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### Domestic Violence and the Faith Community: A Training for Faith Leaders

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Running head: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND FAITH COMMUNITIES

Domestic Violence and the Faith Community: A Training for Faith Leaders

Sandy Almonte

Merrimack College

2018

MERRIMACK COLLEGE

CAPSTONE PAPER SIGNATURE PAGE

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IN

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

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AUTHOR: Sandy Almonte

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### **Abstract**

Domestic violence is a social ill that affects many families in the state of Massachusetts.

Domestic violence can be manifested in different ways by a member of a family, household, or an intimate partner against another member of the family, household, or against the intimate partner. Faith leaders are uniquely placed to reach out to victims and help direct victims to services and safety. Faith-based leaders can support victims with knowledge and compassion. However, they do not always feel prepared to respond or worse, an abuser may have already used faith as a weapon against the victim. As a result, victims may believe that they should forgive, live with the abuse, or honor the covenant of marriage no matter what. The goal of the training is to break the cycle of domestic violence and to provide church leaders with the tools necessary to help their worshipers.

## **Executive Summary**

Domestic violence causes emotional, psychological and physical harm to those exposed to it. Faith community leaders have a unique opportunity in breaking the cycle of violence and the elimination of domestic violence, as they are in many cases the first person a victim approaches. Victims and survivors of domestic violence may turn to faith leaders for support many times before seeking help from a domestic violence agency in their community. In addition, batterers may also turn to faith leaders seeking guidance and counseling for both the victim and the perpetrator. It is important that faith leaders understand how the batterers can use the scriptures to manipulate and justify the abuse.

The main priority for faith leaders in cases of domestic violence should be the safety of the victim. However, in order to achieve this, faith leaders first need to acknowledge domestic violence in their congregation and they need to continue to educate themselves on the issue and the resources available. This training offered tools, including information on best practices and community resources to assist faith leaders in their attempts to eliminate domestic violence in the community. The training also focused on the appropriate response when a victim of domestic violence seeks help from their faith leader.

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### Domestic Violence and the Faith Community: A Training for Faith Leaders

Domestic Violence is a social ill that affects many families and individuals. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV, 2017), on average, nearly twenty people per minute are physically abused by an intimate partner in the United States. Over one year, this equates to more than 10 million women and men. One in three women and one in four men have been victims of physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime (NCADV, 2017). The National Coalition Against Domestic Violence further states that on a typical day, there are more than twenty thousand phone calls are placed to domestic violence hotlines nationwide.

When it comes to domestic violence, church leaders want to be helpful but often do not know where to start. According to a domestic violence survey conducted by LifeWay Research, a phone survey of 1,000 senior Protestant pastors, most pastors said their church would be a safe haven for victims of domestic violence (Smietana, 2017). However, many do not know if anyone in their church has been a victim of domestic violence nor had a plan in place to help if a victim comes forward. Out of the one thousand pastors interviewed, eighty-seven percent (87%) of the pastors already believe that they communicate that domestic violence is not okay and that “a person experiencing domestic violence would find their church to be a safe haven;” eleven percent somewhat agree; one percent are not sure (Smetana, 2017).

Ensuring a victim’s safety has to be the priority. Victims need to be connected with community resources, counselors, shelters, and law enforcement. However, many churches are not always prepared to deal with the complex needs of domestic violence victims. The topic of

domestic violence should be included in everything the church does, from the sermon, community forums, retreat, Sunday study, and pre-marriage counseling.

The purpose of my capstone project is to begin the conversation and equip church leaders with the tools to help and guide a victim of domestic violence in their congregations. I will be creating training where church leaders can explore the role that they play in victim's safety and how to better help a victim to a life free of abuse.

### **Literature Review**

Domestic violence is a crime. Under Massachusetts' laws, it is a crime to commit domestic violence (also called domestic abuse), which includes physical harm, attempts to cause bodily harm, inflicting fear of imminent serious physical injury, and involuntary sexual relations between family and household members (Mass. Gen. Laws, ch. 209A, § 1). Domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behavior that may include physical, sexual, and psychological abuse as well as economic coercion, property destruction, and child abuse that occurs between partners in intimate relationships (Mass. Gen. Laws, ch. 209A, § 1). According to the protective order in Massachusetts a family and household members include people who are or were married, are or were living together, are related by blood or marriage, have children together, and are dating or have dated. (Mass. Gen. Laws, ch. 209A, § 1)

### **Who are the Victims of Domestic Violence?**

Although both men and women can be victims of domestic violence, the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 85% of reported assaults on spouses or ex-spouses are committed by men against women (Department of Justice, 2017). Domestic violence is a public health issue. It has even been called an epidemic (Wood, 2009). Statistically, one in three women is or will be a

victim of some form of domestic abuse in her lifetime (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). A woman is battered every 15 seconds in this country (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1993). In 2007, intimate partner homicides accounted for 14% of all murders in the U.S.; female victims represent 70% of the 2,340 of these deaths (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2009).

In an overview of Massachusetts for the period of January 1, 2003, to December 31, 2012, Jane Doe Inc. determined that there were 247 incidents of intimate partner violence (IPV) that resulted in a total of 334 homicide deaths committed by 257 IPV homicide perpetrators. Of these 334 homicide deaths, 256 people were homicide victims: 243 were domestic violence victims or people killed in the context of a domestic violence homicide, and 13 were intimate partner perpetrators killed in self-defense by the victim. Of the 243 deaths, 177 (69.1%) people were domestic violence victims (154 female, 23 male), 25 were the children of a domestic violence victim, and 37 people were associated with a domestic violence victim. Another four bystanders were killed." (Jane Doe Inc, 2015).

