



#Press for Progress! Ending Violence against Women and Girls

A Resource for Faith Communities inspired by International Women's Day 2018.

About YWCA Ireland

YWCA Ireland seeks to empower women in their leadership, Christian faith and human rights. Inspired by our Christian faith and as part of a worldwide movement of women leading change, we support and encourage women in communities throughout Ireland. For more information visit www.ywca.ie

Using this resource

****Trigger warning. This resource discusses violence against women and girls****

This resource can be used to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women and girls in your community and/or church. The resource can also be utilised to inform personal reflection and prayer. It is hoped that this resource will inspire and support positive action to end violence against women in Ireland and worldwide on International Women's Day and beyond.

“Violence against women and girls takes many forms and is widespread throughout the globe. It includes rape, domestic violence, harassment at work, abuse in school, female genital mutilation and sexual violence in armed conflicts. It is predominantly inflicted by men”.

(Ban Ki Moon, Former UN General Secretary)

It is important to be aware that women and girls of faith can be victims of violence too. As leaders and members of faith communities we must ensure that the victims and survivors of violence are not silenced or blamed. Furthermore, we must acknowledge that faith communities have an important role in creating healing and restorative spaces for the women and girls impacted by violence.

Recommended Reading: Scars Across Humanity: Understanding and Overcoming Violence against Women. Front Cover · Elaine Storkey. SPCK, Nov 25, 2015

Scripture Reflections

Luke 4:18-19

He sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favour has come.

Excerpt from Scars across Humanity; Understanding and Overcoming Violence against Women (p. 220 -21)

“The Gospels give us a glimpse of how Jesus cuts open cultural norms, hierarchies, stereotypes, and the low status of women, and injects the reality of equal significance before God. A woman is about to be stoned for having illicit sex (not her partner, although the Torah rule includes them both), Jesus challenges her prosecutors about their own sins, and she is freed. He heals a woman struggling with menstrual problems, who touches his clothing, in direct defiance of the laws of menstrual hygiene. She makes him ritually ‘unclean’, yet he ignores that and commends her faith (Luke 8). Jesus asks a despised and much-divorced Samaritan at the well for a drink and discloses to her his identity as Messiah (John 4). He accepts tears and kisses from a former prostitute who perfumes his feet and dries them up with her hair in gratitude for her own new freedom, and rebukes the poor hospitality of his hosts (Luke 7). He banters with a Canaanite woman about the primacy of the Jews, and heals her daughter (Mark 7). He brings life to a widow's only son, recognizing her social vulnerability as well as her devastation at his loss (Luke 7). He notices a struggling spondylitis victim and heals her, defying legalist authorities (Luke 13).

Women are included among Jesus closest friends and followers: Joanna, the wife of Herod's household manager, Susanna, Mary Magdalene, whom he releases from a life of emotional turmoil, Mary and Martha whose home he visits regularly. His stories often relate to women's domestic lives – sweeping rooms, baking bread, looking for lost coins, being pregnant, facing authorities and seeking justice. He points out the generosity of a poor widow and affirms mothers who bring their children to be blessed, despite his impatient disciples. When dying in great pain, he commits the care of his mother to John, his disciple. His women disciples come to anoint his body and are heralded as the first witnesses of his resurrection. It is not surprising that, through the centuries, women have found their own identity and significance in following Christ. As both victims and advocates, they draw inspiration from the Gospels to fight injustice and bring transformation.”

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The Apostle Paul advocates dismantling those barriers that privilege some and penalise others. He compels Christians to recognise the freedom from cultural bondage that true faith brings, and experience unity and equality in the body of Christ.

Isaiah 32:16-18

The Lord's justice will dwell in the desert, his righteousness lives in the fertile field. The fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and

confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest.

Excerpt from Scars across Humanity; Understanding and Overcoming Violence against Women (p. 220)

“Christ faces the injustice of the world, the brutality of the human race, and dies for sin. To human minds it is unfathomable. Its reality comes home in our experiences of forgiveness and resurrection. This means that there is always hope for those struggling with oppression and violation. Lives can be restored, pain healed, bondage broken, the past left behind. Repentance and change can transform even repressive structures. Redemptive living affects gender relations as it affects everything else”.

Discussion Points

Gender based violence is a global epidemic and a grave violation of human rights. All forms of gender based violence have a profound impact on victims, their families and communities. As followers of Jesus we cannot ignore the suffering of the women and girls who are the victims of violence or allow this violation to continue. We need to work together to enable healing and restorative justice.

1. As individuals/communities, how can we take action to prevent violence against women and girls?
2. As individuals/communities how we can guard against complacency in a world plagued by violence in many forms?
3. As individuals/communities what can we learn from the example of Jesus and how he treated women?
4. As individuals/communities how can we support a women or girls who have experienced violence?
5. As individuals/communities how can we ensure safe spaces for women and girls?

Take Action

1. Host a meeting or workshop to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women and girls in your community or church. Invite an expert speaker or facilitator from a professional support service to input to the meeting and to support the conversation on this important issue.
2. Ensure that information on support services for victims of violence is visible and accessible in your community or church.
3. Host a prayer meeting or special service to pray specifically for the healing and restoration of the women and girls directly impacted by violence.
4. Lead a time of reflection on the issue of violence against women and girls using the Scripture passages and excerpts above.
5. Raise funds for a domestic or sexual abuse service in your community.

6. Support a domestic or sexual abuse service in your community by volunteering.

Prayer

Compassionate God, may those experiencing all forms of violence be given courage, hope and the means to break free from abuse.

We pray for all who live in fear of violence and despair that life will change: Bring to an end their suffering;

Restore their sense of worth. Bring to light deeds of abuse hidden in darkness, that victims may find safety and refuge free from fear.

We pray for all to follow your example of treating women with equality and respect.

We pray for the dawn of a better world where justice and peace may flourish.

Amen.

Domestic and sexual violence services in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

National Support Services Republic of Ireland

- Women's Aid National Freephone Helpline 1800 341 900 (Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)
- National Rape Crisis Helpline 1800 778 888 (operated by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

Northern Ireland

- NIDIRECT
- NexusNI
- Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and is open all women and men affected by domestic violence. 0808 802 1414 (Open 24 hours a day, 365 days per year)

Local Support Services Republic of Ireland

- Local refuges and domestic violence support services
- Local Rape Crisis Centres

Northern Ireland

- Belfast and Lisburn WA - Down and Lisburn Refuge
- The Belfast Area Domestic & Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership
- The Women's Centre, Derry