

# “NO PLACE FOR VIOLENCE HERE” CONGREGATION WORKSHOP LEADER NOTES

We encourage churches to run congregational awareness workshops using the guide we have provided.

## Before the Workshop

- The workshop leader should complete the workshop for leaders by Carolyn Cousins found on the No Place for Violence Here website and read the booklet A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence, which can be ordered from the website;
- A domestic violence counsellor or social worker who has experience in the field of domestic violence should be invited to participate in the workshop in order to provide commentary and feedback;
- Designate pastoral carers to be available to anybody who is distressed or troubled during the workshop. At least one of these should be a woman and all should have completed the DV workshop with Carolyn Cousins found on the campaign website and have read the booklet A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence. Their role is not to provide counselling but to provide pastoral care in the manner described in the Pastoral Response booklet;
- Keep a copy of the domestic violence fact sheet handy, downloadable from the No Place for Violence Here website, as it may help answer questions that arise during the course of the workshop.



### Opening (5 min)

You might like to begin by using some of the statistics on the campaign factsheet to identify why domestic violence is an important issue. Make sure that at some stage during the introduction you acknowledge that there may be people in the room who have experienced domestic violence and some who may be in an abusive relationship. The workshop may cause them to feel troubled or distressed. If that is the case, they should feel free to take time out. At this point introduce the pastoral carer/s you have appointed, explaining that they will be available to anybody who may need care during the workshop, and introduce the counsellor/social worker you have invited to participate, explaining that they are here to provide informed feedback.

### View the Documentary (Film 25 minutes + reflection 10-15 minutes)

Show the documentary "Behind Closed Doors". The documentary runs for 26 minutes is quite confronting. At the end it is important to give people some time to process their emotions. One way to do this is to give people cards or sticky notes and invite them to write down how they are feeling and questions that the documentary raises for them, with a fresh card for each feeling or question. Place the cards in the middle of the group where they can be seen, or stick them up on the wall, and spend some time recognising the thoughts and questions.



## Overview the Information (20-25 minutes)

Pages 2 and 3 of the participants guide contain some of the important things to know about domestic violence. The workshop leader and/or the domestic violence counsellor you have invited should work through those pages. Two ways you could do this are:

1. Display the headings and the two diagrams using PowerPoint or other presentation software and speak briefly to each heading;
2. Set up seven stations around the room, reproducing the content for one of the seven points in participants guide at each station. Ask people to move around the room reading the seven points. They can read them in any order.

## Discussion Questions

Invite people to form small groups and discuss the questions found in the participants guide. If possible, have leaders for these groups established beforehand. The leaders do not need to have domestic violence expertise. Their role is rather to make sure that the group stays on track with the questions that are being asked, to ensure that one or two voices do not dominate the discussion, to give everybody an opportunity to speak, and to be sensitive to anyone who may be getting distressed and if necessary suggest that they may like to take time out with the pastoral carer.



You may like to give the groups 10 minutes for each question and report back after each 10 minute block, or to give them 20 to 30 minutes to work through all three questions and report back at the end.

If you have a small number of groups you may like to give every group an opportunity to feedback on each question, or if you have a large number of groups ask just one or two groups to feedback on each question. During these feedback sessions it's important to affirm those insights that are well-made and gently correct any misunderstandings. One way to do this would be to follow group sharing on each question by asking the domestic violence counsellor/social worker how s/he would answer the question.

### Question 1

in answering this question people may raise the issue of biblical texts that speak of male "headship". The study guide can be used in both churches that teach male leadership in marriage and those that don't. In either instance it will be important to point out that in the biblical way of thinking leadership does not involve control. The biblical model of leadership is servanthood and not coercion. It is not the responsibility of one partner to coerce the other to behave in a particular way. Rather, people are always free to choose their response to the loving behaviours and initiatives of the other.



## Question 2

in answering this question highlight the importance of believing the person who is confiding violence to you. This may well be the first time they have had the courage to confide in somebody and if met with disbelief or questioning they may never seek help again. You may also like to highlight the value of asking the person what they believe is likely to happen, what they want to do, and encouraging them to find a place of safety if you or they believe the risk of violence is high.

## Question 3

This question highlights the fact that domestic violence is commonly a pattern of behaviour in which remorse is part of a cycle of controlling behaviours. In these instances, offering couples counselling and asking what each is doing to contribute to the problem misses the mark. What needs to be addressed is the cycle of behaviour in which one partner seeks to coerce and control the other.

## Closing

Finish by encouraging people to seek help if the relationship has become one in which control and coercion play a part; encouraging congregation members to be alert and provide support; and outline the points of what to do if someone confides in you found in the Pastoral Response To Domestic Violence booklet. Finally spend time praying for households where violence is an issue.