### **Theories about the Causes of Domestic Violence**

Gender inequality is at the core issue of domestic violence. A lack of gender equality is consistently cited as an underlying determinant of violence against women. The United Nations General Assembly, in its 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, states that this violence is a historical expression of the unequal power relations between men and women (UN Women, 2001).

Achieving gender equality is a crucial goal in the prevention of violence against women by those aiming to reduce gendered violence. Domestic violence is a pattern of behavior used by an abuser to establish power and control over a spouse or family member through fear and

intimidation (Jane Doe Inc, 2017). It is our societal norms and belief surrounding male dominance and male superiority, created by a traditional power hierarchy that gave men greater status. Since abuser believe that they are entitled to control their victims, it is difficult to separate gender inequality and domestic violence. It is also evident why the majority of the victims are female (World Health Organization, 2017).

### **Why Is Important for Church Leaders to Be Knowledgeable about Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is a crime. Faith leaders and are often the first people congregants turn to for help. Church leaders, regardless of denominations, should be knowledgeable about the dynamics of domestic violence, and be prepared to help victims find safety. Domestic violence is an uncomfortable topic to discuss, and even more uncomfortable to address in a house of worship.

If faith leaders are not trained on the issue of domestic violence or intimate partner violence, the religious institution is missing valuable opportunities to help victims and end the violence (Miles, 2000). In addition, inadequately prepared individuals who deal with victims may inadvertently contribute to continued violence (Miles, 2000). Many victims are less likely to leave because they believe that it will violate their commitment to God and marriage. Many victims blame themselves for the abuse (Nason-Clark & Kroeger, 2004), therefore becoming more vulnerable. The response of a church leader can increase the risk to a victim, mainly if a church leader prioritizes forgiveness for an abuser before safety for a victim.

### **How Religion Can Impact Domestic Violence**

The majority of the population in the United States has a religious affiliation (Fortune, 2010). One cannot be surprised that many victims of domestic violence seek counseling or guidance from their faith leaders when facing this issue. Religion could serve as a resource or a

roadblock (Fortune, 2010). The interpretation of the religious text can be used to condone or excuse abusive behaviors. It is the responsibility of the faith leader to get educate on the issues that are faced by victims of domestic violence and find new interpretation of the scripture to decrease the roadblocks. It is important to acknowledge the amount of religion, religious believes, and the diversity of traditions within that exist. In addition, some religions have different denominations. For the purpose of this project, we will focus on three major religions, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

It is no secret that Christian scripture condone male violence against women. “Wives be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Chris tis the head of the church, the body of which he is the savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands” (Ephesians 5:22-24, NRSV). One can see how this scripture could be used to keep women in an abusive relationship. It is up to the religious leader to educate and interpret this passage in way that does not excuse or justify the abuse against women.

In the Jewish tradition, one of the most common misuses of the Jewish value is the Shalom Bayit (peace in the home). This refers to a harmonious home that is based on nurture and respect. Shalom Bayit has been interpreted as women are the sole responsible party to keep peace in the home and it could be misused to pressure women to go back or stay in an abusive relationship.

According Muslim scholar Sharifa Alkahateeb, the scripture most commonly used to justify abusive behavior of men in the Islam community is Ayah 34 of Surah four: “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah gave more to the one than the other, and because they support them from their means. So devout women are extremely careful and

attentive in guarding what cannot be seen in that which Allah is extremely careful and attentive in guarding. Concerning women whose rebellious disloyalty (nusbooz) you fear, admonish them, then refuse to share their beds, then hit them; but if they become obedient, do not seek means of annoyance against them. For Allah is Most High, Great” (Alkahateeb, 1999).

Faith-based leaders can support victims in different ways but especially by interpreting the scripture in a way that does not excuse any abusive behavior. The more educated on the dynamics of domestic violence and how the misapplication is utilized to substantiate abuse a faith leader is, the more effective and appropriate their approach will be. The main concern and focus that leaders should have is how to keep the victim and the family safe.

### **Health Impacts of Domestic Violence**

Domestic abuse has significant health consequences; the effects go beyond the physical injuries suffered at the hands of the abusers. Usually, domestic violence survivors suffer from an array of psychosomatic illnesses, eating disorders, insomnia, gastrointestinal disturbances, generalized chronic pain, and devastating mental health problems like post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression (Joyful Heart Foundation, 2017)

Some immediate health impacts may include physical injuries such as cuts, scrapes, and bruises, fractures, dislocated bones; hearing and vision loss; miscarriage or early delivery; sexually transmitted diseases; knife wounds; gunshot wounds; and homicide.

Longer term health impacts may include: gastro-intestinal disorders associated with stress, headaches, back pain, fainting, seizures, gynecological problems, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disturbances, alcohol and substance misuse, smoking throughout pregnancy, homelessness, suicide, and homicide (Gluck, 2007).

