House Sarah Resources

…..transforming the lives of those who come seeking help… 6 Desvouex Road Suva 6793100665

Of

[www.houseofsarah.org](http://www.houseofsarah.org)

**9. What can your Church do about Family Violence?**

The House of Sarah recognises that clergy and church leaders are not trained to provide in depth counselling to either survivors or perpetrators of family violence but there is still much that church leaders and parishes can do to raise awareness of the problem and support families involved.

**Some Basic Responses to Family Violence for Local Churches**

1. **Believe it!** Family violence happens both outside and inside the church; for many people in church family violence is a taboo subject, which “doesn’t happen here, and we don’t like to talk about it.” However, people in church will either know victims or be victims them­selves. It is therefore vital that this subject is on the agenda of all the church.

2. **Create** a list of family violence contacts to refer people to. - See **Where Help is available**

4. **Adopt** the Family violence commitment for Churches.

5. **Be aware** of limitations; we have many limitations and to not take account of this and work within those limitations is likely to do more harm than good. Our job is to provide a ‘safe’ place for victims and refer them to the appropriate professionals.

6**. Educate** your church using local expertise; invite the House of Sarah, the Simeon Ministry, the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre and other local domestic violence services to do presentations and/or training*.*

7. **Ensure support** is available for children; family violence has a serious effect on children. Ensure you have an effective child protection policy and that Church leaders and members are child protection trained.

8. **Confidentiality;** in view of the serious or real risk of potential harm to the victim and any children, it is important to respect the information disclosed to you. It should be shared on a need to know basis, with full consideration given to any safety issues.

9. **Display posters and pamphlets** that offer information about help that is available locally. Place information about the House of Sarah, the Fiji Women’s Crisis Centre and the Salvation Army Refuge contact numbers in suitable locations in the Church. Remember it is important for people to be able to access material discreetly and without embarrass­ment.

10. **Use preaching and teaching** to make it plain that family violence is wrong.

11. **Pray** regularly for organisations that work in this area and for victims and offenders.

12. **Review the content of your marriage preparation.** Does it deal with the issues of conflict, control and abuse?

13. **Challenge inappropriate behaviour** and encourage inclusive language.

14. **Make your church a safe environment** and provide opportu­nity for prayer and listening.

15. **Discuss issues in youth groups –** call on the resources of the House of Sarah and Simeon Ministry.

16**. Encourage** your Men’s and Women’s Fellowships to discussthese issues.

17. **Encourage training for greater understanding** e.g. developing skills in listening and pastoral care.

18. **Stand up** for individual rights, in church, locally, na­tionally and internationally.

19. **Designate a special time each year** when your church will focus on developing awareness of family violence/abuse issues. A suggestion is time is during the global campaign -**16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence** which runs from No­vember 25th- International Day of Action to End Violence Against Women to December 10th International Human Rights Day. (See below)

20. **Participate** in the Diocese of Polynesia/ Suva Christian Network (*Talanoa)* – working together to end violence and abuse against women and children in our families, our churches and our communities -initiative **‘Break the Silence’ Sunday** usuallythe Sunday closest to November 25th which is International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Special Resources are available to use on this Sunday. They can be found on [www.houseofsarah.org](http://www.houseofsarah.org) click on the Resources page.

**What is the 16 Days of Gender Based Violence all about?**

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The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is a global campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers University, in 1991.

The 1991 meeting was attended by 23 participants from different countries in all of the world's regions and were drawn from a variety of fields - lawyers, policymakers, teachers, health care workers, researchers, journalists, and activists. These women were local civil society leaders with at least two years of experience in women's organising, who were also interested in building the global women's human rights movement. During the WGLI, participants discussed different aspects of gender-based violence and human rights, learning from one another's experiences and consequently developing strategies to increase international awareness of the systemic nature of violence against women; and to expose this violence as a violation of women’s human rights. While violence against women takes different forms according to its cultural context, the problem exists everywhere and working on the issue offers unique opportunities to build bridges across cultures, to learn from both similarities and differences, and to link strategies globally.

As one strategy to build awareness about gender-based violence and facilitate networking among women leaders working in this area, the WGLI participants established the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign. Participants chose the dates 25th November - International Day Against Violence Against Women- and 10th December - International Human Rights Day- in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights and to emphasise that such violence is a violation of human rights.

This 16 day period also highlights other significant dates including 29th November, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, 1st December, World AIDS Day, and 6th December, which marks the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre.

The 16 Days Campaign has been used as an organising strategy by individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women by:

* Raising awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international levels
* Strengthening local work around violence against women
* Establishing a clear link between local and international work to end violence against women
* Providing a forum in which organisers can develop and share new and effective strategies
* Demonstrating the solidarity of women around the world organising against violence against women
* Creating tools to pressure governments to implement promises made to eliminate violence against women.

**\***From the Mother’s Union information pack

– see [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org)

**After discussions with Clergy, Vestry Leaders, Leaders of Women’s, Men’s and Youth fellowships and with members your Church may want to consider making the following Commitment –**

**This Church:**

**1. Understands family violence to be the abuse of a person physically, sexually, psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, socially or financially within an intimate or family-type rela­tionship and that forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.**

**2. Holds that abuse in all its forms is unacceptable and irreconcilable with the Christian faith and a Christian way of living.**

**3. Accepts that family violence is a serious problem which oc­curs in church families as well as in wider society.**

**4. Undertakes to listen, support and care for those affected by family violence.**

**5. Will always place the safety of women and children as the highest priority.**

**6. Will work with domestic violence support agencies, will learn from them and support them in appropriate ways, and will publicise their work.**

**7. Will play its part in teaching that family violence and abuse is a sin.**

**8. Believes in a God of love, justice, mercy, and forgiveness.**

**9. Will teach what it means to be male and female, equally made in God’s image.**

**10. Will seek to appoint advisors to encourage the use of good practice guidelines and keep the church informed about the implementation and development of these guidelines**

*(From a Charter developed by Churches Together in Gloucester­shire, and adapted by Churches Together in the Merseyside Region, The Baptist Union of Great Britain, The Methodist Church and others*

**Adapted by the House of Sarah** [**www.houseofsarah.org**](http://www.houseofsarah.org) **for the Pacific context from the Restored Church Kit** [**www.restoredrelations.org**](http://www.restoredrelations.org)