

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Pastoral Resources for Action – African American

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

And Tamar put ashes on her head and tore the long robe she wore. And she laid her hand on her head and went away, crying aloud as she went (*II Samuel 13:19-20*).



The horrors of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) are brutal. SGBV is a demonstration of power and control that ignite deep emotional and physical wounds that scar one's life. Scripture records this in the stories of Tamar, (*II Samuel 13*), the victim of Judges 19, and Dinah (*Genesis 34*). All are grim reminders of the need to practice and affirm the sacredness of all and each person's right to safety and loving care.

The history of our faith is the history of attempts to recover the insight of Genesis 1, that all creation is sacred in God's sight, and all human beings are creatures made in the image of God. Jesus was an advocate for the sacred worth of all. In the account of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11), we see Jesus actively oppose violence against women. Jesus saw beyond the stigma and blame that her accusers imposed on her. Unlike King David, Jesus did not employ his power to conceal the injustice, but instead recognized her dignity, interrupted the proposed violence and sought to restore her to community. Jesus' response expresses his commitment to abundant life (John 10:10) and his call to create circumstances in which abundant life can thrive. Jesus' gracious response reaches for the redemption of both victim and perpetrator and stops the cycle of violence.

WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?



Violent, disrespectful, or abusive sexual expressions do not confirm sexuality as God's good gift. We reject all sexual expressions that damage the humanity God has given us as birthright, and we affirm only that sexual expression that enhances that same humanity.

¶161.H *Social Principles of the United Methodist Church*

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

Sexual assault occurs anytime a person is forced, coerced, and/or manipulated into any unwanted sexual contact, attempted or completed, without consent.¹



Sexual violence includes: intimate partner violence, stalking victimization, sexual coercion and rape are experienced by persons of every sexual orientation and gender. But the victimization of women is far more prevalent. We need to address gender based violence and exploitation.

1 in 5 African American women have been raped in their lifetime.²

¹ http://nkaceda.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Brochure_ENG_KAN-WIN.pdf

² http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf


1 in 5 African American women have experienced stalking in their lifetime and the same statistic for African American men is 1 in 17.³

More than three-quarters of female victims rape (79.6%) were first raped before their 25th birthday, with 42.2% experiencing their first completed rape before the age of 18 (29.9% between 11-17 years old, and 12.3% at or before age 10).⁴

Children who have experienced domestic and sexual violence may more likely tolerate the same behavior throughout their life. Sexual assault disempowers individuals, causing low self-esteem and worthlessness. Many survivors feel like they have lost control over their lives.⁵

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO?

Be a place of healing, grieving and hope

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- The church must continue to be a place where friends and family gather as a community to share their pain, seek care, and are accompanied on the long journey of healing.
 - We must continue to teach that we are all beloved children of God and celebrate the sacredness of women and children.
 - Church leaders should be prophetic in sermons and Bible study; speaking truthfully about sexual violence in our communities and the call of scripture to live into a world free of violence and where all are protected.
 - Church leaders should receive training to respond and care for those who are survivors of sexual and gender based violence.
 - Be an intergenerational place of healing and safety. Caring for survivors, reaching out to those experiencing harm and perpetrators alike.
 - Believe the survivor, never allow them to be blamed for their abuse and let them share their story.
 - Remember that the support survivors receive can make a significant difference between beginning the healing process and continuing to feel hopeless and isolated.⁶ We need to build a community of care to surround the person who has survived abuse.
 - Build relationships with the emergency care services, social service providers, health centers and shelters in your area. By building these relationships you will know what resources are available to your community, trust that care is culturally competent and know the barriers to care.

Teach and take steps

- Cherish and protect our bodies by encouraging discussion with youth and young adults about our bodies, sexuality, and sex.
- Children and youth should have an adult in their lives that they trust, who will believe and protect them.
- Ensure that there is comprehensive, culturally based sex education that includes sexual orientation, how to prevent sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and awareness of reproductive rights.
- Combine education and awareness events with other activities to help participants build trust and openness to ease into conversations about sexual violence.
- Generate awareness of sexual violence, dating violence, rape, stalking and their harmful effects. This will help us to destigmatize the shame that is often placed on the person who has survived abuse.

³ http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

⁴ http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

⁵ <http://www.nurturingchange.org/resources/understanding-domestic-and-sexual-violence/impact-of-domestic-violence-and-sexual-assault>

⁶ Ibid.

