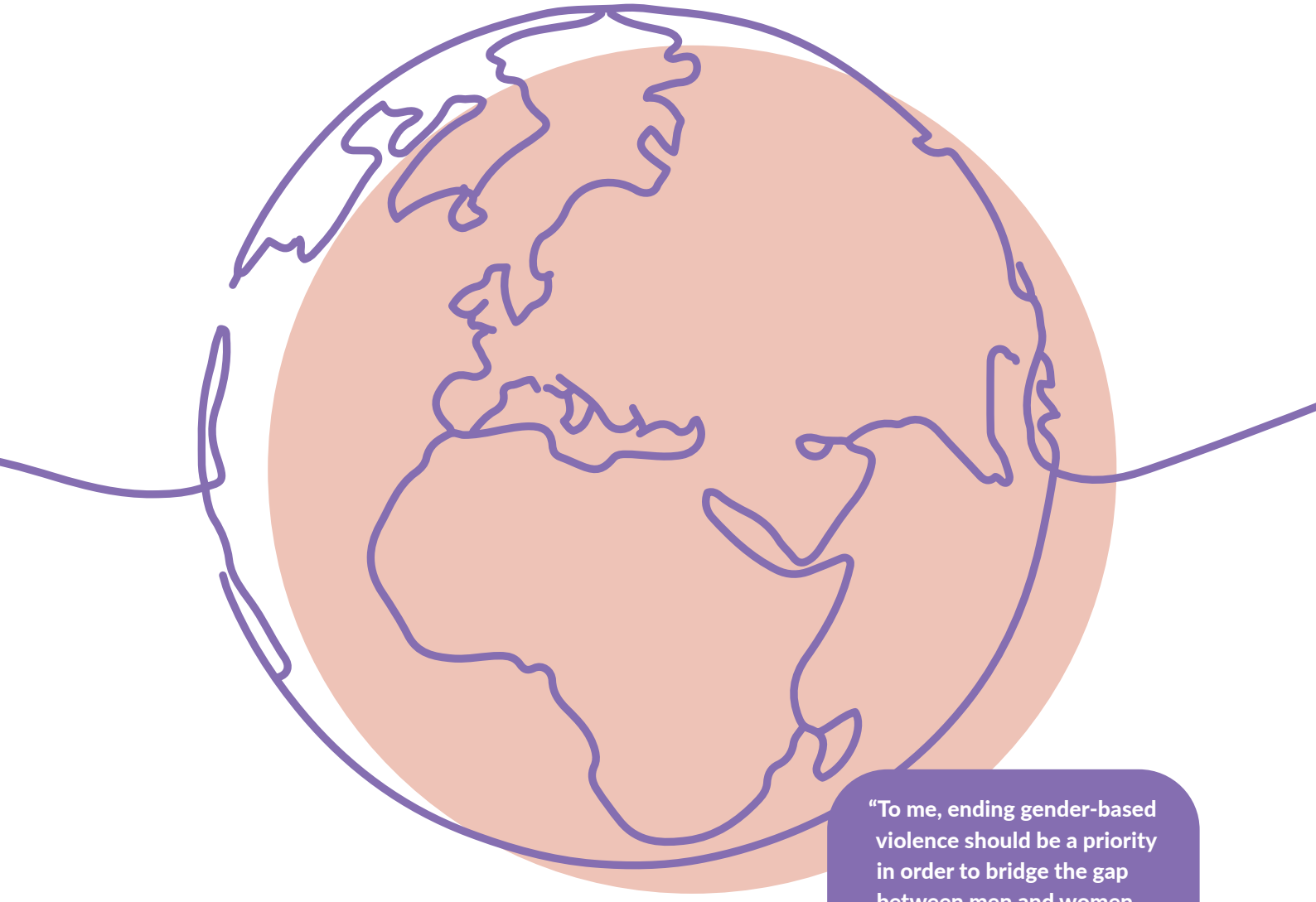
ANGLICAN COMMUNION
IN OVER 165 COUNTRIES

God's Justice:

Theology and Gender Based Violence



"To me, ending gender-based violence should be a priority in order to bridge the gap between men and women for justice and peaceful co-existence in the society"

The Revd Domnic Misolo
IFAGE – Kenya.

What does the Bible say and how should the Church respond?

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Foreword by The Most Revd Dr Thabo Makgoba

Archbishop of Cape Town and Primate of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa

My first exposure to the horrific nature and extent of violence against women and children came during the early 1990s. When I was chairing an NGO in Johannesburg dedicated to legal advocacy on behalf of victims, the head of a project which ran a shelter for abused women challenged me to become a volunteer counsellor so I could experience the crisis at first hand.



As Anglicans we have no choice but to work to transform anything that obstructs the achievement of God's justice and mars the relationship between men and women, girls and boys.

At the shelter, run by Women Against Woman Abuse, I heard the most shocking stories of abuse. Some are too awful to relate, but including accounts of men inflicting burns on women, of beating pregnant women, of a boyfriend allowing a friend to rape his girlfriend, or of children being raped in front of their parents. This intensified my commitment to working with the NGO, the Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre to End Violence Against Women, and to advocate for the rights of women and children to live their lives free from the fear or experience of violence, and to support church efforts with the same objective.

As the end of apartheid freed the church to turn its attention to other societal crises, our Provincial Synod adopted a resolution on violence against women in 1999. This gave rise to one of the best resources we have in our Province: "*Beloved of God*", a six-week course written by Archdeacon Erica Murray reflecting the input of the women of the Diocese of Cape Town. As church, our approach has to be unique. We intervene from a faith perspective, seeking to see the face and hear the voice of God amidst the suffering, helped by the transforming power of Jesus to bring healing out of the pain and exclusion experienced by God's children.

That is what inspires us and that is what makes this new publication crucially important, particularly at a time when shouting from the rooftops, picketing and issuing statements does not seem to be producing the transformation we are looking for.

As Christians and people of faith, and especially as Anglicans, we approach this challenge on the basis of scripture, tradition, and reason. We say firstly, "Let's start from scripture". Then we look at how we have done things in the past and draw on the experience which has enabled us, for example, to overcome apartheid. Then let's apply our reasoning to transform our situation.

And so it is apt that this resource starts by posing the questions that every Christian ought to be asking: What does the Bible say? What is Christian teaching? And how should the Church respond?

The Church should seek the face of God, seek the face of justice, in whatever we do. We should seek to decode or unmask truth that is concealed. As we work to discover God's healing and God's truth, we should journey both with those who are perpetrators and those who have been wronged and demeaned.

These are necessary steps on our journey to confront and eradicate the shocking reality of gender-based violence. We also need to look at the power dynamics which our societies perpetuate in relations between women and men; and recognise the patriarchal attitudes that underpin abuse. We need to transform those relations, guided by the model that Jesus gave us in the Bible of how he treated men and women.

As this resource says, "getting our bearings" correct is key – understanding gender, understanding what scripture says about gender, and recognising our responsibility to one another. If we are to bring about equality in relationships, it is important also that we come to an understanding of how inequalities disempower women, whether at home, at work, or at church.

Let us remember too that if we are to succeed in ensuring that the dignity of all is respected, it must be in the wider context of respect for the integrity of all of God's creation, including justice for the whole of our environment.

The Anglican Communion's five Marks of Mission compel us to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and to pursue peace and reconciliation. As Anglicans we have no choice but to work to transform anything that obstructs the achievement of God's justice and mars the relationship between men and women, girls and boys.

This valuable resource will help us to do that. I commend it warmly.

The Most Revd Dr Thabo Makgoba
Archbishop of Cape Town

Introduction by Mandy Marshall

Director for Gender Justice, Anglican Communion

"I expect my wife to bow down before me as I bow down before Christ."



These were the words of an evangelical pastor in Zimbabwe in 2004. I will never forget them. They were awful to hear, stark, misguided, and not loving. They were full of cultural expectations of a wife built on a misunderstanding of Bible passages. It made me angry but it also made me sad, as the pastor clearly had not had the opportunity to study the scripture in the relationship between women and men in the Bible. This highlights the need for continued learning and theological education.

What is this resource?

This resource was written to highlight the devastating level of gender-based violence around the world and enable groups and individuals to engage theologically in the issue; leading them to respond prayerfully, personally and practically. Gender based violence is a global pandemic. We, as a global church communion, need to break the silence, shame, and stigma. Reflecting theologically on how we ended up in such a mess in the world and in our churches can encourage us to move beyond the cultural and traditional beliefs and practices. It will lead us to respond and act in a way that enables us all to mutually flourish as God intended.

This resource also provides the opportunity to reflect and think through some of the key issues in the Bible relating to women and men. There can be a tendency to shy away from reading and thinking about this subject as it can be seen as controversial in some parts of the Anglican Communion. Even the word "gender" is so loaded that it can turn Christians away from reading further. I very much hope this isn't you.

This resource aims to provide you with information about what the Bible does and doesn't say and it provides questions for reflection to help us think through our own responses to the scripture. The resource starts with the theological overview of our identity in Christ before following on to the basics of what gender is and how it is impacted by our background, family, and the culture that we live in. It then goes on to look at the shocking reality of gender-based violence and the impact of that on our churches globally. There is a personal story of transformation by the Revd Domnic Misolo, from being a man growing up in Kenya and how this had influenced the way he treated women to his journey of discovery and healing. The resource leads onto what the Bible says about men and women. It looks at Jesus as the example of how to treat women and men with equal value, worth, dignity, and respect, as equals in the Kingdom of God.

This resource takes a heteronormative approach to gender. It does not address directly issues of LBTQIA+ nor transgender issues. This will be a disappointment to some and will, no doubt, be seen as a missed opportunity. If this is you, we hear you. There is, however, still a real need for the majority of people to be able to theologically discuss male / female relationships and what this means for our attitude and behaviours towards one another.

There is, however, still a real need for the majority of people to be able to theologically discuss male / female relationships and what this means for our attitude and behaviours towards one another.

Why did we write this resource?

In 2019 a group of theologians from around the Anglican Communion published a resource called "*God's Justice: Just Relationships between Women and Men, Boys and Girls*"[1] that was produced for theological colleges. This resource explored issues of relationships and gender in an academic way. However, there was a need for a resource that all Anglicans could have access to and be able to read in an easy format.

In 2021, another group of theologians from across the Anglican Communion came together to produce an updated resource that was accessible in language, easy to read and understand. This new group consisted of some of the original authors and a few new ones. Its aim is to gently guide people through some of the tricky pieces of scripture relating to women and men. All of the authors want to encourage everyone to engage in theological thinking and reflection. We ensured that the voice of youth was represented, as well as different ethnicities and differing theologians across the Anglican Communion.

Who is the resource for?

In essence this resource is for anyone who wants to learn more about what the Bible says (and doesn't say) on the relationships between women and men, boys and girls. It is primarily written for Anglicans and references Anglican statements and agreements in the resource. It is for those who want to explore gender and theology but are afraid to start or to ask questions. Each author wants to encourage everyone to engage in theological thinking and reflection on this issue. You do not need a theology degree or diploma to read this resource. For those with theology degrees we would still recommend this resource as there is always something new to learn from our sisters and brothers in Christ, as well as seeing things from a different or new perspective.

How can the resource be used?

This resource can be used in many settings. It is hoped that small groups will read and discuss this resource together and discuss and reflect on the questions posed at the end of the chapters. This can bring a richness in understanding and enable groups to discuss the preconceived ideas, the challenges in changing views, and to reflect personally on what change is needed within ourselves. Of course, it can be used for individual study too.

For further reading, The Buffalo Statement, "*In the Image and Likeness of God: A Hope-Filled Anthropology*"[2] gives an Anglican common understanding of the reality of the relationship between humans and God and a more in depth exploration of the subject than one chapter can here.

What is the expected impact of the resource?

We hope that reading, reflecting, and engaging theologically on the issue of gender-based violence and gender will result in a transformation of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours – in us as individuals, as churches, and as communities in the journey of discipleship. This can result in mutual flourishing and freedom for women and men to be who God created them to be and not a stereotype that they feel they have to conform to because of what they think the Bible says. It is hoped that the resource will bring light and life to both women and men who think that their roles are predefined. They are not. We are designed for healthy relationships.

Commending the resource

I hope that in reading this resource you will gain new insight into the Bible and the example of Jesus, whom we follow. Discipleship is a lifelong journey of following Jesus. We are challenged to change ourselves more into the likeness of Christ along that journey. Gender and relationships between women and men is one of those areas where we need to be open to be challenged and changed. Are we bold enough to pray the prayer of King David in Psalm 139 which says, from verse 23:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my thoughts.
See if there is any hurtful way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting?
(NRSVA)

We need to listen to one another. Crucially we need to hear the hurt, pain and destruction that stereotypes and misreading scriptures have had on women and on men. Let us be bold; let us be prepared to be challenged afresh and in being challenged to change as a result.

Crucially we need to hear the hurt, pain and destruction that stereotypes and misreading scriptures have had on women and on men. Let us be bold; let us be prepared to be challenged afresh and in being challenged to change as a result.

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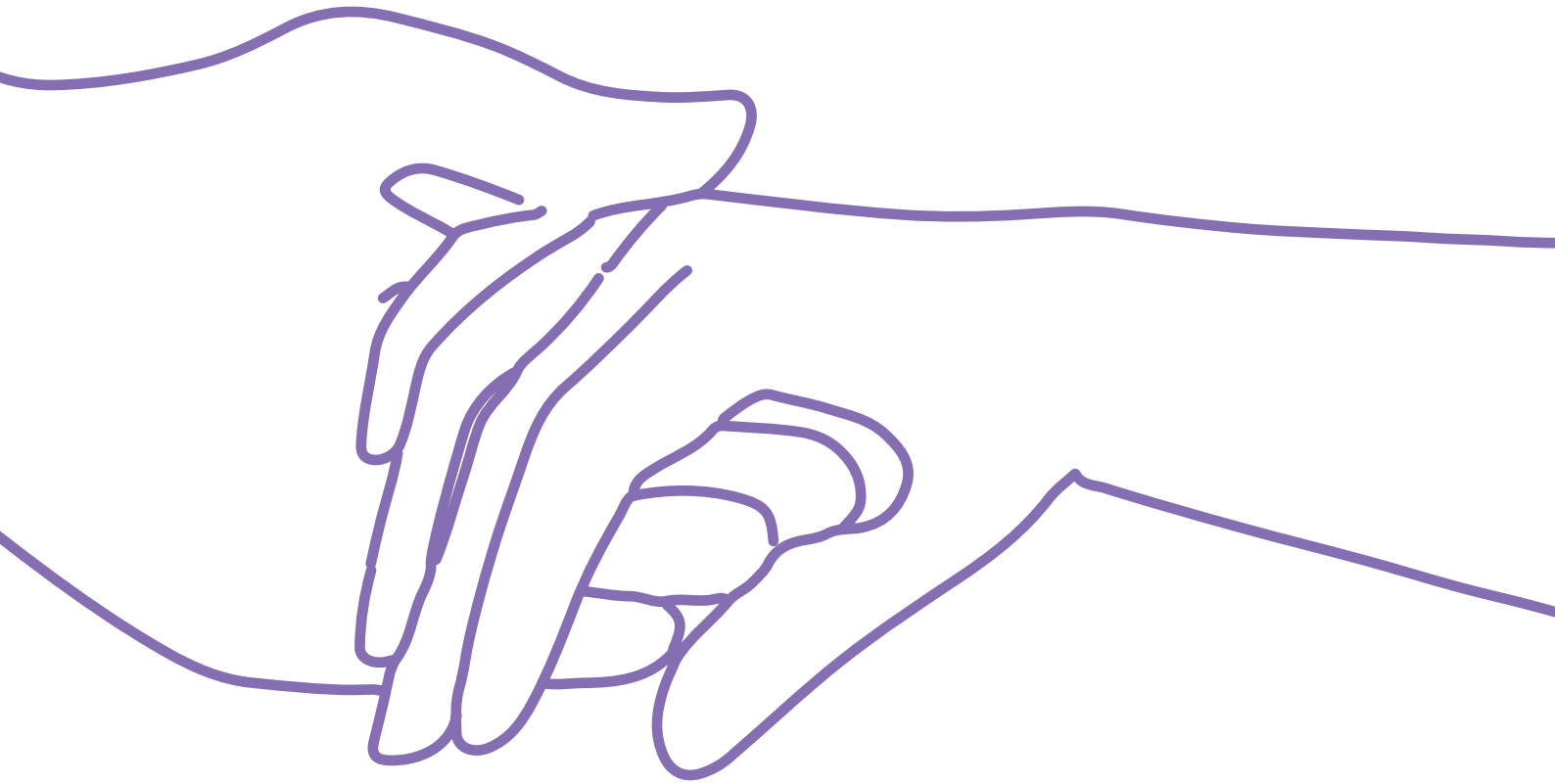
[1] anglicancommunion.org/media/346995/acc17-study-materials-just-relationships.pdf
[2] anglicancommunion.org/media/208538/in-the-image-and-likeness-of-god-a-hope-filled-anthropology-2015.pdf



1

The heart of the matter: some theological guidelines

The dignity of all people within creation

Once we have seen the extent and depth of gender inequality, abuse, and violence in the world, it is important to remember why Christians are so opposed to it. Why do we fight this injustice in the world? This is ultimately a theological question about the nature of God and creation.

A gift

Scripture and Christian tradition teach that God creates all things out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), an act of infinite generosity. The very existence of creation is a gift, an expression of the eternal divine love of the persons of the Trinity. Within this created order, scripture then teaches that humanity is created in the image of God (*imago dei*). This has come to form the heart of the Christian understanding of the human person (Genesis 1: 28-29). While the whole of creation resembles the glory of the creator (Psalm 19: 1), humanity is unique among creatures because women and men are made in God's image and likeness.

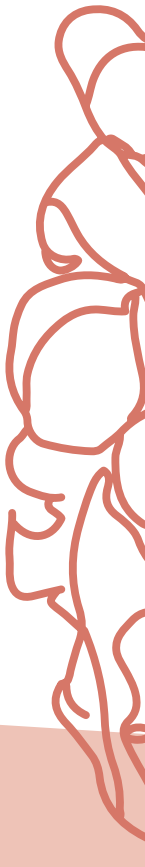
The scriptures reflect deeply on the significance of gifts. Saint Paul writes "For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (1 Corinthians 4: 7). The Holy Spirit, frequently known in the Christian tradition as "the gift", is the source of the gifts which form the Church (1 Corinthians 12: 4-6). Human relations are expressed through gifts, whether they be donations of time, talents, skill, attention, care, or money. These are all gifts of love which form and express a relationship and therefore bear meaning and significance. The Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith & Order (IASCUFO), said in its paper "*God So Loved the World*", that "In the giving of a gift, the gift bears something of the giver to the recipient. The reciprocal sharing of gifts forms family bonds and community."[1]

Gift exchange as communion

This highlighting of gift exchange begins to show why the concept of communion is central to the identity of humanity: "In common with all creation, humanity receives itself as a gift from God. The gift of our humanity bears something of the giver, God, to the recipient, the human person. Although humanity receives everything from God, it is called in turn to give itself to God in thankfulness. Humanity is called into loving exchange, or communion, with God and gives voice to creation's gift of praise and thanksgiving."[2]

Outside this relationship to God the creator every creature, including the human person, is nothing. Whilst every human person is the offspring of a parental relationship and enters a variety of living relations as, for example, sibling, spouse, parent, friend, colleague, leader, or helper, no single relationship between human beings wholly defines those persons. A woman may be a mother, sister, friend, or carer, but none of these relationships, however precious and valuable, fully captures the depth of her humanity. Our human relationships are changeable, yet through those relationships we learn about and participate in our fundamental relation to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, "the one in whom we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17: 28)[3].

So at the fundamental level, in the primary way in which we are human, we are equal because we all share the defining features of our humanity: our lives are a gift from God and are defined by that relationship which we are called to share eternally. This relationship with God, whether acknowledged or not, goes beyond all human differences including gender. The undermining of human dignity through unjust relationships between the genders, as well as through other unjust and inhumane relationships, is therefore deeply offensive to Christian teaching and the Christian way of life.



A calling to every church and to the Anglican Communion

What is the place and role of the Church within the gift relationship of humanity with God? A clear and concise ecumenical answer is provided by a recent document from the World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order[4]. It begins at the same place as above, with a description of how in the beginning man and woman were created in the image of the Triune God, thus bearing an inherent capacity for communion with God and with one another.

The document goes on to describe how God's purpose in creation was thwarted by human sin and disobedience, which damaged the relationships between God and human beings, between human beings, and between humans and the created order. But God persisted in faithfulness despite human sin and error. The dynamic history of God's restoration of community found its irreversible achievement in the incarnation and paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.



Restoring communion

"The Church, as the body of Christ, acts by the power of the Holy Spirit to continue Christ's life-giving mission in prophetic and compassionate ministry and so participates in God's work of healing a broken world"[5].

A vital element in this mission of the Church comes from the biblical concept of communion or koinonia. The Greek noun koinonia derives from the verb meaning "to have something in common", "to share", "to participate", "to have part in" or "to act together". It appears in passages recounting the sharing in the Eucharist (1 Corinthians 10: 16-17), reconciliation (Galatians 2: 7-10), the collection for the poor (Romans 15: 26; 2 Corinthians 8: 3-4) and the experience and witness of the Church (cf Acts 2: 42-45). The Church, then, is called to make visible the unchangeable gift of God's communion within the human family, and with the whole created order.

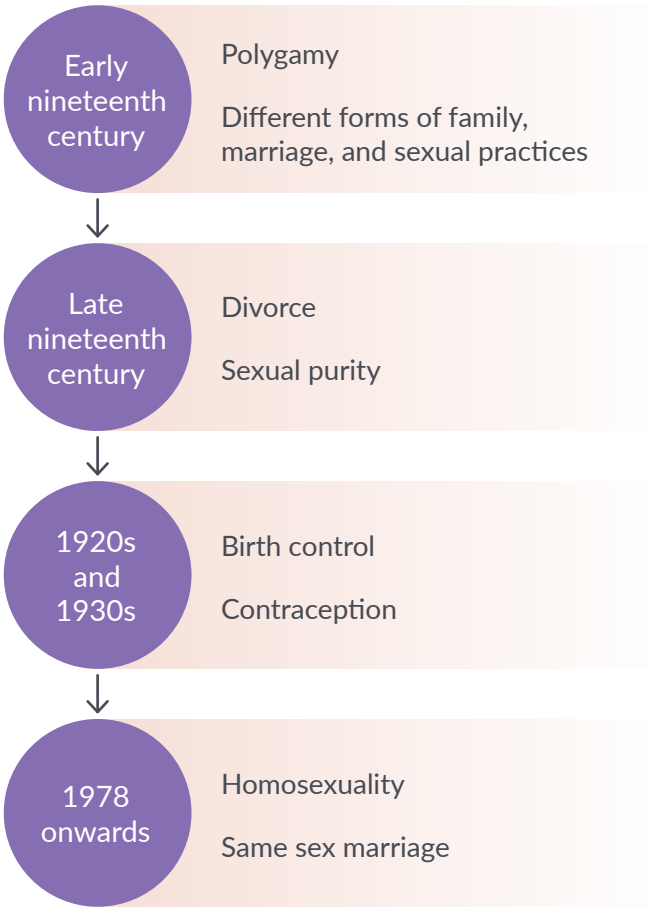
At this point it is important to recognise that the Church's mission is damaged whenever any part of the Christian community denies, distorts, or rejects the gift of communion in its life and witness. This is done by starting or continuing the unjust relationships of racism, economic injustice, warfare, and gender injustice, which lead to some of the painful history of Christian disunity. Unjust relationships between women, men, girls, and boys are part of it; these must be recognised at the most basic level of church community as distorted koinonia. Like Christian disunity, the denial of communion between women and men harms the basic mission of the Church as the sign and servant of God's design for the world: the communion of all under the reign of Christ[6].

On the other hand, the full, visible koinonia between women and men in a sacramental relationship of justice and peace in the Church is a particular way that Christians proclaim Christ's mission. Communion, whose source is the very life of the Holy Trinity, is both the gift by which the Church lives and, at the same time, the gift that God calls the Church to offer to a wounded and divided humanity in hope of reconciliation and healing[7].

The Anglican Communion

The Anglican Communion finds its identity and calling in this gift of communion. Anglicans do not belong to a union of churches but to a communion of churches. The Communion is not a global corporation with a single legal and financial structure governed by a head office, but a communion of autonomous and interdependent churches that through prayers, fellowship and mission actively share their Anglican faith. This implies that they do not exist in a fixed state with each other but, rather, need continually to re-establish what they hold in common out of the differences and diversity that they embody. To be a "communion" implies an ongoing process of finding what is held in common from within the diversity of Anglican life across the globe.

For example, there are not one but four Instruments of the Communion: the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lambeth Conference, the Primates' Meeting and the Anglican Consultative Council. Like a varied set of musical instruments, these different organisations need to be played with each other if they are to produce a symphony of music. These instruments aim to promote koinonia among the member churches and share common witness, mission and evangelism in the global context.[8]



Challenges of diversity

In addition to these formal institutions, koinonia is also seen in a host of informal links and connections across the Communion, between dioceses, parishes, agencies, and individuals. Human interaction is at the heart of what it means to belong to the Anglican Communion, against the background of extraordinary and wonderful difference and diversity, not least in the expression and understanding of gender. This interaction should be about continually finding and treasuring what we have in common.

To this end, Anglicans have been engaged in discussion of gender from its beginning. In the nineteenth century, the debates focused on polygamy as Christian mission encountered diverse understandings of gender and different forms of family, marriage, and sexual practices. In the late nineteenth century, the issue of divorce and sexual purity was contested and the question of how to treat divorcees in the church became a recurrent issue in the twentieth century. In the 1920s and 1930s the focus was on birth control and contraception. Since 1978, the discussion of homosexuality and same sex marriage has been raised in each of the Lambeth Conferences that have taken place.

The discussion of gender has always been difficult because of cultural, religious, national, and regional differences and diverse understanding of the Bible and theological traditions. But the greater the differences, the greater the potential for deep and meaningful communion, though the danger of misunderstanding and prejudice is also present. There is no question that disagreement can be destructive or distracting to the mission of the church, but conflict is not necessarily unhelpful in and of itself. The Anglican Communion finds its identity and calling in finding reconciliation and healing through communion.

Discussion Questions

1. Knowing that our value and identity fundamentally comes from being given our life by God, how does this change the way you view the differences of gender in those around you?
2. How can Anglican churches truly embody communion not just in worship but in the whole way they live as the body of Christ?
3. What steps have you, your church and diocese taken to end gender-based violence in the church community and in wider society?



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[2] ibid. Section 23
[3] ibid. Section 40
[4] World Council of Churches' Commission on Faith and Order, (2013) The Church: Towards a Common Vision (TCTCV), Section 1, WCC Publications
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[7] ibid. Section 1
[8] anglicancommunion.org/media/209979/Towards-a-Symphony-of-Instruments-Web-Version.pdf p.83



Let's pray

My heart is not proud, Lord,
my eyes are not haughty;
I do not concern myself with great matters
or things too wonderful for me.
But I have calmed and quieted myself,
I am like a weaned child with its mother;
like a weaned child I am content.
Israel, put your hope in the Lord
both now and forevermore.

Psalm 131

2

Getting our bearings: What is gender?

When we start discussing gender, the first thing to recognise is that it's not the same as biological sex. The World Health Organisation (WHO) explains it like this: "gender is used to describe the characteristics of women and men that are socially constructed, while sex refers to those that are biologically determined. People are born female or male, but learn to be girls and boys who grow into women and men. This learned behaviour makes up gender identity and determines gender roles."[1] "Socially constructed" means it is formed by human societies and each society or culture is likely to do it slightly differently to any other. So "male" and "female" refer to biological sex, but "masculine", and "feminine" to gender. It may seem like a recent topic, but gender issues have existed long before the term itself was invented.

It may seem like a recent topic, but gender issues have existed long before the term itself was invented.

Gender in the Bible

In Genesis 1: 26-28, God creates first the "human being" and together they are in God's "image and likeness". God acknowledges that they are "male and female", giving both the same responsibilities and privileges to care for the rest of Creation without establishing any hierarchy or qualitative difference between them. In Genesis 2: 4b-23, God creates from clay a human (ha-adam in the Hebrew), breathes into them the ruach (breath or spirit) and makes them a living being who is told to care for the Earth (verse 15). Then God takes a part of the human being's side (often translated as rib) and makes another person, but of a different sex. The man sees the woman as someone equal to him. In addition, in Genesis 2: 24, God says that man will leave father and mother to once again become "one flesh" with woman, once more reflecting the image of God.

Already in this ancient text our gender norms are challenged. Biblical narratives and history show that the one who leaves the parental home has usually been the woman, but in Genesis 2: 24 "a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife." We need to take care not to commit injustices because of traditional interpretations of the Bible.

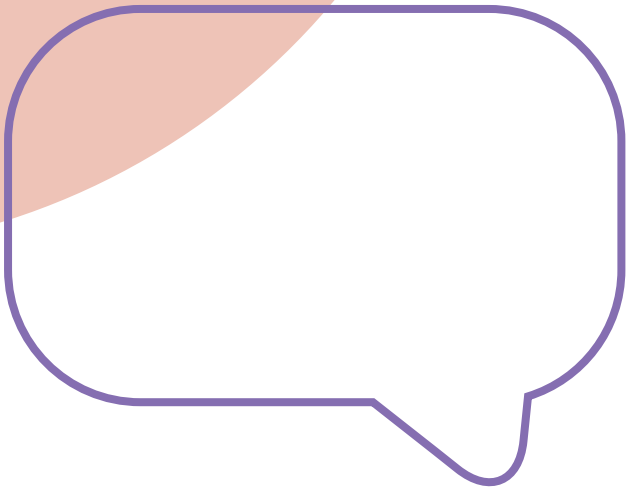
Upholding human ideas of gender inequality as if they were divine desire does not accord with the Word of God, in which all humanity is God's "image and likeness". From the accounts of creation, through Jesus' actions in the Gospels, through reform movements in the Church to the present day, there are records of women acting in many ways, despite the challenges and patriarchal models of each era.

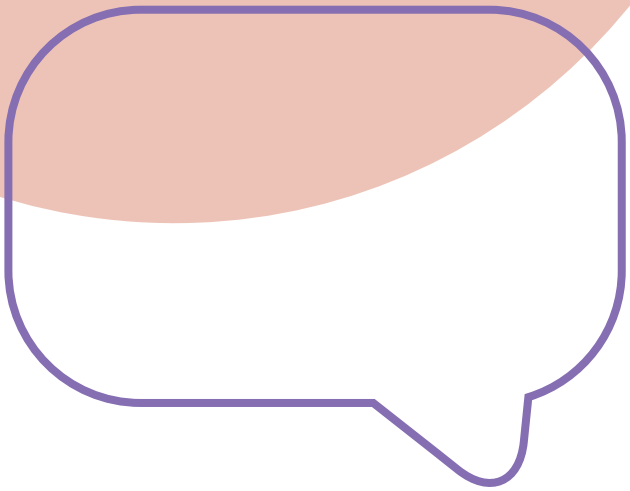
We have examples of women in the Old Testament leading the people, like the Judge Deborah, the prophetic role of Miriam, the solidarity of Ruth supporting her mother-in-law Naomi. We have always known that women walked alongside Jesus and his disciples although they are rarely highlighted in biblical accounts. Jesus discusses gender and, in a patriarchal society, includes women and children in the project of salvation. Women were at the crucifixion and, like Mary Magdalene, the first ones at the tomb.

Our own gender

Not long after we are born, people in the family and in our circle of acquaintance cover us with colours and expectations based on the "masculine" or "feminine" gender, depending on the biological characteristics found in our body. With technology, it is already possible to know the biological sex of the baby months in advance and, therefore, this process begins to happen even during pregnancy. From birth, we are being socially, culturally, and religiously educated to occupy the places and roles that are "ours", in the context where we are.

In our daily lives at home, at school, at work or in church, there are always issues related to gender relations. Have you ever been told off for playing with a particular toy, wearing certain clothes, or behaving in a way that is considered inappropriate for a boy or a girl? From very early on, and in many places, from childhood to adulthood, we learn what is and isn't accepted in our culture.





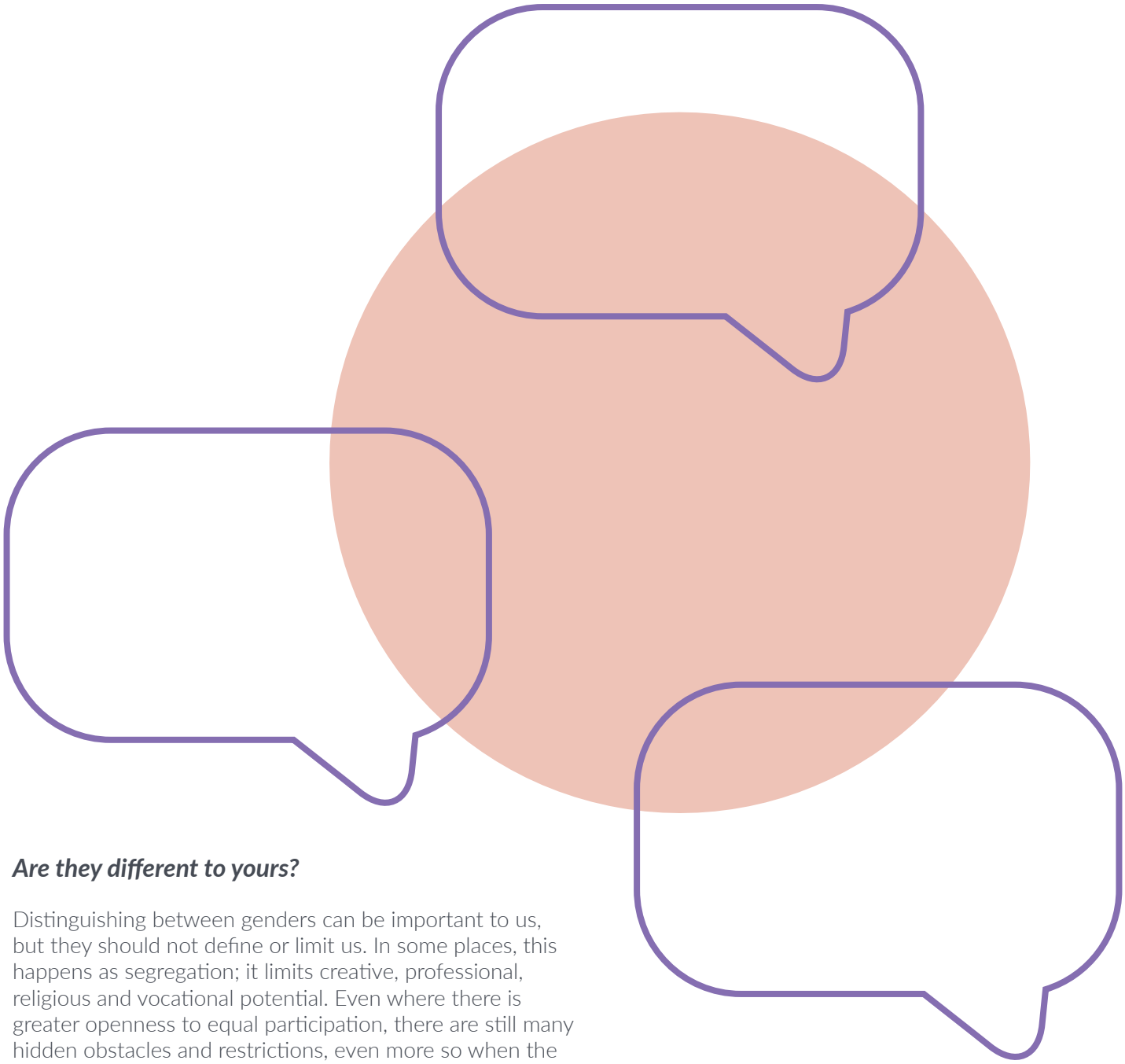
This is something to think about: how are we challenging cultural, social, and legal norms that still treat women in an oppressive way? What phrases below have you heard?

1. God made man superior to woman.
2. Women should be submissive and not act in leadership.
3. To be a man, you must be macho.
4. Every woman should be a mother.
5. God made man and woman.

We can think together about what these statements mean. They disregard the fact that gender is a social construction – something that is created by societies and cultures, by human beings. People do not always fit into the stereotypes of what is considered a man or a woman, categories that are assigned to them, either biologically or socially. Not every woman can or wants to be a mother and this does not make her inferior to others. So there is no single way of being man or woman. In fact, there are expectations generated by gender as to what belongs to this or that sex, often without considering realities such as the mother or father who raises children alone, the woman who drives a tractor, the man who cares for infants, to name a few situations that go against standards and prejudices.

Some say that the gendered division of roles only follows nature, but gender is not defined only by the genital organ or body features, but varies in each context and culture. Being a woman or a man in Cape Town is not the same as in England or Angola. Nor are the people of two generations ago the same as those of today.

Compare some images, representations and roles of men and women in different times, places and cultures that you know about.



Are they different to yours?

Distinguishing between genders can be important to us, but they should not define or limit us. In some places, this happens as segregation; it limits creative, professional, religious and vocational potential. Even where there is greater openness to equal participation, there are still many hidden obstacles and restrictions, even more so when the woman is part of an ethnic minority. There are many more barriers to be overcome to occupy the religious priesthood, academic spaces, and leadership positions in general.

In addition, there may be the imposition of a particular way of life, forcing women to fit into invented "boxes" based on their gender. These may even prevent women from marrying, starting a family and working in faith communities. Despite much progress, many capacities, attributions and rights are granted or withdrawn from people because of their sex or gender. Intellectual and cognitive capacity, honesty, personal morality, and goodness are judged by gender; seeing, for example, men as more qualified than women, even in having a voice or taking turns to be heard. Yet men are also held to a standard of masculinity that is often unattainable and generates toxic behaviour and low self-esteem.



Let's talk about our context:

What are your main concerns about gender in your current context?

Church is the place to talk about gender!

Gender relations are a big topic in our daily lives, within the church, throughout Scriptures, and in theology. As disciples of Jesus we are called to re-establish human relations based on justice, mercy, and equality. We are called to be a parable of God's love to everyone, to everything and everywhere.

This is the Church's prophetic duty, including denouncing the sins which violate the intrinsic human worth of women and girls, ethnic and racial minorities, and LGBTQIA+ people, and announcing that more welcoming, loving and committed world to the most vulnerable people, starting from our spaces of faith and worship.

The church has been keen to address this important issue, revisiting and re-signifying the role of genders in its journey with God. For a long time, women were kept silent in the churches, at best performing auxiliary functions, although they have always been present in the work of the church. Most of the time, men were given the leadership roles, since it was assumed that men were always more capable of performing more important tasks. Women should take care of the house and the children, the only place where they would have more ability than men to act.

It is time to reaffirm that in Christ, we are new creatures and the newness of life that we want to live must be in a world where labels do not define or limit us, a world where all people are respected in their individuality, accepted in their differences, included, integrated, and not excluded from the opportunity to develop their gifts and talents, living in freedom in love.

"Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism…'" (Acts 10: 34) so we are all (and "all" is ALL) God's children loved and cared for equally.

To think about:

How are we fostering gender justice and equitable relationships in our families, churches and places of work?

What are the challenges, and where do I need support to do it?



Bible Study and Discussion Questions

Mark 5: 21-42

1. In Mark's gospel, Jesus recognises the dignity of two women: a woman who had a bleeding condition for 12 years, and a younger woman of 12 years old, Jairus' daughter, who was dead. Jesus treats them as subjects, not objects (Mark 5: 21-42). Mark interweaves the two stories, weaving both situations together.

2. Read the text of Mark 5: 21-42 three times. The first time, one person reads it aloud for all to hear. The second time is to do a dramatic reading, dividing the lines of the characters (Jairus, the woman, Jesus, etc) among the people present. The third time, each person reads the text individually, in silence.

3. Discuss and write down in small groups:

- What do we know about each character in this story?
- What do the two female characters have in common?
- What do the male characters, Jesus and Jairus, have in common and how do they relate to the women?
- In what ways did Jesus' words and actions challenge the gender systems shaping in that context?
- How can this passage inspire us today, in building healthy gender relationships and overcoming inequalities?

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3

The shocking reality of gender-based violence (GBV)

What is Gender-Based Violence?

The United Nations definition of gender-based violence is

> **"any act of ... violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."[1]**

At the heart of gender-based violence is the desire to control and misuse any power over another person. It can take many forms, with the perpetrator of abuse choosing the most effective tactic or form of abuse that creates the desired control over another person. This is a sin and in direct contrast to the gospel message of doing to others as you would have them do to you (Matthew 7: 12, Luke 6: 31).

The list is not an exhaustive one but rather provides examples of different types of gender-based violence.

Physical violence

Intentionally pushing, grabbing at clothing or a body part, hitting, slapping, beating, burning, raping, murdering, injuring, wounding because of one's gender.

Sexual violence (SGBV)

Coercing another to engage in sexual activity, treating a person as an object for sexual gratification, physically attacking the sex organs, forced marriage, child marriage, widow inheritance, female genital mutilation / cutting, bride kidnapping, trafficking of a person, using financial control to gain sex (e.g. "If you want money for shopping you have to have sex with me").

Threats and intimidation

Any behaviours that make or carry out threats, including threats of abandonment, poverty, suicide, physical violence. Behaviours that can frighten, intimidate, terrorise, manipulate, hurt, or humiliate others. Using a woman's children as a weapon for maintaining control. Threatening to report the woman to the local authorities for being an unfit parent. Threatening to kill the children.

Economic control

Unfair control of household income and assets, preventing a woman from obtaining or keeping a job, taking money and / or possessions and using it selfishly for one's own purposes. Not allowing the woman to have a say in how the household income is spent, not allowing her to be in joint control of the household finances or have access to bank accounts and cash.

Isolation

Control over who a woman sees, talks to or visits. Secluding a woman from friends and family, removing or restricting forms and means of transport to keep her isolated or make it very difficult to see others. It can involve moving home far away from friends and family; or removing the support network without mutual agreement.

Emotional abuse

Using insults to demean a person, playing mind games with a woman so that it undermines her trust. Using "put downs" to belittle a woman and make sure she is disempowered, anxious, and unsettled in her emotions. Constantly keeping a woman earning the favour of the man.

Psychological abuse

Tell them they are going mad or have mental health problems, force or manipulate her to take medication. Give untrue alternate realities to undermine the woman's confidence or counter recollections with falsehoods. Threaten to make false accusations of abuse to the local authorities.

Harassment

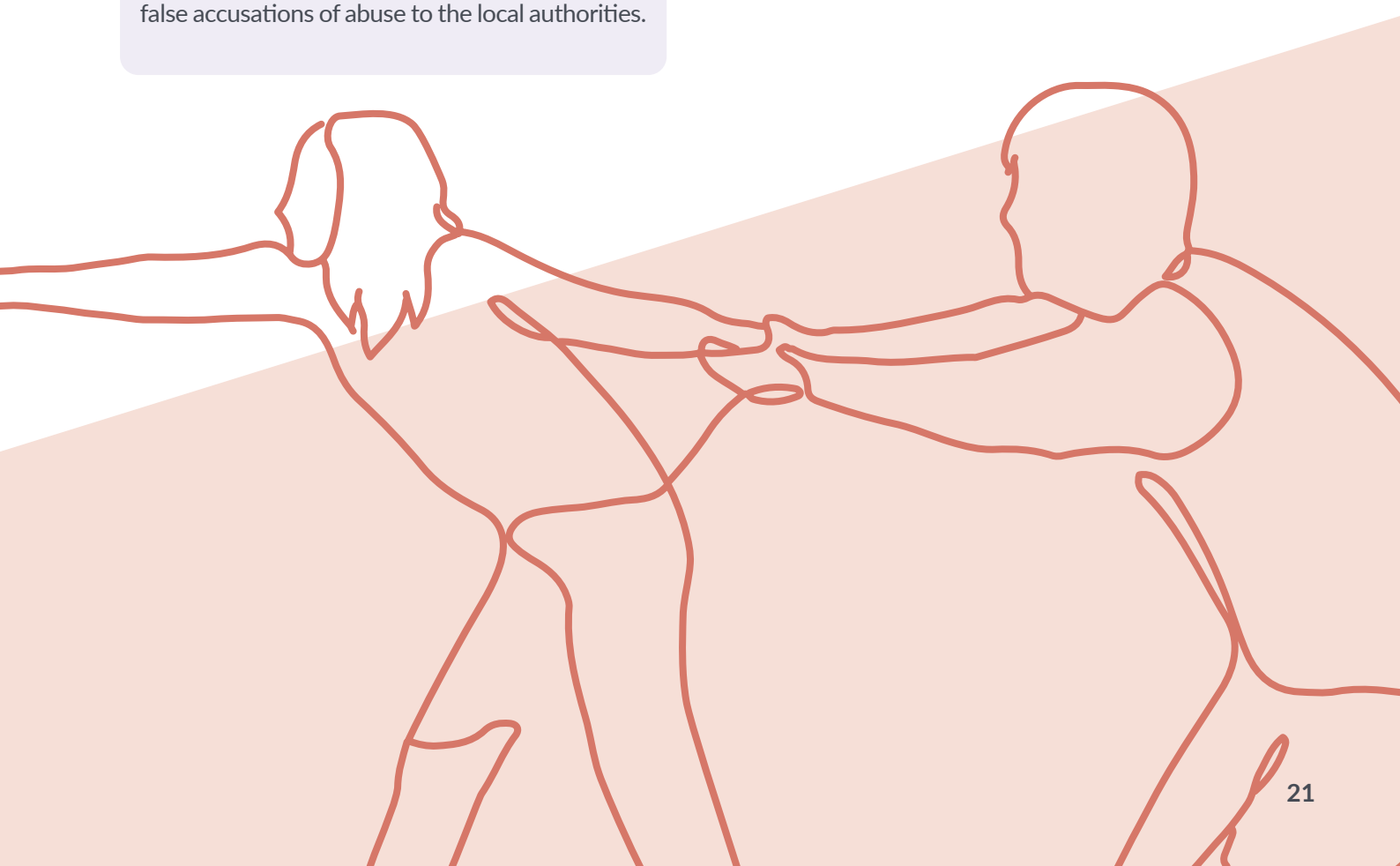
Includes requesting sexual favours, making comments of a sexual nature in the workplace designed to intimidate, embarrass, or make fun of a person. Making a woman "manage" someone else's advances for fear they may do something worse. Demanding sexual favours in return for jobs or promotion, or threatening job loss if they do not provide sexual favours. Slapping a bottom is harassment.

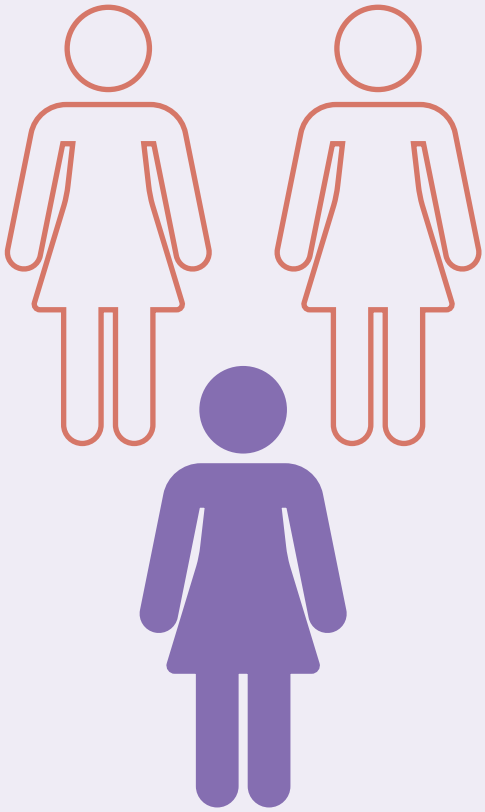
Stalking

Unwanted obsessive attention that does not go away even when asked. It can take place online or in person and can feel threatening or create a feeling of constantly being watched.

Spiritual Abuse

Misusing the Bible or a pastoral relationship to coerce and control another person.





Globally

one in three women

experience physical and / or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner."[2]

The prevalence of gender-based violence

"Globally one in three women experience physical and / or sexual violence mostly by an intimate partner."[2]

Sadly, gender-based violence is an issue that can occur for anyone: any race, age, sexual orientation, religion, educational level, country, gender, or socioeconomic background. Wealth is no barrier to gender-based violence. Women in so called "rich countries" experience gender-based violence too. For example, in the UK, one in four women will be abused in her lifetime and on average two women a week are killed by their partner or former partner.[3]

Gender-based violence can occur within a range of relationships including couples who are married, living together, or dating. Marriage is no protector against abuse. Domestic abuse is prevalent in every country. Domestic abuse in a relationship can often start when a woman is pregnant. The pregnant woman is more vulnerable and often reliant on the man. This dependency can be taken advantage of and disrespected by someone who uses that power and control to abuse her. Gender-based violence is not always obvious. Often it is hidden and carried out behind closed doors in the home. Many think that physical and or sexual abuse are the only examples of gender-based violence. However, gender-based violence takes many forms, as outlined above.

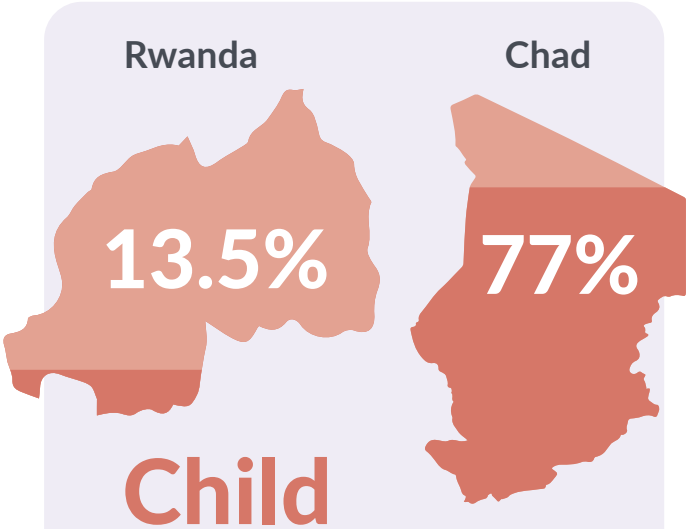
Objectification, thinking about or treating someone as an object for fulfilling one's own ends needs and pleasures can be both hidden and public. Women and men can be treated as objects by others for sexual gratification rather than as human beings made in the image of God and a gift to the world. Objectification of women and men in the media to sell material possessions is only one example. The proliferation of pornography across the internet that is accessible, anonymous, affordable, via mobile phones and laptops in people's own homes, is another way in which people objectify others.

How big an issue is gender-based violence?

In the year before the Covid-19 pandemic, 243 million women and girls experienced sexual and / or physical violence by an intimate partner[4]. It is a statistic that only became worse with lockdown and stay at home notices during the pandemic. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said: "violence is not confined to the battlefield. For many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest: in their own homes ... we have seen a horrifying surge in domestic violence". In some countries the number of women calling support services has doubled or tripled[5].

This is the global reality faced by many women and girls every day of their lives. They are not safe outside the home because of fear of sexual harassment, verbal abuse, rape, or other forms of gender-based violence, nor inside the home because of domestic abuse that includes marital rape and incest. Gender-based violence is a shadow pandemic that poisons relationships, families, and lives. The impact is felt for years, often lifetimes, and can be passed down to the next generation as children are traumatised by the impact of growing up in an environment of abuse.

Most violence against women is perpetrated by current or former husbands or intimate partners. More than 640 million women worldwide aged 15 and older have been subjected to intimate partner violence (26 percent of women).[2]



Child marriage

prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa ranges from 13.5 per cent of girls in Rwanda to 77 per cent of girls in Chad.[6]



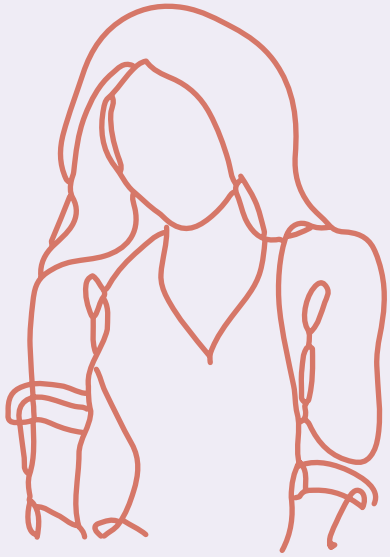
243 million

women and girls experienced sexual and / or physical violence by an intimate partner[4]

In sub-Saharan Africa, one in three girls will be married before the age of 18, limiting their education, increasing life threatening complications in childbirth, and making them more likely to experience intimate partner violence. Child marriage prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa ranges from 13.5 per cent of girls in Rwanda to 77 per cent of girls in Chad.[6]

Fifteen million adolescent girls worldwide, aged 15-19 years, have experienced forced sex (forced sexual intercourse and other sexual acts). In the majority of countries, adolescent girls are most at risk of forced sex by a current or former husband, partner, or boyfriend. Girls aged 20-24 years who married before they turned 18 were 20 per cent more likely to experience intimate partner violence than those who married as adults.[6]

"We lament the incidence of this violence and we recommit ourselves to just, fair and transparent processes to root it out. We recommit to celebrating and respecting women, as we are called to do by the example Jesus set in his interactions with women."
Archbishop Thabo Makgoba, Archbishop of Cape Town[7]



Women with disabilities

are twice as likely to experience abuse and 10 times as likely to experience sexual abuse.

Women with disabilities are at an increased risk of violence and abuse. They are twice as likely to experience abuse and 10 times as likely to experience sexual abuse. This is due to their greater vulnerability and in some cases reliance on the support of others for personal care, which increases the risk and opportunity for abuse. If a person is unable to clearly communicate with others this also increases their risk of abuse, as they can't inform others about the abuse taking place.

Women and men who are marginalised in a society because of their race, ethnicity, tribe, non-indigenous or other status are also at an increased risk of violence and abuse. Stereotypes, prejudice, historical inequality, and injustice all increase the risk of reports not being taken seriously, being diminished or dismissed. Privilege and racism contribute to structural, attitudinal, and behavioural inequality that can create an enabling environment for abuse to occur and justice to be hindered, including the legacy of colonialism and imperialism.

Generally, where vulnerability increases, the likelihood of violence and abuse increases.

Sexual violence in conflict

Conflict-related sexual violence as defined by the United Nations refers to "rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, forced marriage, and any other form of sexual violence of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is directly or indirectly linked to a conflict."[8]

According to the UN, 2,542 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were reported in 2020[9]. Of those, for example, 1,053 (41 per cent) were in the Democratic Republic of the Congo[10]. Currently, more than a dozen countries have ongoing conflicts as well as more that have recently had conflict or are sites of concern.

Conflict-related sexual violence can arise in nearly any context when perpetrators treat others as objects to defile or conquer. The 2020 UN statistic of reported conflict-related sexual violence suggests that 96 per cent is perpetrated against women and girls and 4 per cent against men and boys.[11] It is well-known that sexual violence is under-reported for many reasons, especially the shame and stigma that often accompany it.

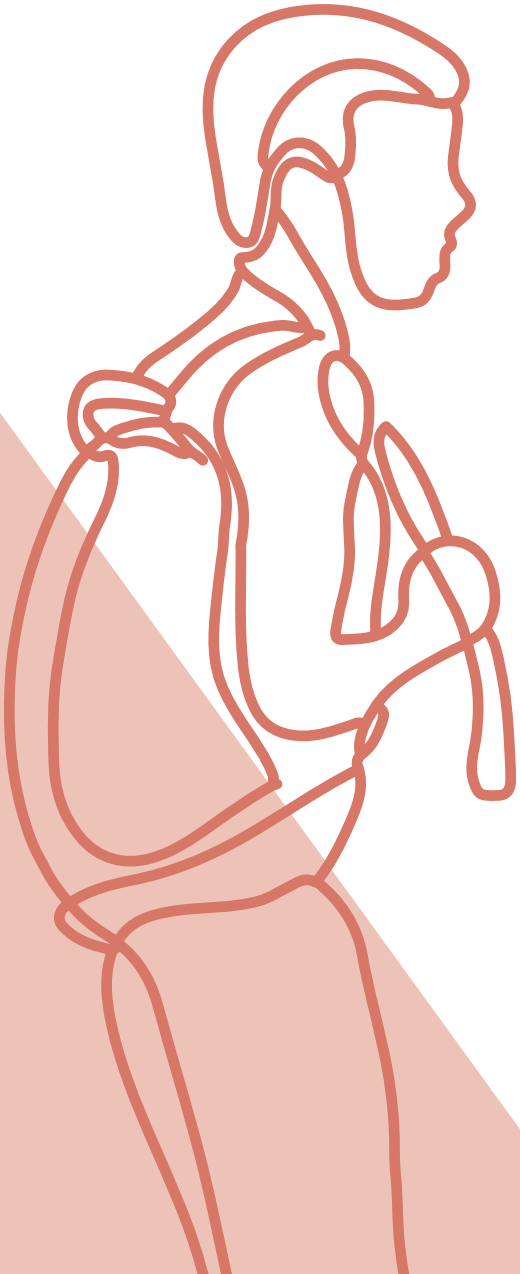


Violence Against Men and Boys

Men also suffer gender-based violence worldwide, yet to a lesser extent than women. Much of the violence against men is committed by other men and is more likely to take place in public rather than in private and sometimes within homosexual relationships. Whatever our feelings around this may be, it is important that we acknowledge the reality of domestic abuse for men too.

Boys are at risk of being trafficked for sexual abuse as well as being abused within their own families. It is a highly taboo subject and yet incidences have been brought to light in the work of Christian organisations helping childhood survivors of abuse.

We need to be mindful and wise to the power and control in relationships, recognising who holds the most power and seeing this in light of the understanding that the abuse of power and a desire to control are at the heart of gender-based violence.



In Churches Too

> **"The church is seen as being complicit in GBV. The trauma, the pain and the brokenness run very deep."**
> Bishop Margaret Vertue, False Bay diocese, Anglican Church of Southern Africa.[12]

Gender-based violence and domestic abuse happen in churches of all traditions. For example, the Anglican Church of Canada continues the difficult work of truth, reparation, and reconciliation processes over sexual abuse and violence at residential schools for Indigenous and First Nations children and youth over many years.

In another example, research focussed on churchgoers across Cumbria (a region in the UK) found that one in four churchgoers had experienced at least one abusive behaviour in their current relationship. Six women were in relationships where they feared for their lives. 42.2 per cent of the whole sample had experienced at least one of the abusive behaviours in a current or previous relationship.[13]

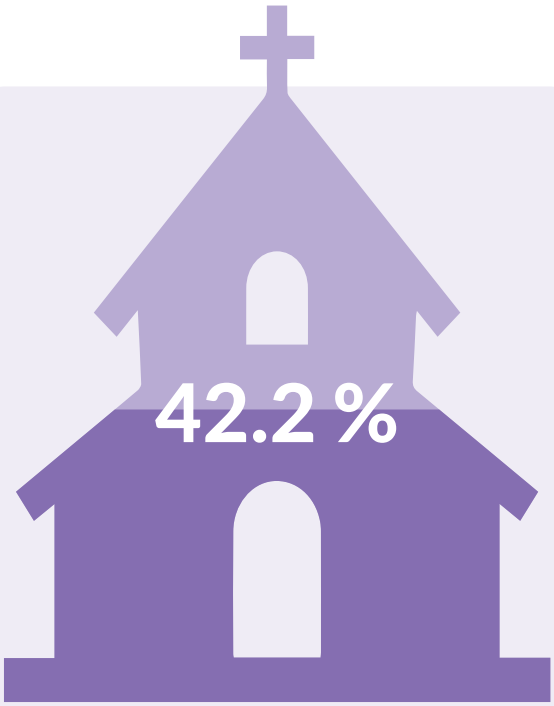
The National Anglican Family Violence Research Report, commissioned by the Anglican Church of Australia in 2019,[14] surveyed over 2,000 males and females aged 18-plus, including the general public and Anglicans. The survey results found the following:

1. the prevalence of intimate partner violence among Anglicans was the same or higher than in the wider Australian community,
2. the prevalence of intimate partner violence among church-attending Anglicans was the same or higher than among other Anglicans,
3. the prevalence of intimate partner violence was higher among women than men, and
4. most Anglican victims of domestic violence did not seek help from Anglican churches.

