

Shattering the Silence About Abuse: Support for Clergy

She sang in the choir, worked in children's ministry and was a faithful member of the prayer team. Her husband also sang in the choir, was involved in men's ministry and was a well-liked gentleman. They were a middle class family and strong financial supporters of the church. On the surface they appeared to be a highly functional Christian family.

I can still remember the day I met her over 25 years ago. The lady was crying uncontrollably. Her body was bruised. Her wrists were red from the ropes her husband had used to tie her to the bed. Her story sounded like something out of a Hollywood movie - not of a respected church family. Sadly, the pastor dismissed the allegations, concluding that this was just an emotional woman who was not credible. And, he inferred that she must have done something to incite her husband's anger against her. If she had submitted to his authority, this never would have happened.

This was not only an irresponsible and unconscionable response, but it was also a misrepresentation of scripture and the heart of God. God does not sanction abuse or the dehumanization of His creation. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are to respect and honor people.

Excerpted from the sermon by Rev. Miriam Mollering, Center Street Church, Calgary, AB



The RAVE Project
University of New Brunswick
2 Garland Court, Suite 205
Fredericton, NB, E3B 6C2
Canada

www.theraveproject.org
Phone: (506) 458-7283
Email: rave@unb.ca

The RAVE Project

(Religion and Violence e-Learning)

Team Mission

There is no place like home; when abuse strikes, there is no home.

RAVE seeks to equip religious leaders to respond to domestic violence ways that are compassionate, practical, and informed by the latest research and best practices for professionals;

RAVE seeks to build bridges between the steeple and the shelter;

RAVE seeks to walk alongside victims and survivors on their journey towards healing and wholeness; and

RAVE seeks to hold abusers accountable for their actions, while offering hope for a transformed life.

Members of the RAVE Project Team

- Nancy Nason-Clark
- Barbara Fisher-Townsend
- Steve McMullin
- Cathy Holmann
- Michelle Soucy

The RAVE Project

Religion and Violence e-Learning

www.theraveproject.org

Listening to the Voices of Religious Leaders

Interviews from religious leaders concerning domestic violence and what they have to say about the reality of abuse in their ministries:

I thank the Lord that I'm a great big two-hundred pound guy because I've had a husband who was violent against his wife haul and hit me and all I could think about was "these glasses cost me two hundred dollars and I don't want to get them broken." So I put my fists up and I said, "Go for it"... If a man is screaming at me, as in this case, I don't coward down... If another man can try to intimidate me, great big two-hundred-pound-guy, what makes me so friggin' mad is another man would do that to [his wife] ... I see the violence against women and it makes me mad, and there's a lot of it going on.



I've had a lady who has come to me out of, out of fear for her own life and her children's lives, with a husband who, again has come from an abusive home. They have had eighteen years together, it has not been a happy relationship. . . . He has pushed and shoved her from time to time. But his scare tactic is to take his hunting rifle out and lay it on the bed and say, "OK, I'm

gonna shoot myself, I'm gonna shoot myself and somebody else." She has endured this kind of abuse for . . . years and he always comes back, in tears himself, with being remorseful and says I'll never do it again . . . only to repeat it.



Top ten check-list for considering whether or not a congregation or religious leader is serious about the issue of abuse.

1. Do you offer a listening ear?
2. Does your church washroom offer information about abuse?
3. Does your congregation, or ministry groups within it, partner with the local transition house?
4. Is violence ever discussed in your church youth group?
5. Do you make appropriate referrals to the resources in your community?
6. Is violence discussed in your pre-marital counseling?
7. Do you realize the importance of spiritual resources for victims of abuse?
8. Do you share the load amongst the flock?
9. Do you offer ministry opportunities to those who have received the care and counsel of the church?
10. Do you offer ministry opportunities to those who have received the care and counsel of the church?

How Can We Help?

We offer resources for clergy:

- Contact information for shelters throughout Canada and the United States
- A downloadable safety plan
- Sample sermons
- On-line training
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQS)

Ideas on how to:

- Assist a victim looking for help
- Raise awareness in your church on abuse
- Partner with your community to stop violence
- Support the local shelter

The RAVE Project
www.theraveproject.org

Need Help Now?

Call: