

Domestic Abuse and Faith Communities

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Domestic Abuse (DA)

- An incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse, psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional between adults who are or have been intimate partners or family members (Archbishop's Council 2006:ix)

Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project



Spiritual Abuse

- Belittling spiritual worth, beliefs and deeds
- Preventing performance of spiritual acts
- Causing transgressance of spiritual obligations or prohibitions

(Dehan, Levi 2009:1300)

Global Phenomenon

- Primates acknowledged with grief that gender based violence is a global phenomenon and that all but a very small percentage of such violence is perpetrated by men against women, with devastating effects on individuals, families and society.

(The Anglican Communion 2011)

Global Incidence

- ‘Women between the ages of 15 and 44 run a greater risk worldwide of being the victims of rape or of abuse in the home than they do of contracting cancer or malaria, or of having an accident’

(Carfagna cited in G8 Summit 2009)

Incidence of DA

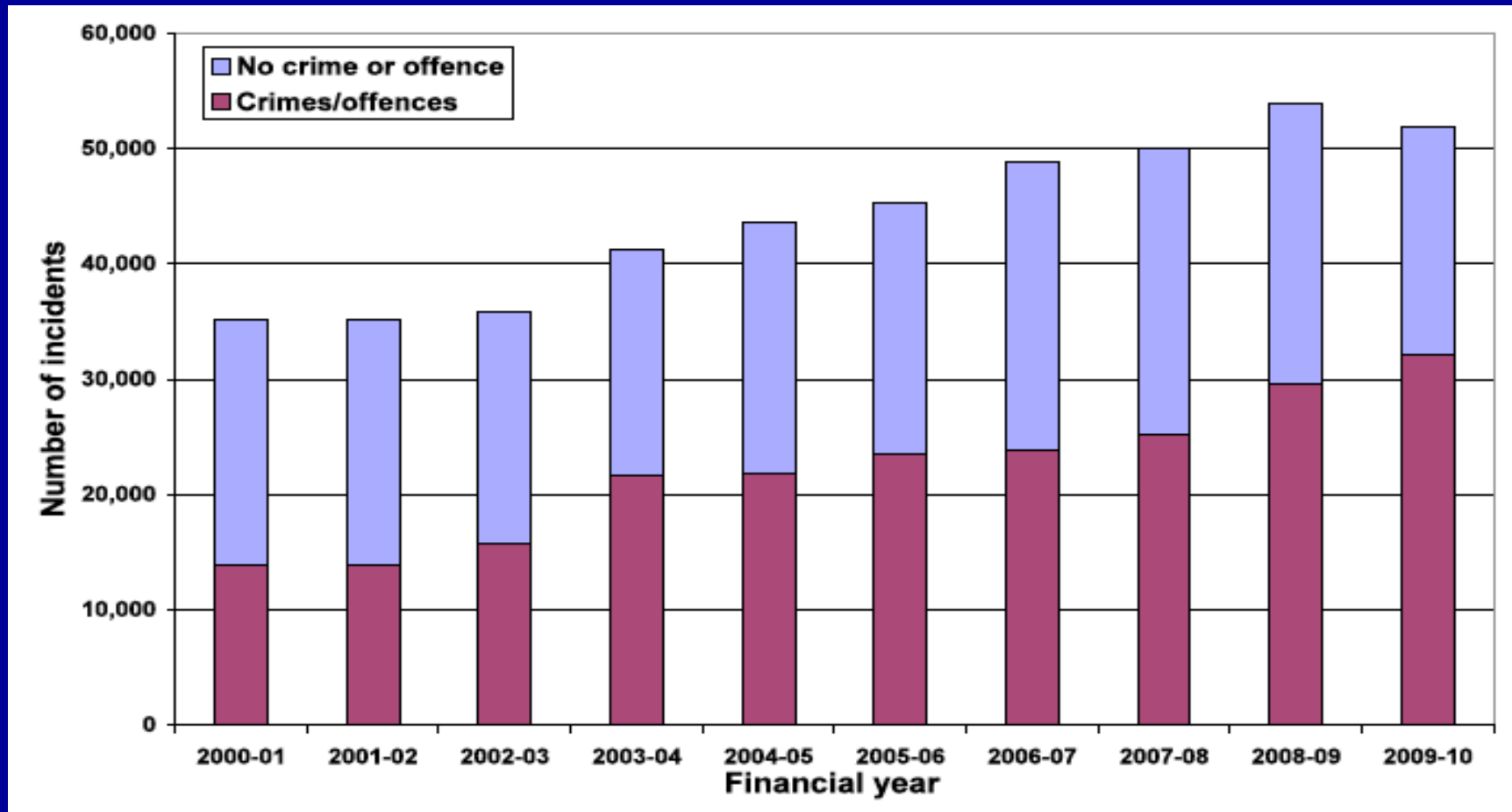
- 1 in 5 women experience DA
- Between 6-10% of women suffer DA in a given year
- DA accounts for 16- 25% of all violence
- 2 women per week are killed by a male partner or former partner

