RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE
A ToolKit for Texas Faith Communities
Compiled by Texas Impact
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with the support of Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.
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Introduction

Family violence is a serious issue in Texas. The Texas Council on Family Violence states that 1 in 3 Texans will experience domestic violence in their life. This compendium is intended to be a starting place for congregations, a way to start the conversation. This is not an exhaustive list of all resources that are available. Use this as a way to begin educating yourself about this topic and cater it to your congregation’s needs.

It is important to note that a lot of the language surrounding family violence, particularly domestic violence, portrays women as victims and men as abusers. While this is statistically more likely, it is not universally the case. A lot of the language in this resource will reflect this bias. Remember that men can be victims abused by women, and people in homosexual relationships can be abusive to their partners.

A word of caution: this is a highly sensitive topic that can be found in every part of society. Do not assume that your congregation is immune. Do not assume that because someone is a beloved figure within the community that they are not also capable of hurting their loved ones. Human beings are complicated, often contradictory, creatures.

Therefore, it is important to examine your biases and assumptions before you take on this important work. What are your first thoughts when you think of batterers or victims of family violence? How do you react when a victim tells you about their experience? Examine the language you use around the issue. The words we use to talk about this issue can further hurt someone who has already been injured.

Ultimately, we are children of God and must delve deeper than laws and community resources will allow us to. How does your faith and theology lead us to act towards both the perpetrator and victim of violence? Do you prioritize safety of the victim over reconciliation with the perpetrator. Does the structure of your community allow for both? Does your theology?

Thank you for doing the hard work to educate and advocate on this issue.

Peace and Blessings,
Erica Nelson
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Class of 2018
If Violence is Happening Now

- Is the violence happening now, or are there injuries? Call 9-1-1
- Domestic violence? 1-800-799-7233 National Domestic Violence Hotline
- Child Abuse? 1-800-252-5400 Texas Abuse Reporting Hotline
- Vulnerable Adult Abuse? 1-800-252-5400 Texas Abuse Reporting Hotline
- Human Trafficking? 1-888-373-7888 National Human Trafficking Hotline

For resources specific to a variety of social location and needs, please see Section 3 of this resource.

If possible, safety-plan with the victims. There are sample safety plans in Section 5 for reference.

Mandatory Reporting

In Texas, any person who has reason to believe a child or vulnerable adult is being abused or neglected is required by law to report the situation. Professionals licensed by the state of Texas such as teachers, health care providers, and attorneys are held to higher standards for reporting. This is true even of professionals whose communications typically are confidential, including members of the clergy.

Things to Consider When You Report

- Will the victim be safe?
- Does reporting put the victim(s) at risk of retaliation from the abuser?
- Will they be required to leave their home if they are forced to leave for safety or if evicted by their landlords?
- If so, do they have somewhere safe to go?
- What will you do to support the victims?
- How will the congregation/neighborhood/community react when they find out?

Always make sure the victims know you are calling for them, even in cases of child or vulnerable adult abuse where you are required to report. Victims of violence deserve the right to make their own decisions, especially regarding their safety. Most importantly, remember: it is not your job to investigate or mediate. Be a support to those involved and let the professionals handle everything else.
Decide whether you think each statement below is true or false...then look at the facts.

1. T or F It is not against the law to slap your own spouse.
2. T or F Battering means beating someone to the point of bleeding or broken bones.
3. T or F Alcohol and drug abuse can cause family violence.
4. T or F Battering is passed from generation to generation.
5. T or F Men being injured by women is just as big a problem as women being injured by men.
6. T or F Rarely are victims of family violence seriously injured.
7. T or F If a battered woman were to leave her abuser, she would be safe.
8. T or F The police can't do much about family violence.
9. T or F Arresting batterers and putting them in jail will end family violence.
10. T or F Violence in someone else's family is not my business.

The Facts

1. False. A slap is a form of assault. Texas law specifies that assault of another person, including one’s spouse, is illegal.
2. False. Battering (which is the same as assault) means causing or threatening bodily injury. Under Texas law, that includes causing pain or offensive contact. Visible injury does not have to occur.
3. False. Many people who are violent toward family members never drink or use drugs. Others drink or use drugs but never batter. So we cannot say that alcohol or drugs cause family violence. However, over half of men in battering intervention report abusing drugs or alcohol. Furthermore, the severity of abuse is likely to increase when the abuser is on drugs or alcohol. Gondolf, E.W. (Characteristics of court mandated batterers in four cities: Diversity and dichotomies. Violence Against Women, 5(11), 1277-1293.
4. True. Children learn from their experiences—including violence. In one study of men court-mandated to attend battering intervention, 33 percent reported seeing their mother abused by their father and 26 percent of the men were abused as children. However, not all child witnesses to family violence become abusers. Gondolf, E.W. (Characteristics of court mandated batterers in four cities: Diversity and dichotomies. Violence Against Women, 5(11), 1277-1293.
5. False. Though it is true that both men and women are victims of domestic violence, women are the victims in 85 percent of domestic violence cases. Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime Data Brief, Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2001,

6. **False.** In 2008, 39 percent of women murdered in Texas were killed by a current or former intimate partner. Also, up to 30 percent of women seen in emergency rooms are there for an injury attributed to family violence. *Texas Department of Public Safety, Data from Supplemental Homicide Report. (2008.)* McLeer SV, Anwar R. A study of battered women presenting in an emergency department. *Am J Public health.* 1989; 79:65-66.

7. **False.** Threats, harassment, and assaults often escalate just after a battered woman leaves her abuser. This can be the most dangerous time in the relationship. That is why it’s important for the victim to go to a safe, secure place such as a shelter for family violence survivors.

8. **False.** Texas law permits immediate arrest for suspected family violence and many police departments now make such arrests. Family violence related calls are the largest category of calls made to the police. Seventy-seven percent of police departments have operational procedures on how to respond to these calls such as asking if there are any weapons involved or if there is a protective order. *Klein, Andrew. (April 2008). “Practical Implications of Current Domestic Violence Research Part 1: Law Enforcement” NU Sponsored.*

9. **False.** Arrest and jail time alone are not usually enough to make a batterer permanently stop being violent. Battering intervention and prevention programs are essential. However, arresting and jailing batterers is important because it temporarily stops their violence and lets them know that our society does not tolerate battering. *Gondolf, E.W. (2004). Evaluating batterer counseling programs; A difficult task showing some effects and implications. Aggression and Violent Behavior 9: 605-631.*

10. **False.** Seventy-three percent of all Texans believe that domestic violence is a serious problem in Texas. In fact, one in four American females experience family violence at some time in their lives; your daughter, sister, or neighbor could be next. That makes it your business. Family violence also touches your pocketbook. As a taxpayer, you are affected every time police answer a family violence call or a woman visits an emergency room because of battering. *Texas Council on Family Violence 2002 statewide poll on prevalence and attitudes on domestic violence. Tjaden, P. & Thoennes, N. (2000). Extent, Nature and Consequences of Intimate Partner Violence. National Institute of Justice and Centers for Disease Control.*

*The Texas Council on Family Violence promotes safe and healthy relationships by supporting service providers, facilitating strategic prevention efforts, and creating opportunities for freedom from domestic violence. Since 1978, the Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) has been a nationally recognized leader in the efforts to end family violence through partnerships, advocacy and direct services for women, children and men. TCFV is one of the largest domestic violence coalitions in the nation. http://tcfv.org/
Responding to Family Violence

Reverend Sarah Gaventa  
Dean of Students  
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

While the seminary prepared me for many aspects of parish life, I was completely unprepared for ministering to people going through domestic violence. For some reason, I believed domestic violence was a problem for the uneducated and would not affect my parish. It was not long before women from a variety of social and educational strata in my parish came forward with their stories. Thankfully, my boss’s wife was an OBGYN nurse and well prepared to teach us about safety plans, local shelters, and the importance of trusting people to know when it is safe—and not—to leave an abusive partner.

In the Christian tradition, we are taught to look for Christ in the other. We believe every person is born worthy of love and respect. Domestic violence takes these values and twists them beyond recognition — slowly manipulating people until they feel trapped in a relationship no way reflective of God’s Love. The offenders slowly dehumanize their victims, making them feel small and powerless, maybe even culpable in their own abuse. Domestic violence can affect people of all ages and genders. It is vital for clergy to know how to respond when a congregant approaches them about their concerns.

If we are to live out our call to help people recognize the Christ in themselves and in others, we must be able to see when that truth has been twisted. We are vital resources for those who may not see a way out or even remember that they are beloved. We interact with people in key times in their romantic relationships — courtship, marriage, the birth of a child, and other family stressors. All of these can be opportunities to ask hard questions, share information, and provide a listening ear. We must be prepared. Familiarizing yourself with the resources found in this volume will go a long way towards that preparation.
SECTION ONE: DEFINITIONS
Warning Signs

People Who are Being Abused May:

- Seem afraid or anxious to please their partner
- Go along with everything their partner says and does
- Check in often with their partner to report where they are and what they are doing
- Receive frequent, harassing phone calls from their partner
- Talk about their partner’s temper, jealousy, or possessiveness

Warning Signs of Physical Violence:

- Have frequent injuries, with the excuse of “accidents”
- Frequently miss work, school, or social occasions without explanation
- Dress in clothing designed to hide bruises or scars (for example wearing long sleeves in the summer or sunglasses indoors)

Warning Signs of Isolation:

- Be restricted from seeing family and friends
- Rarely go out in public without their partner
- Have limited access to money, credit cards, or transportation
- Restricted from use of phone or social media

Psychological Warning Signs of Abuse:

- Have very low self-esteem, even if they used to be confident
- Show major personality changes (for example, an outgoing person becomes withdrawn)
- Be depressed, anxious, or suicidal

For more information, visit
In Texas, the definitions of child abuse and neglect include specific acts or omission by a person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare. Here are important legal definitions from Section 261.001 of the Texas Family Code:

“Abuse” includes the following acts or omissions by a person:

• Mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning.
• Causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning.
• Physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm.
• Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child.
• Sexual conduct harmful to a child’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare including conduct that constitutes the offence of indecency with a child under Section 21.11, Penal Code, sexual assault under Section 22.011, Penal Code, or aggravated sexual assault under Section 22.021, Penal Code.
• Failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child.
• Compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct as defined by Section 43.01, Penal Code.
• Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Section 43.21, Penal Code, or pornographic.
• Causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child as defined by Section 43.25, Penal Code.
• The current use by a person of a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child.
• Causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code.
Child Abuse and Neglect

“Neglect” includes:

- Leaving a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator of the child.

The following acts or omission by a person:

- Placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgement or actions beyond the child’s level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that result in the bodily injury or substantial risk of immediate harm to the child.
- Failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a child; with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury; or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of a child.
- The failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child; excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.
- Placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to a sustainable risk of sexual conduct harmful to the child.
- The failure by the person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to return to the child’s home without arranging for the necessary care for the child after the child has been absent from the home for any reason; including, having been in residential placement or having run away.

“Person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare” means a person who traditionally is responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare, including:

- A parent, guardian, managing, or possessory conservator, or foster parent of the child.
- A member of the child’s family or household as defined by Chapter 71 of the Family Code.
- A person with whom the child’s parent cohabits.
- School personnel or a volunteer at the child’s school.
- Personnel or a volunteer at a public or private child-care facility that provides
services for the child; or at a public or private residential institution or facility where the child resides.