### **Economic Impacts of Domestic Violence**

In recent years, economists, human rights advocates, and governments have also become aware of the severe financial and economic burden that domestic violence imposes on victims, households, the public sector, private businesses, and society as a whole. Based on mounting evidence from studies conducted around the world, researchers have concluded that domestic violence significantly impedes economic growth and development (Day, McKenna & Bowlus, 2005). Many victims of abuse find it difficult to function in their daily lives because of the effects of domestic violence. Absences from work, due to injuries or visits to the doctor, often cause them to lose their jobs, making them less able to leave their abusive situations. They may feel ashamed that their partners abuse them, see themselves as unworthy of love, and suffer from a significantly diminished self-perception. Because of their feelings of low self-worth, these victims become isolated from friends and family and do not participate in social activities typical to others in their demographic (healthyplace.com 2017).

According to a study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007) there are 5.3 million incidents of intimate partner violence (physical assault, rape, and stalking) against women age 18 and older in the United States each year. These incidents result in 1,300 deaths and 2 million injuries, 555,000 of which require medical attention. Victims of intimate partner violence lose a total of nearly 8 million days of paid work (the equivalent of over 32,000 full-time jobs) and 5.6 million days of household productivity each year. The costs of these victimizations exceed \$5.8 billion annually. A recent study of abusers in the workplace found that domestic violence offenders were likely to use work time and workplace resources to contact victims for abusive purposes. Seventy percent of men who attend batterer's intervention programs report losing work time due to domestic violence arrests. Domestic violence costs

more than \$5 billion in medical and mental health care each year, and an estimated 8 million days of paid work are lost annually because of domestic violence (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). These numbers do not take in consideration the economic lost for the victims that are not allowed to get job or are force to take part-time jobs. In addition, the economic loss for the individual that has no control over their income and an asset is not calculated. Women also are faced with wage disparities, especially if you are women of color, resulting in less options and feeling stuck in an abusive relationship due to financial needs.

### **Intersection of Race and Domestic Violence**

Domestic Violence can affect anyone, regardless of their race, sexuality, gender, or age. Yet, there are circumstances that are specific for women of color. Women of color, specifically African-American women experience domestic violence 35% higher than white women (Blackburn, 2017). Some of the barriers for women of color to seek help are: the strong loyalty binds to race, culture and family, cultural and religious belief that restrain from leaving the abusive relationship, lack of linguistic and cultural educated service providers, and attitudes and stereotypes about domestic violence (Blackburn, 2017). According to the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community, one in three black women will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Black people make up twenty-two percent of intimate partner homicides in the United States. Black women are only eight percent of the population. Due to the stereotypes of black women including "the strong Black woman," and/or "Black women are domineering figures that require control," they are discouraged to seek help making them vulnerable to domestic violence (Mausteller, 2017).

Unfortunately, many women of color are unwilling to call the police due to the distrust of the criminal justice system. Many fear that the police will not take their report seriously. In



addition, according to the Women of Color Network, "the current and historical presence of racism within the criminal justice system means that women reporting abuse often fear they will be placing their partner at risk of police brutality and negative stereotyping" (Mausteller, 2017). Only 25 percent of physical assaults against women are reported to the police (O'Bannon, 2016). This number represents a combination of lack of trust in the judicial system, the police or fear of repercussion from the perpetrator (O'Bannon, 2016). In addition, many women of color are culturally pressure not to report the abuse in order not to reinforce the stereotype many believe about men of color, particular black men, are naturally violent. Historically, for people of color, the church is a place where important issues regarding their community are discussed and their church family is the only support system they have (Jordan, 2015). Unfortunately, abused African American women have to choose between continue to endure the abuse or faced the risk to be isolated or even degraded if she speaks out (Jordan, 2015). "The silence of the church regarding the abuse of women is in conspiracy against the total liberation of the African American community. An African American woman is expected to suffer in silence for the sake of others; when she assumes this role on the Black church, she is elevated to the level of martyrdom. Hence, her oppression is guaranteed" (Jordan, 2005).

### **Project Plan**

In order to break the cycle of violence and to ensure victims safety, I would like to train faith leaders on the issue of domestic violence and help them identify local resources that would be beneficial to their community.

### ***Situation Statement***

Domestic violence is a social ill that affects many families in the state of Massachusetts.

Domestic violence can be manifested in different ways by a member of a family, household, or an intimate partner against another member of the family, household, or against the intimate partner. Faith leaders are uniquely placed to reach out to victims and help direct victims to services and safety. Faith-based leaders can support victims with knowledge and compassion. However, they do not always feel prepared to respond or worse; an abuser may have already used faith as a weapon against the victim. As a result, victims may believe that they should forgive, live with the abuse, or honor the covenant of marriage no matter what.

### ***Define Your Goals***

The goals of the training are to break the cycle of domestic violence and to provide church leaders with the tools necessary to help their worshipers. This will be achieved by increasing the awareness and the role of faith leaders; increasing survivors' access to resources; and to increasing the understanding of domestic violence survivors

### ***Target Audience and Stakeholders***

The audience will be a combination of the different faith-based leaders in the area. The various churches' denominations should be represented. If possible in the audience, they should be leaders from the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Islamic, and Buddhist communities as well as any other religions in the area. Although anyone can benefit, especially those in leadership roles in the church, such as: pastors and other ministerial staff, choir leaders, youth and college leaders, church childcare leaders, elders or deacons in the church, Sunday school teachers or Bible Study leaders, and anyone in a leadership role within the church working directly with congregants.