- Include men in preventing and speaking out against sexual violence. Encourage boys to develop positive identities and positive masculinity.
- Continue to be in conversation about and develop means to address gender based violence and oppression in our communities. Black Women's Blueprint provides resources and trainings on this nationwide. <http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org/gender.html>
- Create holistic comprehensive community solutions. Build trust with service providers as the healing process involves long and short term needs.
- Train service providers to see individual women in light of her socio-cultural and immigration history, consider her vulnerabilities and possible victimization. This helps advocates see the barriers that survivors face in their own communities.
- Train law enforcement officers, judges, court personnel, prosecutors, social service staff, and health care providers to identify and respond to violent crimes against women in your community.⁷

Ask for more



- **Advocate** for victim services in your community which should include: legal, medical, and counseling services, housing assistance, emergency shelter and transportation.⁸
- Lobby to have the US government spend more to provide resources and support to survivors of sexual assault. Health services should be multilingual, holistic, comprehensive, and culturally specific to navigate the barriers that prevent survivors from seeking care.
- **Get connected.** The General Board of Church and Society can support your efforts. Contact **Susan Greer Burton, Director of Women's & Children's Advocacy**, sburton@umcjustice.org

⁷ Henry, M. (2012, Spring). Effective Outreach and System Advocacy. Connections A Biannual Publication of Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Vol XV, 9 http://www.wcsap.org/sites/wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/files/uploads/resources_and_pubs/SPRING%202012%20CONNECTIONS.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Pastoral Resources for Action – African American

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

The frequency and acceptance of domestic violence within our communities is sometimes overlooked. Yet it weighs down, isolates, creates pain, seems endless, and limits vision, making life unbearable for the survivor of abuse. Luke 11:46, tells of loading people with burdens that are hard to bear, grievous and undesirable by others; yet no one is willing to lift a finger to help them. Such is domestic violence.



In Luke 13: 10-17, Jesus encounters the woman who had been bent over for eighteen years, unable to stand straight. She was so overcome with the burdens that she could only see the ground, she saw feet rather than faces, was alone, helpless and appearing to be worthless. That is what the burden of domestic abuse does, as it grips, immobilizes, and keeps victims oppressed. It is the role of the church to intervene and stop the abuse.

Jesus calls, not waiting to be asked, a gracious initiative that would change her life. He gives a kind yet powerful touch, speaks to her situation, brings freedom and courageously goes against cultural norms. God was glorified, and a woman and daughter who was bound for a long time was set free.

Everyone did not celebrate. Jesus shamed those gathered because their excuses for keeping her a victim were not acceptable. Something wonderful had happened – that which bound the woman had been broken. Christ touched one who was doubled over in pain and enabled her to walk upright again. May we go and do likewise and remove the burdens of violence, and abused suffered by so many, allowing freedom and glorifying God.

WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?

We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms—verbal, psychological, physical, sexual—are detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel and support for the victim. While we deplore the action of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God’s redeeming love.”



¶ *161.G Social Principles of the United Methodist Church*

The United Methodist Church affirms the sacredness of all persons and their right to safety, nurture and care. It names domestic violence and sexual abuse as sins and pledges to work for their eradication. The church commits itself to listen to the stories of battered spouses, rape victims, abused children, adult survivors of child sexual abuse, and all others who are violated and victimized. The church further commits itself to provide leadership in responding with justice and compassion to the presence of domestic violence and sexual abuse among its membership and within the community at large.

2012 Book of Resolutions, #3423, “Violence against Women and Children”

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one person to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner or family member. Abusive behavior can be physical, emotional, verbal, financial, and sexual.¹

Four out of 10 black women have been the victim of rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime.²

Domestic violence re-occurs. In a large sample of black women who have been abused over 1/3 of women reporting abuse had at least one other incident of severe domestic violence in the same year, and 1 in 6 experienced another less severe act of domestic violence.³

In a 2003 national study of high school students, approximately 14% of African American youth stated that a boyfriend or girlfriend had “hit, slapped, or physically hurt them on purpose” in the last year.⁴



- **Silence.** Communities of color often advocate that women keep silent about sexual and intimate partner violence in order to maintain a united front against racism.⁵ Thus racism and sexism complicate abuse and keep stories of abuse from being told.
- **Not wanting to report.** Many in the African American community do not trust the law enforcement or the justice system. This leads to the survivors of domestic violence not wanting to report abuse.
- **Inequality.** Domestic violence is a clear indication that there is inequality in the relationship which can result in an environment of fear and victimization. Therefore we must continue to address beliefs, attitudes and messages that are deeply embedded in our social structures and that create a culture that condones sexual violence and intimate partner violence.⁶
- **Economic insecurity.** “Intimate partner violence among black people occurs more frequently among couples with low incomes, those in which the male partner is underemployed or unemployed, particularly when he is not seeking work, and among couples residing in very poor neighborhoods, regardless of the couple’s income.” according to the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community University of Minnesota.⁷

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO?