For more information visit www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_protection/child_safety/reporting_abuse.asp#legal

**Indicators of Child Abuse/ Neglect**

**Physical Abuse**

Unexplained bruises and welts
• On face, lips, eyes
• On torso, back, buttocks, thighs
• In various stages of healing
• Cluster, forming regular patterns
• Reflecting shapes of articles used to inflict (electric cord, belt buckle)
• On several different surface areas
• Regularly appear after absence, weekend, or vacation

Unexplained Burns
• Cigar, cigarette burns; especially on soles, palms, back, or buttocks
• Immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like doughnut shaped on buttocks or genitalia)
• Patterned like electric burner, iron, etc.
• Rope burns on arms, legs, neck, or torso

Unexplained Fractures
• To skull, cheekbone, nose, or facial structure
• In various stages of healing
• Multiple or spiral fractures

Unexplained Lacerations or Abrasions
• To mouth, lips, gums, or eyes
• To external genitalia
• Wrists, thighs, easy to hide locations
Child Abuse and Neglect

Behavioral Indicators:
• Wary of adult contact
• Apprehensive when other children cry
• Behavioral extremes
• Aggressiveness
• Withdrawal
• Frightened of parents
• Afraid to go home
• Reports injury to parents

Neglect:
• Consistent hunger, poor hygiene, or inappropriate dress
• Consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities for long periods of time
• Constant fatigue or listlessness
• Unattended physical problems or medical needs
• Abandonment

Behavioral Indicators:
• Begging, stealing food
• Eating excessive food provided by public or private school institute or program
• Extended stays at school
• Early arrival and late departure
• Constantly falling asleep in class
• Alcohol or drug abuse
• Delinquency
• Theft
• Detention
• Cheating
• Bullying
• States there is no caregiver

Sexual Abuse:
• Difficulty in walking or sitting
• Torn, stained, or bloody clothing
• Pain or itching in genital area
• Bruises or bleeding in external genitalia, vaginal or anal areas
• Venereal disease, especially in pre-teens
• Pregnancy

Behavioral Indicators:
• Unwilling to change for gym or participate in PE
• Withdrawn, fantasy or infantile behavior
• Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge
• Poor peer relationships
• Delinquent or runs away
• Reports sexual abuse by caregiver

Emotional Maltreatment

Physical Indicators:

Habit disorders
• Sucking
• Biting
• Rocking
• Conduct disorders
• Antisocial
• Destructive

Neurotic traits
• Sleeping disorders
• Speech disorders
• Inhibition of play

Behavioral Extremes:

• Overly compliant, or excessively passive
• Overly aggressive, or demanding
• Alternatively, a child who experiences abuse may behave either inappropriately maturely, or inappropriately immaturely.

For more information visit
www.americanspcc.org/indicators-child-abuse/
What is Adult Abuse?

Abuse of adults can happen anywhere. It can happen at home, in a residential or nursing home, in a hospital, at work, or in the street.

There are different types of adult abuse including:

- Physical - Being hurt or harmed either deliberately or through rough, careless, or thoughtless behavior.
- Emotional - Being humiliated, dehumanized, made inferior, or put down; made to feel anxious, unwelcomed, or frightened.
- Bullying - Being humiliated, dehumanized, made inferior, or put down; made to feel anxious, unwelcomed, or frightened.
- Financial/Theft - Someone using your money or possessions in a way that you don’t approve of, know of, or want.
- Neglect - Not being given the things you need to feel safe and comfortable or not making sure you get the care or treatment you need.
- Sexual - Being coerced to engage in sexual behavior against your better judgement or your will.
- Discrimination - Including racist, sexist, ableist, or other prejudice against your personhood.
- Domestic - Psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional, or autonomy-based violence against a person in the same household.
- Modern Slavery - Including human trafficking and forced labor.
- Organisational - Including neglect and poor care within an institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home.
- Self-Neglect - Not caring for personal cleanliness, physical health, mental health, emotional health, or surroundings; example would be behavior such as hoarding.

Who is at Risk?

Anyone can be vulnerable to abuse at some time in their life. Those who need safeguarding are often elderly and frail, living on their own at home, or without much family support in care homes.

Many other groups of people are also at increased risk of suffering harm. Examples
include those with physical or learning difficulties, people with mental health needs, young adults and immigrant workers. The person who is responsible for the abuse is often well known to the person abused.

**Abusers of adults could be:**
- A paid caregiver or volunteer
- A health, social care, or other worker
- A relative, friend, or neighbor
- An employer
- Another resident or service user
- An occasional visitor or someone who is providing a service
- Someone who deliberately exploits vulnerable people

At first, you might not recognize the signs of abuse. They may appear to be symptoms of dementia, or sign of the elderly person's frailty, or a symptom of their mental illness.

**Examples of Adult Abuse Include:**

**General Signs of Abuse**
- Frequent arguments between the caregiver and the elderly or vulnerable person.
- Changes in personality or behavior in the person being abused.
- Withdrawn behaviors of the abused person.

**Signs of Physical Abuse**
- Unexplained signs of injury such as bruises, burns, or scar, which may include serious injury, like broken bones.
- Report of a person taking too much of their medicine or not taking their medicines regularly.
- A prescription that has more remaining than it should
- A prescription is refilled far more often than it should
- Broken eyeglasses, frames, or other personal items.
- Signs of being restrained, such as bruises on the wrists.
- Staff in a care home refusing to allow you to visit or see the vulnerable person alone.
Emotional Abuse:
- Threatening, belittling, or controlling behavior by the abuser.
- Withdrawn behavior, or changes in personality that is unexplained.
- Behavior from the abused person that seems like dementia, such as rocking, sucking, or mumbling to themself.

Signs of Sexual Abuse:
- Unexplained bruises around breasts or genitals
- Unexplained genital infections or diseases
- Unexplained bleeding from orifices
- Torn, stained, or bloody undergarments

Neglect by Caregivers or Self-Neglect:
- Unusual weight loss because of not eating enough food or drinking enough fluids.
- Untreated physical problems, such as bedsores.
- Dirty living conditions; dirt, bugs, soiled bedding, and clothes.
- Being left dirty or unbathed.
- Unsafe living conditions (no heat or running water; faulty electrical wiring, or other fire hazards)

Financial Exploitation:
- Significant withdrawals from the vulnerable person's bank account or assets.
- Items or cash missing, possibly stolen.
- Suspicious changes in wills, power of attorney, policies or other documents.
- Suspicious addition of names to the person's signature card.
- Unnecessary services, goods, or subscriptions.

For more information visit
www.patient.info/health/safeguarding-adults-leaflet
Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is modern day slavery. Kevin Bales of Free the Slaves defines it as “a relationship in which one person is controlled by violence; through violence, the threat of violence, or psychological coercion, who has lost free will and free movement, and who is exploited economically, and paid nothing beyond subsistence.”

The Major Types of Trafficking

Under Texas law, human trafficking is divided into four types:
1. Trafficking of adults for forced labor, for instance in agriculture, food service, factory work, or sales.
2. Trafficking of adults for sex, in strip clubs, brothels, massage parlors, street, or internet prostitution.
3. Trafficking of children under the age of 18 for forced labor.
4. Trafficking of children under the age of 18 for sex.

An individual can be trafficked into any industry or type of work. Legally, someone is trafficked if force, fraud, or coercion is applied to make the trafficked individual work or if the child under the age of 18 is trafficked for sex by any means, regardless of whether the trafficker has to use force, fraud, or coercion.

Children Have Special Protections

A child under the age of 18 is a victim of sex trafficking if they are being prostituted by someone other than themselves, regardless of whether the child complied with the trafficker’s demands or actively resisted. Sex trafficking of children can be accomplished by any means and does not require the use of force, fraud, or coercion.

Some of the more common methods of recruitment of children include:
• A promise of romance, love, or acceptance
• Offers of cash, luxury items, a place to stay, independence, or a glamorous lifestyle
• The persuasion of a peer who is already involved
• Meeting the immediate need of a child for food, clothing, shelter, or love
• Taking advantage of a vulnerability or a desperate situation
• Flattery, lies, manipulation, deception
Human Trafficking

• Exploiting an existing position of power
• Making an offer that is too good to be true
• Establishing relationship with false or tenuous connections

Who Are the Traffickers and Who Are the Buyers of Trafficked People?

There is no one particular look to a trafficker. Traffickers are people who are willing to treat other people like objects or commodities that they can buy, sell, and exploit for their own benefit.

Traffickers And Buyers Can Be:

• Family or relatives
• Peers
• International third party recruiters
• Unscrupulous employers
• Organized crime syndicates, cartels, or gangs
• Strip club owners/managers
• Opportunistic criminals
• Intimate partners
• Neighbors and friends

Warning Signs that a Person is being Trafficked

These warning signs could be observed in person, over social media interaction, through telephone communication, or simply an observable suspicion.

Potential Red Flags for Children Include:

• Changes in their school attendance habits, appearance, socio-economics, friend groups, interests, school activities, vocabulary, demeanor, attitude, and/or sexual behavior
• Luxury items like manicures, designer clothing, purses, etc. without explainable source of income
• Truancy
• Getting into trouble in the company of older teens or adults
• Sexually provocative clothing
• Tattoos or branding
• Hotel key cards
• Reloadable gift cards
• Multiple phones
• Multiple, fake, or duplicate social media accounts
• Lying about the existence of those accounts or refusing parental access to those accounts
• Sexually provocative pictures on the phone or online accounts
• Unexplained injuries: bruising, swelling, redness, cigarette burns, etc.
• Claim of an older girlfriend/boyfriend
• Lack of I.D.
• Multiple runaways in a short period of time

Potential Red Flags For Adults Include:
• Third party control of schedule and social interaction
• Isolation from community, such as family and friends
• Evidence of violence: bruising, swelling, scarring
• Tattoos or branding
• Sexually provocative clothing that is inappropriate for the situation or weather
• Frequent movement or erratic schedule
• Inability to speak English
• Identification documents in the hands of a third party
• Lack of knowledge about the community
• Malnutrition, dehydration, exhaustion
• Dizziness, headaches, or memory loss from traumatic brain injury
• Untreated chronic disease, dental or visual problems
• Chronic back pain, muscle strains, cardiovascular and respiratory issues related to exposure to chemicals or serious industrial injury

What to Do When You Believe That Someone May Be A Victim of Trafficking

Report it. It is better to make the call and be wrong than to leave someone enslaved a moment longer.

Guidelines for reporting suspected human trafficking

1. If the situation is an emergency or you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911 to alert the authorities. Tell them you believe it is a human trafficking or slavery so that it can be routed to the proper investigators. Follow the call
with another call to the National Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or report online at Report@PolarisProject.org

2. Include actionable information, names, descriptions of what you saw, heard, when and where. If vehicles are involved try to include license plate numbers or makes, models, and colors.

3. Call as soon as possible after you make the observations. The fresher the information, the more likely law enforcement can take action.

4. Don’t intervene by yourself. Traffickers can be very dangerous. Allow law enforcement to respond to the situation.

What To Do if You Are Unsure

If you can safely obtain more information, do so.

Talk with the individual in a private setting that is non-threatening if you have the type of relationship which allows you to have that conversation comfortably. If you have a concern that such a conversation would put you or that person in danger, then make the call to report instead.

Guidelines if you are unsure you should report a suspected human trafficking situation:

• Call the National Hotline 1-888-373-7888 or text “Help” or “Info” to 233733. This hotline is staffed 24/7 with people trained in recognizing and identifying trafficking. They can help you make sense of the information that you have and recommend next steps.

• Call law enforcement or your local district attorney’s office through a non-emergency number and ask to speak to someone who works on trafficking cases. Many of the larger jurisdictions have specialized law enforcement and assistant district attorney who can talk through the situation with you.

• Call the Department of Public Safety. They have victim advocates who specialize in human trafficking stationed across the state. Complete an online search for the ‘Department of Public Safety Victim Service Counselors’ for more information.