Some large congregations may have many leaders who should take this training, and small congregations may have only a few. Still, every church should have at least one leader who knows how to help victims of domestic violence.

The stakeholders for the training are victims of domestic violence that would have a nonjudgmental place where to obtain services. Church leaders will be part of the audience, but they are stakeholders as well. Church leader will be able to solidify their congregations as a place where victims of domestic abuse can find the help and guidance, which could increase attendance and church followers. Also, the general public is too a stakeholder. Domestic violence is a public health issue. If church leaders are able to intervene or break the cycle of violence, the general community will benefit by reducing the cost of treatment, hospitalization, and public services. In general, this will make the community safer.

### ***Crafting a Clear Message***

Faith-based leaders have an opportunity and a duty to their community to educate and to keep their congregant safe. They are in a unique position where they might be the first person a victim of domestic violence seeks help. In addition, as an authority figure they could impact the beliefs of those that condone abuse by educating them.

### ***Incentives for Engagement***

The incentive of the training is to become more educated on of the severity of the issue of domestic violence. In addition, faith-based leaders would become more aware of the community resources available for their congregants. Therefore, helping break the cycle of violence and keeping their participants safe.

***Identify Outreach Methods***

Since the event is going to be held at Merrimack College, we will utilize the resources of the college. The college has a Center for the study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim- Relations (JCMR). "The Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian Muslim Relations is dedicated to making Merrimack College the premier undergraduate institution for interfaith dialogue and intercultural education among Jews, Christians and Muslims through distinctive, nationally and internationally recognized programs and services designed for students and young adults" (Merrimack College, 2018). We are planning to invite all the faith leaders in the Merrimack Valley, via email with a follow-up by a phone call, as well as reaching out in person to personal connections through work, friends, and family. My goal is to have twenty different churches represented at the training.

***Responsibilities Chart***

NAME	ORGANIZATION OR AFFILIATION	RESPONSIBILITIES	CONTACT INFORMATION
Joseph Kelley, Professor and Co-chair; Director, Center for the Study of Jewish Christian Muslim Relations	Merrimack College	Provide a list of churches and their leaders	978-837-5171 kelleyjt@merrimack.edu
Sandy Almonte	Merrimack College	Invite all church leaders to the event Find appropriate trainer	978-884-7355

		Create a domestic violence community resource list Create a guest list Make copies Arrange IT Reserved room Arrange food Create evaluation form	
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***Tools/Measures to Assess Progress***

In late January, we will send the invitations to the faith leaders in the Merrimack Valley and surrounding areas. The training will be held at Merrimack College and it will take place in April 2018. The training will be a half a day training. We are open to doing this training in Spanish and English, depending on the response of the faith community. A questionnaire will be given at the end of the training, to evaluate the domestic violence knowledge of the audience and the impact of the training. The training will be facilitated by professionals in the domestic violence field (Appendix A; Appendix B).

***Implementation Timeline***

January 2018	Book space Create Invitation Send Invitations
February 2018	Send Invitations Send reminder emails
March 2018	Send Invitations Send reminder emails

	Call target audience Order food Create informational package
April 2018	Workshop & Evaluation
May 2018	Assess workshop evaluation and response

### *Logical Framework*

<b>We will...</b>	We will create a curriculum and facilitate a training for church leaders to educate them about domestic violence
<b>So that...</b>	Church leaders can better serve their worshipers and domestic violence victims feel safe talking to their pastor, priest, or church leader
<b>So that...</b>	Domestic Violence victims can have more options and be exposed to safe alternatives
<b>So that...</b>	We can have a healthier family environment, eliminate the cycle of violence, therefore creating a healthier and safer world.

### *Expectations*

It is my understanding that domestic violence is not an easy subject to approach, especially in a religious environment. However, I am expecting that since the training will be held in a Higher Education setting, that the audience will be more receptive and open to the information being provided. The training will be conducted at Merrimack College, where two domestic violence professionals will lead training on the role of church leaders in the issue of domestic violence, how to work with victims, and the resources available. The training is going to be a half a day therefore, everyone that attends will leave with an information guide on how to deal with domestic violence victims. Although half a day is not enough time to change peoples'

beliefs, I expect that the participants will have a greater understanding of the issue, and how to serve the domestic violence population better.

### **Methodology**

Domestic violence is a violation of human rights. To eliminate domestic violence, one of the most important steps is to educate all those in contact with victim; to effectively address the roles that they play; and to increase the access to community resources. The implementation of a training to faith leaders pertaining domestic violence is an important step in order to achieve these goals. This methodology provides guidance on the implementation of domestic violence training and its finding.

### ***Goals***

The project began by determining the end goals. When implementing a domestic violence training is important that we determine if the end results will improve the safety and the quality of life for survivors of domestic violence. The goals for this project is to increase awareness and the role of faith leaders; increase survivors' access to resources; and to increase the understanding of domestic violence survivors.

In an attempt to maintain neutrality, the training will be held at Merrimack College. In early spring, the Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations, at Merrimack College, will send an invitation to all the religious leaders in the Merrimack Valley area. The workshop will maintain the focus on a broad goal of promoting victim safety. During the workshop, concerns raised about the implementation of domestic violence services and the church response will be brought up in a meaningful, respectful but impactful manner.

