

AVA'S CALL

Our Voices Are Needed

AVA'S CALL is a quarterly publication of the Department of Women Ministries' program Advocacy for Victims of Abuse.

AVA's Goals are to:

- Provide resources to bring healing to victims of abuse
- Equip the church to minister to victims of abuse
- Promote preventative measures to combat abuse

AVA Director:

Yvonne DeVaughn
devaughn3@gmail.com

AVA Website:

www.covchurch.org/cov/women

National Domestic Violence Hotline

800-799-Safe (7233)

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month but domestic violence is not limited to October it happens every day.

I am deeply troubled when I hear Christians deny or minimize that domestic violence is impacting Christian families. I know from personal experience that this is a real problem in our congregations. I have witnessed aggression from angry men against women in church settings, seen lumps and bruises of a parishioner who had been beaten by her husband, know the woman who has had numerous serious injuries from her husband, heard the confession of a minister who badly bruised his wife, seen children scarred by beatings from a Christian mother, and lived with the pastor who molested his daughters. I have read about the husband who was calm and deliberate when he walked up to his wife in the church parking lot and unloaded two clips from his gun into her body." (She died.)

Domestic violence makes no distinction in age, religion, social status, economic status, nationality or gender. In reviewing the 2004 Remember My Name Project, (http://www.ncadv.org/programs/RememberMyName-2004_149.html) public awareness of domestic violence deaths, I could not help pay attention to the wide range of ages—6 months to 84 years old—so tragically young and so sorrowfully old to have endured such inhumane treatment. Just reviewing the list was enough to break my heart and underscored the need to keep this problem in the spotlight.

When will the body of Christ say enough is enough and begin to address this issue honestly? We cannot ignore or remain



unconscious about what this is doing to our families, our congregations, our communities, and our world. A course correction is desperately needed. We cannot afford to be silent any longer. We need to raise our voices to bring about change.

—Yvonne DeVaughn, AVA Director

5 TYPES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

Physical: Includes shoving, pushing, restraining, hitting or kicking.

Sexual: One partner forcing sexual acts, which are unwanted or declined by the other partner.

Psychological: Includes isolation from family and friends, forced financial dependence, verbal and emotional abuse, threats, intimidation, and control over the other partner's choices.

Spiritual: Using spiritual practices to gain control over the other partner. Examples include using scripture to justify abuse, restricting access to worship, and invalidating or mocking spiritual beliefs.

Financial: Exerting financial power and control over another, or using economic means to intimidate, threaten, isolate, humiliate, disempower, or otherwise control the other partner.

We're never so vulnerable than when we trust someone – but paradoxically, if we cannot trust, neither can we find love or joy.

Walter Anderson

THE TASTE OF FEAR **Living with Domestic Violence...** **Why They Stay**

By: Ruth Ann Cole

There was a very distinct acid taste in her mouth. The knot in the middle of her stomach felt like a stone and made her nauseous. She tried to keep her mind focused on something else, safe thoughts, happy thoughts, in a safe place. It didn't matter that the thoughts were nothing more than a figment of her imagination. Imaginary friends and places did not hurt her. All she wanted was it to be over so that once again the calm would return, the taste would go away, she could take a deep breath and would know with certainty that she survived another attack. Only then could she begin to sort out all that had been said and done, knowing with total conviction that she needed to try harder so it would not happen again.

A woman who had lived in an abusive marriage wrote this. She wanted to try to convey to others how her fear felt to her. She wanted to tell people that she could "taste" her fear. This is a woman that was hit only on occasion and never was physically hurt enough to have to go to the doctor or the hospital. This woman was intelligent and socially adept outside of her relationship, yet she continued to live a paralyzing and debilitating life at home.

Why? If someone is being abused why don't they just leave? Isn't that what you would do? Read the rest of this woman's story on the AVA web site www.covchurch.org/cov/women



Book Review for **"MISS AMERICA BY DAY"** **by Marilyn Van Derbur**

Karen Bayley

There are many publications on the effects of sexual trauma on victims and their families, but this one is, in my opinion, outstanding. As a survivor myself, and a counselor who works with many dealing with these issues, this has been a very helpful work. Marilyn makes important connections between the abuse and the long term affects on her physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well being. For many years Marilyn was able to maintain an amazing schedule as a motivational speaker, but gradually she began to unravel from the traumatic physical and emotional trauma that she experienced. It addresses the journey out of denial, the unhealthy loyalty she felt toward her father, the healing love of her husband and later her daughter which gave her permission to do the work of recovery. Marilyn shares many helpful insights for professionals as they help victims on their journey of healing. She has used her story to bring a voice to this very prevalent and tragic reality in our society that continues to grow. This book is packed with vital information for victims, therapists, health care professionals, those working in the justice system, and those of us who work in spiritual communities to bring awareness and support. I recommend it as a great and worthwhile read!

Intimate Violence **Remains a Big Killer of Women**

July 25, 2008 Women's eNews posted a piece by Marie Tessier that cited a slight rise in recent years in deaths due to domestic violence. **The statistics are chilling**—several studies cite domestic violence as the second leading cause of death for pregnant women. Domestic violence is also one of the **leading causes of death for women ages 15-44**. African American and Native American women are at the highest risk of partner homicide. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, **over a thousand U.S. women are killed each year** by a current or former intimate partner. Two million a year are injured. **A sexual assault occurs every two minutes.**