• Call Child Protective Services if a child is involved. Tell them you have concerns for trafficking during your intake call or online report. 1-800-252-5400 for the Texas Abuse Hotline.
• Call the Office of the Attorney General, Human Trafficking Prosecutor at 512-463-1646 or email at humantrafficking@texasattorneygeneral.gov. The Office of the Attorney General has law enforcement officers specifically trained to combat and investigate human trafficking and has conducted sting and rescue operations across the state.

For more information visit
www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/cj/human-trafficking
Reflection: The Faith Community’s Role in Ending Family Violence

Hind Jarrah
Executive Director
Texas Muslim Women’s Foundation

Domestic Violence (DV) disrupts the lives of families in communities of all faiths, and hits families irrespective of educational, economic, racial, or cultural status. DV’s insidious, gradual, and increasingly debilitating impact on the abused is not expected, and takes them totally by surprise. In their attempt to understand what is happening and in their search to find advice/tools/recommendations to deal with it, and in light of their feeling of shame and helplessness, victims seek the help and advice from their religious leaders—whether they are rabbis, pastors, or imams—in the hope that they can receive divine inspiration or teaching that can help them through or get them out of the nightmare that they find themselves in.

In many cases, the victims do not know that what they are going through is domestic violence and that they are actually being abused. Some may think that abuse can only be physical...so if the perpetrator is using verbal, emotional, economic, or spiritual abuse, they won’t even recognize it as abuse. Statistics have shown that majority of abusers, as well as victims, have witnessed DV in their childhood. Therefore, if the cycle of abuse is to be interrupted, it will take a concerted effort by the whole community.

DV in all its form, tears the victim’s self-esteem to pieces. It effectively destroys their self confidence, so the victim’s helplessness in understanding what’s happening puts so much shame on the individual that it deters them from telling their closest family members about what is actually happening in their lives. And in majority of DV, the abuser effectively isolates his/her victim from their family and friends, so there is no one to turn to.

Hence, in many situations, religious leaders are the first responders to domestic violence. The victim goes to the religious leader in the hope that they will receive help based on the teachings of their faith. Therefore, the leader’s response to the victim’s inquires is critical to the well being and sanity of the abused.

Unfortunately, in many communities the faith leaders play a hampering or discouraging role for the victims, because so many faith communities and religious leaders prefer to ignore or deny that domestic violence exists in the midst of their congregation. This can be for a variety of reasons: perhaps they do not want to
face the fact that members of their congregation can be abusers; perhaps they do not want to risk losing big donors/contributors to their institutions; perhaps they genuinely do not understand DV. There also can be the expectation that this is just a reality of life, and is part of one’s role to be subject/subordinate and on the receiving end of their husband’s wishes/temper/attitude. It is just part of their destiny; they have to accept the abuse and pray their way around it, otherwise they will be subjected to shame, humiliation, and excommunication. Victims may risk being totally shunned by their faith community if they seek help outside faith or prayer.

There is so much stigma and denial around the issue. Yet it is critical that the religious community—especially its leaders—recognize, admit, and discuss the existence of domestic violence within their midst. The abusers (men in the majority of cases) have to be held responsible and accountable by the other men for their attitudes towards their spouses and their children.

The lack of involvement by religious leaders addressing DV within their congregations is only recently being addressed. DV service providers have finally succeeded in making the public realize that at least 1 in 3 women are victims of DV both nationally and internationally, and there is a concerted effort to identify a viable solution. This requires a comprehensive strategy consisting of providing services for the abused, as well as addressing the abuser, and mobilizing the whole community in stemming its tide.

This invariably means having religious leaders learn about DV, become familiar with resources to address it and educating their congregation about it. They can and should hold the abuser accountable for their actions. They have immense power: they can hold the podium at critical times with captive audiences, and they can educate those audiences, both men and women, on the true position of their faith in regards to DV. They can correct the rampant misconceptions and misinterpretations about what the true faith teaches and requires.

The faith community is looked at as the safe haven and sanctuary for the individual, their spouse, and their children, so how they react towards the abused and the abuser determines whether the cycle of DV continues or gets interrupted. Please refer to the Faith Trust Institute info on DV in various communities including Muslim communities. It is an excellent resource for the different faith teachings as well as an excellent resource to deal with the current issues that revolve around DV.
SECTION TWO: RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS & SURVIVORS
Resources

The National Domestic Violence Hotline
1-800-799-7233 (SAFE)
www.ndvh.org

National Dating Abuse Helpline
1-866-331-9474
www.loveisrespect.org

Americans Overseas Domestic Violence Crisis Center
International Toll Free (24/7)
1-866-879-6636
www.866uswomen.org

National Child Abuse Hotline/Childhelp
1-800-422-4453
www.childhelp.org

National Sexual Assault Hotline
1-800-656-4673
www.rainn.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-8255
www.suicidepreventionhotline.org

National Center for Victims of Crime
1-202-467-8700
www.victimsofcrime.org

National Human Trafficking Resource Center/Polaris Project
1-888-373-7888 or Text “HELP” to 233733
www.polariproject.org

National Network for immigrant and Refugee Rights
1-510-465-1984
www.nnirr.org

National Coalition for the Homeless
1-202-462-4822
www.nationalhomeless.org
Resources for Children

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
1-800-537-2238
www.nrcdv.org and www.vawnet.org

Futures Without Violence: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence
1-888-792-2873
www.futureswithoutviolence.org

National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma, and Mental Health
1-312-726-7020 ext. 2011
www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org

RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

Childhelp USA/National Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-422-4453
www.childhelpusa.org

Children’s Defense Fund
202-628-8787
www.childrensdefense.org

Child Welfare League of America
202-638-2952
www.cwla.org

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
Child Protection and Custody/Resource Center on Domestic Violence
1-800-527-3233
www.ncjfcj.org

Center for Judicial Excellence
info@centerforjudicialexcellence.org
www.centerforjudicialexcellence.org

RESOURCES FOR TEENS

Love is Respect
1-8666-331-9474
Resources

www.loveisrespect.org
Break the Cycle
202-824-0707
www.breakthecycle.org

RESOURCES FOR DIFFERENTLY ABLED PERSONS

Domestic Violence initiative
303-839-5510 or 877-839-5510
www.dviforwomen.org

Deaf Abused Women’s Network (DAWN)
202-559-5366
hotline@deafdawn.org
www.deafdawn.org

RESOURCES FOR WOMEN OF COLOR

Women of color Network
1-800-537-2238
www.wocninc.org

INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence
incite.natl@gmail.com
www.incite-national.org

RESOURCES FOR LATINX PERSONS

Alianza
1-505-753-3334
www.dvalianza.org

Casa de Esperanza
1-651-722-1611 Linea de crisis 24/7
www.casadeesperanza.org

National Latin Network for Healthy Families and Communities
1-651-646-5553
www.nationallatinnetwork.org
RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRANTS

The National Immigrant Women’s Advocacy Project
202-274-4457
www.niwap.org

RESOURCES FOR INDIGENOUS WOMEN

National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center
855-649-7299
www.nirwc.org

Indigenous Women’s Netwrok
1-512-258-3880
www.indigenouswomen.org

RESOURCES FOR ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER PERSONS

Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence
1-415-954-9988
www.apiidv.org

Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAAV)
1-212-473-6485
www.caav.org

Manavi
1-732-435-1414
www.manavi.org

RESOURCES FOR AFRICAN-AMERICAN PERSONS

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
1-877-643-8222
www.dvinstitute.org

The Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute
1-770-909-0715
www.bcdvi.org
Resources

RESOURCES FOR LGBTQIA+ PERSONS

The Audre Lorde Project
1-178-596-0342
www.alp.org

LAMBDA GLBT Community Services
1-206-350-4283
www.qrd.org

National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs
1-212-714-1184
www.ncavp.org

National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
1-202-393-5177
www.ngltf.org

Northwest Network of Bisexual, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse
1-206-568-7777
www.nwnetwork.org

ABUSE IN LATER LIFE

National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later life
1-608-255-0539
www.ncall.us

National Center for Elder Abuse
1-855-500-3537
www.aginginplace.org

RESOURCES FOR MEN

National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS)
1-720-466-3882
www.nomas.org
A Call to Men
1-917-922-6738
www.acalltomen.org

Men Can Stop Rape
1-202-265-6530
www.mencanstoprape.org

Men Stopping Violence
1-866-7171-9317
www.menstoppingviolence.org

**LEGAL RESOURCES**

American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence
1-202-662-1000
www.abanet.org

Battered Women’s Justice Project
1-800-903-0111
www.bwjp.org

Legal Momentum
1-212-925-6635
www.legalmomentum.org

Womens Law
1-800-799-7233
www.womenslaw.org

National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women
1-800-903-0111 ext. 3
www.ncdbw.org

*More information at www.ncadv.org/learn-more/resources*
SECTION THREE: RELIGIOUS RESOURCES
Our spiritual ancestors, the poets who composed the Psalms and the Priests who intoned them in Temple Ceremonies have a lot to teach us about truth telling in community, and as a faithful response in or relationship with the Divine. For millennia, these prayers have been used not only in praise and celebration but also in lament and calls for justice. They recognize that pain, suffering, violence, abuse, and hardship are not just experienced by the individual but tear at the fabric of the community and must be acknowledged if healing is to occur.

“My tears have been my food day and night” (Ps. 42: 3)  
“My enemies trample upon me all day long” (Ps. 56:2)  
“Rise up, O God, confront them, overthrow them” (Ps. 17: 3)

These scriptures proclaim out loud the realities of victims and survivors crying out for relief and justice. They call out the perpetrators and enlist the community and God in confronting wrong-doing.

Following in their footsteps, preaching is essential in engaging the injustices of our day. Preaching addresses difficult issues through teaching, offering pastoral care, and engages the community in the work of restoring wholeness. With 1 in 3 women experiencing domestic abuse, on any given Sunday, it is likely that perpetrators, bystanders, victims, or survivors of violence, child abuse, and sexual abuse will be among the congregation. Silence in the face of injustice is just as powerful as addressing hard topics. By not speaking out, we signal tolerance and a lack of concern for both the victim and the abuser.

In naming the violence and abuse and proclaiming it as being counter to a loving God’s intent for wholeness, victims and survivors learn they are not alone and become empowered. Perpetrators are then held accountable and are invited to repentance, and bystanders come to see their own complicity through self deception and participation in systemic violence.

This work is difficult and long term. Sermons place our lived experience in conversation with the biblical text and offer a counter vision to a culture that
tolerates and even celebrates violence. Care must be taken in speaking about our sacred scriptures, traditions, and doctrines to avoid tacit approval of violence, offering cheap grace to perpetrators, or reinforcing the perceived guilt and shame of survivors. Involvement with victims and survivors teaches how to preach about these issues in ways that are not harmful and, for the congregation, offers a chance to overcome complacency and learn how to be supportive.

_Telling the Truth: Preaching about Sexual and Domestic Violence_ (1998) shares the wisdom of theologians, pastoral care professionals, and preachers in approaching this difficult but necessary task of confronting difficult issues in their church and community.
Responding to Family Violence

Pastoral Reflection: Why Should Male Ministers Preach On Domestic Violence?

Reverend Kevin Fredericks
Black Mountain Presbyterian Church
Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network (PADVN) Leadership Team

For years many church leaders have operated from the basic orientation that Domestic Violence (DV) is a women’s issue. Within the Presbyterian Church (USA), the issue emerged through the Office of Women’s Ministry. In a rather subtle and dismissive way, the church male leadership had frequently assumed that within our denomination there are women specialists who address the cases of Domestic Violence that emerge from time to time. In doing so, we make the assumption that family violence is adequately addressed within our congregation. Nothing could be further from the truth.

1. The problem of Domestic Violence is not just a “women’s issue.” DV affects the whole family, including children and the perpetrator. Family violence impacts the whole congregation and the larger community and it is reaching epidemic proportions. Currently, 1 in 3 women will become victims of violence in their lifetime, and most of the violence occurs within the context of intimate family relationships. The odds are very strong that in every congregation there are families that have been impacted by domestic violence. The larger the church, the greater the number of families that are impacted by DV.

