

16 Days Against Gender Violence

Marking the annual 16 day campaign against gender violence.

Deal with of rape and sexual violence

The Most Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate of The Episcopal Church, delivered the following sermon in the Chapel of Christ the Lord at the Episcopal Church Center in New York, New York, on Nov. 25, [International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women](#).

Today we mark both the feast of James Otis Sargent Huntington and the opening of the annual 16 day campaign against gender violence. That campaign has grown from its origins at Rutgers in 1991 to be a truly global effort. Many religious communities have joined to raise awareness and end gender-based violence, and the Anglican Communion has become a significant part of the effort. When the primates last met in 2011, we issued a letter to the churches about the reality of this kind of violence, largely perpetrated against women and girls. The heart of that letter noted that

‘Our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women. In penitence

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and faith we must move forward in such a way that our churches truly become a living witness to our belief that both women and men are made in the image of God.’

This year’s campaign addresses the violence of war and state-sanctioned violence, the connection between domestic violence and small arms, and the reality of rape and sexual violence in the course of war.



These problems are as old as humanity, and all religious traditions can be part of an effective response, beginning with how we understand the nature of each human being – created with dignity, to be met as Christ himself, to be partners in creating a society of justice, where violence no longer holds any power or sway. Abundant life means an end to violence.

Nehemiah tells of the response to his urgent reformation of Jerusalem. He has organized the people of that city to defend themselves, and they’ve spent their

resources abundantly in doing so. The nations around them are increasingly worried about what this military buildup will mean. Admittedly, this fortifying began from a defensive posture, but it has initiated fear and anxiety all around. The people of Jerusalem are beginning to complain about the cost to their families, both fellow Jews and those with other roots. The result may be the appearance of physical safety, but economic strife results, as poverty, hunger, and debt divide the community. Debtors are being forced into slavery, daughters raped, fields and lands foreclosed – all as the result of a military buildup, ultimately grounded in territorial behavior – by everyone involved.

James Otis Sargent Huntington ministered here in New York with working class people and immigrants who had fled strife and violence. He was born in 1854 to a Unitarian pastor, who later became an Episcopal priest and bishop, and founded Emmanuel Church in Boston.^[6]

James studied at Harvard, read the Oxford Tractarians, and was eventually ordained by his low-church father. He worked in a blue-collar congregation in Syracuse, and then moved to the lower East Side with two other priests to live in community and work with a group of English nuns^[7] at Holy Cross Mission. Together these colleagues worked directly with the poor and the exploited, and women of the streets. In 1884 Huntington founded the first indigenous Anglican religious community on these shores, the Order of the Holy Cross.^[8]

Huntington was a tireless champion of labor rights, and as one commentator notes, “Eyebrows were raised among ‘proper’ Episcopalians when he taught choirboys to sing ‘Our Lord He was a Carpenter.’”^[9] He gave speeches about the need for an 8 hour workday and advocated for the just use of the earth through a single tax on land,^[10] insisting that ultimately land is a gift from God and belongs to all humanity.^[11] He also

organized teams of young men to escort women factory workers home after 12 hour shifts, and similarly, for teenaged girls who worked in department stores until midnight. His order opened schools for girls in danger, for mountain boys in Tennessee, and one for boys of all social classes who were expected to work for their daily bread as well as study.^[12]

Huntington’s ministry is a witness to the kind of work required to end gender-based violence. It insists on the equal valuing of women and men, girls and boys, in the religious life and in daily life. It insists that all have access to the basic necessities of life – daily bread, shelter, employment, physical safety, and the solidarity of advocates for abundant life for all.

This work is still needed everywhere – with Syrian refugees, Haitian women still living in camps,^[13] the victims of wartime atrocities in Congo^[14] and Rwanda, domestic violence victims here and around the world, and those who fall prey to human trafficking. The Super Bowl next year will be the largest episode of human trafficking in this nation.^[15]

Give us our daily bread, O Lord, and give daily bread to all who hunger. May we be bakers and servers of that bread – true instruments of your peace.

Newsletter - Church Response to Domestic Abuse

Published to help mark the 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, the IAFN newsletter on the theme of Church Responses to Domestic Abuse shows both the scope and international extent of such abuse within families and the growing efforts now being made by churches and faith organisations to combat it.



Instead of dismissing physical violence and coercive control as a "private matter" or part of a culture, work is being done on the causes of such violence.

It is not enough just to support women's refuges and help survivors - essential though this work is.

Christian theology teaches that men and women are created by God in God's image; they are partners, and Jesus' whole life showed that power and authority should not mean dominance but self-giving love.

Men as well as women are vital in this struggle for justice, and Anglican Church leaders in Australia, Africa, Brazil, Guyana, Melanesia and UK are encouraging men to understand and combat the abuse which can make marriage "an endurance club" rather than a sacred institution based on mutual respect. The effect of domestic violence on children and society as a whole is incalculable.

Belatedly, the Church in many parts of the world is becoming aware of the problems which exist even within its own communities, and which for too long have taken place behind closed doors.

See - <http://iafn.anglicancommunion.org/newsletters/2013/november/index.cfm>

Facebook

Anglicans Helping To Prevent Violence Against Women

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Anglicans-Helping-To-Prevent-Violence-Against-Women/367961126547383>

Resources

IAWN resources list with links for worship and to resources from other agencies like Tearfund

<http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/resources/documents.cfm>

Anglican Primates response, Dublin 2011

<http://www.anglicancommunion.org/communion/acc/meetings/acc15/downloads/Report%20to%20ACC%20on%20Anglican%20responses%20to%20GBV.pdf>