

## Purpose of the Statement on Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse, in any form, is an affront to God because it injures and degrades men and women made in His image. The statistics demonstrate that domestic abuse is a common occurrence.<sup>1</sup> Our church needs to be vigilant and ready to respond with compassion, decisiveness, and wisdom. This statement represents the pastoral team's efforts to "do justice and love kindness" (Micah 6:8) by supporting and protecting victims, calling abusers to repent, enacting church discipline on the unrepentant, and involving civil authorities and professionals when necessary.

## Definition of Domestic Abuse

"An abuse of power, manifested through selfishly motivated patterns of behavior intended to exercise or maintain control over one's partner."<sup>2</sup>

## Types of Domestic Abuse

The following list is not exhaustive, but provides an overview of the major types of domestic abuse.<sup>3</sup>

**Physical Abuse:** Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing, pinching, biting, hair pulling, etc. are types of physical abuse. This type of abuse also includes denying a partner medical care or forcing alcohol and/or drug use upon him or her.

**Sexual Abuse:** Coercing or attempting to coerce any sexual contact or behavior without consent. Sexual abuse includes, but is certainly not limited to, marital rape, attacks on sexual parts of the body, forcing sex after physical violence has occurred, or treating one in a sexually demeaning manner.

**Emotional Abuse:** Undermining an individual's sense of self-worth and/or self-esteem is abusive. This may include, but is not limited to constant criticism, diminishing one's abilities, name-calling, or damaging one's relationship with his or her children.

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<sup>1</sup> According to a 2010 national survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1 in 3 (35.6 percent) women and 1 in 4 men (28.5 percent) have "experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime." The survey also found that 1 in 4 women (24.3 percent) and 1 in 7 men (13.8 percent) have been "hit with a fist or something hard, beaten, slammed against something) at some point in their lifetime" by an intimate partner.

<sup>2</sup> Definition provided by Chris Moles: <https://vimeo.com/218959931>. Accessed online 5/2019.

<sup>3</sup> These types and definitions are provided by Chris Moles:

[https://christcovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/WOMENS-RESOURCE-What-is-Domestic-Violence-C.Moles\\_.pdf](https://christcovenant.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/WOMENS-RESOURCE-What-is-Domestic-Violence-C.Moles_.pdf). Accessed online 05/2019.

**Economic Abuse:** Is defined as making or attempting to make an individual financially dependent by maintaining total control over financial resources, withholding one's access to money, or forbidding one's attendance at school or employment.

**Psychological Abuse:** Elements of psychological abuse include - but are not limited to - causing fear by intimidation; threatening physical harm to self, partner, children, or partner's family or friends; destruction of pets and property; and forcing isolation from family, friends, or school and/or work.

## Pastoral Response to Domestic Abuse

The pastoral team denounces, in the strongest possible terms, any act of domestic abuse, whether physical, sexual, economic, psychological, or emotional. We are resolved to root out instances of domestic abuse among members and attenders of our church. We stand ready to protect and support abuse victims, call abusers to repentance, discipline the unrepentant, and preserve the picture of Christ's self-sacrificial love for His bride in marriage.

One counselor is quoted as saying, "if you've seen one abuse case, you've seen one abuse case."<sup>4</sup> Due to the varying nature of domestic abuse cases, the pastoral team has opted for a set of principles that govern their response to potential instances of domestic abuse. The principles are outlined below:

1. The line between abusive and non-abusive behavior is not always obvious. The pastoral team has the responsibility, exercised with fear and trembling before God, to determine when a situation has reached the level of abuse. They may do this in concert with law enforcement, licensed counselors, and other professionals with relevant expertise. In each instance, the members of the pastoral team will work together to make this determination.
2. When made aware of a potential instance of domestic abuse, the pastoral team will do all in their power to ensure the safety and security of the victim(s).
3. Victims will be encouraged, but not required or coerced, to report criminal abuse to civil authorities.
4. Domestic abuse is not simply a marriage problem and requires a response beyond marriage counseling. When a situation is abusive, the pastoral team, in coordination with the victim, will engage licensed counselors, law enforcement, lawyers, or any other professionals with expertise in this area.

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<sup>4</sup> John Henderson quoted by Jason Meyer in his sermon titled "Fooled by False Leadership" from 4/26/2015 at Bethlehem Baptist Church: <https://bethlehem.church/sermon/fooled-by-false-leadership/>. Accessed online 5/2019.

5. There are instances where both parties are perpetrating domestic abuse. In these cases, the pastoral team will engage each partner as both victim and abuser.
6. Abusers who remain unrepentant will be subject to church discipline.
7. The pastoral team is committed to patiently walk with victims so that they may experience healing through Christ.
8. The pastoral team is committed to patiently walking with abusers who want to change.
9. The pastoral team maintains a biblical view of suffering that drives us to act compassionately on behalf of victims.
10. The pastoral team maintains a biblical view of oppression that informs our protection of victims and confrontation of abusers.

## Resources for Victims of Domestic Abuse

If you believe you are the victim of domestic abuse, the pastoral team wants to support and help you. Please do not hesitate to contact them for assistance at 949-436-5915 or [www.sovgraceoc.org/leaders](http://www.sovgraceoc.org/leaders).

The resources listed below are available to victims of domestic abuse. We encourage anyone who believes they have been the victim of domestic abuse to make use of these.

- Call 9-1-1 if you are in immediate danger
- National Domestic Violence Hotline  
1-800-799-7233  
<https://www.thehotline.org/>
- Orange County Domestic Violence Resources  
<http://www.ocgov.com/gov/ssa/community/abuse.asp>
- OC Rescue Mission  
1-800-663-3074  
<https://www.rescuemission.org/>
- Orange Police Department  
Non-emergency line: 714-744-7444