2. The presence of family violence is more widespread within our churches than pastors or leaders can easily recognize. Five years ago when my own congregation designated a Local Domestic Violence Center as the recipient of the local share of the PC(USA) Peacemaking Offering, the director of a local shelter spoke as part of the Sunday Worship Minute for Mission. That afternoon five church members independently made contact with the shelter director asking for help as victims of DV. I learned that very day that victims of DV do not assume that the church will help them if they never hear about the issue in worship.

3. Preaching and praying about DV as a justice issue and as a violation of the covenant of marriage builds a level of trust between the church leadership and the members of the church, and gives members permission and comfort to share their issue with their pastor as it arises.

4. Currently a majority of churches in our denominations have male pastors...
as solo pastors or as head of staff. Church leadership of all congregations need to address the issue theologically as a violation, against both the covenant of marriage and the victim and other family members. Amongst members in our churches, a high degree of trust and authority is placed in the pastor of the church and when the pastor address this issue from the pulpit, family violence is widely understood as an issue worthy of the faith community’s full attention and focus.

5. It is not enough for a well meaning pastor to launch into addressing domestic violence from the pulpit unless he or she engages in adequate educational training. DV has many levels to it, each of which must be explored and understood, including social, psychological, legal, and the theological dimensions of the issue. A well informed pastor must know how the Bible and theology have been misused by pastors in counseling and preaching, most dramatically to the detriment of the victim, and even for the perpetrator. They must know why couples counseling and anger management courses are not only inadequate but may actually have dangerous implications if used in addressing family violence with victims and perpetrators.

6. Victims and family members where domestic violence is present have significant needs for support, safety, and wellbeing. The pastor must also recognize that the perpetrator needs a whole set of pastoral care as well. Including accountability, restorative justice for the victim, forgiveness, and healing as a person who is a perpetrator. In all probability, male ministers with a clear sense of the justice and reconciliation issues surrounding DV are in a stronger position to effectively connect with male perpetrators.
Sermon Starters: Suggestions for Thinking About Family Violence Themes in Preaching

Questions About Scripture to Help You Form a Sermon Around Texts that Include Themes of Violence Against the Vulnerable

General questions that are relevant to most, if not all, of these passages:
1. How do we reconcile the intended message of the scripture with how it is commonly being interpreted today?
2. How do we compare the law and culture of Ancient Israel with the law and culture of the present day?
3. How do we advocate for the protection and empowerment of women using a text that often times demands their subjugation?
4. What do we do with a text that is written to and for men, often to the detriment of women?
5. How can we be advocates for victims of violence when violence is often ordained, sanctioned, or committed by God and God’s chosen?

Judges 19-21
1. What is the implication that the woman is never named?
2. Explore the connotative and denotative definition of concubine. Examine its cultural context, and explain how this woman was not Levi’s whore, but rather his wife.
3. Explore what it would be like for a woman to experience this passage in a literal sense. Bring up questions surrounding the brutality, and sexual violence.
4. How would it feel to be thrown to a savage crowd—to be assaulted—by your own husband?
5. Why was the owner of the household willing to throw his virgin daughter to such a barbaric crowd?
6. How would it feel to know that your husband would have left you, had your battered body not been a physical barrier in his way?
7. The text does not specify that the woman was dead when the Levite cut her body into pieces. How would it feel to travel back to your home, broken and bruised, only to have your husband cut your body into pieces?
8. Explore how a woman might feel while reading this text. What emotions does this text elicit for you?
9. The framing of this story, speaking to how there is no king in Israel, shows us that this story is (one of many) used to justify why a monarchy was necessary. How does it feel knowing that a woman was brutalized (whether it was metaphorical or literal) in order to prove a point?
2 Samuel 11
1. What does the story of David and Bathsheba have to tell us about consent and abuse of power?
2. Explore Bathsheba’s position in society. She is a married woman who is propositioned by her king: she has no right to refuse. The situation is escalated when she falls pregnant—and if their relationship had been discovered, it would have been Bathsheba to be punished, not David.
3. What is Bathsheba’s role in this story? Is she a cunning seductress who intentionally bathed where David could see her in order to entice him? Is she a helpless victim who was merely bathing in a place she thought was safe, only to be spied upon and then taken advantaged of, and forced into sexual relations by the King?
4. How do either of these views harm or empower Bathsheba?
5. How do they harm or empower other women?
6. Did Bathsheba know about David’s role in the death of her husband Uriah? Would this have changed how Bathsheba might have acted, taking into account the laws of society and the authority David had over her as a man and as her king?

2 Samuel 13
1. How does this story reflect modern day views and stories of rape?
2. Both Absalom and David silence Tamar. Does David refuse to help Tamar simply because he does not want to punish his son? How do families and court systems sometimes fail to help victims of rape?
3. Some say that what happened to Tamar is a punishment against David for his action against Bathsheba. How does this idea perpetuate violence against women?

Ezekiel 16
In this chapter, the author uses a metaphor of God as husband and Israel as God’s unfaithful wife; in order to portray how Israel has worshipped false gods, therefore cheating in a marriage setting and thus enraging God. This metaphor portrays God as a violent husband, harming his adulterous wife because of her transgressions.
1. How does this passage perpetuate violence against women? How does this passage condone violence as a response to a woman’s “misbehavior?”
2. How does this passage hurt a victim’s relationship with God?
3. How do we work past this violent imagery of God with the loving God portrayed...
in the rest of the bible?
4. How does this passage pardon or confirm that violence of the husband and abuse of the woman is a holy/divinely behavior. Does this passage let abusers defend their actions with this passage as evidence they were in the right?

**Genesis 2:4-3:24**
1. How does the creation story of Adam and Eve perpetuate violence against women?
2. Why is it that Eve must bear the brunt of the punishment by those who interpret the story?
3. Why do we, in our modern setting, so easily accept that consequence?
4. Adam is also equally guilty, yet is interpreted as the innocent. Take into account that it was Adam who received the order to not eat from the Tree of Knowledge from God, whereas we assume that Eve heard it translated from Adam, and not from God. How does that affect the story and how does that affect where blame ought to be placed?
5. In the end, God does punish Adam and Eve, by expelling them from the Garden. Even so, God still cares for them, giving them clothes even in their sinfulness.
6. How can we interpret the relationship between the abuser and the abuse in light of this story?
7. How do we reconcile our knowledge of abuse and violence, and commit to our faith in this story?

**Ephesians 5:21-33**
1. How does this passage encourage the submission of women to men? How can we acknowledge the damaging psychology that affirms men as saviors and punishes women with violence as something legitimate?
2. Verse 27 states that “...so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of that kind —yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish...” This metaphor alluded to how men must make women look beautiful. How is that harmful to women? Conversely, how might this be empowering to women?
3. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her...” this is what is written in Verse 25. How is this verse misinterpreted? How is this verse ignored? How should husbands act according to this verse, how should they show love?
4. How can the ancient Roman structure of pater familias inform our
understanding of this text and the role it plays in our current context?

**Colossians 3:18-19**
The Colossians text of the household codes is similar to the Ephesians text, though much smaller. It does not take the time to speak the metaphor of husband and wife as Christ and the church.

5. What is the focal point of the text? How does the interpretation confirm or verify the actions in the other texts?

6. How can the ancient Roman structure of pater familias inform our understanding of this text and the role it plays in our current context?

**Matthew 19:1-12 and Mark 10:1-12**
1. Matthew and Mark speak about divorce. How does strict adherence to these texts trap women in abusive marriages?

2. In what ways can these texts be about protecting the sanctity of marriage and the love of both participants equally? Explore how these texts protect women from being divorced, and left destitute when their husbands leave and want to marry a younger/prettier woman.

3. How do these passages, with the conclusion above, teach modern women that marriage has the expectation or certainty that their husband will constantly be running after a younger/prettier woman?

**1 Corinthians 14:33-36**
1. In what ways does this text perpetuate violence against women?

2. How can this passage be used by husbands or male abusers to silence women or isolate them?

3. How can we combat the silencing of women in the church? How can your congregation specifically act in order to give them a voice?

4. In what ways can we give women an opportunity to speak and be heard...not just about their victimization but also about God, about their passions, about the ideologies or interpretations, about the things that heal them—and about things that hurt them.

5. What is Paul’s motivation for writing these verses within this passage? Is there a specific situation of a defiant or loud woman that he is addressing? Or is it more general?
**1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

1. How does policing the way a woman dresses and styles her hair perpetuate violence?
2. How are women subjugated and oppressed by verse 7, “Men are a reflection of God, whereas women are a reflection of me…”
3. Can this be redeemed through verse 12, “For just as a woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God.”
4. How do the members of your congregation dress when they come to church? If a man were to dress ‘inappropriately’—what consequences would happen? What consequences would happen if a woman were to dress ‘inappropriately’?
5. Are those responses and consequences equitable, when the only difference is the gender of the person?
6. If a woman stands up to read, pray, or preach, what kinds of comments does she receive? Are they about her message or duty? Or are they about her stance and attire?
7. While Paul wrote about policing the appearance of women while they pray and prophesy, he is not policing the actions of women praying and prophesying. How can we continue to encourage and rejoice in the leadership and actions of women of the church, while simultaneously combating the policing of their appearance?

**1 Timothy 2: 1-15**

1. Similar to 1 Corinthians 14, this text perpetuates the silence of women. It does take it further in this text, it condemns all women for the actions of Eve (while also absorbing Adam’s role in the situation), and because of this women should be silent and submissive.
2. How does this passage perpetuate the negative and incorrect generalization that men are better than women? How does this ideology materialize today, and is this passage used as evidence?
3. Connect this text back to the Genesis story of Adam and Eve. Explore how this text then places all of the blame of what happened on Eve. While maintaining that Adam was innocent and ignorant to her behavior. How is this harmful to women? Is this interpretation harmful to men?
4. How can we, as modern Christians, change our interpretations and long standing beliefs which stem from this passage?
5. What are the other names attributed to Eve? (Seductress, whore, sinful woman,
etc.) Why do we accept these titles so easily? And how can we change that?

6. How does the idea and belief that only childbirth redeems women continue to harm women? How does it harm those who cannot or choose not to have children? What does this text mean in light of a world where there are thousands of children in foster care? Thousands of children who are starving or suffering? What does this text mean in light of a world that is struggling with overpopulation?

Texts that can Lead Towards Healing and Reconciliation

Genes 1:1-2:3
1. Compared to the second creation story, this story gives a more equal view of men and women. God creates both men and women in God’s image, without specifics - thus without discrimination. How is this story empowering?
2. How do we reconcile the story conflicting with the other creation story?
3. What do we do with the different pronouns used for God in this passage?
4. In verse 26 God is referred to as “our” whereas verse 27 God is referred to as “his”. How might that change our view of God as gendered, genderless, or gender fluid being?
5. How might the use of pronouns help trans-people in your congregation to heal or feel empowered?

Numbers 27: 1-11
1. This is an example of women negotiating their own worth in their father’s inheritance and being granted it by God. How can this passage be successfully used to compare a woman’s experience with domestic violence?
2. This passage is linked with Numbers 36, how does that addition perpetuate the idea that women are belongings of men? How does this then perpetuate domestic violence?

2 Kings 4:1-17
1. How can we see a victim of domestic violence in this woman and her children?
2. How does the community aid the widow? How does this compare to how our communities aid victims and families?

1 Corinthians 7:1-4
1. This passage refers to a kind of equality between men and women for conjugal
rights and authority over the other. Is this empowering or damaging?
2. What is Paul saying about celibacy/sexuality and sexual relations in this text?
3. How does this inform our modern view of marriage and sex? How can this text be used in order to help LGBT church goers to feel included and welcomed?
4. How can this help us understand how to have a conversation about sex in a church setting?