(10 separate studies Council of Europe)

Suicide and Domestic Abuse UK

- 500 women commit suicide each year
- 200 of these had attended hospital as a result of domestic abuse on the day they died
 - Walby, S. (2004) The Cost of Domestic Violence. Women and Equality Unit.
http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/research/cost_of_dv_Report_sept04.pdf.

Incidents of Domestic Abuse Recorded by Police in Scotland (TSG 2010)



Incidents (Strathclyde)

- **Between 31/03/08 and 22/03/09**
- **11 Homicides/ 28 Attempted Murders/
241 Serious Assaults/ 41 Rapes/ 97
incidents of Threats, Extortion and
Abduction/ 1775 Bail Offences**

(TSG 2010)

Children and Domestic Abuse

- Almost 75% of children on 'at risk' register live in households affected by DA
- Children are themselves abused – 30-66%
- Generations affected by the legacy of abuse- attachment, behavioural problems

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(SWA 2009)

Feelings expressed by young people – survivors of DA

- Sadness, being scared of being hit, broken and hurt
- Trauma - listening to abuse
- Isolation - no one wanted to listen to their story
- Guilt of not being able to protect their mother

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(SWA Conference Edinburgh 2011)

Agencies known to Young People which offer help

- Refuge
- Childline
 - Police
- Social work
- Hospitals

(SWA Conference Edinburgh 2011)

Why don't they leave?

- Perpetrator does everything to keep victim
 - Fear
 - Shame
 - Lack of opportunity
 - Stockholm Syndrome
- Lack of refuge accommodation

Silent Response

- The majority of men are not violent against women, however the majority of men have remained silent and due to this silence the violence has been allowed to continue – because men control governments, police, religious institutions, legal systems, media and the corporations

(Kaufman 2007:1)

Survivor's Voice

- The church seemed almost the last place for honest sharing of pain and vulnerability
- “the violence is IN the silence”

(CoS 2003)

Silent Response by FCs

- It is the silence, the unwillingness to acknowledge the horror that leaves victims isolated, protects perpetrators and thwarts healing. We must break the silence to be agents of justice

(Halsey in Geanacopoulos cited in Clapsis 2007:134)

Suggested explanations for the silence of FCs

- Knowing of our need for forgiveness
 - Fear
 - Feeling of helplessness
 - Lack of resources

Pastoral Support received by some victims of DA

- ‘You have to work harder at being a better wife’
- ‘Pray so you’ll be able to endure this pain –God will never give you more than you can bear’
- ‘Divorce is a sin. You must do everything possible to keep your family together’
- ‘The wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does’

(Miles 2000:23)

Faith Inspired Response

- Domestic abuse is a 'violation of God's wish for humanity'
- People of faith called to be on the side of the oppressed, to challenge injustice.
- Justice and the love of God are inseparable