Be a place of healing

- The church is the center of the community. The church can use this position to be a place of safety and support as the survivor engages in the process of healing.
- Receive training on how to respond to domestic violence, provide care and be an advocate.
- Form a group of trusted caregivers who have been trained to be a circle of confidential care and support for the survivor of abuse. This care will help the healing process.
- Preach and teach biblical messages that emphasize the sacredness of women and children, healthy family dynamics of caring for one another with mutual respect.

¹ http://nkaceda.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Brochure_ENG_KAN-WIN.pdf

² http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

³ http://www.idvaac.org/media/publications/FactSheet.IDVAAC_AAPCFV-Community%20Insights.pdf

⁴ http://www.idvaac.org/media/publications/FactSheet.IDVAAC_AAPCFV-Community%20Insights.pdf

⁵ <http://www.incite-national.org/page/analysis>

⁶ Adaptation from http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

⁷ http://www.idvaac.org/media/publications/FactSheet.IDVAAC_AAPCFV-Community%20Insights.pdf

- Boldly speak against violence in our communities. Silence and secrets allow for abuse to continue and allow us to accept violence as a social norm.
- Reach out confidently to those families where abuse is suspected.
- Affirm survivors for their courage and strength to seek support.⁸
- Never blame survivors for their abuse and believe their story.
- Encourage the family to be involved and support the survivor and perpetrator of abuse.
- Know the emergency care, social services providers and shelters in your area. Build relationships with caregivers so you trust referring community members for short-term and long-term care.

Take steps



- Create intergenerational spaces to confront gender roles and how negative aspects of those roles can lead to gender based violence.
- Emphasize the need for families to embody care, respect and be a supportive environment where disputes are resolved non-violently.
- Encourage men to see their role in ending domestic violence. Work to shape positive identities for boys and positive masculinity.
- Create holistic comprehensive community solutions. Holistic comprehensive care is important as the survivor builds trust with the care provider.
- Train service providers to see each individual woman in light of her socio-cultural and immigration history, consider her vulnerabilities and possible victimization.⁹ This helps advocates see the barriers that survivors face in their own communities.
- Train law enforcement on domestic violence and cross cultural competence.

Ask for more

- Lobby to have the US government spend more to provide resources and support survivors of domestic violence. Services should be multilingual, holistic, comprehensive, and culturally specific to navigate the barriers that prevent those who have been abused from seeking care.
- Lobby to decrease the barriers to emergency care services.

CONTACT US!

For more information, please email

Susan Greer Burton, Director of Women's & Children's Advocacy, sburton@umcjustice.org

⁸ <http://www.api-gbv.org/organizing/prevention-organizing.php>

⁹ <http://www.api-gbv.org/files/SexualViolence.HowtoInclude-APIIDV-2009.pdf>

FAMILY PLANNING

Pastoral Resources for Action - African American

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

I came that they may have life and have it more abundantly. *John 10:10*

Motherhood

Scripture reiterates the sacredness and significance of motherhood. God honors Eve, Hannah, and Elizabeth, whose roles as mothers are essential to our faith. Similarly, we also have stories of the sorrow and grief of maternal mortality, as seen in the lives of Rachel (*Genesis 35:16-20*) and Eli's daughter-in-law (*1 Samuel 4:19-20*).



Sadly, maternal and infant mortality are common tragedies for many women and families in developing countries. As frequently as once every 2 minutes, a woman dies while giving birth or in the days right after birth. Such tragedies can be prevented through interventions such as family planning, good prenatal and post-natal care, and skilled birth attendants.

Jesus' call to abundant life demands that his example, hearing the cries of those who bear great sorrow, cannot be ignored. Despite social isolation and rejection, the woman who is bleeding placed her faith in Jesus and reached out to touch his garments in order to be healed. Jesus' acceptance of her (*Matthew 9:20-22*) revealed his compassion, his acknowledgment of her suffering, and his boldness to challenge the status quo and intervene for her to have life in all its abundance.

The church is called to do the same.

WHAT IS FAMILY PLANNING?

Family planning matters, despite barriers of culture, misinformation, and gender inequalities. Since the formation of the Millennium Development Goals in 1990, the global community, through the United Nations, has proven that the decrease in maternal mortality is attributed to effective family planning made accessible in spite of economics or other hindrances.

Family planning:

- Enables spacing and timing of children so that a woman's body recovers, enhancing a healthier pregnancy
- Is a key factor for reducing infant and maternal mortality
- Promotes a clear understanding of sexual and reproductive health
- Prevents sexually transmitted infections (STIs)
- Gives tools to make the decisions that prevent unplanned pregnancies and the spread of HIV/AIDS, and reduces abortions
- Contributes to the wellbeing of women and girls increasing their opportunities for education, economic growth and contributions to the church and the nation.

WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?

Women, who are crying out for not only their own survival but also the survival of their families and communities, deserve access to services and care that empower their personal decision-making. As a global church, we are called to eradicate systems of oppression and marginalization that inhibit women's health and well-being.



2012 Book of Resolution, #3203, "Maternal Health: The Church's Role"

We affirm the right of men and women to have access to comprehensive reproductive health/family planning information and services which will serve as a means to prevent unplanned pregnancies, reduce abortions and the spread of HIV/AIDS.

¶ 162.G Social Principles of the United Methodist Church

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- Social and economic conditions, such as high rates of poverty, income inequality, unemployment, low educational attainment and geographic isolation can make it more difficult for individuals to protect their sexual health.¹
- Poverty rates are higher among African Americans than other racial/ethnic groups.²
- 1.4 million Americans without health insurance are black.³
- Roughly 16% of unmarried young black women nearly one in six have an unplanned pregnancy each year.⁴
- One survey that collected data from 2006-2010 by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that "Unmarried black women who had an unplanned birth reported the following reasons for not using contraception at conception: 25% did not think that they could get pregnant. 23% did not expect to have sex. 10% didn't really mind if they got pregnant. 12% said their partner did not want to use a birth control method. 18% were worried about the side effects of birth control."⁵
- African American communities experience higher rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) compared with other racial/ethnic communities.



WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO?

Be a space that cultivates community

- Support women who are often times the primary caregiver in the family and community.
- Teach women and girls that they are beautifully and wonderful made.
- Ensure that life is lived to fullest as each person is able to secure all that is needed to live an abundant life.
- The church is a space for intergenerational discussions of: identity, gender roles, sexuality, sexual identity, healthy relationships, and what it means to be a family.

Teach and take steps

- Map out what resources are available to your community by meeting with healthcare providers and social services agencies that focus on women's health, hygiene, and reproductive rights.

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats12/minorities.htm>

² <http://www.cdc.gov/std/stats12/minorities.htm>

³ <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2015/1/26/many-african-americans-fall-into-a-health--coverage-gap>

⁴ http://thenationalcampaign.org/sites/default/files/resource-primary-download/fastfacts_upsexualactivitycontraception_black.pdf

⁵ http://thenationalcampaign.org/sites/default/files/resource-primary-download/fastfacts_upsexualactivitycontraception_black.pdf

- Spread the word. The Affordable Care Act ensures that insurance covers at little or no cost Prevented Care Services which include HIV and Sexually Transmitted Disease screenings, Women's Preventative Health Services, HIV and STD screening and counseling, FDA approved birth control, breast feeding support and supplies, also covered is Essential Health Services including maternity and new born care.⁶
- Work with healthcare providers and social service agencies to understand the needs and barriers to care that affect African American women.
- Ensure that there is comprehensive, culturally based sex education that covers sexual orientation, how to prevent sexually transmitted infections, pregnancy and awareness of reproductive rights.⁷ This could be used to educate youth and young adults.
- Women should be informed about emergency contraception and care that is available and that they have access to.
- Advocate for and increase access and affordability of condoms and birth control to prevent unplanned pregnancy, to reduce sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.
- Model relationships of mutual respect. Each person in the relationship should feel free to ask their partner to use protection to guard against sexually transmitted diseases.
- Encourage youth and young adults to seek relationships to be built on mutual respect and equality.

Ask for more

- Work to ensure an increase in access to comprehensive healthcare providers in African American communities that are culturally competent.
- Call for the monitoring of the implementation of the Affordable Care Act and other state and congressional actions in order to ensure that Black women's health needs are being addressed and met.⁸
- Promote reproductive rights by expanding contraceptive access, availability and affordability.⁹
- **Get Connected.** Contact **Susan Greer Burton, Director of Women's & Children's Advocacy,** sburton@umcjustice.org

⁶ <http://www.bwhi.org/issues/healthcare/access-to-healthcare/>

⁷ Yee, J. (2012, Spring). Voice from the Field. Connections A Biannual Publication of Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, Vol XV, 9 http://www.wcsap.org/sites/wcsap.huang.radicaldesigns.org/files/uploads/resources_and_pubs/SPRING%202012%20CONNECTIONS.pdf

⁸ <http://www.bwhi.org/issues/healthcare/access-to-healthcare/>

⁹ <http://www.bwhi.org/issues/reproductive-health/contraception-access/>

HIV/AIDS

Pastoral Resources for Action - African American

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Read Luke 17:12-19

The parallels between leprosy in scripture and HIV/AIDS are staggering. Both are dreaded, because there is stigma, shame, blame, and are seen as death sentences that cast the victims away from community and family. Hence, Christ's encounters with lepers sets standards for ministry with those infected with HIV/AIDS.