**Galatians 3:28**

1. How might the idea of “there is no longer male and female” be liberating to both men and women? How might it be damaging?
2. What could this mean for those who are gender nonconforming? Or people who are in transition?
3. How can this passage help them feel included? And what role should the church take in order to help welcome and love people of all spectrums?
4. What does it mean for justice and equality that we are all “one in Christ Jesus”?

**Sample Lectionary Texts**

**Isaiah 42:1-9 (Lectionary Year A, 1st Sunday in Ordinary Time)**

1. What does it mean for women when God’s servant, “in whom God’s soul delights”, is a man? Does God’s soul also delight in women? In children? How might our actions towards another person, be they batterer or victim, change if we saw the person as someone in whom God’s soul delights?
2. Verse 3 states “a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.” What interpretations exist for those metaphors?
3. What does that type of justice look like? And how might that change if the person is abused or the abuser?

**Romans 6:1b-11 (Lectionary Year A, 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 5th Sunday After Pentecost)**

1. In the context of domestic violence, what is a sin?
2. In the wake of domestic violence, how do we walk in newness of life with Christ? What has to happen within the family, church or leadership to heal?
3. What can this text teach us about reconciliation? About moving beyond past abusive behaviors?
4. What hope can this text provide for victims?
Matthew 22: 34-46 (Lectionary Year A, 30th Sunday in Ordinary Time)
1. Jesus speaks to the two most great commandments: Love the Lord (with all your heart, soul, mind, strength) and love your neighbor as yourself. How does this mentality/priority help those suffering from domestic violence?
2. Some people believe that ‘tough love’ is necessary to make people better? How does this ideology be misinterpreted in order to commit violence against one another?

Deuteronomy 18: 15-20 (Lectionary Year B, 4th Sunday after Epiphany)
God’s people need a prophetic voice to speak out up against domestic violence. The people that God cares about, the oppressed, need a voice to speak out for them. They are needed in churches, in schools, in courtrooms, and in homes. How do we call people to speak a word from God on behalf of victims who often can’t speak for themselves?

2 Corinthians 12:2-10 (Year B, 7th Sunday after Pentecost - Proper 9)
1. How might this text teach victims to remain in an abusive situation? Is using the language “enduring hardship for the sake of Christ” damaging and permitting of domestic, or otherwise, violence?
2. How might this text provide hope for those escaping violent situations? Is the phrase “whenever I am weak, then I am strong” empowering?
3. In modern, American culture boasting is often acceptable for men, and unacceptable for women. How might this passage continue to enforce this idea? Or can this passage be used to form the opposite idea, that women should be able to boast just as much as men?

Mark 12:38-44 (Year B, 25th Sunday after pentecost, Proper 27)
1. Explore the financial aspects of family violence, using this passage as a tool or example.
2. How can finances be used to control and subjugate women and children? How can money be used as a tool to abuse? And how can you notice it within personal situations?
3. Look at your own congregation or community. Who are the ‘rich scribes’ and who are the ‘widows’? How does this passage call you to act?
4. How do we appreciate the first of all, no matter how small?
Sermon Starters

Jeremiah 17:5-10 (Year C, 6th Sunday after Epiphany)
1. How can trusting in the LORD be empowering for victims of domestic violence?
2. How can it be damaging? How can leadership address when/where to draw the line between spiritual help and literal help? When/where to intervene as a friend or mentor rather than just pray?
3. Often, victims are told that if they only trusted God more, God would have helped them. How can we combat this narrative?

Galatians 5:1, 13-25 (Year C, 6th Sunday after Pentecost, Proper 8)
1. What does this passage mean in the context of family violence? What does it mean for abusers and batterers? For victims?
2. How does this passage encourage readers to advocate for victims of family violence? How does this passage lead us towards reconciliations?

1. How does an attitude of “thank God I’m not like them” separate us from victims and abusers?
2. How does it perpetuate violence? And how can we combat this narrative?
3. This is a prime example of how someone can convince themselves that family violence is not their problem. Instead, how can we use this passage as an opportunity to educate and advocate for victims of domestic violence?

These resources are only the beginning. Please commit and continue to work within your place of worship, to find more biblical texts or theological resources in order to educate and advocate - starting with members of the church body.

Challenge long held ideologies and prejudices, which are damaging to victims. Cultivate and create new interpretations so that people who are abused, and people who abuse may mend themselves and stop this unhealthy and damaging cycle.
Prayer for Thursdays in Black

“Creating God,
Mother of us all.
We are your beloved,
    Formed in your image and nurtured in the depth of your dark womb. You breathed life into our flesh and sent us to do your work in the world, to care for each other and for all of creation as we would care for you:
        Our life and our breath.
Wherever we are in your world there are survivors, victims, bystanders, and perpetrators of gender-biased violence.
This violence is destroying your sacred creation,
        Breaking and mutilating bodies,
        Crushing spirits,
Stealing dignity,
        Abusing trust,
        Seizing power, and
        Violating your beloved.

As long as violence exists among your people, anywhere, we will not be whole.
Until your creation is healed, we will wear black in solidarity with people around the world to honor the courage to work toward an end to such violence.

May black remind us of the unimaginably deep love that you have for us and the cavernous well of tears shed by communities broken by violence.

And may black remind us of the hope for transformation that you have planted within the dark belly of the earth. A hope that grows stronger every time a cycle of violence is broken and nurtured by each action against violence and rape.

Creating God, As long as we have breath, may we work with perseverance towards restoring your creation.
Amen.”

The United Church of Canada - 2017 - L’Eglise Un du Canada
Remembering Women

31 December 2006

LEADER:
Spirit of Life, we remember today women, famous women and nameless, who in the course of history have used the strength and gifts you have given them to change the world. We call upon these ancestors in the faith to help us discover in ourselves this strength and the way to use it to bring the Kingdom of Justice and Peace.

We remember Sarah, who with Abraham answered God’s call to leave their native land and put their trust in a covenant with the LORD.
We pray for her strength of faith.
We remember Esther and Deborah, who by their personal deeds of courage saved their nation.
We pray for their strength and courage in acting for the good of many.
We remember Mary Magdalene and the other women who followed Jesus, who were not believed when they told of his resurrection.
We pray for their strength of belief when confronted with skepticism.
We remember Phoebe and Priscilla and the other women who were leaders in the early church.
We pray for their strength to spread the Gospel and to inspire other communities of believers.
We remember the abbesses of the Middle Ages who kept faith and knowledge alive. We pray for their strength of leadership.
We remember Teresa of Avila and Catherine of Siena, who challenged the corruption of the Church at the Renaissance.
We pray for the particular strength that they sought to pass on to us.

We pray for women who are victims of domestic violence. May they find strength to overcome fear and seek solutions.
We pray for women facing a life of poverty and malnutrition. May they find strength to hope and work together for a better life.
We pray for women who have led the way in making a breakthrough for women. May they find strength to persevere and open up new opportunities for all women.

We pray for our daughter and granddaughters. May they find the strength to
discover a life that is distinctly theirs.

(Add here the names of women whom you wish to remember or for whom you wish to pray)

All:

We have celebrated the strength of many women, past and present. Now we come to celebrate ourselves. In each one of us there is the same life, the same light, the same love. In each one of us there are the seeds of strength and glory. Our bodies can lovingly touch, our hearts can heal, our minds can discern faith, truth, and justice.

Spirit of life, be with us in our quest. Amen.

(From: A Collection of Prayers for Peace - 2006 DOV, WCC)

*Please use this prayer when your congregation is in need, and when it is not in need. Please use the platform of the podium to affirm and remember women of faith, so that the people in the church body may be empowered and lifted up.

The online version may be found at the following web addresses:
Liz Cruz Garbutt  
Former HHSC Associate Commissioner  
Office of Social Services, Community Access & Services  

In Texas, it is estimated that 1 in 3 women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Every year over 100 women in Texas are killed by an intimate partner. In 2015, Texas family violence programs received 183,294 hotline calls, served over 70,000 victims, and 15,869 requests for shelter went unmet.

Domestic violence (which is synonymous to family violence) doesn’t discriminate. It affects people in urban environments, as well as rural communities; it affects people of every race, religion, gender, sexuality, or socio-economic status. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, in every community—in every faith community—there are victims of family violence.

Domestic violence is tragic and harmful, often with severe consequences for the victim, survivor, and family. The Texas Family Code defines violence as: “an act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, sexual assault, or that is a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself.”

As spiritual leaders, faith based organizations have an ongoing opportunity to raise awareness, educate, and provide assistance to victims, survivors, and perpetrators. It is natural that people reach out to their faith leaders in times of crisis. When that crisis is domestic violence, it is imperative that faith leaders are prepared to safely assist the victim and children. Understanding the dynamics of family violence, the myths and facts about this form of violence, the services available, and safety planning is absolutely critical.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) administers the Family Violence Program, which works to promote self-sufficiency, safety, and long-term independence of adult victims of family violence, child victims of family violence, and victims of teen dating violence. The program funds local family violence organizations across Texas to provide emergency shelter and support services to victims and their children, education for the public, and training and prevention.
support.

Local family violence organizations are excellent resources for information and guidance. Direct services provided for domestic violence victims may include shelter, crisis hotline, referral to emergency medical care, counseling services, emergency transportation, legal assistance, employment assistance, and more. A list of Texas programs for domestic violence victims can be found at www.hhs.texas.giv/family-violence-program.

Building a relationship with the family violence program in your community can enhance the ability to provide assistance with this complex issue.

Raising awareness and providing education is essential to ensure that everyone understands that family violence is not acceptable, and cannot be justified under any circumstances. Here are a few suggestions related to raising awareness:

• Educate yourself about the dynamics of domestic violence and the issues related to it through reading, meeting with local advocates, or talking with state/national advocates from the Texas Council on Family Violence or the National Domestic Violence Hotline.
• Educate your community through sermons, speeches, and prayers around the subjects of domestic violence and healthy relationships/marriages.
• Encourage development of an age appropriate curriculum on bullying prevention, healthy dating relationships, and domestic abuse for children’s classes and youth groups.
• Encourage your faith community to support and get involved with the local family violence program or anti-violence organization in your community.
• Participate in or sponsor Domestic Violence Awareness Month activities in October.

Faith-based organizations in our communities seek to make a positive difference in the lives of the people they serve. Based on current statistics, faith communities are likely to come in contact with people impacted by domestic violence. As a faith community, being aware, informed, and prepared on the complex issues of domestic violence will bring hope and healing to those in need.
SAFETY DURING AN EXPLOSIVE INCIDENT
- If an argument seems unavoidable, try to have it in a room or area that has access to an exit and not in the bathroom, kitchen or anywhere near weapons.
- Practice how to get out of your home safely. Identify which doors, windows, elevator or stairs would be best.
- Have a packed bag ready and keep it in a secret but accessible place in order to leave quickly.
- Identify a neighbor you can tell about the violence and ask that they call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your home.
- Devise a code word to use with your children, family and neighbors when you need the police.
- Decide and plan for where you will go if you have to leave home (even if you don’t think you will need to).
- If the situation is very dangerous, use your own instincts and judgements to keep yourself safe. Call the police as soon as it is safe to do so. You can obtain a protective order at your local court during business hours, and—if the abuser is arrested—through the police at any time.
- Always remember: YOU HAVE THE RIGHT NOT TO BE ABUSED IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP—PHYSICALLY, VERBALLY, EMOTIONALLY, OR SEXUALLY.

