

2012 RESOLUTION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

WHEREAS, God created women and men in the image of God, equal in dignity, worth, rights, and authority, and sin has distorted God's created order (Genesis 1:26-27; Galatians 3:28);

WHEREAS, domestic violence includes all forms of physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, verbal, spiritual, and financial abuse, including what is often a pattern of battering, threats, intimidation, isolation, and economic coercion, used by one person to exert power and/or control over another person in the context of intimate, dating, family, or household relationships;

WHEREAS, the epidemic of domestic violence is found in all types of communities and family structures, and devastates young and old women, children, and men;

WHEREAS, those experiencing domestic violence often suffer in silence and feel deep and misplaced shame and stigma because of their abuser's choices;

WHEREAS, domestic violence is present in our churches, and abusers, victims and survivors alike are often our brothers and sisters in Christ; and while God calls the church to expose violence and injustice, the church has too often remained silent and failed to speak out about domestic violence or encourage those who are experiencing it to ask for help (Prov. 31:8-9);

WHEREAS, scripture teaches that human relationships should be characterized by mutual respect and kindness (Colossians 3:19; Mark 12:31); using power and control is explicitly censured in stories like that of Amnon and Tamar (2 Samuel 13); and because domestic violence is never acceptable, appropriate, or biblically defensible, scripture should never be used to minimize or justify domestic violence;

WHEREAS, Christ longs to free, protect, empower, and heal all experiencing domestic violence, and calls abusers to repentance and transformation (Psalm 82:3-4; Matt. 11:28-30); and Christ calls the church to be a safe haven of truth, hope, healing, peace, protection and restoration (if possible), for those impacted by domestic violence, to victims first, but also to abusers;

WHEREAS, the Covenant ministry, Advocacy for Victims of Abuse (AVA) (CovChurch.org/abuse), is an accessible resource to help churches and individuals respond holistically to abuse in all its forms through education, awareness, training, and support for victims, as well as primary responders.

THEREFORE, as Covenant individuals and congregations, we **RESOLVE** to:

- 1) Move beyond denial and disbelief and break the silence on domestic violence by acknowledging through teaching, preaching, and leadership the existence of domestic violence that occurs within our society and churches, and by encouraging victims and survivors to seek help and healing;
- 2) Address domestic violence within our congregations and create a safe place for victims/survivors;
- 3) Refuse to tolerate or defend instances of domestic violence and create systems for reporting abuse;
- 4) Educate ourselves about the signs of domestic violence and services available in the community;
- 5) Prevent domestic violence by mentoring and educating youth and young adults;
- 6) Equip pastors and leaders to be informed advocates, able to provide safety, encouragement, and community support by using the AVA Online Tutorial (ava-online.org/index) and availing ourselves of trained AVA coordinators at the local and conference level;
- 7) Make available the "Mending the Soul" Bible Study to those experiencing or recovering from domestic violence; and
- 8) Establish local AVA advocates in our congregations.