The trainer may decide to divide or narrow the scope of the training by focusing on specific services needed by the survivors. For instance, the trainer may focus on an appropriate response when a survivor is in crisis; or the trainer may focus on identifying the services available when the survivor is trying to leave the abusive relationship; or the supportive services available to help empower someone in a DV relationship.

In the training, we will have a monitoring or observation team. The team will observe the participants on the reaction to the issue of domestic violence. The team will be provided with information on the training topic, project, and the goals and expectations of the training. Time is an important element of any training. The timeline will, in part, be dictated by how much and what type of information the trainer will provide and the amount of knowledge of the audience. The following issues will be considered when determining the timeline, the number of people have participating, and how much information will be presented

### ***Participants***

Up to forty church leaders from different religion denominations were invited to participate in a training about domestic violence and the faith community. Participant should be diverse in ethnicity, gender and religious believe. Although, most religious leaders in the Merrimack Valley area are male, white, and Christian; an extra outreach effort to female and people of color were made.

### ***Materials***

The trainer will use several tools to highlight the issue of domestic violence. The trainer will use begin by handing out the legal definition of domestic violence and the myths and facts about the issue. The trainer will give a copy of The Power and Control Wheel (Appendix C) as a tactic to explain how an abusive partner gain and maintain control over their partner. In addition,



the trainer will handout and explain The Explain the Equality Wheel (Appendix D). The participants will also receive a domestic violence scenario to work as a group activity to come up with a consensus response to the situation. In addition, participants will receive a list of domestic violence service providers, an evaluation form will need to be submitted at the end of the training.

### ***Procedures***

An invitation will be sent to by the Center for the Study of Jewish-Christian-Muslim Relations to all the faith leaders in February and March. In addition, in order to engage faith leader in the workshop, personal contact and connections via phone calls will be made.

It is important that one chooses who the trainer will be very carefully. One needs keep in mind that we all bring our personal views and experiences and that could impact how we approach the training. The trainer does not need to be a person of faith to train faith leader, but one needs to strategically plan who would be best to deliver the information (Appendix A, Appendix B).

When the participants come to the workshop they will receive a questionnaire about general information on domestic violence and their congregation. The information collected can be anonymous to get a better understanding of the leader's perception for their church.

The trainer will begin the workshop by doing having the audience do a quick introduction, welcome and acknowledgements. The trainer will share the goals for the training. A disclaimer about confidentiality will be given at the beginning of the training.

The trainer will commence the training asking the participants to define domestic violence and by sharing the working and legal definition of domestic violence. The trainer will follow the workshop's agenda (Appendix G).

At the end of the workshop the participants will be given an evaluation form to give feedback on the workshop. In addition, a community resource manual will be distributed (Appendix F).

### **Results**

The training was evaluated on its effectiveness. The participants answered a questionnaire after the training. The questionnaire evaluated whether the information provided at the training was useful and relevant to the participants (Appendix H).

Based on the evaluations and the engagement of the participants in the training, the overall results were positive. Twenty-six (26) faith leaders participated in the training ranging from ages thirty-five (35) to sixty-five (65). Out of the 26 participants four (4) were self-identified as male and 22 females. Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the participants self-identified as Latino / mixed race; 25% self-identify as Caucasian; and 17% identified as Black/African American. In addition, 83% identify themselves as Christians (Protestant, Catholic, Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Methodist); 8% identified themselves as Jewish; and 8% as Unitarian.

Eighty-three percent responded “excellent” on the overall rating of the workshop. Participants were also asked to evaluate if the workshop goals were met on the relevancy of the content, the activities, and the role of the faith community, and 91% percent of the participant answered “strongly agree” and eight percent answered “agree.” When asked if they had attended any seminar or workshop on the role of the faith in helping to reduce domestic violence, 75% answered “no,” 8% answered “yes,” and 16% did not answer.

When asked the open question of most valuable things learned from the workshop, three themes were predominant. The first one was how religion and the bible scriptures are utilized to

reinforce the control in an abusive relationship. The second was the impact that faith has on victim's decision-making process. The last theme was about determining the level of abuse within a relationship. In the last theme people responded, "what's the level of domestic violence;" "understanding what is an abusive vs. non-abusive behavior;" and "the different levels of abuse with the couple."

Activity one consisted of reading different scenarios and having the participants identify the behavior as abusive, "very abusive, and not abusive. Participants had to explain and defend their answer. The conversations ranged from the intention of the abuser to the criminology (police enforcement) of the behavior. Another activity other activity that started a great conversation was when the presenter spoke about the scriptures and how some faith leaders had interpreted them. The majority of the participants agreed that more education is needed and understood how some passage from the bible could be used to continue the victimization of victims of domestic violence. One participant became very defensive, stating that in her church domestic violence is treated as a crime and that they encourage victims to seek help from the police. However, the same participant stated that they provide "couple counseling" when members of the church seek guidance from their faith leader.

At the end of the training, all participants agreed that more education is needed for faith leaders. Many requested the training to be given in their place of worship. Since this was only a small number of participants and mostly Christian, is hard to determine the implication of these results. However, the results demonstrate, that at least in the Christian Community, a lot more work needs to be done with the faith leaders and that domestic violence is still an issue that goes across religious beliefs, education, social and economic status.