SAFETY WHEN PREPARING TO LEAVE
- Determine who would let you stay with them or lend you some money.
- Always try to take your children with you or make arrangements to leave them with someone safe.
- Leave money, an extra set of keys, copies of important documents and extra clothes with someone you trust.
- Open a savings account in your own name to start to establish or increase your independence. Think of other ways in which you can increase your independence.
- Keep the shelter numbers close in hand and keep change or a calling card with you at all times.
- Review your safety plan with a domestic violence advocate in order to plan the safest way to leave your batterer.
- REMEMBER – LEAVING YOUR BATTERER CAN BE THE MOST DANGEROUS TIME.

SAFETY IN YOUR HOME
- Inform neighbors and landlord that your partner no longer lives with you and
that they should call the police if they see your abuser near your home.
• Rehearse a safety plan with your children for when you are not with them.
• Inform your children’s school or day care about who has permission to pick up your children. Give them a copy of your protective order.
• Change or add locks on your doors and windows as soon as possible. Add peephole and increase outdoor light if possible. Try to borrow a mobile phone.
• Check with your local battered women’s center to see if they distribute cell phones for 911 use.
• Change your telephone number.

SAFETY WITH A PROTECTIVE ORDER
• Keep your protective order with you at all times. Leave extra copies at work, with a friend, in your car, etc.
• Call the police if your partner breaks the protective order. Be sure to tell the police you want to report a violation of a protective order.
• Inform family, friends, and neighbors that you have a protective order in effect.
• Try to avoid places in the community where your batterer may frequent.

SAFETY ON THE JOB AND IN PUBLIC
• Decide which co-worker you will inform of your situation. This should include office or building security. Provide a picture of your batterer if possible.
• Arrange to have someone screen your telephone calls if possible.
• Devise a safety plan for when you leave work. Have someone escort you to your car, bus or train. Use a variety of routes to go home if possible. Think about what you would do if something happened while going home.

YOUR SAFETY AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH
• If you are thinking of returning to a potentially abusive situation, discuss an alternative plan with someone you trust.
• If you have to communicate with your partner, determine the safest way to do so.
• Have positive thoughts about yourself and be assertive with others about your needs.
• Plan to attend a domestic violence support group for at least a few weeks to
Teens in Violent Dating Relationships

- Gain support from others and learn more about yourself and the relationship.
- Read books or articles to make you feel stronger.

**IF YOU ARE A TEEN IN A VIOLENT DATING RELATIONSHIP**
- If things in your relationship doesn’t feel right to you, talk to someone you trust about it.
- Decide which friend, teacher, relative, or police officer you can go to in an emergency.
- Contact a domestic violence advocate, a representative from the county or District Attorney’s office or a victim services counselor from a law enforcement agency to learn how to obtain a protective order or restraining order and make a safety plan.
- Remember – you should never have to feel afraid in your relationship.
- NO MEANS NO!
What You Need To Take If You Leave

**Identification**
- Drivers license, car title, and registration
- Children's birth certificates
- Your birth and marriage certificates
- Social security card
- Welfare identification

**Financial**
- Money
- Bank account information
- Checkbooks

**Legal Papers**
- Your protective order (very important)
- Lease, rental agreement, house deed
- Car registration and insurance papers
- Custody papers
- Divorce papers
- Health and Life insurance papers
- Medical records for all family members
- Work permits
- Green card and/or immigration papers
- Passport

**Other**
- House and car keys
- Medications
- Small objects you can sell
- Address book
- Photos of you, your children and your abuser
- School records
- Jewelry
- Children's small toys
- Pets, if you can
- Changes of clothing for you and your kids
- Phone card
Círculo de Poder y Control

PODER Y CONTROL

VIOLENCIA

física

AMENAZAS:
Asistiría con amenazas de hacerle mal. Amenazaría con dejarla, con el suicidio, o con denunciarla falsamente a la autoridad. Obligaría a retirar los cargos presentados contra él. Obligaría a cometer actos ilegales.

INTIMIDACIÓN:
Producirle miedo a través de sus miradas, acciones, y gestos. Destruiría objetos y amenazaría con asesinar a sus animales domésticos, mostrándole armas.

PRIVILEGIO MASCULINO:
Trataría como una servienta. No dejaría tomar decisiones importantes. Actuaría como el rey de la casa. Definiría los roles del hombre y de la mujer.

ABUSO ECONOMICO:
No dejaría trabajar o impediría que mantenga su empleo. Obligaría a que le pidan dinero. Daría una mensualidad. Quitaría el dinero. No informaría acerca de los ingresos familiares o no permitiría disponer de los ingresos.

MANIPULACION DE LOS NIÑO(A):S:
Hacería sentir culpable por el comportamiento de los niño(a)s como intermediarios y mantener así el control. Usaría la violencia hacia los niño(a)s para molestarla o amenazarla. Amenzaría con quitarles los niño(a)s.

ABUSO EMOCIONAL:

ASELAMIENTO:
Controlaría lo que hace, a quien puede ver, con quien puede hablar, lo que puede leer, y donde va. Limitaría su vida social, utilizando los celos para justificar sus actos.

DESVALORIZAR, NÉGAR, CULPAR:
No tomar seriamente la preocupación que ella tiene sobre el abuso. Negaría que hubo abuso. Hacería sentir responsable de la conducta abusiva. Decirle que ella lo provocó.

VIOLENCIA

sexual

Responding to Family Violence
Power and Control Wheel

COERCION AND THREATS:
- Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her, threatening to leave her, commit suicide, or report her to welfare.
- Making her drop charges.
- Making her do illegal things.

INTIMIDATION:
- Making her afraid by using looks, actions, and gestures.
- Smashing things.
- Destroying her property.
- Abusing pets.
- Displaying weapons.

MALE PRIVILEGE:
- Treating her like a servant: making all the big decisions, acting like the “master of the castle,” being the one to define men’s and women’s roles.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:
- Putting her down. Making her feel bad about herself.
- Calling her names.
- Making her think she’s crazy.
- Playing mind games.
- Humiliating her.
- Making her feel guilty.

ECONOMIC ABUSE:
- Preventing her from getting or keeping a job.
- Making her ask for money.
- Giving her an allowance.
- Taking her money.
- Not letting her know about or have access to family income.

ISOLATION:
- Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, and where she goes.
- Limiting her outside involvement.
- Using jealousy to justify actions.

MINIMIZING, DENYING, AND BLAMING:
- Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously.
- Saying the abuse didn’t happen.
- Shifting responsibility for abusive behavior.
- Saying she caused it.

USING CHILDREN:
- Making her feel guilty about the children. Using the children to relay messages.
- Using visitation to harass her.
- Threatening to take the children away.

Developed by:
Domestic Abuse Intervention Project
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, MN 55802
218.722.0134

A Toolkit for Texas Faith Communities compiled by Texas Impact
Responding to Family Violence

Hotline Flyers to Post (English & Spanish)

This page lists hotlines staffed by crisis professionals trained to help victims and survivors of family violence. Please print copies of this page to place in private areas in your faith gathering place, for example in restroom stalls. https://wewillspeakout.us/

Is someone hurting you?

☐ Does your spouse or partner often put you down and make you feel ashamed?
☐ Do they tell you what you can and can’t do, or whom you can and can’t talk to?
☐ Are they threatening you or someone you love?
☐ Have they tried to convince you that you can’t survive or function without them?
☐ Have they ever pushed or hit you?
☐ Has anyone forced you to have sex, or performed sexual acts without your consent?

If you answered yes to even one of these questions, it’s time to seek help.

There is no excuse for sexual assault, physical violence, or controlling or oppressive behaviors. Even verbal or emotional abuse is unhealthy and unacceptable in any relationship. It is not your fault. You deserve peace, and you have options.

Caring people are available to help.

If at any time you feel that you are in immediate danger, call 911.

FILL IN LOCAL NUMBERS HERE

Below are national hotlines that can help you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

National Domestic Violence Hotline ...... 800-799-SAFE (7233) ...... 800-787-3224 TTY
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) Hotline ...... 800-656-HOPE (4673)
RAINN National Sexual Assault Online Hotline ...... ohl.rainn.org/online
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline ...... 1-800-273-8255
National Sexual Assault Hotline ...... 1-800-656-4673
National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline ...... 1-866-331-9474
¿Hay alguien causándole daño?

☐ ¿Está usted siendo constantemente humillada y maltratada por su esposo/a o pareja sentimental?

☐ ¿Le dicen a usted lo que puede y no puede hacer, o con quién usted puede o no puede hablar?

☐ ¿Está usted siendo amenazada o alguien a quién usted ama?

☐ ¿Alguien ha tratado de convencerla de que usted no puede sobrevivir o funcionar sin ellos?

☐ ¿En alguna ocasión usted ha sido empujada o golpeada?

☐ ¿Ha sido usted forzada a tener sexo, o a practicar actos sexuales sin su consentimiento?

Si su respuesta es SÍ aunque sea a una de estas preguntas, es tiempo de que usted búsque ayuda.

No hay excusa para la agresión sexual, la violencia física, o conductas contraladoras y opresivas. El abuso verbal y emocional no es saludable y es inaceptable en cualquier relación. No es su culpa. Usted merece paz, y usted tiene opciones.

Personas amorosas están dispuestas a ayudar.

Si en algún momento usted se siente que está en peligro inminente, llame al 911.

ESCRIBA AQUÍ LOS NÚMEROS LOCALES

Más abajo, encontrará números de teléfonos importantes donde le pueden ayudar las 24 horas del día, los 7 días de la semana.

Línea Nacional de Violencia Doméstica ....... 800-799-SAFE (7233) ....... 800-787-3224 TTY
Línea Nacional de Violación, Abuso E Incesto ....... 800-656-HOPE (4673)
RAINN Línea Nacional Y Red de Asalto Sexual ....... ohl.rainn.org/online
Línea Nacional de Prevención de Suicidio ....... 1-800-273-8255
Línea Nacional de Asalto Sexual ....... 1-800-656-4673
Línea Nacional de Ayuda Contra el Abuso de Citas de Adolescentes ....... 1-866-331-9474
Responding to Family Violence
SECTION FIVE: TEXAS LAWS
Reflection: Bringing Pastoral Care to Law Enforcement

Rabbi Cantor Marie Betcher, ACC
Austin Police Chaplain
Cedar Park Police/Fire Chaplain
Swan Songs Executive Board Member
Chaplain USA Executive Board Member

Question: From a Jewish perspective, how does family violence affect Jewish congregations? Why is it important Jewish congregations advocate for the education, prevention, and intervention of family violence? In that same way, how can Jewish congregations advocate for those things?

Answer: The Jewish perspective, if followed, is one that respects life, children and adults. If one is following Torah one does not engage in behavior that contradicts our halacha (Jewish Law). That being said, to assume that all Jewish households are absent of family violence is folly. People are full of faults, we are human and therefore subject to human frailty. Rabbis realize that people will transgress. More often than not, things are dealt with privately with clergy, when possible. If the situation warrants it, law enforcement/justice system can be called in. Prevention is intertwined in living a Jewish life, which is “do unto others as you would have done unto you”. Domestic abuse is not automatic grounds for Jewish divorce. An abused woman whose husband refuses to give her a divorce is considered an agunah, a chained or anchored woman. But in the dominant sect of Reform Judaism, Jews very rarely obtain a “Jewish divorce” document, a get, and a civil divorce is sufficient enough for one to remarry. Reporting abuse is quite low in the Jewish community, but it is thought that abuse in Jewish households is on par with the rest of society.

Question: From a law enforcement perspective, have you seen ways in which faith has helped and/or hindered the work of law enforcement in matters of family violence? In what ways does faith communities addressing this issue benefit law enforcement? How does this benefit victims of family violence?

