



# HARBOR LIGHTS

Winter 2005

## MISSION

*To lead a community wide partnership in the awareness and prevention of domestic violence and abuse and to offer safety and support to diverse families in crisis.*

### Faith Community's Task: Hearing, Believing, Caring

Frightened, alone and worried about her future, an abused woman may turn to the one place she believes she will find solace and help: her church.

For many pastors, the realization that a member of their church family is an abuser can be a difficult and frightening concept. The man who has helped raise money for the new roof or that committed dad who teaches Sunday school, that parishioner beats his wife or children, leaving ugly marks on the souls of people he claims to love?

It is a hard concept to confront.

Perhaps the victim is someone who lives near the church and has literally run for her life to the one place she believes she can find sanctuary. She is not a member of the congregation but she is in pain and she is afraid and she needs immediate help.

What does a pastor do when confronted with these kinds of situations?

According to Harbor House Board of Directors member, the Rev. Kathy Gloff, "The pastor should listen with a compassionate heart, offering advice only when asked." She added that, in this way, the clergy are able to "demonstrate that the church is a place where victims will be heard and believed."

It is not only the clergy who deal with the problem. The entire faith community can play a role in stopping abuse and healing the victims, Kathy said.

"The faith community should play an active role in the prevention of domestic abuse," she stated. "In Micha 6:8 we are called



to do justice. Ensuring that all the members of our faith community, and of our global community, are

safe is what we are called to do."

Sometimes a lack of preparation hampers an appropriate response to abuse, and that can lead to silence or neglect. Pastors and others may be reluctant to become involved, believing that saving the family unit is the most important priority, a belief that can put them at odds with the Christian teaching that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Knowledge and preparation can change those beliefs and save the lives of family members.

Harbor House is well equipped to help members of the faith community prepare for the day they are confronted with this problem. And chances are they WILL be confronted with it at some point. Surveys from Canada and the United States indicate domestic violence occurs in 28 percent of all marriages. Many researchers believe this number is just the tip of the iceberg because most incidents of domestic abuse go unreported.

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Cheri Bricco

**3.1  
domestic  
violence  
related  
deaths  
happen in  
the state of  
Wisconsin  
every  
month!**

## Faith Community's Task: Hearing, Believing, Caring *(continued)*

“When asking for help, battered women frequently seek it first from their clergy person. Unfortunately they do not always find it there,” according to Harbor House Executive Director Beth Schnorr. “The materials we have developed are designed to be ‘user friendly’ and to give clergy simple dos and don’ts to guide them in responding in helpful ways to victims and to perpetrators.

“It’s our hope that the materials we have developed and gathered will enable them to reach out with increased compassion and confidence to parishioners affected by domestic violence,” she added.

The entire faith community should be aware of the scope of domestic abuse and the pain it inflicts on all its victims, Kathy said, acknowledging that the discussion is not always easy.

“A willingness to discuss the difficult topics is key,” she said. “Nothing can be changed until it is faced,” she said. “When we admit that domestic abuse is a problem everywhere, including the church, we can begin to deal with the issue compassionately and constructively.”

*We gather in sorrow as we recall so many women among us who have suffered rape, battering, harassment and abuse.*

*We gather in anger that these things continue with no end in sight.*

*We gather in hope that our commitment and our actions will matter.*

*We come acknowledging that we have not always heard; we have not always acted; sometimes we have turned away rather than stand beside a woman who has been victimized.*

*Hear the cries of those who have been harmed, O, Go. We are here today, and in every religious assembly throughout our land. Call to account those who have caused harm. Rebuke their careless and exploitive acts. Help us to teach them a better way.*

*Enlighten those who are called upon to help – judges, police officers, doctors, clergy, legislators, therapists and others – so their decisions and actions will bring forth justice and healing.*

*Send us forth as witnesses, renewed in our commitment to stand in solidarity with every woman who has been harmed by abuse and violence, encouraged in our efforts to comfort the afflicted and confront the assailants, and emboldened to speak out in our own communities so that silence may no more mask the injustice of violence against women.*

*We pray for God’s love and justice to heal our hurt and to bring us to that day when women no longer live with fear in their homes, their workplaces, their religious assemblies, or their communities. Amen.*

Prayer obtained from the Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence

Article by: Carol Lyons—Harbor House Board of Directors

### THANK YOU!

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING MAKE THE 2006 HOLIDAY SEASON SPECIAL WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN DECEMBER! BECAUSE OF YOUR COMPASSION AND COMMITMENT HARBOR HOUSE HELPED 140 RECEIVED GIFTS FOR MOMS AND KIDS!**

**THANK YOU TO THE MANY INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES, CHURCHES AND ORGANIZATIONS THAT PARTICIPATED IN OUR ADOPT-A-SHELTER PROGRAM HELPING US WITH BASIC SHELTER NEEDS. YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS HELP US ENSURE EACH FAMILY COMING INTO SHELTER HAS BASIC NEEDS SUCH AS FOOD AND SHELTER.**

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