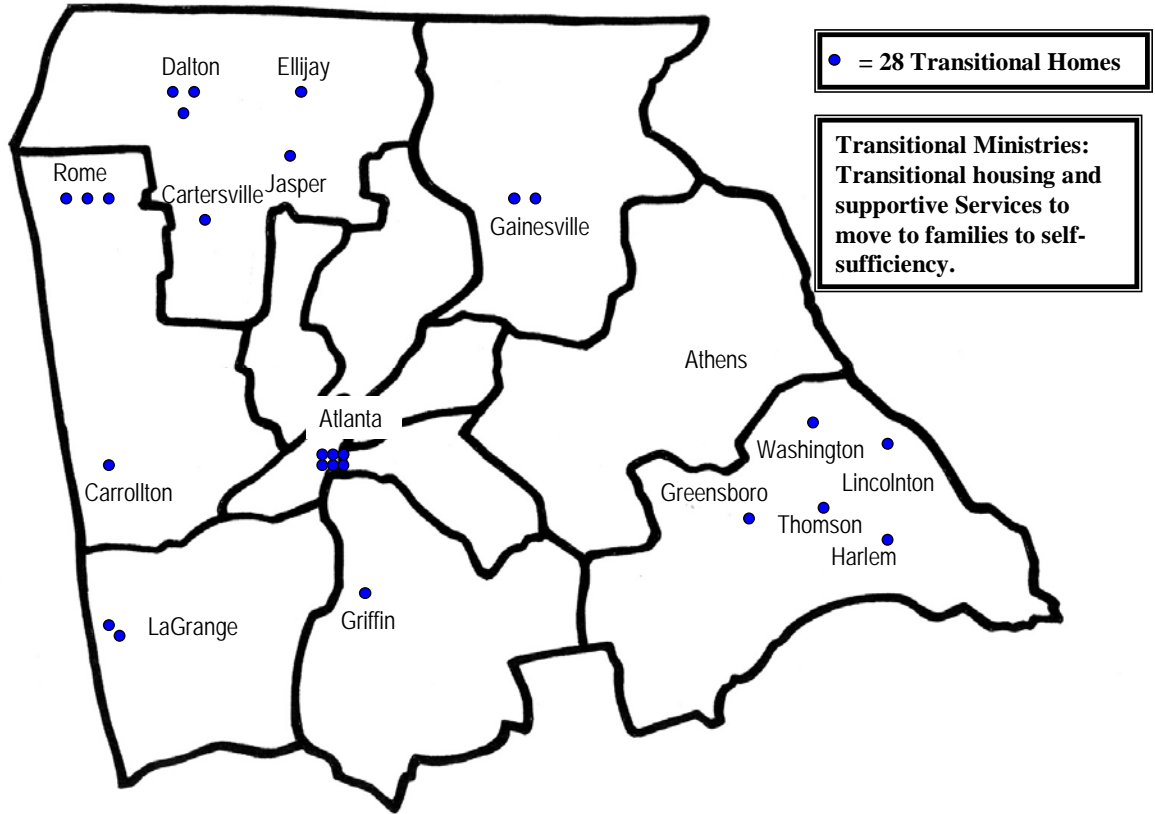
The primary goal of the Action Ministries Transitional Housing program is to move homeless families into transitional housing so that they are given access to the tools that will promote the opportunity for self-sufficiency with regards to parenting, education, jobs, etc. This goal is accomplished as follows:

1. Each family is provided a home, appropriate furnishings, and payment for utilities.  
Families in the Transitional Housing program average a nine-month stay, though they are permitted to stay for up to two years as they work towards self-support.
  2. Each family is provided with a case manager who assists the families in developing short-term and long-term life plans, including goals and the means by which to accomplish them. Case managers reside in the areas in which they serve and are familiar with community resources that can help these families accomplish their goals. Case managers
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meet with the families at least once per week in order to provide support and ensure that the families are working towards their goals. Weekly meetings also enable case managers to address problems the families might be experiencing.

3. Each family is required to establish a savings account. This ensures that, upon leaving the program, families have some financial independence and are more able to begin an independent lifestyle.
  4. Case managers work with each family in ensuring that children are enrolled in and attending school. For younger children, the Transitional Housing program works with parents in securing affordable, quality childcare and will assist the families until they can handle the cost.
  5. The Transitional Housing program sees that each family has access to transportation needed for employment. This occurs through the use of in-kind vehicle donations and/or funds for public transportation.
  6. As each family enters the program, Transitional Housing ensures that any family health needs are addressed. Case managers follow up with the families to make certain that health is maintained for all members of the families. Based on current results, 80% of the families entering the Transitional Housing program become self-sufficient, measured by achieving the plans developed by the families.
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**E. Transitional Housing Program**



Transitional housing through Action Ministries is comprised of 8 ministries providing services across north Georgia. The ministry offices are located in Rome, Athens, Augusta, Gainesville, Decatur, and four in Atlanta including the central office. Each blue rectangle highlights a ministry and the services provided. The blue circles are the locations of the transitional homes for families with children.

## Recommendations

Based on the research presented through this document, we offer the recommendations listed below as ways for the United Methodists Church to break the silence surrounding domestic violence:

1. Give congregations the message that Domestic Violence is a crime that, once uncovered, will be very costly and damaging for any family. Discuss Domestic Violence to take the secrecy out of the issue. (Transitional Ministries, 2/05/08) In truth, most Domestic Violence cases go unreported and unrealized beyond the family and closest friends. In the *Book of Resolutions*, local congregations are commended to “Urge clergy to preach on domestic violence...” and to, “Participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Month each October...” (Church, 2004b). Make it clear that Scripture does not excuse domestic abuse. The *Book of Resolutions* states, “We acknowledge the ways in which misinterpretation and misuse of Christian Scriptures and traditions have contributed to violence against women and children, and to the guilt, self-blame, and suffering which victims experience, and to the rationalizations used by those who abuse. A reexamination of those misused passages can help us reclaim traditions in ways that support victims and challenge abuse in the family.”(Church, 2004b)
  2. Invite a representative from the local Women’s Shelter to attend or staff a table for outreach discussions, on days when missions are highlighted at the church.
  3. Consider creating a Lay Domestic Violence committee, or institute Laity mentoring and/or support groups within the local church.
  4. Discuss Domestic Violence in Sunday school classes to increase awareness.
  5. Provide education/training for clergy and laity. (Church, 2004b)
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6. Provide support to a local short-term shelter.
7. Post contact information about Domestic Violence in private places (e.g., women's restrooms) in the church.
8. Use the church bulletin to provide information about Domestic Violence contacts within the church and outside agencies.

## **Appendices**

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### **Author Note**

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## **Footnotes**

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