Answer: As a chaplain, I have seen faith communities help tremendously when it comes to family violence and surrounding issues. That is, if the family has any affiliation to a congregation or is open to working within one or with clergy. Those families that are strictly secular really have a difficult time finding their way through the maze of emotions family violence stirs up. I have seen wonderful partnerships between law enforcement and faith communities with joint programs, speakers,
and start up groups addressing family violence and abuse. As a chaplain, when on calls, people will usually readily talk to me and open up about personal details which, at times, I can share with law enforcement. And I have seen law enforcement officers come to my temple and present a program and their presence gives people hope that things could change. They sometimes can envision a way out after meeting an officer and feeling they will be heard.

*Question: Finally, how do your dual lenses of faith and law enforcement inform your experience and work around the issue of family violence?*

*Answer:* It is impossible for me to separate my identities within law enforcement and my identities within chaplaincy and rabbinical culture. Because of my ministry I am a “mandated reporter.” In Judaism, we follow teaching such as this verse from Leviticus; “Do not stand idly on the blood of your neighbor.” (Lev. 19:16) Of course, there are familial situations that are in ‘gray areas’. I try to give someone the benefit of the doubt when a situation is ‘iffy’... but, when certain lines are crossed, we have no choice but to report something, even when it might tear the family apart.
FAMILY CODE
TITLE 4. PROTECTIVE ORDERS AND FAMILY VIOLENCE
SUBTITLE A. GENERAL PROVISIONS
CHAPTER 71. DEFINITIONS

Sec. 71.001. APPLICABILITY OF DEFINITIONS. (a) Definitions in this chapter apply to this title.
(b) If, in another part of this title, a term defined by this chapter has a meaning different from the meaning provided by this chapter, the meaning of that other provision prevails.
(c) Except as provided by this chapter, the definitions in Chapter 101 apply to terms used in this title.

Sec. 71.002. COURT. “Court” means the district court, court of domestic relations, juvenile court having the jurisdiction of a district court, statutory county court, constitutional county court, or other court expressly given jurisdiction under this title.

Sec. 71.0021. DATING VIOLENCE. (a) “Dating violence” means an act, other than a defensive measure to protect oneself, by an actor that:
(1) is committed against a victim or applicant for a protective order:
(A) with whom the actor has or has had a dating relationship; or
(B) because of the victim’s or applicant’s marriage to or dating relationship with an individual with whom the actor is or has been in a dating relationship or marriage; and
(2) is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the victim or applicant in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault.
(b) For purposes of this title, “dating relationship” means a relationship between individuals who have or have had a continuing relationship of a romantic or intimate nature. The existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on consideration of:
(1) the length of the relationship;
(2) the nature of the relationship; and
(3) the frequency and type of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship.
(c) A casual acquaintanceship or ordinary fraternization in a business or social
context does not constitute a “dating relationship” under Subsection (b).

Sec. 71.003. FAMILY. “Family” includes individuals related by consanguinity or affinity, as determined under Sections 573.022 and 573.024, Government Code, individuals who are former spouses of each other, individuals who are the parents of the same child, without regard to marriage, and a foster child and foster parent, without regard to whether those individuals reside together.

Sec. 71.004. FAMILY VIOLENCE. “Family violence” means:
(1) an act by a member of a family or household against another member of the family or household that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault or that is a threat that reasonably places the member in fear of imminent physical harm, bodily injury, assault, or sexual assault, but does not include defensive measures to protect oneself;
(2) abuse, as that term is defined by Sections 261.001(1)(C), (E), (G), (H), (I), (J), (K), and (M), by a member of a family or household toward a child of the family or household; or
(3) dating violence, as that term is defined by Section 71.0021.

Sec. 71.005. HOUSEHOLD. “Household” means a unit composed of persons living together in the same dwelling, without regard to whether they are related to each other.

Sec. 71.006. MEMBER OF A HOUSEHOLD. “Member of a household” includes a person who previously lived in a household.

Sec. 71.007. PROSECUTING ATTORNEY. “Prosecuting attorney” means the attorney, determined as provided in this title, who represents the state in a district or statutory county court in the county in which venue of the application for a protective order is proper.
Sec. 91.001. DEFINITIONS. In this subtitle:
(1) “Family violence” has the meaning assigned by Section 71.004.
(2) “Medical professional” means a licensed doctor, nurse, physician assistant, or emergency medical technician.

Sec. 91.002. REPORTING BY WITNESSES ENCOURAGED. A person who witnesses family violence is encouraged to report the family violence to a local law enforcement agency.

Sec. 91.003. INFORMATION PROVIDED BY MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS. A medical professional who treats a person for injuries that the medical professional has reason to believe were caused by family violence shall:
(1) immediately provide the person with information regarding the nearest family violence shelter center;
(2) document in the person’s medical file:
   (A) the fact that the person has received the information provided under Subdivision (1); and
   (B) the reasons for the medical professional’s belief that the person’s injuries were caused by family violence; and
(3) give the person a written notice in substantially the following form, completed with the required information, in both English and Spanish:
   “It is a crime for any person to cause you any physical injury or harm even if that person is a member or former member of your family or household.
   “NOTICE TO ADULT VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE
   “You may report family violence to a law enforcement officer by calling the following telephone numbers: ____________________________.
   “If you, your child, or any other household resident has been injured or if you feel you are going to be in danger after a law enforcement officer investigating family violence leaves your residence or at a later time, you have the right to:
   “Ask the local prosecutor to file a criminal complaint against the person committing family violence; and
   “Apply to a court for an order to protect you. You may want to consult with a legal aid office, a prosecuting attorney, or a private attorney. A court can enter an order that:
   “(1) prohibits the abuser from committing further acts of violence;
   “(2) prohibits the abuser from threatening, harassing, or contacting you at home;
“(3) directs the abuser to leave your household; and
“(4) establishes temporary custody of the children or any property.
“A VIOLATION OF CERTAIN PROVISIONS OF COURT-ORDERED PROTECTION MAY BE A FELONY.
“CALL THE FOLLOWING VIOLENCE SHELTERS OR SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS IF YOU NEED PROTECTION: _____________________________.”
Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 34, Sec. 1, eff. May 5, 1997.

Sec. 91.004. APPLICATION OF SUBTITLE. This subtitle does not affect a duty to report child abuse under Chapter 261.
Added by Acts 1997, 75th Leg., ch. 34, Sec. 1, eff. May 5, 1997.

FAMILY CODE
TITLE 5. THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP AND THE SUIT AFFECTING THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP
SUBTITLE E. PROTECTION OF THE CHILD
CHAPTER 261. INVESTIGATION OF REPORT OF CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 261.001. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:
(1) “Abuse” includes the following acts or omissions by a person:
(A) mental or emotional injury to a child that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning;
(B) causing or permitting the child to be in a situation in which the child sustains a mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in the child’s growth, development, or psychological functioning;
(C) physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child, including an injury that is at variance with the history or explanation given and excluding an accident or reasonable discipline by a parent, guardian, or managing or possessory conservator that does not expose the child to a substantial risk of harm;
(D) failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent an action by another person that results in physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child;
(E) sexual conduct harmful to a child’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare,
including conduct that constitutes the offense of continuous sexual abuse of young child or children under Section 21.02, Penal Code, indecency with a child under Section 21.11, Penal Code, sexual assault under Section 22.011, Penal Code, or aggravated sexual assault under Section 22.021, Penal Code; (F) failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct harmful to a child; (G) compelling or encouraging the child to engage in sexual conduct as defined by Section 43.01, Penal Code, including compelling or encouraging the child in a manner that constitutes an offense of trafficking of persons under Section 20A.02(a)(7) or (8), Penal Code, prostitution under Section 43.02(b), Penal Code, or compelling prostitution under Section 43.05(a)(2), Penal Code; (H) causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing the photographing, filming, or depicting of the child if the person knew or should have known that the resulting photograph, film, or depiction of the child is obscene as defined by Section 43.21, Penal Code, or pornographic; (I) the current use by a person of a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code, in a manner or to the extent that the use results in physical, mental, or emotional injury to a child; (J) causing, expressly permitting, or encouraging a child to use a controlled substance as defined by Chapter 481, Health and Safety Code; (K) causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a sexual performance by a child as defined by Section 43.25, Penal Code; (L) knowingly causing, permitting, encouraging, engaging in, or allowing a child to be trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under Section 20A.02(a)(5), (6), (7), or (8), Penal Code, or the failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent a child from being trafficked in a manner punishable as an offense under any of those sections; or (M) forcing or coercing a child to enter into a marriage. 

(2) “Department” means the Department of Family and Protective Services. 

(3) “Exploitation” means the illegal or improper use of a child or of the resources of a child for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain by an employee, volunteer, or other individual working under the auspices of a facility or program as further described by rule or policy. 

(4) “Neglect”: (A) includes: (i) the leaving of a child in a situation where the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of physical or mental harm, without arranging for necessary care for the child, and the demonstration of an intent not to return by a parent,
guardian, or managing or possessory conservator of the child;
(ii) the following acts or omissions by a person:
(a) placing a child in or failing to remove a child from a situation that a reasonable person would realize requires judgment or actions beyond the child’s level of maturity, physical condition, or mental abilities and that results in bodily injury or a substantial risk of immediate harm to the child;
(b) failing to seek, obtain, or follow through with medical care for a child, with the failure resulting in or presenting a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or bodily injury or with the failure resulting in an observable and material impairment to the growth, development, or functioning of the child;
(c) the failure to provide a child with food, clothing, or shelter necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services had been offered and refused;
(d) placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to a substantial risk of sexual conduct harmful to the child; or
(e) placing a child in or failing to remove the child from a situation in which the child would be exposed to acts or omissions that constitute abuse under Subdivision (1)(E), (F), (G), (H), or (K) committed against another child;
(iii) the failure by the person responsible for a child's care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to return to the child’s home without arranging for the necessary care for the child after the child has been absent from the home for any reason, including having been in residential placement or having run away; or
(iv) a negligent act or omission by an employee, volunteer, or other individual working under the auspices of a facility or program, including failure to comply with an individual treatment plan, plan of care, or individualized service plan, that causes or may cause substantial emotional harm or physical injury to, or the death of, a child served by the facility or program as further described by rule or policy; and
(B) does not include the refusal by a person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare to permit the child to remain in or return to the child’s home resulting in the placement of the child in the conservatorship of the department if:
(i) the child has a severe emotional disturbance;
(ii) the person’s refusal is based solely on the person’s inability to obtain mental health services necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the child; and
(iii) the person has exhausted all reasonable means available to the person to
obtain the mental health services described by Subparagraph (ii).
(5) “Person responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare” means a person who traditionally is responsible for a child’s care, custody, or welfare, including:
(A) a parent, guardian, managing or possessory conservator, or foster parent of the child;
(B) a member of the child’s family or household as defined by Chapter 71;
(C) a person with whom the child’s parent cohabits;
(D) school personnel or a volunteer at the child’s school;
(E) personnel or a volunteer at a public or private child-care facility that provides services for the child or at a public or private residential institution or facility where the child resides; or
(F) an employee, volunteer, or other person working under the supervision of a licensed or unlicensed child-care facility, including a family home, residential child-care facility, employer-based day-care facility, or shelter day-care facility, as those terms are defined in Chapter 42, Human Resources Code.
(6) “Report” means a report that alleged or suspected abuse or neglect of a child has occurred or may occur.
(7) Repealed by Acts 2017, 85th Leg., R.S., Ch. 316 (H.B. 5), Sec. 36(1), eff. September 1, 2017.
(8) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1, Sec. 1.203(4), eff. April 2, 2015.
(9) “Severe emotional disturbance” means a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder of sufficient duration to result in functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits a person’s role or ability to function in family, school, or community activities.