- Jesus hears and responds to the loud cry for mercy.
- Jesus immediately brings hope to what appears to be a hopeless situation.
- Jesus enables return to community.
- Jesus acknowledged the person's return.
- Jesus engenders praise, thanksgiving and glory to God.

For bible study questions see guided questions for Luke 17:12-19

WHAT DOES THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAY?

"The global AIDS pandemic provides a nearly unparalleled opportunity for witness to the gospel through service, advocacy, and other healing ministries. United Methodist public health specialists, health workers, social workers, teachers, missionaries, clergy, and laity live and work in areas where the AIDS pandemic is spreading. United Methodist congregations, schools, health facilities, women's, men's, and youth groups can play a major role by providing awareness, support, education, and care to those affected by HIV/AIDS."



2012 Book of Resolution, #3243, "The Church and the Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic"

In response to the HIV/AIDS crisis in the world, The United Methodist Church commits itself to a holistic approach of awareness, education, prevention, treatment, community organizing, public advocacy, and abstinence.

2012 Book of Resolution, #3243, "The Church and the Global HIV/AIDS Pandemic"

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

African Americans have been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS since the epidemic's beginning, and that disparity has deepened over time.¹



In 2012, African Americans had the largest percentage (47%) of the estimated 47,989 diagnoses of HIV infection in the United States.²

An estimated 1 in 16 African American men and 1 in 32 African American women will be diagnosed with HIV infection.³

Gay and bisexual men account for most new infections among African Americans; young gay and bisexual men aged 13 to 24 are the most affected of this group.⁴

¹ <http://kff.org/hivaids/fact-sheet/black-americans-and-hiv-aids/#footnote-110986-1>

² <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/raciaethnic/africanamericans/index.html>

³ <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/raciaethnic/africanamericans/index.html>

Close to 73,600 HIV infected persons in the African American community in 2011 were unaware of their HIV status. Late diagnosis of HIV infection leads to late treatment and transition to others.⁵

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO?

- Host a bible study to discuss and identify the ways Luke 17:12-19 calls your community to respond.
- Continue to be the center of the community by being a place that is open to supporting people living with HIV/AIDS through prayers, presence, and assistance.

Prevention

- Break the history of stigma and silence around this epidemic.
- Know your HIV/AIDS status.
- Be honest about your status and reach out to others for support.
- Reduce stigma by creating confidential space for people to share their status and story. This will help with prevention and normalization.
- Promote the awareness of the nearest testing center. Services provided are confidential.
- Promote safe needle exchange programs, due to high number of new infections resulting from drug usage.

Education

- Church should be a safe space to talk about identity, sexuality, sex, sexual violence, reproduction, family planning, Sexually Transmitted Diseases and drug use.
- Teach equality so partners can ask their partner to use protection to guard against STD's and sexually transmitted diseases.
- We must continue to shape positive identities in our youth so they value one another and build relationships of mutual respect and care.
- Learn about the barriers to care in your community and act to address them.

Call Attention To

- Build relationships with health service providers in your community by sharing their resources and knowing how they interact with clients.
- In your church community create a network of communal care that supports the immediate and long term needs of those persons in your community living with HIV/AIDS
- Create an action plan, gather information, and review policies that relate to HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment while generating community support.
- Lobby to increase funding for comprehensive health services in your community that are culturally competent in order to reduce barriers to care.
- Plan an event for National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, Feb 7th. For more information visit <http://nationalblackaidsday.org/>
- **Get connected.** The General Board of Church and Society can support your efforts. Contact Susan Greer Burton at sburton@umcjustice.org

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Pastoral Resources for Action

Guided Questions for Luke 17:12-19

In your community what gets in the way of people experiencing hope?

What does it feel like when you are shunned or excluded from your community?

How is shaming and stigma visible?

Why do we blame victims of HIV/AIDS? How do we benefit from this blame?

How do we make those who are infected and affected seem estranged?

If we were to be more like Christ we would offer healing, and care for those living with HIV/AIDS and those who are affected; how have you been a part of this healing?

In your community a place of welcome or does it hold on to the fear and stigma associated with HIV/AIDS? How could you change this culture of misinformation and fearful?

What traditions or customs do we have to welcome people back to the community?

How will you celebrate God's presence among you as you work to end HIV/AIDS in our community?