Addressing gender-based abuse and violence as people of faith

"Gender-based violence is an affront to God, and we pray for all those affected. As Anglicans around the world, let us commit to ending violence against women in all its forms."
The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

25 November 2020, Twitter



In a study of churchgoers across Cumbria

42.2 %

of the whole sample had experienced at least one of the abusive behaviours in a current or previous relationship.[13]

Gender-based violence is an affront to God because all humankind is created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 27). To violate another (just because she is a woman, for example) disrespects the creation that God has pronounced as good (Genesis 1: 31). Although early biblical stories reveal situations of rape and disrespectful treatment of women, Jesus makes clear throughout the gospels that abuse and violence have no place in God's reign.

As Christians we are called to challenge the messages passed down within the cultures of families, communities, or society that domestic abuse or gender-based violence is acceptable. As Archbishop Henri Isingoma of the Anglican Church of Congo (DRC) said in 2014, "Women in our country have paid a high price for the instability and cultural attitudes that continue to influence our society. We are called to challenge these harmful attitudes and to share the divine message of equality between men and women, for the well-being of all."[15]

Equality means loving, respecting, and treating another as one would want to be treated. It also means that all relationships should reflect God's abiding love.

Looking at Scripture

Anglicans have done much work on this issue through the *Bible In The Life Of The Church* project[16]. It is important to look at the theology of being human and what that means for our identity in Christ. We are unique human beings, made in the image of God and in relationship with one another. Each person reflects God's image. It is important we bear this in mind when looking at scripture and our response to gender-based violence.

"In virtue of the incarnation of God in Christ, gender difference, instead of being divisive, invites and presupposes relationship and unity, both to our Creator and to each other."[17]

Ephesians 5: 22-24 has been used to justify domineering and abusive behaviour against wives and women overall. When verses 25 to 30 are ignored, which call on husbands to love their wives like Christ's self-sacrificial love for the church and to respect them like one's own body, this is a misuse of Holy Scripture. Morally, this passage is about how a couple cares for one another in Christ's love.

Gender-based violence also contradicts Christian teachings on reconciliation and living as Christ's beloved community, in koinonia. Reconciliation depends on repentance and forgiveness. Those who have done harm must first recognise the sinfulness of their behaviour and repent by making permanent changes in their conduct. Jesus makes this clear in his Sermon on the Mount (e.g. Matthew 5: 23-24) and elsewhere, such as when forgiveness or healing are followed by his instruction to go and sin no more (e.g. John 5: 14). This moral repentance is essential and what makes forgiveness and the journey of reconciliation possible.

Ethical responses to the evil of gender-based violence

"Jesus teaches that every person is valued and loved by God – let's work to end discrimination and eradicate harmful practices that perpetuate violence against women."
The Most Revd Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

8 March 2021, Twitter

Just as Jesus responds compassionately to the woman who had been caught in adultery and challenges her male accusers to reflect on their own past sinful behaviour (John 8: 3-11), there is only one standard for all in God's reign. No one was more deserving of punishment simply because of their gender.

To live as beloved community in the communion of Koinonia[18] in accordance with the gospel, we must end all gender-based double standards that have justified and allowed abusive and violent behaviour to continue. Those who have benefited from such standards, most often men, must take a leadership role by denouncing them and upholding one standard for all, grounded in Christ's compassion and love, especially within our churches and communities.

Women and men of faith can do much to make churches safe places of teaching Christian love and mutual respect, so that gender-based abuse and violence cannot be nurtured in a culture of silence or disregard. This begins in each congregation, and at all levels of the church. As Australian scholar Leonie Westenberg has said: "Christian churches, in building a response to domestic violence, should examine the role of religious language in practice, in church structures, in liturgy, and in programmes concerning marriage and counselling."[19]

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba has acknowledged that gender-based violence has become a second pandemic in the church as well as the culture. He affirms that the church needs to recommit itself to respecting women, according to "the example Jesus set in his interactions with women" and adds: "to the women of the Province and the world, we will walk alongside you as we change the policies of Church and State to reflect our commitments. The road will be painful as we search for the life-transforming truth of Christ, but we shall overcome and will celebrate with you when together we end this scourge."[7]

His Church's Provincial Standing Committee put forth a resolution with specific steps to eradicate gender-based violence, including putting a programme in place with dedicated people to ensure that it is carried out across dioceses and parishes. Prayers, readings, liturgies, Bible study and other materials will help transform church communities toward gender-inclusive worship and practices.[20]

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), one of the four Instruments of the Anglican Communion, has recognised the need for the Anglican Communion to address gender justice and to prevent and end gender-based violence. Doing so, the Anglican Communion will take its place in serving the wider world, as expressed in its concerns and intentions in several ACC resolutions (see Appendix Two).

Just as Jesus responds compassionately to the woman who had been caught in adultery and challenges her male accusers to reflect on their own past sinful behaviour, there is only one standard for all in God's reign. No one was more deserving of punishment simply because of their gender.



How Churches Can Engage and Respond

"It is by standing up for the rights of girls and women that we truly measure up as men."
Archbishop Desmond Tutu[21]

Churches can engage by being aware and acknowledging how they may have participated in oppressive attitudes or behaviour and then take steps to ensure that their practices and those of their clergy and lay leaders are consistent with the gospel teachings on the equality and dignity of all persons.

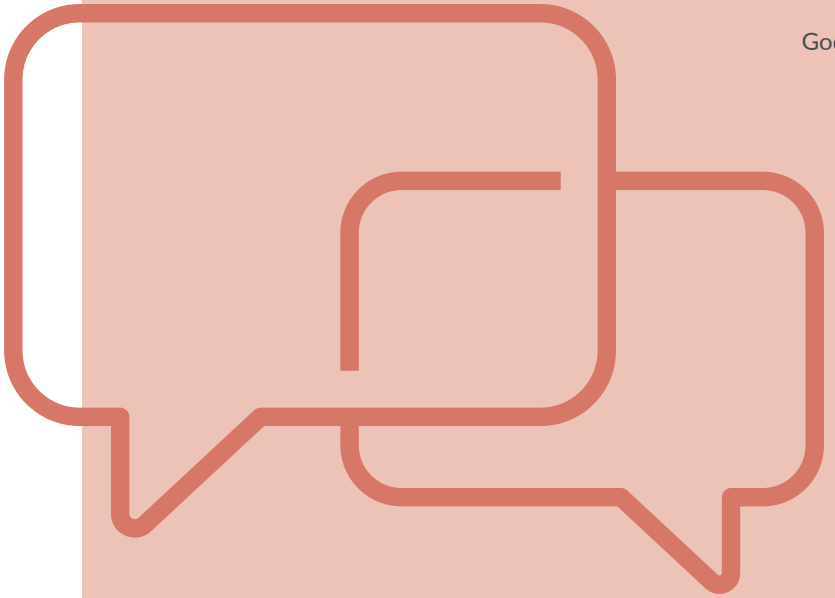
Religious leaders, especially men, must speak out publicly against the evils of a wider culture of violence that justifies abusive behaviour, especially in times of social unrest, conflict, and war. Silence allows sinful behaviour to fester and grow. The gospel holds a powerful message to be spread – or evangelised – especially during times of strife.

Religious leaders also have a role in preaching and teaching the gospel's message of Christian manhood based on Jesus' humility and his respect for the equal dignity of all, including women and girls. Ephesians also teaches that Christian manhood means loving, caring for, and cherishing the well-being of one's spouse and family as well as others.

Chapter V explores and discusses New Testament understandings of Christian manhood and womanhood.

Religious leaders must build a culture of trust and support so that those experiencing abuse or violence feel free to speak without fear of reprisal or blame. People of faith must be compassionate toward those who have been victimised, helping them heal spiritually and emotionally and empowering them to contribute to a future free of abuse. Survivors of gender-based violence offer a powerful witness to the need for change and can be helpful participants in transforming injustice.

All of these steps must be accompanied by prayer for healing our broken relationships, communities, and the world they inhabit, so that all people can be respected and reconciled in God's abiding love.



Discussion Questions

When we first hear about the brutal reality of domestic abuse and the many and varied ways in which a person can be abused, it can leave us shocked, stunned, traumatised, or triggered from having previously experienced abuse or currently experiencing abuse. Take time to process the information and any reaction to the information. Be kind to yourself (and others in the group) during this time.

1. How do the statistics make you feel?
2. Consider the number of women in your church. With one in three women globally being abused in her lifetime, how many women in your church would this be?
3. Where would a woman obtain help and support within your church or community?
4. What stops a woman from accessing help?
5. In Psalm 139: 23-24 King David prayed this prayer:
   "test me and know my anxious thoughts.
   See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
   Could you pray this prayer, listen and act on God's prompting?
6. Are there any of your own attitudes and behaviours that you need to reflect on and change?

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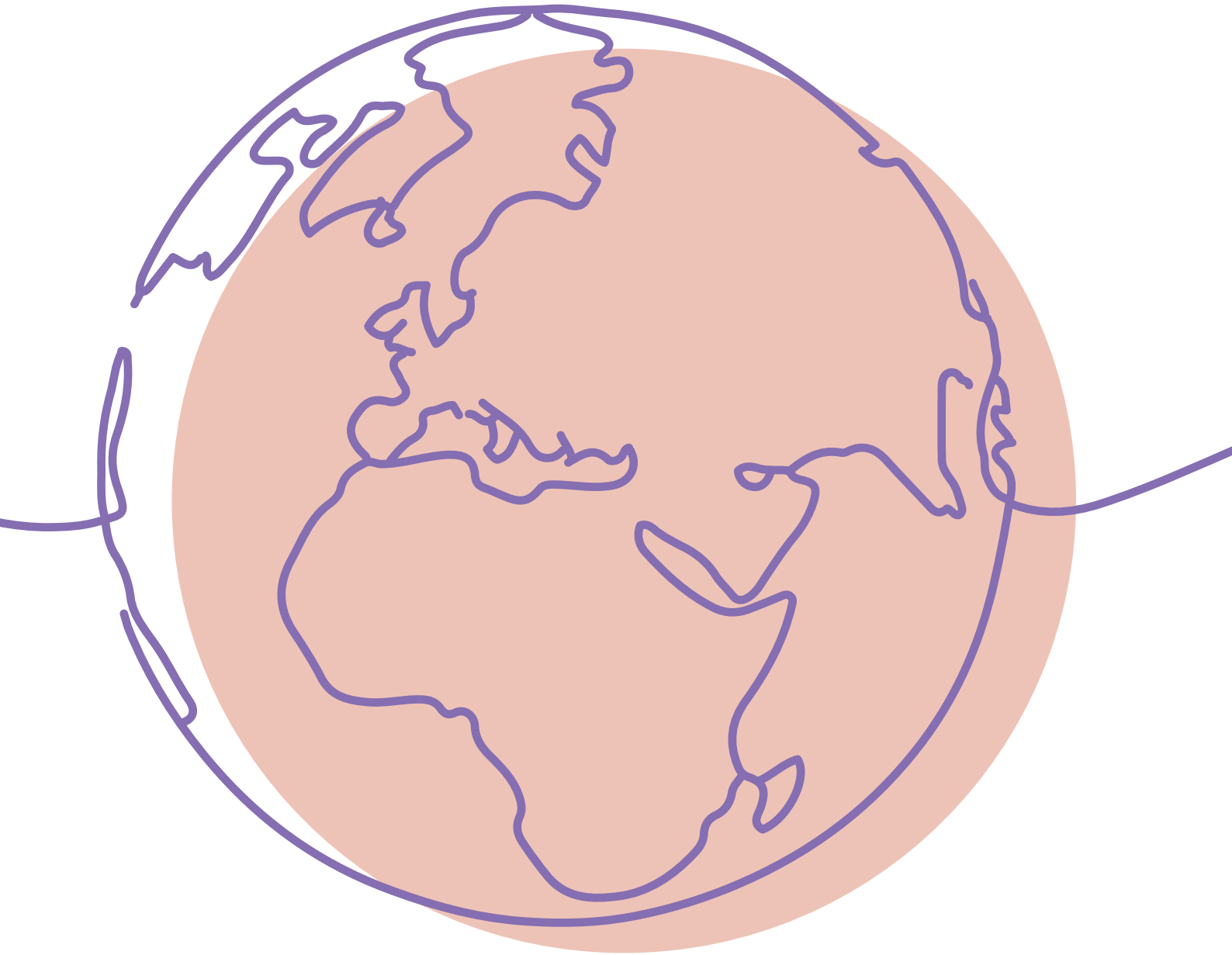

A personal story by the Revd Domnic Misolo

Director of The Institute for Faith and Gender Empowerment (IFAGE), Kenya

My wife, Christine, and I celebrate the glory of discovering God's will for men and women as equal human beings. God used this simple discovery to teach us a radically different understanding about his will concerning the relationship between women and men. It has changed our lives and it is already confronting the patriarchy of the culture and church in Kenya.

A truth concealed

I was born in a traditional, male-dominated, polygamous family that held to common cultural convictions that depict men as superior to women. Our culture views women as inferior in many ways. We have common sayings that refer to men as pillars, great bulls and buffaloes, heroes, and lions. Meanwhile, women are referred to as mongooses, because the mongoose belongs not in the home but in the bush. This is a reference to the belief that a woman's destiny is determined in marriage. She does not truly belong with her birth family but with her future husband. If she grows to marriageable age and dies unmarried, burying her at her place of birth is thought to bring bad luck to younger siblings and a curse on the community.

Thus, every girl must be married. Once she is married, the husband is considered the protector and provider of the family, and the giver of children. Women are simply the bearers of children and are to be housewives and help their husbands raise the children. These days many women are educated and act as breadwinners but are still expected to perform the traditional duties at home. This background and culture influenced me very powerfully, and I grew up believing the lie that males are superior to females and should have power over them.

In the Kenyan context, this is the cultural lens that informs ministry, both in preaching and interpreting Scripture. For this reason, I strongly believe that church ministers have contributed greatly to the creation of unjust societies and structures that destroy and harm females. Even before European missionaries arrived in Kenya, traditional religious beliefs did not allow women to be priests and diviners. They were perceived to be unclean, especially during menstruation. The church has brought much healing to our culture but still upholds patriarchy by misinterpreting the Bible.