SUBCHAPTER B. REPORT OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT; IMMUNITIES

Sec. 261.101. PERSONS REQUIRED TO REPORT; TIME TO REPORT. (a) A person having cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately make a report as provided by this subchapter.
(b) If a professional has cause to believe that a child has been abused or neglected or may be abused or neglected, or that a child is a victim of an offense under Section 21.11, Penal Code, and the professional has cause to believe that the child has been abused as defined by Section 261.001, the professional shall make a report not later than the 48th hour after the hour the professional first suspects that the child has been or may be abused or neglected or is a victim of an offense under Section 21.11, Penal Code. A
professional may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report. In this subsection, “professional” means an individual who is licensed or certified by the state or who is an employee of a facility licensed, certified, or operated by the state and who, in the normal course of official duties or duties for which a license or certification is required, has direct contact with children. The term includes teachers, nurses, doctors, day-care employees, employees of a clinic or health care facility that provides reproductive services, juvenile probation officers, and juvenile detention or correctional officers.

(b-1) In addition to the duty to make a report under Subsection (a) or (b), a person or professional shall make a report in the manner required by Subsection (a) or (b), as applicable, if the person or professional has cause to believe that an adult was a victim of abuse or neglect as a child and the person or professional determines in good faith that disclosure of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of:

1) another child; or
2) an elderly person or person with a disability as defined by Section 48.002, Human Resources Code.

(c) The requirement to report under this section applies without exception to an individual whose personal communications may otherwise be privileged, including an attorney, a member of the clergy, a medical practitioner, a social worker, a mental health professional, an employee or member of a board that licenses or certifies a professional, and an employee of a clinic or health care facility that provides reproductive services.

(d) Unless waived in writing by the person making the report, the identity of an individual making a report under this chapter is confidential and may be disclosed only:

1) as provided by Section 261.201; or
2) to a law enforcement officer for the purposes of

Sec. 261.104. CONTENTS OF REPORT. The person making a report shall identify, if known:

1) the name and address of the child;
2) the name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child; and
3) any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.
HUMAN RESOURCES CODE

TITLE 2. HUMAN SERVICES AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES IN GENERAL

SUBTITLE D. DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES; CHILD WELFARE AND

PROTECTIVE SERVICES

CHAPTER 48. INVESTIGATIONS AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES FOR ELDERLY PERSONS AND

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

SUBCHAPTER A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Sec. 48.001. PURPOSE. The purpose of this chapter is to provide for the authority to investigate the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly person or person with a disability and to provide protective services to that person.

Sec. 48.002. DEFINITIONS. (a) Except as otherwise provided under Section 48.251, in this chapter:

(1) “Elderly person” means a person 65 years of age or older.

(2) “Abuse” means:

(A) the negligent or wilful infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or cruel punishment with resulting physical or emotional harm or pain to an elderly person or person with a disability by the person’s caretaker, family member, or other individual who has an ongoing relationship with the person; or

(B) sexual abuse of an elderly person or person with a disability, including any involuntary or nonconsensual sexual conduct that would constitute an offense under Section 21.08, Penal Code (indecent exposure) or Chapter 22, Penal Code (assaultive offenses), committed by the person’s caretaker, family member, or other individual who has an ongoing relationship with the person.

(3) “Exploitation” means the illegal or improper act or process of a caretaker, family member, or other individual who has an ongoing relationship with an elderly person or person with a disability that involves using, or attempting to use, the resources of the elderly person or person with a disability, including the person’s social security number or other identifying information, for monetary or personal benefit, profit, or gain without the informed consent of the person.

(4) “Neglect” means the failure to provide for one’s self the goods or services, including medical services, which are necessary to avoid physical or emotional harm or pain or the failure of a caretaker to provide such goods or services.

(5) “Protective services” means the services furnished by the department or by another protective services agency to an elderly person or person with a disability.
who has been determined to be in a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation or to a relative or caretaker of an elderly person or person with a disability if the department determines the services are necessary to prevent the elderly person or person with a disability from returning to a state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation. These services may include social casework, case management, and arranging for psychiatric and health evaluation, home care, day care, social services, health care, respite services, and other services consistent with this chapter. The term does not include the services of the department or another protective services agency in conducting an investigation regarding alleged abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an elderly person or person with a disability.

(6) “Protective services agency” means a public or private agency, corporation, board, or organization that provides protective services to elderly persons or persons with disabilities in the state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

(7) Repealed by Acts 2015, 84th Leg., R.S., Ch. 1, Sec. 4.465(a)(55), eff. April 2, 2015.

(8) “Person with a disability” means a person with a mental, physical, or intellectual or developmental disability that substantially impairs the person’s ability to provide adequately for the person’s care or protection and who is:
(A) 18 years of age or older; or
(B) under 18 years of age and who has had the disabilities of minority removed.

(9) “Legal holiday” means a state holiday listed in Subchapter B, Chapter 662, Government Code, or an officially declared county holiday.

(10) “Volunteer” means a person who:
(A) performs services for or on behalf of the department under the supervision of a department employee; and
(B) does not receive compensation that exceeds the authorized expenses the person incurs in performing those services.

(11) “Home and community-based services” has the meaning assigned by Section 48.251.

(b) The definitions of “abuse,” “neglect,” “exploitation,” and “an individual receiving services” adopted by the executive commissioner as prescribed by Section 48.251(b) apply to an investigation of abuse, neglect, or exploitation conducted under Subchapter F.

(c) Except as provided by Subsection (b), the executive commissioner by rule may adopt definitions of “abuse,” “neglect,” and “exploitation,” as an alternative to the definitions of those terms under Subsection (a), for purposes of conducting an investigation under this chapter or Chapter 142, Health and Safety Code.
Sec. 48.051. REPORT. (a) Except as prescribed by Subsection (b), a person having cause to believe that an elderly person, a person with a disability, or an individual receiving services from a provider as described by Subchapter F is in the state of abuse, neglect, or exploitation shall report the information required by Subsection (d) immediately to the department.

(b) If a person has cause to believe that an elderly person or a person with a disability, other than an individual receiving services from a provider as described by Subchapter F, has been abused, neglected, or exploited in a facility operated, licensed, certified, or registered by a state agency, the person shall report the information to the state agency that operates, licenses, certifies, or registers the facility for investigation by that agency.

(c) The duty imposed by Subsections (a) and (b) applies without exception to a person whose knowledge concerning possible abuse, neglect, or exploitation is obtained during the scope of the person’s employment or whose professional communications are generally confidential, including an attorney, clergy member, medical practitioner, social worker, employee or member of a board that licenses or certifies a professional, and mental health professional.

(d) The report may be made orally or in writing. It shall include:

1. the name, age, and address of the elderly person or person with a disability;
2. the name and address of any person responsible for the care of the elderly person or person with a disability;
3. the nature and extent of the condition of the elderly person or person with a disability;
4. the basis of the reporter’s knowledge; and
5. any other relevant information.

(e) If a person who makes a report under this section chooses to give self-identifying information, the caseworker who investigates the report shall contact the person if necessary to obtain any additional information required to assist the person who is the subject of the report.
PENAL CODE
TITLE 5. OFFENSES AGAINST THE PERSON
CHAPTER 20A. TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS

Sec. 20A.01. DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:
(1) “Child” means a person younger than 18 years of age.
(2) “Forced labor or services” means labor or services, other than labor or services that constitute sexual conduct, that are performed or provided by another person and obtained through an actor’s use of force, fraud, or coercion.
(3) “Sexual conduct” has the meaning assigned by Section 43.25.
(4) “Traffic” means to transport, entice, recruit, harbor, provide, or otherwise obtain another person by any means.

Sec. 20A.02. TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS. (a) A person commits an offense if the person knowingly:
(1) traffics another person with the intent that the trafficked person engage in forced labor or services;
(2) receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (1), including by receiving labor or services the person knows are forced labor or services;
(3) traffics another person and, through force, fraud, or coercion, causes the trafficked person to engage in conduct prohibited by:
(A) Section 43.02 (Prostitution);
(B) Section 43.03 (Promotion of Prostitution);
(C) Section 43.04 (Aggravated Promotion of Prostitution); or
(D) Section 43.05 (Compelling Prostitution);
(4) receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (3) or engages in sexual conduct with a person trafficked in the manner described in Subdivision (3);
(5) traffics a child with the intent that the trafficked child engage in forced labor or services;
(6) receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (5), including by receiving labor or services the person knows are forced labor or services;
(7) traffics a child and by any means causes the trafficked child to engage in, or become the victim of, conduct prohibited by:
(A) Section 21.02 (Continuous Sexual Abuse of Young Child or Children);
(B) Section 21.11 (Indecency with a Child);
(C) Section 22.011 (Sexual Assault);
(D) Section 22.021 (Aggravated Sexual Assault);
(E) Section 43.02 (Prostitution);
(F) Section 43.03 (Promotion of Prostitution);
(G) Section 43.04 (Aggravated Promotion of Prostitution);
(H) Section 43.05 (Compelling Prostitution);
(I) Section 43.25 (Sexual Performance by a Child);
(J) Section 43.251 (Employment Harmful to Children); or
(K) Section 43.26 (Possession or Promotion of Child Pornography); or
(8) receives a benefit from participating in a venture that involves an activity described by Subdivision (7) or engages in sexual conduct with a child trafficked in the manner described in Subdivision (7).

(a-1) For purposes of Subsection (a)(3), “coercion” as defined by Section 1.07 includes destroying, concealing, confiscating, or withholding from the trafficked person, or threatening to destroy, conceal, confiscate, or withhold from the trafficked person, the trafficked person’s actual or purported:
(1) government records; or
(2) identifying information or documents.

(b) Except as otherwise provided by this subsection, an offense under this section is a felony of the second degree. An offense under this section is a felony of the first degree if:
(1) the applicable conduct constitutes an offense under Subsection (a)(5), (6), (7), or (8), regardless of whether the actor knows the age of the child at the time of the offense;
(2) the commission of the offense results in the death of the person who is trafficked; or
(3) the commission of the offense results in the death of an unborn child of the person who is trafficked.

(c) If conduct constituting an offense under this section also constitutes an offense under another section of this code, the actor may be prosecuted under either section or under both sections.

(d) If the victim of an offense under Subsection (a)(7)(A) is the same victim as a victim of an offense under Section 21.02, a defendant may not be convicted of the offense under Section 21.02 in the same criminal action as the offense under Subsection (a)(7)(A) unless the offense under Section 21.02:
(1) is charged in the alternative;
(2) occurred outside the period in which the offense alleged under Subsection (a) (7)(A) was committed; or
(3) is considered by the trier of fact to be a lesser included offense of the offense alleged under Subsection (a)(7)(A).

Sec. 20A.03. CONTINUOUS TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS. (a) A person commits an offense if, during a period that is 30 or more days in duration, the person engages two or more times in conduct that constitutes an offense under Section 20A.02 against one or more victims.

(b) If a jury is the trier of fact, members of the jury are not required to agree unanimously on which specific conduct engaged in by the defendant constituted an offense under Section 20A.02 or on which exact date the defendant engaged in that conduct. The jury must agree unanimously that the defendant, during a period that is 30 or more days in duration, engaged in conduct that constituted an offense under Section 20A.02.

(c) If the victim of an offense under Subsection (a) is the same victim as a victim of an offense under Section 20A.02, a defendant may not be convicted of the offense under Section 20A.02 in the same criminal action as the offense under Subsection (a), unless the offense under Section 20A.02:

(1) is charged in the alternative;
(2) occurred outside the period in which the offense alleged under Subsection (a) was committed; or
(3) is considered by the trier of fact to be a lesser included offense of the offense alleged under Subsection (a).

(d) A defendant may not be charged with more than one count under Subsection (a) if all of the conduct that constitutes an offense under Section 20A.02 is alleged to have been committed against the same victim.

(e) An offense under this section is a felony of the first degree, punishable by imprisonment in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice for life or for any term of not more than 99 years or less than 25 years.
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