

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

REV. DR. TIM LECROY [Chairman] is a teaching elder in Missouri Presbytery. He is a visiting instructor of historical theology at Covenant Theological Seminary and has served the General Assembly on various committees.

REV. CAL BOROUGHS is a retired teaching elder from St. Elmo Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga, TN. He has served as moderator for his presbytery and was part of the working group that brought to the Assembly the overture for a study committee on domestic abuse and sexual assault.

DR. KELLY DEHNERT [Secretary] is a ruling elder and Assistant to the Pastor at Covenant Presbytery Church in Lander, WY. He researches and teaches on abusive leadership in Christian organizations and is on the national board of Refuge Ministries.

BOB GOUDZWAARD is a ruling elder and helped develop a domestic abuse online training video for the Institute for Biblical Counseling and Discipleship. He serves as director of Care Ministries at Christ Covenant Church in Charlotte, NC.

DR. DAVID HABURCHAK, PCA ruling elder, is a doctor of internal medicine and was a professor of medicine at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University. He recently authored “Kingdom Work: Redeeming Child Sexual Abuse.”

REV. DR. LLOYD PIERSON works with abuse survivors and perpetrators through Refuge Ministries, a national domestic abuse ministry founded in Kalispell, MT. He is a teaching elder at Faith Covenant PCA in Kalispell.

REV. SHANE WALDRON is lead pastor of Rocky Mountain Presbyterian Church in Denver, CO. He is also the founder of Refuge Ministries, which helps families impacted by domestic abuse find healing in Christ. He teaches on the subject of domestic violence at churches and parachurch organizations.

ADVISORS

RACHAEL DENHOLLANDER became known internationally in 2016 as the first woman to pursue criminal charges and speak publicly against USA Gymnastics’ team doctor Larry Nassar, one of the most prolific sexual abusers in recorded history. She is an attorney, author, advocate, and educator.

ANN MAREE GOUDZWAARD is the Executive Director of Help[H]er. In addition, she trains counselors at RTS Charlotte, Eternity Bible College, and Peace Works University. She is a biblical counselor with an M.Div. / counseling emphasis and a D.Min. candidate.

DR. DIANE LANGBERG attends Calvary PCA in Willow Grove, PA and is a psychologist of over 50 years. She is a well-known speaker and author of multiple books about abuse and trauma.

DR. BARBARA SHAFFER is a psychologist with nearly 40 years of experience, much of which involved working with survivors of sexual and domestic abuse. She attends Faith PCA in Wilmington, DE.

DARBY STRICKLAND teaches Counseling Abusive Marriages at WTS Philadelphia. She is the author of the book “Is It Abuse?” and two booklets for churches and survivors of abuse. She attends Cornerstone PCA in Center Valley, PA.



RESOURCE PAMPHLETS

The Ad Interim Study Committee on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault report includes chapters on Biblical and Confessional Foundations for Understanding Abuse, Domestic Abuse, Women Who Abuse, Adult Sexual Abuse, Child Abuse, The Misuse of Spiritual Authority, an extensive Appendix, and an Annotated Bibliography.

It is the committee’s desire to help the PCA respond well in cases where abuse is reported within the church.

Each of these pamphlets include summary statements included in the report to give the reader a general idea of each section of the report. For help in understanding and responding to the different types of abuse, readers should refer to the Report document.

Read the Report:
<https://pcaga.org/aic-report-abuse>

Ad Interim Study Committee on
Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault

Domestic Abuse



PCA®

Established by the
General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church in
America in 2019



1. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

In domestic abuse, power, authority, and strength are used selfishly against another rather than for their flourishing. Abuse comes from a deceitful and desperately wicked heart. Domestic abuse is a violation of the marital covenant that destroys the safety and stability of every member of the family and corrupts the body of Christ.

At least ten million men and women suffer from domestic abuse each day. Up to 85% of the victims of domestic abuse are women and/or young girls, while 2% are men. There are 137 women killed each day by acts of familial violence. Statistically, there is no difference between the general and Christian population.

Although men and women experience domestic abuse differently, every abuser misuses his/her power and control. Because most victims are women, the section on Domestic Abuse speaks of abusers as men.

2. EXPRESSING GOD'S HEART

The biblical category for understanding all types of abuse is oppression. The Hebrew word most often translated "oppress" (רָדַף) means to squeeze, press, or crush. This is the essence of abuse. An abuser uses superior size, strength, and/or authority to crush a victim. In an oppressive marriage, the husband twists his authority as the head. Instead of serving his wife and promoting her well-being, he uses authority to crush and oppress.

"The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble" (Ps. 9:9). In the Bible, God is always on the side of the oppressed. God hears the cries of the oppressed and acknowledges the terrible evil.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

Domestic abuse can be defined as a form of oppression in which one spouse controls and dominates the other through a pattern of coercive, controlling, and punishing behaviors.

3. RECOGNITION

Women in the church tend to consult other Christian women and/or their pastors when they experience difficulty in the home. Therefore, church members and leaders are wise to educate themselves regarding the dynamics of domestic abuse, the damage it causes, and the necessary interventions.

Abuse is primarily idolatry. Scripture teaches that all behavior flows from the desires of the heart. To understand the actions of an abusive person we must understand the idolatry which fuels the abuse.

- The desire for power and control,
- The abuser's sense of entitlement, and
- The desire to be God.

4. RESPONDING

Jesus calls us to proclaim the gospel through evangelism, but He also calls us to minister to those who are oppressed (Isa. 58:6-7). Silence does not protect the church or Christ's name. When we stay silent, we tell the world, victims, and abusers we are okay with violence in the home. We tell children that violence is normal and the church does not care whether they or their family is hurting.

Intervention by godly response helps break the chain of perpetual abuse. Intervening is quite costly in terms of time and energy. It requires wisdom, patience, and courage to battle evil and deception.

5. REPORTING

Be familiar with the reporting requirements in your state. Typically, these laws are less stringent for adult

abuse than they are for child abuse. In the case of domestic abuse, reporting is *not* recommended unless mandated by state law. It violates the victim's freedom, and it may unintentionally jeopardize her safety. It is important to allow the victim to direct adult abuse reporting unless mandated by state law.

6. SHEPHERDING THE VICTIM

Life with an abusive husband is incredibly stressful and confusing. The person a victim loves the most is hurting them, and they don't necessarily have categories for how to think about what's happening, how to respond, how to get help, and/or what the children may need. Victims live in a state of hyper-vigilance, constantly on high alert. Even if, or when, a victim separates physically from an abuser she may continue to live under the threat of harm.

Practically, pastors help victims process anger, shame, and fear. The victim needs to hear God's word validate that the abuse committed is heinous sin, and that he grieves with and for them.

Pastors and the church family who empathize with victims provide God's comfort (2 Cor. 1:4). As the victim experiences the love of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit through the ministry of the Word, she begins to find healing. Throughout this process, trust is built and care expressed.