Scripture has been misused to affirm male superiority. Eve, it is said, was created from Adam as an afterthought. Then, she was deceived by the snake because she was the weaker sex and because she was not an original creation (because she was created from Adam). Even worse than her original sin is the sexual intercourse she makes available to Adam. This is blamed for bringing down humanity and causing the suffering of the world.

In the New Testament, Paul's two commands for women to submit to their husbands and to be silent in church are taken out of context to claim that inequality is God's ideal.

Teachings about marriage often enable domestic violence. Since the Bible teaches that marriage is God-ordained and valuable, many churches teach that no marriage should be ended. Thus, even badly abused and battered women cannot walk away from a marriage.

And because sex is a taboo subject in our culture, churches do not address sexual abuse. By teaching that the Bible upholds patriarchy and by failing to address domestic abuse, the church has contributed to a culture that allows women to be violated and beaten, even to death. For many years, I did not recognise the problems and injustice of these teachings.

By the time I began to attend university, I was already an ordained priest with four years of experience, and I had completed a diploma course in pastoral theology. Yet I must confess that despite my training and experience, I held to these mistaken interpretations and theologies and believed very strongly in the supremacy of man over woman as natural and God-ordained. The idea of biblical equality was foreign and unknown to me.

A truth discovered

In 2009, I was in my first year of studies at Saint Paul's University. I was searching the library for books and journals for a class assignment when I came across Priscilla Papers, the academic journal of Christians for Biblical Equality. As I read these journals, I became curious and interested to learn more. They challenged my traditional worldview with facts about the Bible, faith, and society. I continued reading Priscilla Papers not only for academic adventure but as a theological document with great potential to change my life and ministry.

Before long, I was convinced that the Bible demands equality of males and females. This conviction led to immediate changes, which God is already using to heal many people.

The good news of biblical equality transformed my relationship with my wife and also challenged us to engage in new kinds of ministry.

I no longer see my wife, Christine, as just a housewife; now she is a close partner with potential, skills, and the ability to chart her own destiny and to support our family. We are now able to discuss important issues maturely together as equals. When I told Christine about my dream to spread biblical equality, she told me,

"I feel the need to stand by you on this journey, and my call is to look into the practical, daily challenges faced by poor women in the community."

We concluded that to follow this vision, Christine should attend university and get a bachelor's degree in education. In addition to being very smart and gifted, God is already putting her gifts to work in the community. She has formed a group called the Gender Alliance for Community Health and Development. The group, made up of women from several local churches, explores ways to empower women through farming, poultry-keeping, savings and loans, and basic education about human rights.



A truth brings healing

Biblical equality is currently confronting patriarchy and its devastating consequences. As we preached biblical equality through projects and Bible studies across churches and community groups, we saw God releasing his people from oppression, abuse, and injustices. We decided to make this ministry official by registering a new faith-based, non-profit organisation called Ekklesia Foundation for Gender Education (EFOGE). EFOGE has become an African leader in championing gender justice and equality from a biblical perspective.

When we first began speaking publicly, some priests and church leaders argued that our teachings were heretical. Others believe that we are like several popular feminist groups in Kenya that have caused harm to families and marriages by creating a battle for supremacy between men and women. But there are others, such as Bishop Johannes Angela of the Anglican Diocese of Bondo, who recognise our mission to free people from injustice and offer their full support. Thanks to support from many partners and friends around the world, we are at work on many projects geared toward justice and equality.

We are working for equality for students and for church leaders. Through partnerships with seven schools in the Bondo and Rarieda districts of Kenya, we are training youth in biblical leadership, gender justice, and equality. We've been able to help pay the school fees of 18 needy students, and we are providing feminine hygiene products to girls so that they can continue to be in class during menstruation and therefore receive the same education as male students.

We are planning an annual pan-African leadership conference to emphasise biblical equality among leaders, and we are helping to coordinate emerging egalitarian groups in Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ghana, South Sudan, and Nigeria.

We see great potential for the healing power of biblical equality in the Kenyan church. We have seen churches ordaining women and raising them to influential positions. Recently, the Anglican Diocese of Bondo installed the Venerable Monica Owiti as archdeacon. She is the first woman in all western Kenya to hold this office. Two female priests have been promoted to the office of rural deans, who have authority to oversee many churches and parishes. More and more female priests are being considered for ordination and our neighbouring churches are opening up to women in leadership. Currently we have more than 15 churches that are applying to partner with us in doing the work of biblical equality.

The church is one of the strongest social institutions in Kenya and in many parts of Africa. In the past, this has meant that it has been able to harm women by teaching patriarchy. But today, this means the church has great potential to change people's attitudes on gender and shape cultural values to heal communities, families, and individuals. We are already seeing this take place when churches embrace God's truth about gender. Women and men are being healed and released from oppression. Biblical equality is real and we are witnesses. It is through this ministry that we can truly show our love to one another and bring healing to humankind.

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Gender inequalities throughout history and across cultures

Gender can be a precious gift to help express human differences. But when that gift becomes corrupted those differences can lead to some people being more highly valued or others being abused and excluded. It harms the ability of a community or society to make the fullest use of the many gifts and talents in it. It also obstructs the fulfilment of God's mission in the world. Jesus often taught about the need for followers to treat one another as they would treat him (Matthew 25: 31-46). Paul, in the early church, made this point when he said that a person's status – whether ethnicity, power or servitude, or gender – did not make them greater or lesser in Christ (Galatians 3: 28). All the differences that people use to put themselves above another, God sees as equal.

Gender inequality in work

Few societies have had complete gender equality, although women have had greater status and respect in some cultures than in others. Researchers have pointed out that in tribal societies where survival depends either on hunting and gathering or on growing crops, gender differences have not been valued in ways that create significant inequalities. This is because women can more easily fit in these activities with pregnancy and breastfeeding.

In most societies that have developed enough wealth to move beyond a subsistence economy (which provides for basic needs but doesn't use money), the work that women and men do often becomes divided into specialised jobs and tasks. Women have become responsible for reproductive work, such as the work involved in raising children, cooking, sewing, caring for the sick and elderly, and other tasks involved in maintaining the household and community. Men have taken on jobs that involve bringing in money and other resources, which in economic terms is called productive work. As paid work outside the home increased in its importance to family survival, it also gained higher status than reproductive household work.

Where women have done paid work, until recently their occupations have often involved caregiving, teaching children, and other forms of reproductive work that are done for others. Even where men and women have the same jobs, women on average are paid less and find it harder to get promoted. This classic division of labour is familiar to most modern societies.

The saying "women's work is never done" usually means that women don't have time to relax after a day's work, since meals must be prepared, cleaning done, and family needs met. In households where women work for money, they also have most and sometimes all their unpaid household work to do as well. In some cultures, men have helped with household and childcare chores but they typically do less than women, even when both work full-time outside the home.[1] These inequalities are found in societies around the world, regardless of economic wealth or the percentage of women in the paid workforce. Overall, the amount and type of work that women and men continue to do is still unequal.



Gendered space and gender inequality

The control of public and private space has a long history in determining how gender and other forms of inequality continue. We don't often think of how space can be gendered, with different limits on where it is acceptable for women or men to go, and the various penalties for anyone who enters a space where she or he is not supposed to be. Within each culture, gendered space also includes how we are taught to walk or move, the facial or hand gestures we might use, or our clothing or coverings.

Power plays out in how space is controlled, which spaces are limited for some by others, and who seeks to enforce penalties and the type of punishments given. Women's uses of space become watched and controlled in ways that men's are not. In many cultures young children may play together in the same space, or perform similar activities or chores, without causing concern or attention to gender differences.[2] Typically, as girls approach puberty, their use of space becomes more restricted than for boys. Such messages are communicated both through values of modesty and fears of physical and sexual violence for girls and women who break the rules. In some situations, being out of place is seen as "deserving" whatever happens to her.

The gendered inequalities that develop through restrictions on space become internalised by the woman herself, becoming a part of what she believes women can or cannot do, can or cannot be. Over time, limiting women's space affects their ability to perform certain tasks, to gain the skills and experience necessary for some jobs, or to get an education. The result is that men have access to far more public space than women, without fear of threats or violence. With access comes so many more opportunities in life.

Biblically, Jesus challenged the practices of his day by listening and speaking to women "out of place" in public space, especially when appearing alone: whether they were asking for healing (Mark 5 and 7), or the woman he met at the well (John 4). His message was clear that everyone's basic humanity was to be respected in every space, and that gender did not decide the amount of respect or kind of treatment one should receive. In this way, Jesus points to the fundamental human equality that all deserve.



Jesus challenged the practices of his day by listening and speaking to women "out of place" in public space, especially when appearing alone: whether they were asking for healing, or the woman he met at the well.

Gender inequality and work in the church

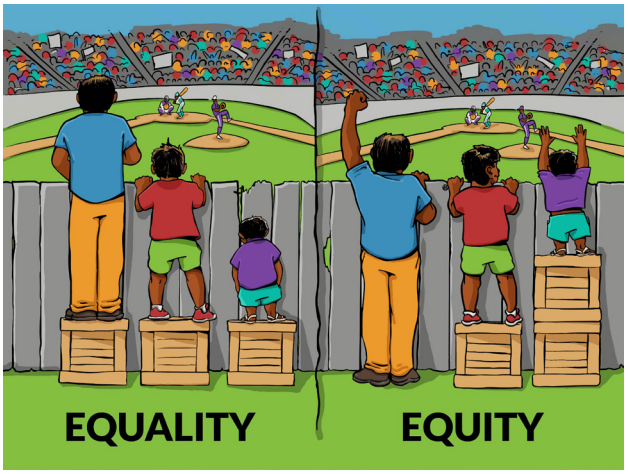
The church has always been a space where women have been welcomed. In the very early church, men and women often worked together and their roles overlapped. Phoebe served as a deacon (Romans 16: 1), Junia as an Apostle (Romans 16: 7); Prisca and Aquila worked devotedly for their church (Romans 16: 3).

However, over time women's church work grew increasingly separate from that of men both in the type of work they did and the roles they held. Even today, certain groups or tasks may be regarded as largely "women's" or "men's" realms, such as who prepares the altar for worship or who teaches Christian education to children. Men traditionally have held the decision-making positions on how serving the church is to be done and by whom.

Women's work in the church, whether lay or ordained, paid or unpaid, is still controversial in many places, with lingering theological beliefs about the lay or ordained roles that women should hold or not, or cultural arguments that women's leadership in non-traditional roles would not be accepted. Though women and men increasingly hold similar staff or volunteer positions, there still is a gender gap in leadership positions and, in some churches, in payment for similar work.[3] Typically, men more often hold leadership in congregations with larger membership and financial resources.

Gender differences, equality, and equity

It is important to recognise that gender equality is different from gender equity. In an ideal world, equality would mean that people are treated equally and have the same human rights and opportunities. However, equal treatment does not always result in equal outcomes for everyone in real life (see the illustration). Equity recognises that differences may exist, such as a woman needing time off for childbirth, but those differences are valued and treated in a way that is fair and just for all. Equity is the process used to bring about equality of access to opportunities and potential outcomes.



by Angus Maguire © Interaction Institute for Social Change.

Gender equity matters both for men and women. Although men may give up power that comes with dominance over women, they gain respect based on love rather than fear. They also move closer to the model for equitable relationships that New Testament scripture has called us to follow. Ideally, the goals of gender equality and equity should involve treating people in a way that breaks down the unequal value that is placed on our human differences, especially where some have been revered and others have been disrespected. The church has an important opportunity to model what is possible to the rest of society.

When speaking of gender inequality, it is also important to remember that not all men are dominant and powerful, and not all women are powerless. Not everyone has the same gifts or abilities, and some have more physical or mental limitations than others. Sometimes differences are temporary, such as the physical and emotional demands of childbearing or care-giving responsibilities; other times they are permanent. A person's place in their society or culture, their age, wealth or poverty, ethnicity or race, can affect the potential power they might hold. However, whilst all people are not exactly the same, all are equally valued by God. Differences are simply part of our humanity, and not justifications for valuing some more than others or treating some groups of people unequally.

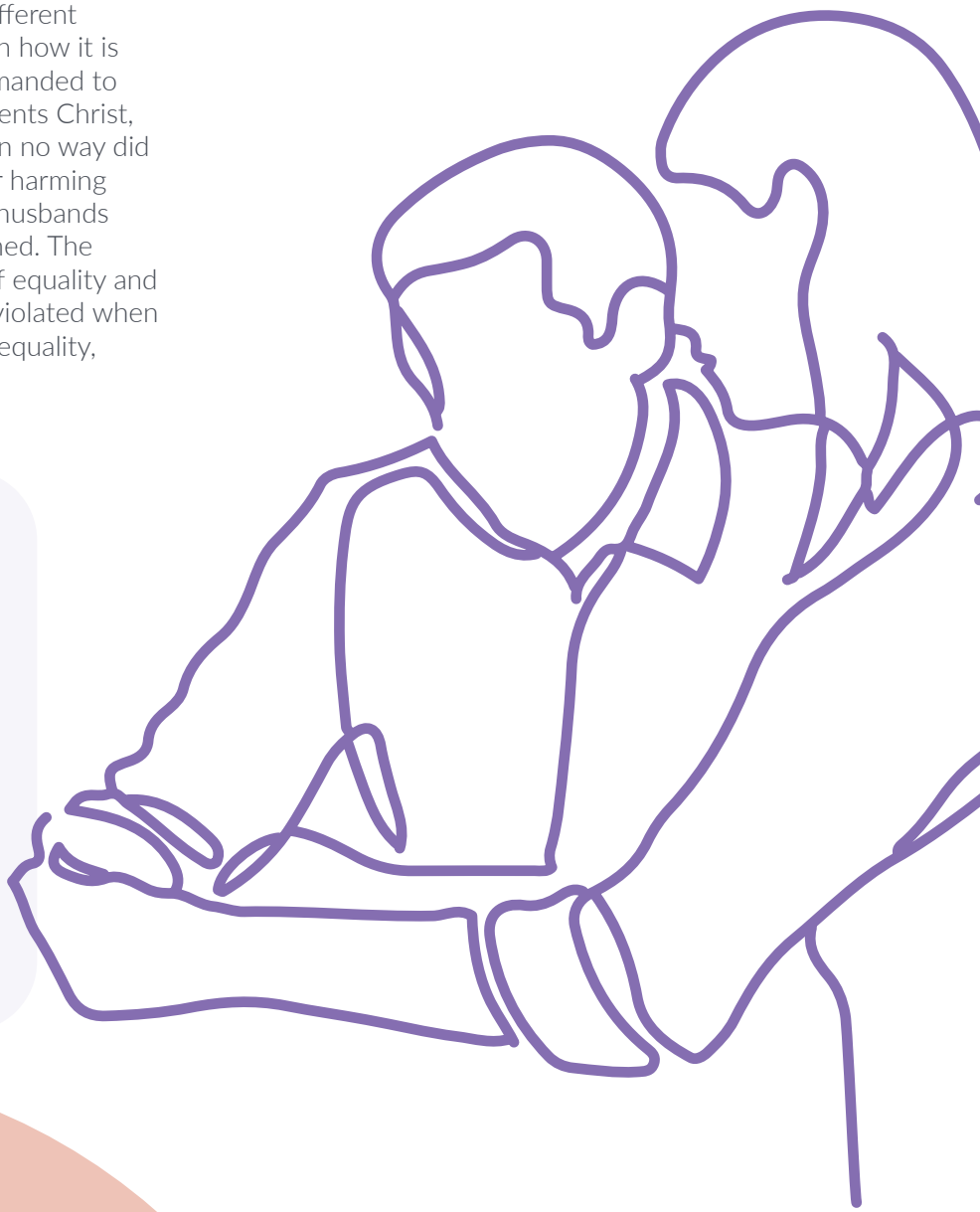
Over time, differences in how men and women are expected to behave can grow increasingly rigid and unequal, often without thought being given to whether these differences are moral or just. In the New Testament, Jesus' respect and treatment of women offered a powerful message of how important it was to restore gender justice by treating women equally.