### Discussion

The data collected in this project demonstrated that there is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to violence against women, in particular domestic violence and the faith community. The training to faith leaders provoked serious conversation that challenged the roots of many of the participants' beliefs. One of the main concerns of this project was that the information gathered was not going to be honest and that the participants were not going to receive the information well. Domestic violence is a sensitive topic, but the participants appeared to be engaged and appeared to share openly and sincerely.

All participants agreed that more education is needed for faith leaders. Participants recognized the constraint to change the institutional beliefs that many faith leaders have. However, all participants expressed the desire to expand their knowledge in this subject. It was interesting when the presenter began to explain the differences between a conversation that domestic violence survivors have with an advocate versus their pastor. For instance, a domestic violence survivor could tell their pastor or faith leader that their partner made them feel bad or called them names; but they will tell their domestic violence advocate that her husband told her that he was going to kill her. Participants seemed to understand why different information is shared by the domestic violence victim with different people. One thing that we tried to make sure faith leaders took away from the training was that a domestic violence victim will not be able to speak sincerely in front of their abuser, therefore couple counseling or therapy is never a good option when domestic violence is an issue.

None of the participants contradicted the premise that domestic violence is a crime and should not be tolerated, excused, or condoned. However, many of them have different approaches on how to handle a domestic violence situation. Some of the approaches mentioned

were: couple counseling, individual counseling, family counseling and a referral to a domestic violence program. One of the goals for this training was for faith leaders to know and understand that they do not need to handle a domestic violence situation on their own.

At the beginning of the training all participants had different opinions on their role as a faith leader when dealing with a domestic violence situation. Some believed that they could handle the situation, but they haven't had a case at their congregation; others believed that they could handle it and would only seek help if victims requested it; and some believed that they need more education on the issue and access to the resources available. When asked how many of the participants had dealt with a domestic violence situation, only one pastor answered yes. Many of them acknowledge the issue but did not believe or were aware of any cases in their congregations. By the end of the training, most participants acknowledge that the dynamic of domestic violence, although a controversial topic, is one that they need more education on.

The participants of the training did not seem reluctant and were enthusiastic on the information presented. All acknowledge the indoctrination of keeping the family together but recognized that each situation is different and should not be treated in the same. Yet, it is still not evident that the training would change their beliefs and that the participants would incorporate some of the suggestion given at the training. In this case, the hope is to start the conversation and encourage the participants to continue their education on the topic.

The trainers were very careful not to include personal opinions. The trainers were intentional about the approach used with the participants. The aim was to facilitate a dialog among faith leaders and generate transformative conversation that would not isolate any of them. The trainers are aware that change does not happen overnight and that this was just the beginning of a long journey among those who participated and the faith community at large.

**Limitations**

Although the evaluation on this training was very positive, the scope of the study was limited by the number of participants. The list of invitees consisted of a more diverse group comprised of faith leaders from diverse religious beliefs, gender, geographically and social and economic status. Unfortunately, many of the invitees were not available or willing to participate.

Most of the participants were self-identified as Christians. The data analyzed reflected their individual congregation perspectives or their individual interpretation. However, all the participants were individuals with a leadership position at their congregation. This added weight to their statements, but one religion does not capture the magnitude of the problem.

**Implications**

Domestic violence is a controversial topic and not welcome in many settings. For many victims of domestic violence, religion is at the core of every decision they make and needs to be taken in consideration when working with them. Faith leaders plays an important part in providing knowledge and guidance. Domestic violence education should be part of everyday conversation for faith leaders. Since education plays an integral role in shaping our beliefs and interest one must encourage our faith leader to continue increasing their knowledge on the issues that are affecting their community including on domestic violence. This project shows that even though some faith leaders are not willing to engage in furthering their knowledge on domestic violence it is still affecting many members of their congregations.

Traditions are at the core of religion institutions but if the members of the congregation require or challenge their leaders to be more educated in the issues that the community is facing, transformation and evolution will be inevitable. The secrecy and silence about domestic violence

needs to end. Religious institutions need to take a stand in the fight against gender violence and domestic violence.

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**Appendix A: Facilitator Background**

The facilitator will have intensive experience in the field of domestic violence. Preferably, the trainer will also have experience training faith leaders. The trainer should be a Certified Domestic Violence Counselor and has coordinated and lead domestic violence support groups at several churches. The facilitator should be passionate in is helping women and families in domestic violence situations, gain confidence in their ability to not only survive, but to thrive.

Every domestic violence situation is unique, and every pastor, reverend, priest approaches domestic violence differently. The facilitator should tailor the training methods to what the participants need and the goal of the training session. The facilitator should know different approaches to deliver the message to a possible not welcoming audience. It will be the facilitator's responsibility to know the resources being offered in the community, help the participants understand that they do not have to this alone that they can always connect or refer the victims to appropriate resources.

The facilitator should be familiar with working with a diverse population and treat all the participants with respect. The facilitator should educate and familiarized themselves the different cultures, and beliefs of the trainees. The facilitator should aim to be mindful of their own bias and pre-conceptions and try to create a non-judgmental and inclusive environment.

**Appendix B: Facilitator Philosophy of Education**

A good facilitator is integral for this workshop to be productive. The facilitator should be able to clarify any of the participants' concerns in a manner that does not isolate or make them defensive. This training is going to make some of the participants uncomfortable since we might be challenging their beliefs. The facilitator should be able to guide the participants through difficult situations. The facilitator should value and respect the participants' beliefs and at the same time be able to guide them or help them find their role in the fight of this social ill; we call domestic violence. Whether is helping them plan if the situation arrives, identifying where they could refer the victim or connecting the victims to the different resources in the community. The participants should leave the training thinking that they should always consider the victims' needs first.

