

2019_AC145_02

Recognizing and Ending Domestic Violence in our Congregations

RESOLVED, That this 145th Annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Newark affirm the action of the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church in adopting resolution D031 by affirming the following:

That the Episcopal Diocese of Newark continue to speak out clearly against all forms of domestic violence as it has done in the past;

That the Episcopal Diocese of Newark encourage Episcopal clergy and congregations to educate themselves on the widespread problem that domestic violence is in their churches, neighborhoods and beyond;

That the Episcopal Diocese of Newark urge clergy and lay leadership to familiarize themselves with the international and multi-lingual resources provided by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, White Ribbon, and other local resources, as well as existing trainings developed for domestic violence prevention, and create procedures for supporting domestic violence survivors in their dioceses and congregations; and

That the Episcopal Diocese of Newark urge the Church at every level to examine its response to domestic violence, especially its response to survivors of domestic violence.

Supporting Information:

Domestic violence affects one in every four women. On average, nearly twenty people per minute are physically assaulted by their partners in the United States. The statistics are staggering. It is doubtful that anyone can say that domestic violence has never affected them or a family member or friend. It would be statistically impossible to also say it has never affected every Episcopal Congregation at some point.

Yet, most congregations do not have procedures in place when it does affect their congregation. How does one handle a restraining order against a member of the congregation? Should the parish be used as a safe haven for the transfer of children from one parent to another? These are questions that most congregations do not deal with until the crisis is upon them.

Understanding domestic violence means understanding all the aspects of domestic violence. Once the physical violence stops, the other, little known, abuses continue. The emotional abuse, the economic abuse, the threats, and the fear continue. At its heart, domestic violence is not about physical abuse. It is about power and control. Power and control over the victim until they feel so helpless, so depressed, that they accept their fate. It is one of the reasons one does not leave. The batterer controls everything, and the domestic violence survivor feels they have nothing. It even continues in a congregational setting. Batterers control the finances, and write the pledge. They control the survivor's movements, so they are more likely to sit on committees and vestries. Abusers are more ingrained in the life of the church usually than domestic violence survivors.

Congregations should create policies and procedures to deal with domestic violence in their congregation. These policies and procedures should come from a place of caring for all parties, yet understanding the dynamics of domestic violence. They should be supportive of the survivor, and not judgmental or worse, not safe. Every congregation should plan for this, and in this planning should become more knowledgeable on the widespread issue of domestic violence.

The language in this resolution is the same as the language of resolution D031, passed at General Convention 2018.

Submitted by The General Convention Deputation of the Diocese of Newark.

The Resolutions Committee recommended that this resolution be placed on the Consent Calendar