Badge of Identity FCs

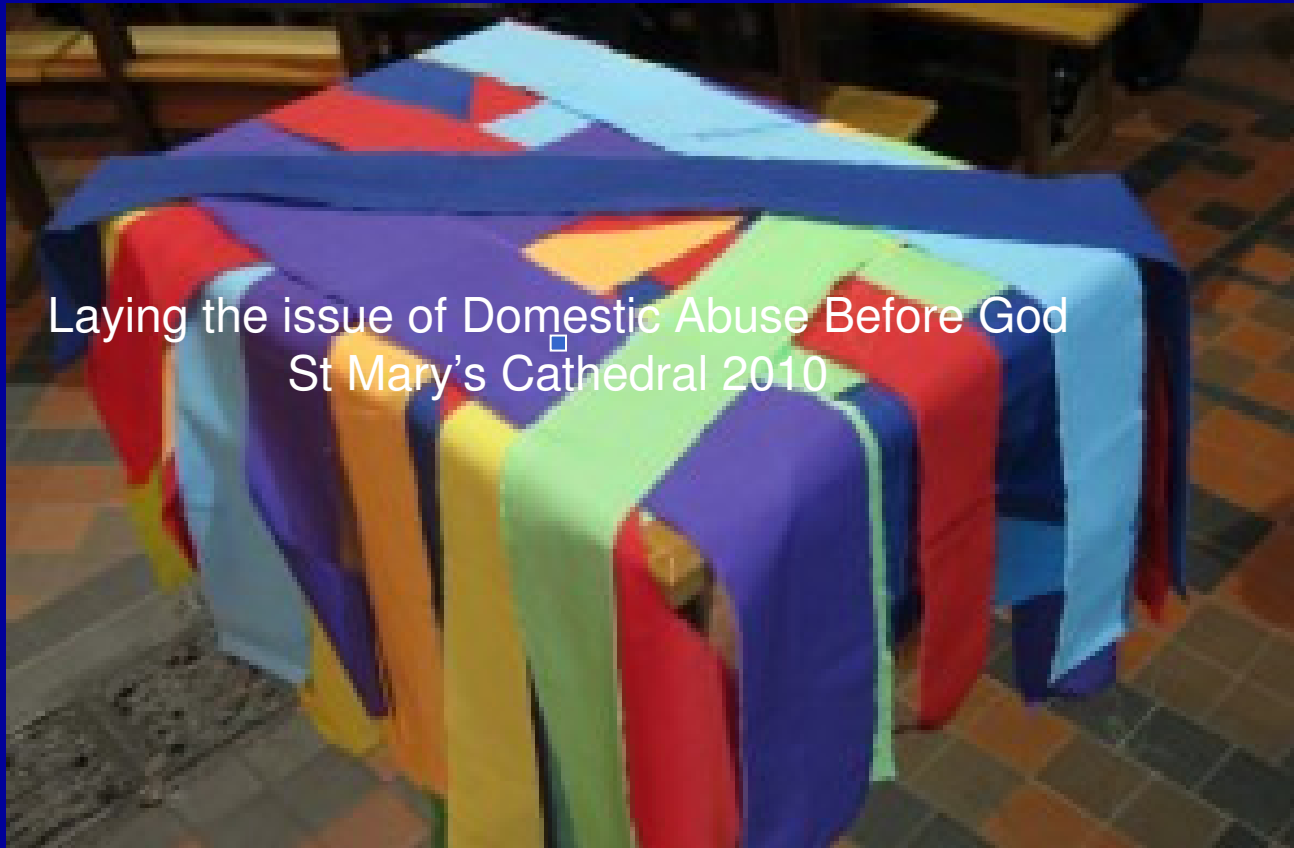
- Includes opposition to all forms of violence against humans, nature and the environment

(Williams cited in Gnanadson 1993:78)

Worship

- Essential component is the glorification of God
- Pastoral role – addresses issues of social justice
 - Honours the experiences of the community it serves
- Meaningful, accessible – language, symbols, prayers and hymns

Worship and Prayers



Laying the issue of Domestic Abuse Before God
St Mary's Cathedral 2010

Faith Community Premises

- National Domestic Abuse Helpline
Scotland 24 hours tel 0800 027 1234
- Posters condemning DA
- Offer prayers, develop liturgies,
sermons
- Services on 25th November
- Develop links with women's refuges
and White Ribbon Campaign

Signs of Hope



- The white ribbon is a public promise never to commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women

(Kaufman 2003)

The Souls of our Shoes

Faith Communities Working Together to Tackle Domestic Abuse



St Mungo's Museum of Religion from 25th
November till Christmas 2011

Partnerships



SCOTTISH WOMEN'S AID
STOP IT CAMPAIGN

Faith Communities -

10 things you can do to stop

DA

Domestic Abuse Aware

- Raising awareness and ensuring your place of worship is 'domestic abuse aware' you can benefit community members and save lives

(SWA 2011)

Perpetrators

- Provide opportunities to seek forgiveness from God and to be transformed
- Support Government initiatives - Finance ring-fenced from justice budget

Prayer

- God of love, justice, mercy and compassion inspire and strengthen us all, women, men and children to work to eradicate the scourge of domestic abuse so that your peace prevails and your Kingdom comes. In Jesus name **Amen**