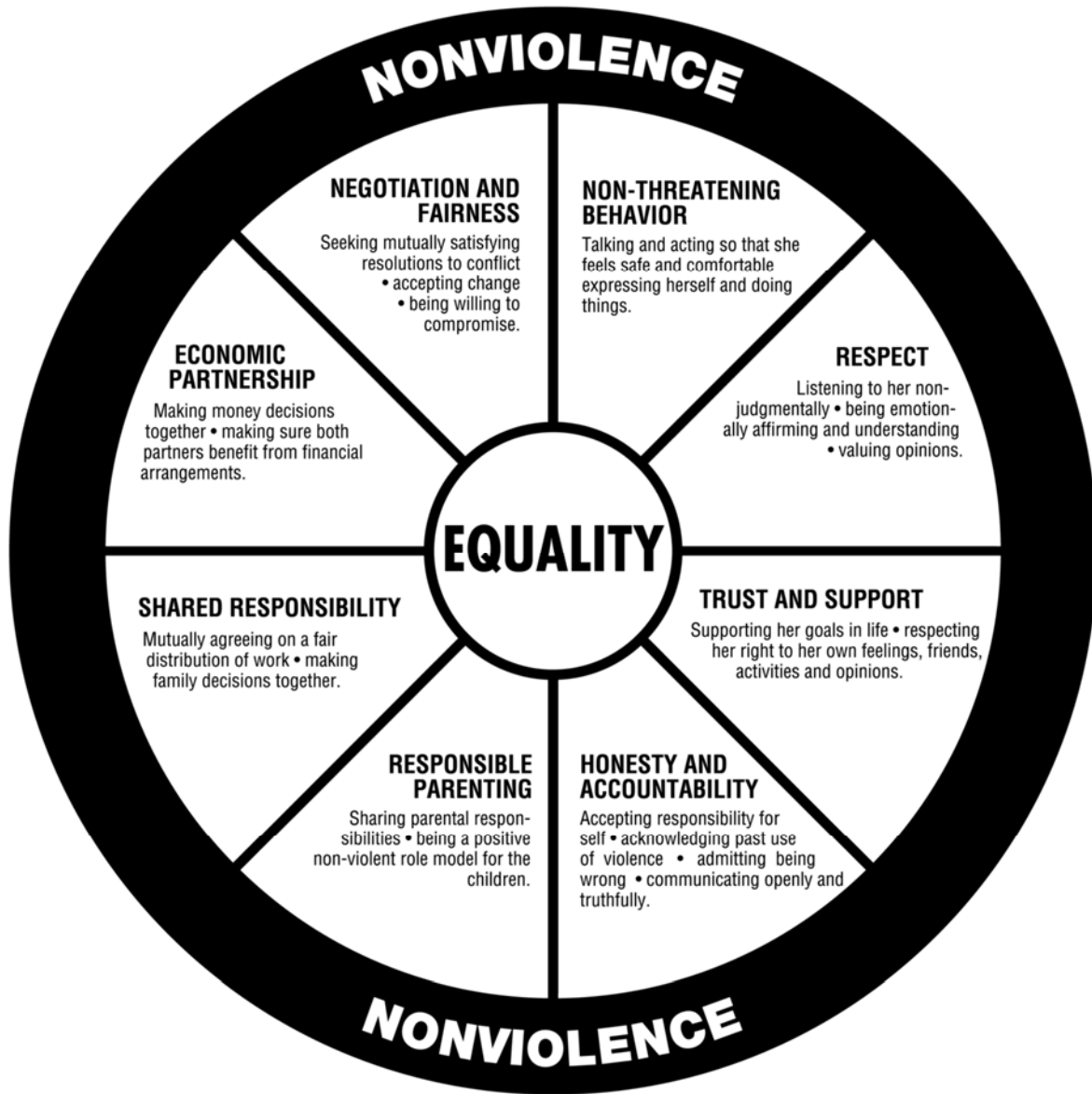
Appendix C: Power and Control Wheel



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT

202 East Superior Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802  
218-722-2781  
www.duluth-model.org

Appendix D: Equality Wheel





## Appendix E: Flyer

Healing  
Awareness  
Empowering



**A CONVERSATION ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE in the FAITH  
COMMUNITY with REVEREND TRACI JACKSON ANTOINE**

**Domestic Violence & abuse stories have been filling the media. But what does domestic violence look like, and how do we break the silence in our community  
Join us in a conversation about understanding the signs of  
domestic violence and the role the faith community could play**

Reverend Traci Jackson Antoine is the Project Executive Director of the Domestic/Sexual Violence Project for the Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts. This culturally specific program is designed to improve outcomes for African-American victims and survivors of both domestic and sexual violence; while improving each partner agency's capacity to provide culturally relevant services. Prior to this role, Traci was a Technical Assistance Provider for the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). A native of Boston, Traci received her education at both the Northeastern University and the University of Massachusetts. In addition to her work at Urban League, Traci serves as a National Consultant and Curriculum Specialist for the *Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC)*. Reverend Antoine leads the Institute's African American Domestic Peace Project (AADPP) Boston team. Traci is a Cultural Competency and Domestic Violence lecturer at Northeastern University School of Law. She also provides Cultural Competency and Domestic Violence training for the Boston Police Academy, and Advocates and Shelter Workers statewide.