Women were not to be stoned while men went unpunished for adultery (John 8: 1-11). Women's menstrual blood was not seen as unclean or as defiling the one who might treat or heal her (Matthew 9: 20-23). Women on the margins of society were worth including in serious conversation, as well as asking for life-giving water (John 4: 5-42). Women were respected as serious students or disciples of the scriptures and were included in Jesus' inner circle (Luke 10: 38-42, John 20: 1-18). Women were among the leaders and valued contributors in the early Christian churches, such as Lydia (Acts 16: 12-15, 40), and the apostle Junia (Romans 16: 7). Overall, Christianity was a movement that aimed to correct gender inequalities and call people into right relationship with one another and with God.

Equality is most clearly seen in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 12: 12-27, where he speaks of the different parts of the body, and how all have a different but equally valuable function. This makes the point that differences in the Christian community are gifts that should be valued equally even if the functions of one or the other vary widely. Ephesians 5: 21 is another example of how gender equality was expected to function in the early Christian community, clearly stating: "be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ."

Although husbands were given a role of head of the household (which for many in different cultural contexts can be controversial in how it is understood), husbands also were commanded to love their wives with a love that represents Christ, based on mutual respect and honour. In no way did this mean treating wives as property or harming them physically or emotionally, just as husbands themselves would not want to be harmed. The important teaching of this passage is of equality and mutuality, bonded in love. It becomes violated when that equality and mutuality turn into inequality, abuse, and other forms of violence.

A person's place in their society or culture, their age, wealth or poverty, ethnicity or race, can affect the potential power they might hold.



Challenges to gender inequality in the use of space

Since the mid-twentieth century, women's and men's work in most Anglican and Episcopal churches has increasingly overlapped, although the extent has varied according to culture and theological beliefs.[4] Women are increasingly holding positions of decision-making and leadership, including ordination as deacons, priests, and bishops, on every continent. Two women have served as Primates of their Anglican Communion member churches.

Challenges still remain to make the fullest use of everyone's gifts and abilities whatever their gender in a wide variety of lay and ordained ministries. Doing so would greatly benefit the church and its mission. Where cultural norms have prevented full gender equality, a careful study is necessary of where and how such norms have emerged, and whether they are equitable or unjust in terms of who benefits and who is harmed. In short, there may be historical reasons behind inequality, but mutuality and equity are fundamental to our Christian faith and mission.

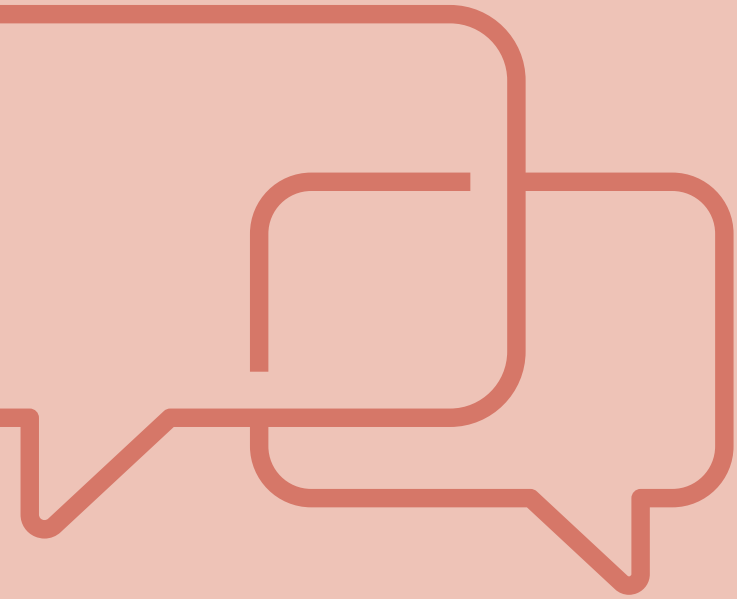
Transforming gender inequality

All humanity is equally deserving of God's attention and love regardless of gender or other differences. For Christians, Jesus emphasises the equality of everyone before God in loving your neighbour as yourself, and in not doing to others what you would not want done to you (Matthew 22: 36-39). The Apostle Paul in Galatians 3: 28 is even more specific in saying that in Christ our varied differences and the inequalities we attach to them do not exist.

Any type of gender inequality that deprives people of making the fullest use of their skills and abilities in the service of one another, including family, community, church, and society overall, can and should be addressed and changed. The exploitation of anyone for the benefit of another violates Christ's instructions to love and treat one another as we would be treated. Therefore, all relationships must be based on respect for one another. This does not mean that boundaries or limits do not need to be set; but gender equity can transform injustice into just relationships of mutual acceptance and respect. To be equitable, all who are affected must be represented in developing a solution or a way forward. One party cannot decide what is equitable for another.

If, in Christ and in the Reign of God, such inequalities do not exist, then why do we as Christians continue to hold on to them?

Any type of gender inequality that deprives people of making the fullest use of their skills and abilities in the service of one another, including family, community, church, and society overall, can and should be addressed and changed.



Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the gender inequalities or inequities in your community, church or work that limit women's opportunities or participation? Are there any that limit men's opportunities or participation?
2. What are the gendered expectations that create or support the gender inequalities or inequities you found? Who is setting or enforcing them: men, women, or both?
3. How might some of the gender inequalities or inequities that concern you the most be changed?

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[2] Cindi Katz, "Growing Girls/Closing Circles: Limits on the Spaces of Knowing in Rural Sudan and United States Cities," in C Katz and J Monk (Eds) Full Circles: Geographies of Women over the Life Course. Routledge (1993): 88-106. Reprinted with new epilogue in D L Hodgson (Ed.) Gendered Modernities: Ethnographic Perspectives. St Martins Press (2001): 173-202.
[3] Paula Nesbitt, "Why Gender Still Matters," Cast Wide the Net. The Episcopal Church. Posted 2015. episcopalchurch.org/cast-wide-the-net/why-gender-still-matters
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5

Transforming relationships and ending violence

Jesus, women and men in the New Testament

"Let us no longer pass judgement on one another but resolve instead to never put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another."
Romans 14: 13

To confront gender inequality and gender-based violence, we need to develop new understandings of gender roles and relationships in the church and society so that men and women will work together for social change. Gender inequality hinders (holds back) many from leading and sharing the gospel. We can learn from the Bible because it offers many insights on transformational leadership[1] for all people, removing stumbling blocks based on gender for both men and women. In this, Jesus serves as a role model for all of humanity.

The context of the Biblical writings was within Greco-Roman and Jewish traditions, where there was a clear bias toward male authority and power. Despite this, Jesus had an extraordinary way of relating to women on equal terms, unusual for the time and place. The Gospels in different ways testify to the remarkable freedom Jesus had in relating to women as persons, as disciples, and as leaders. Jesus' vision of God's community included equals ministering together. Some examples include the following:

1. Jesus offered transformational leadership.[1]

Jesus was not afraid of expressing emotions. When he saw Lazarus' family and friends crying because they thought Lazarus was dead, he wept (John 11: 33-35).

He lamented over the fate of Jerusalem and wanted to gather its children as a hen gathers her brood under her wings (Matthew 23: 37).

The crowd who followed Jesus often sided with him and not with the ruling class, showing that there were men around Jesus who challenged the status quo.

Jesus died on the cross and showed vulnerability and a different way of being a leader.

Jesus demonstrated a different kind of authority and did not draw praise for himself but gave glory to God.

2. Jesus broke cultural taboos.

A Jewish man was not supposed to speak to a Gentile woman, especially someone with a questionable reputation. Jesus broke the taboo by talking to the Samaritan woman by the well (John 4: 1-42).

Jesus healed a woman who had been suffering from bleeding for twelve years (Luke 8: 43-48).

3. Jesus respected women.

Jesus respected his mother Mary and when the wine ran out at the wedding at Cana, Jesus performed his first miracle turning water into wine on Mary's request (John 2: 1-11).

As a teacher who travelled from place to place, Jesus accepted the hospitality of men and women who provided food and rest for him. When he visited the home of Martha and Mary, Martha was busy with her domestic roles taking care of the guest, but Mary sat with Jesus' disciples and listened to his teachings. When Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her, Jesus praised Mary's choice in learning about God (Luke 10: 38-42).

Jesus did not overlook women's traditional domestic roles of the time, such as baking bread (Matthew 13: 33) and sweeping the house to search for a lost coin (Luke 15: 8) and included them in his parables about the Kingdom of God.

A Syrophoenician woman came and begged Jesus to heal her daughter. At first, Jesus said that God's grace was for the Jewish people. When the woman persisted, he changed his mind and healed her daughter because of the woman's faith (Matthew 15: 21-28; Mark 7: 24-30).

He was against a man divorcing his wife, except for unchastity (Matthew 19: 3-9). In his patriarchal culture, a man could send his wife a certificate of divorce for any reason and dismiss her. Society would look down on a divorced woman and she might lose her means of support.

Jesus also showed understanding and compassion for a woman caught in adultery (John 8: 1-11). Many societies judge women more harshly than men, but in this example Jesus forgave the woman and criticised the hypocrisy of the religious leaders.

These Gospel stories show that Jesus crossed religious and social boundaries, particularly around the status and role of women, and that his good news was for all people.





Jesus as a role model for men

Jesus' example of leadership, as we have seen, challenges God's people to develop more helpful and life-giving ideas of what it means to be in relationship. To address the devastating issues of gender-based violence, the behaviours and attitudes that cause violence and abuse against women need to be urgently challenged. As long as men still think that they have the right and power to control women's bodies and sexuality, gender justice will never be fulfilled.

Men who model Jesus' leadership will contribute positively to eliminating violence and transforming relationships. These men would be caring and sensitive; respect women, children and other men; remain faithful in relationships; allow their partners space to be independent and grow; use dialogue and not force to resolve conflicts; use respectful language toward women and children; share in household chores and parenting; accept women's leadership; and confront sexual and gender-based violence whenever they encounter it.

Male religious leaders can play important roles in promoting these transformative behaviours and attitudes to men. In many societies, religion has been a part of the cultural system that justifies male superiority and the abuse of women. Some men have appealed to the biblical texts, which they think give them license to dominate women. Male religious leaders can model Jesus' leadership by correctly interpreting and framing the sacred texts to promote gender equality and respect for women and girls.

The Gospels portray Jesus as a prophet who challenged social injustice, including prejudice and discrimination against women. He showed that both women and men are created in the image of God and can work together in carrying out God's mission.

Women as disciples and leaders in the New Testament

The New Testament shows that women played very strong and important roles in early Christianity. The first three Gospels present women as disciples and followers of Jesus:

Mark's Gospel tells us that the women stay with Jesus on the journey to the cross, even when his male disciples desert him (Mark 15: 40-41).

Luke's Gospel tells us that these women are among Jesus' disciples from Galilee and that they minister to Jesus, making possible his ministry through their acts of service (Luke 8: 1-3).

- Mary Magdalene,
- Joanna (who is connected to the royal court)
- Susanna

Mark's Gospel also mentions:

- Another Mary
- Salome who may be the mother of the apostles James and John.

John's Gospel is more concerned with individual encounters with Jesus:

- The mother of Jesus plays a part in starting Jesus' ministry (2: 5; 19: 25-26).
- The Samaritan woman finds in Jesus the source of living water and quenching of her deep thirst for life (4: 1-42).
- Martha and Mary discover that Jesus is the resurrection and the life and confess their faith in him through word and deed (11: 25-27; 12: 3-8).
- Mary Magdalene as a disciple – the most prominent among the women disciples. (Nowhere in the New Testament is she portrayed as a prostitute. This identification was an error in the early centuries of the Western church). Mary's true role, however, is that of witness to the resurrection. It is to Mary that Jesus first gives the role of telling the good news of his resurrection and she faithfully proclaims it.

What does Paul say?

Paul's writings have been used to justify women's second-class status in church and society. Some would see Paul as a misogynist, someone who had problems with women and their leadership, unlike Jesus. Yet this is far from being the case. Apart from anything else, Paul had a significant number of female colleagues who worked in ministry and mission alongside him.

In one place, he mentions nine women who include the theologian, Prisca (Priscilla); Phoebe, who worked in Corinth as a patron of the church and was trusted to take the Letter to the Romans to Rome on Paul's behalf; and also the apostle Junia. (Romans 16: 3,15). For many years, it was questioned whether a woman could be an apostle, but there is no longer any doubt that the apostle's name was 'Junia', a common female name, and not 'Junias', a male name that never appears in the ancient world.

A major feature of the Pauline letters is found in those passages often called the "household codes". These are instructions for Christian living within the household in a context where Christians are struggling to survive in the world of Roman imperial power. These texts may seem less radical to us than other texts but in fact they are attempting to protect Christians and to tone down those aspects of the Gospel which are simply too radical for their society. (e.g. Colossians 3: 8-4.11; Ephesians 5: 22 to 6: 9; see also 1 Peter 2: 13 to 3: 7). The Bible attests to the equality and mutuality of women and men.

Just relationships between women and men in mission and ministry

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it for me."
Matthew 25:40

To live out just, equal relationships between women and men there need to be intentional, transformative actions that embrace women in leadership as well as men. In addition to challenging behaviours and attitudes of men that cause violence and abuse, women also need to be challenged on their behaviours and attitudes. Women can sometimes be the ones who hinder women's advancement because they are more accustomed to men exercising leadership and authority, and so women may judge other women more harshly than men.

Instead of helping each other, women may become envious of one another and compete for male approval. For example, in the biblical story of Sarah and Hagar, Sarah mistreats Hagar after she bears Abraham a son (Genesis 2: 8-14). Transformational, just relationships include women in mutual support of one another in order to challenge deep-seated male privilege and the cycle of violence.

Religious leaders can help foster new ideas of transformational, just relationships by encouraging women to develop their leadership potential, offering education opportunities and professional development for women, and ensuring that women's voices are represented in the church's decision-making processes. Girls and boys should be brought up in the church with a healthy understanding of gender relationships, knowing that all people will be treated with dignity and respect. The church needs to build communities that embrace women and men as equals, and as full partners in mission, within the home, church, workplace, local community, and wider world.



Action through the five Marks of Mission

Together, the five Marks of Mission[2] express the Anglican Communion's understanding of, and common commitment to, God's holistic mission in the world. They are marks of being a healthy church that contributes to all aspects of God's mission. A healthy church embraces all people, especially the vulnerable, as it takes action to serve God's reign here on earth as it is in heaven. All people are called to offer mission and ministry in the world, according to their gifts and talents. In the Gospels, Jesus calls us to act with those who are disadvantaged and who are seeking justice. Faith in action gives our world hope. The mission of the church is the mission of Christ.

No one Mark of Mission is more important than another; each contributes to the whole. However, looked at individually, they can give us headings for reflecting on a diverse range of faith in action. The following are illustrative examples for faith in action that can lead to the transformation of gender inequalities in all spheres of life:

i. To proclaim the good news of the Kingdom/God's reign.

Women and men working together to:

- study and revisit scripture that has been used to justify the abuse of women or restrict them in proclaiming the good news
- write and deliver Bible studies, bringing different perspectives to promote equality and mutuality of women and men to the texts
- share in the preaching of the Word
- share stories of faith and culture
- offer testimonies that highlight the positive influence of both women and men in ministry
- review and reframe periods of church history in light of gender justice
- consider what good news means for different groups of people
- pray together, and model living the Gospel of love for ALL people

ii. To teach, baptise and nurture the new believers.

Women and men working together to:

- write teaching material for baptism or marriage preparation that promotes gender justice
- model co-leadership in teaching, rooted in positive biblical examples
- walk alongside new believers and create safe spaces for new expressions of mission that embrace just relationships
- offer nurture and care according to context
- live with the questions of faith to encourage ongoing growth, rather than providing all the answers
- recognise that gender influences our teaching of theology and ecclesiology

iii. To respond to human need by loving service.

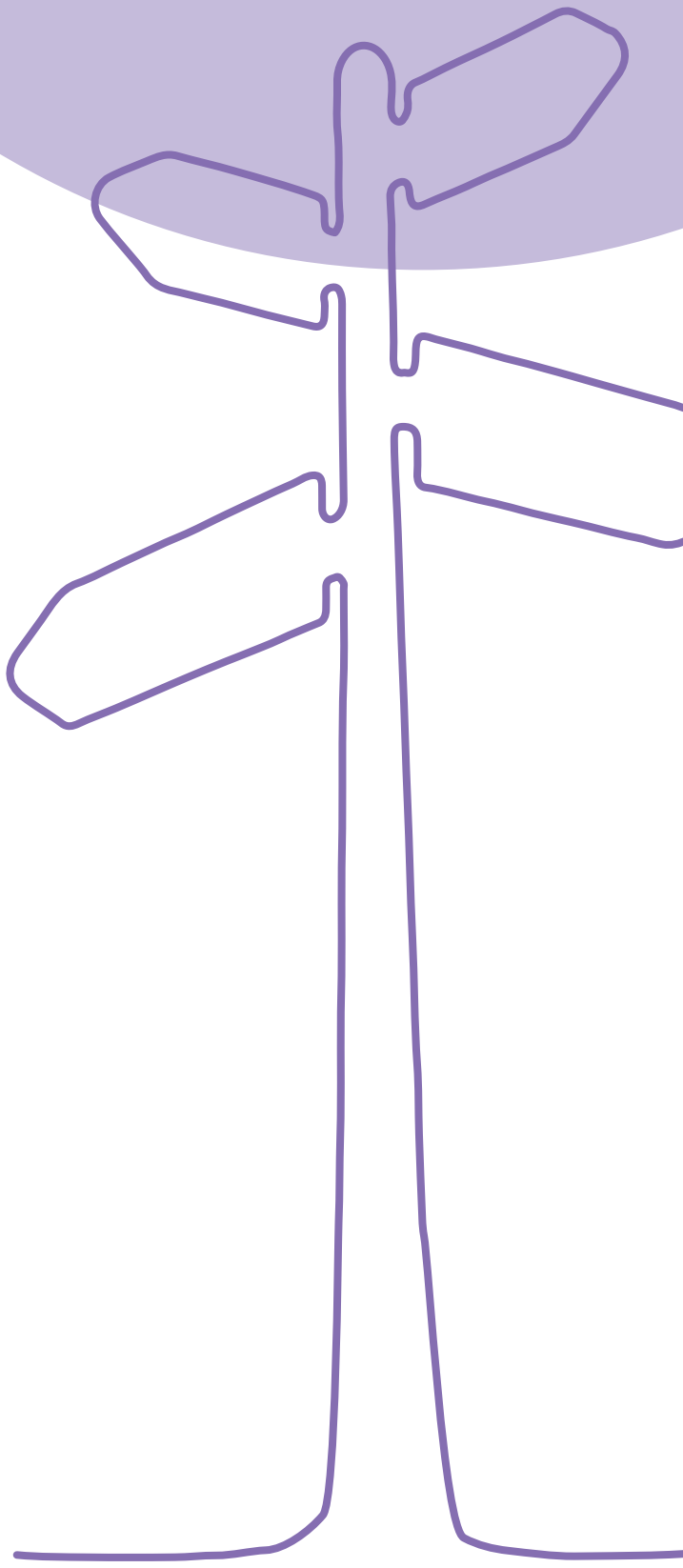
Women and men working together to:

- take responsibility in the home and caring services
- walk alongside the poor, the lonely, the sick, the marginalised and those who struggle, for example, in working with government and other agencies toward eliminating human trafficking and slave labour
- recognise gender norms and stereotypes and their effects, and change unjust structures by challenging the social norms that limit human flourishing
- create safe spaces for survivors of sexual violence and gender-based abuse to offer deep listening for understanding and healing

iv. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.

Women and men working together to:

- encourage men to stand up for women who are marginalised and abused, and women to stand up for men who work outside gender stereotypes
- implement safe church policies and practices with zero tolerance of violence and abuse
- encourage men to give space for women in the public arena and women to give space for men in the domestic arena
- ensure shared decision-making and leadership
- recognise and reconsider the language for humanity and for God that excludes women and girls
- enable men to mentor boys in improving self-understanding and raising consciousness on the effects of harmful gender stereotypes that drive abuse and exclusion
- equip women to mentor girls in improving self-understanding and raising consciousness of their potential
- celebrate and work positively with gender differences



v. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

Women and men working together to:

- consider the impacts of lifestyle on the environment
- learn about and develop new initiatives that contribute positively to the earth's sustainability and renewal
- challenge authorities and institutions that do not take the climate crisis seriously
- ensure women are included in the decisions made on climate action and environmental emergencies
- make plans to mark the annual Season of Creation in a variety of ways that embrace and encourage all genders to participate and lead by example

Conclusion

Proclaiming, teaching, nurturing, loving, transforming, renewing, and sustaining are called for in order to transform relationships and end violence and abuse particularly against women and girls. In the past, biblical texts have been used to justify unjust relationships. Offering new perspectives to Scripture brings new understandings on how we live equally and mutually in God's image. Jesus models a new way forward that highlights the vision of God's community where women and men live, minister, and work together. It is the church's responsibility to confront inequalities and promote and live just relationships in all spheres of life.

Discussion Questions

1. How can the Bible help in raising awareness and changing behaviour that contributes to abuse and violence against women?

   What are some of the positive key points on women's roles found in the Bible that you can share with others?

2. What hinders women from leading in your community?

   What changes need to happen so all people can contribute to sharing the gospel?

3. How can the five Marks of Mission help in making sure that women and men work together in ministry?

4. What ideas would work in your community?

   Identify priorities, goals and action plans to achieve them.

References

[1] "Transformational leadership is... where a leader works with followers to identify the changes needed, create a vision through inspiration, and execute the change with a group of highly committed followers." From: sites.psu.edu/leadership/2020/11/05/transformational-leadership-theory

[2] See Appendix 2

Appendix 1

The Duluth Model

The Duluth Model is a model that provides a framework for understanding the nature of domestic abuse and the tactics used by a perpetrator of abuse to gain power and control over an individual. Based on years of research, the Duluth model describes the different types of abuse and how they are seen in real life.

At the heart of the Duluth Model wheel and domestic abuse, is the desire to control another person and hold power over them to manipulate them into doing whatever the perpetrator wants with minimum struggle. This can use verbal abuse such as saying that a woman is useless and that she is ugly and no-one else would marry her so she should be grateful to him.

The different types of abuse in the model outline the different ways in which a perpetrator can attempt to gain power and control. At the outside of the wheel is physical and / or sexual violence. These types of abuse are often the ones used as a last resort to maintain power and control and also the ones that are more often seen.

Like an orange, you see the orange peel on the outside, but you cannot see the orange segments, or other types of abuse, until you have peeled back the layer. The orange segments – power and control – are often hidden in the centre or core. This serves as a warning because if we can see physical and / or sexual violence taking place then we can be almost certain that other types of abuse have happened before that.



Appendix 2

ACC Resolutions, Primates' Letter and the five Marks of Mission

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC), one of the four instruments of the Anglican Communion, has recognised the need for the Anglican Communion to address gender justice and to prevent and end gender-based violence, and take its place in serving the wider world, as expressed in its concerns and intentions in several ACC resolutions over the years. These include:

- 13:31 Provide equal representation on each Anglican body of men and women and provide a gender focal point in each province.
- 14:33 Supports ending violence against women and allocating financial resources to do so ensuring gender budgeting
- 15:7 and 10 Ending gender based violence and trafficking, supporting theological work on gender justice and appropriate materials
- 16:2 and 3 Reaffirms commitment to gender equality and justice with provinces offering financial support
- 17:2 and 3 Appoint a provincial link, and equipping God's people for gender justice

The Anglican Primates (the senior leaders of the member churches) also have issued a strong statement condemning gender-based violence and calling for our churches to put into practice the biblical teaching that all – women and men – have been created in the image of God.

In 2011 the Primates met in Ireland and made a strong statement about gender justice and gender based violence. They said:

"We acknowledge with grief that gender-based violence is a global phenomenon and that all but a very small percentage of such violence is perpetrated by men against women, with devastating effects on individuals, families, and society.

In considering the pervasive nature of violence against women and girls, our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women. In penitence and faith we must move forward in such a way that our

churches become truly living witness to our belief that both women and men are made in the image of God. To think and behave in ways that do not live out this belief but disempower and marginalise, is to mar the divine image and therefore offend humanity and God."

Anglican Primates' Meeting, Ireland 2011

The fourth Mark of Mission, "seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation."

The Primates committed to address gender-based violence in a number for ways that included

- affirming and praying for God's blessing on initiatives that our dioceses and parishes are already taking to respond to violence against women and girls;
- training for clergy and pastors so that they are aware of the dynamics of gendered violence and how behaviours can be challenged and transformed;
- ensuring that resources, including liturgies, are developed and made available locally;
- working with young people so that boys and girls, and young men and young women are enabled to honour themselves and one another as human beings cherished equally by God, and also empowered to be agents of change among their peers;
- working with other faith leaders in addressing this topic in a shared voice.

In response to this recognition and repentance the Primates committed to the following:

a. to raise the profile of Millennium Development Goal 3 – "promote gender equality and empower women" (now Sustainable Development goal 5);

b. to affirm and pray for God's blessing on initiatives already in place in our dioceses and parishes in response to violence against women and girls;

c. to gather other church and faith leaders together to discern what we might say and do together;

d. to attend to the training of clergy and pastors so that they are aware of the nature and dynamics of gendered violence and how certain attitudes and behaviours can be challenged and transformed.

e. to ensuring the development and accessibility of local, contextual and accessible resources, including liturgies, for example, for 25 November which is the annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women as well as White Ribbon Day, and the first day of the global "16 Days Activism for the Elimination of Violence against Women".

f. through teaching and example, we will work with our young people so that our boys and girls, young men and young women, are enabled to honour themselves and one another as human beings cherished equally by God, and empowered to be agents of change among their peers.

Further Resources

Theology

God's Justice: Just Relationships between Women and Men, Boys and Girls
– Published by the Anglican Consultative Council in French, Spanish, Portuguese and English
anglicancommunion.org/mission/gender-justice/tools-for-transformation.aspx

Of the Same Flesh – gendered theology Susan Durber
– Published by Christian Aid
prod.christianaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/2016-03/of-the-same-flesh-gender-theology-report-jul-2014.pdf

Created in God's Image – Gender Transformation Toolkit
– Published by Norwegian Church Aid
kirkensnodhjelp.no/en/arkiv/gender-based-violence-and-reproductive-health/gender-transformation-toolkit

Gender Justice themed Bible Study Resource
anglicancommunion.org/media/179215/Church-of-Ireland-Lent-2013-Bible-Study.pdf

Gender-Based Violence

Domestic Abuse and COVID-19: How Churches Can Respond
anglicancommunion.org/mission/gender-justice.aspx

Sasa Faith! A guide for Faith Communities to Prevent Violence Against Women and HIV SASA!
Faith – Raising Voices
raisingvoices.org/women/the-sasa-approach/sasa-faith

Jesus didn't die for Marriage
cbeinternational.org/resource/article/mutuality-blog-magazine/jesus-didnt-die-marriage-why-churches-need-address

Gender, HIV and the Church case study
learn.tearfund.org/~/media/Files/TILZ/Topics/Gender/Gender%20HIV%20and%20Church%20web.pdf

Engaging Men in Ending Gender Based Violence
menengage.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Gender-Based-Violence-GBV-MenEngage-Ubuntu-Symposium-Discussion-Paper-EN.pdf

Thursdays in Black
Thursdays in Black | World Council of Churches (oikoumene.org)

Gender Manuals

Tools for Transformation
anglicancommunion.org/mission/gender-justice/tools-for-transformation.aspx

Transforming Masculinities Training Manual, Tearfund (2017)
Tearfund Learn – Gender Based Violence
learn.tearfund.org/en/themes/sexual_and_gender-based_violence

Created in God's Image: From Hierarchy to Partnership (equality)
wcrc.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/CreatedInGodsImage.pdf

Created in God's Image: From Hegemony to Partnership (focus on men and masculinities)
wcrc.ch/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/From_Hegemony_to_Partnership.pdf

Believe in Change – Catholic Gender Manual
cidse.org/2019/09/19/believe-in-change-the-gender-toolkit

Religious / Christians websites dealing with theology and violence against women

Faith Trust Institute Resources
faithtrustinstitute.org/resources

Christians for Biblical Equality
cbeinternational.org/

Restored
restored-uk.org

Books

Scars Across Humanity – Dr Elaine Storkey, SPCK Publishing (2015)

The Bible Doesn't Tell Me So – Helen Paynter, The Bible Reading Fellowship (2020)

Domestic Abuse in Church Communities – Nikki Dhillon Keane, Redemptorist Publications (2018)

ANGLICAN COMMUNION
IN OVER 165 COUNTRIES

God's Justice: Theology and Gender Based Violence

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