**Wednesday April 11, 2018**

**9-12 PM**

**Registration & Networking**

**8AM**

**Merrimack College**

**315 Turnpike St. North Andover**

**Sakowich Campus Center**

**Meeting Room B**

**In collaboration with**

**Delamano Inc.**

**Center for the Study of  
Jewish-Christian-Muslim  
Relations**

**This is a free event!!!**

For information & to RSVP please contact Sandy Almonte Almontes@merimack.edu or 978-884-7355

**Appendix F: Resource List**

**Below you will find a list of programs, resources and agencies you can call for assistance**

**Debajo encontrara una lista de programa, recursos y agencias que puede llamar para asistencia**

**Domestic Violence Programs/Programas de Violencia Domestica**

- YWCA of NE Massachusetts 38 Lawrence St. Lawrence, MA 978-687-0331/978-682-3039
- Supportive Care 15 Union St. Lawrence, MA 978-686-1300
- Delamano 170 Common Street Lawrence, MA 978-242-7788

**Intimate Partner Violence Program/Programa de Intervención para Agresores**

- Family Safety Project 360 Merrimack St. Lawrence MA 978-9898-0607 Ext. 12

**Alcohol Abuse Programs/Programa de Abuso de Alcohol**

- Recovery Center 11 Union St. Lawrence, MA 978-688-5767 Ext. 270
- Alcoholic Anonymous Call for meeting locations 617-426-9444

**Financial Counseling Programs/Consejería Financiera**

- Greater Lawrence Community Action Council 305 Essex St. Lawrence, MA 978-681-4900
- Community Teamwork 155 Merrimack St. Lowell, MA 978-459-0551

**Emergency Shelter/Refugios de Emergencia**

- YWCA of NE Massachusetts 38 Lawrence St. Lawrence, MA 978-682-3039/844-372-9922
- Safelink:DV Hotline Statewide/todo el Estado 877-785-2020

**Police Dept.**

- Lawrence Police 978-794-5900
- Andover Police 978-475-0411
- North Andover 978-683-3168
- Haverhill Police 978-373-1212

**\*IN CASE OF EMERGENCY CALL 911\***

**Appendix G: Workshop Agenda****Domestic Violence and the Faith Community Workshop Agenda**

<b>8:00-9:00 AM</b>	<b>Registration, Breakfast &amp; Networking</b>
<b>9:00-9:20 AM</b>	<b>Welcome Remarks &amp; Icebreaker</b> Introduction/Welcome all participants Explain the purpose and goal of today program
<b>9:20-9:50 AM</b>	<b>Opening Activity</b>
<b>9:50-10:05 AM</b>	<b>Debrief as a group on the activity</b>
<b>10:05-10:15 AM</b>	<b>Break</b>
<b>10:15-11:15 AM</b>	<b>The Reality of DV &amp; Enhancing the Safety of those Victimized</b> Client stories The role of the church
<b>11:15-11:50 AM</b>	<b>Panel Discussion</b>
<b>11:50-12:00 PM</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
<b>12:00 PM</b>	<b>Adjourn</b>

**Appendix H: Workshop Evaluation Form**

Thank you for participating in the Domestic Violence Information & Resource Workshop. This post-event evaluation is being conducted as part of a student capstone project. The purpose of this evaluation is to gain your thoughts and opinions on the workshop. This evaluation should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. Please **DO NOT** write your name on the evaluation and all answers provided will be kept confidential.

**First, please tell us your thoughts about the workshop:**

1. Overall, how would you rate this workshop?  
 Excellent                       Good                       Fair                       Poor
  
2. Prior to this workshop, had you attended any seminars or workshops on the role of faith in helping to reduce domestic violence?  
 Yes  
 No

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3. The goals of the workshop were clear to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The content was relevant to me and my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The activity helped me understand abuse better	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. The role of faith in the topic of abuse is clearer to me now	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The open discussions stayed on track with the theme	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. What were the most valuable things you learned from today’s workshop?

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9. What is one action you will take as a result of attending this workshop?

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10. How could the workshop be improved?

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11. What were your reasons for attending the workshop? *Check all that apply.*

- To learn about domestic violence issues
- To get current information and resources
- To network with others concerned about domestic violence
- To hear ideas about how faith can play a role in reducing domestic violence
- To support the discussion of faith's role in reducing domestic violence
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

12. How likely is it that you would recommend this workshop to a friend or colleague?

- Very likely       Somewhat likely       Not likely at all

**Finally, please tell us a little bit about yourself:**

13. What is your age?

- Under 25
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and older

14. How do you define your gender? *Check all that apply.*

- Male
- Female
- Trans\*
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

15. Do you consider yourself as Hispanic, Latino, Latina, or of Spanish origin?

- Yes, Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish origin
- No, not Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Spanish origin

16. What is your race?

- Black / African American
- Caucasian / White
- American Indian / Aleut / Eskimo / Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
- Mixed Race

17. What is your religious affiliation and denomination (*example: Christian and Protestant*).

---

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this post-event evaluation. Your responses will help our project and give us insight into developing and promoting future workshops.

**Please put your completed evaluation in the box.**