



Sixteen Days: Taking Action to End Gender-Based Violence

Resources for Church Action (prepared by CCOW and revised November 2017)

Between the **25th of November**, which is the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and the **10th of December**, which is Human Rights Day, churches around the world are joining other groups in Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.” While gender-based violence can affect both men and women, the focus of the sixteen days is on ending violence directed at women, so the sixteen days are also often known by titles such as 'Sixteen Days of Activism against Violence against Women'.

Why take action?

Recent revelations have highlighted the fact that gender-based violence, especially against women and girls, is a reality here in the UK as well as around the world. The wave of women saying '#MeToo' is helping to break the silence that surrounds this reality and to challenge attitudes that help to perpetuate it. As women and men of faith, we acknowledge that gender-based violence is an issue – including within our own communities – and seek to prevent and end violence against women and girls and all gender-based violence.

Christian theology teaches us that God is a God of love and justice, and that all people are made in the image of God and called to right relationships. Gender-based violence is contrary to this teaching. Unfortunately many churches ignore the issues or sometimes even are complicit in attitudes that can enable abuse.

What are churches doing to mark the 16 Days? And how can we get involved?

- The **International Anglican Women's Network** of the Anglican Communion has a very helpful page of resources on [Eliminating Gender-Based Violence](#). You can use the materials it contains to inspire action in your church, not just for the 16 Days but year round.
- Ending violence against women and girls isn't 'a women's thing': it's for women and men together, and numerous campaigns exist to help men get involved. On the 25th of November, "**White Ribbon Day**," men are invited to wear white ribbons as a sign of their commitment not to commit, condone, or remain silent about men's violence against women. If you want to celebrate this in a service, there's an [Australian collection of prayers and liturgical materials for White Ribbon Day](#). There's also a distinctly Christian version of the White Ribbon campaign, **Restored's First Man Standing**. Could your church encourage men to join in one of these? You might also want to watch this [video](#) of Anglican men speaking out on violence against women.
- The **Mothers' Union** has prepared a [16 Days Activism Pack](#) which includes a multitude of useful materials: theological information, a fact sheet, advocacy pointers, prayers and reflections, conversation starters, a service outline and other materials to help you host a 16 Days event. The materials focus on stigma: "Mothers' Union is ... calling on people everywhere to: break the silence surrounding gender-based violence, lift the shame which is often placed unfairly on survivors, and shift the blame from victim to perpetrator."
- Need more materials for a service? Take a look at those collected by **CABSA** [here](#) and [here](#). The **Methodist Church** has two services online, [one from Chile](#) and [one from the UK](#). The mission agency **USPG** has good [intercessions](#) relating to work done by churches in Zambia. Want materials for private prayer? Look at **Tearfund's** (old but still helpful) [prayer resource](#) with 16 days of stories and prayer points, the newer **We Will Speak Out resource**, with stories, Bible readings and prayer points ... or the [daily prayer points](#) in the **Catholic tradition from the Philippines**. If you're looking for Bible studies, **Tearfund** has some, as does **Restored**. The **Catholic Bishops** (USA) [also suggest](#) a way of using Psalm 55.
- **Restored** has a [Church Pack on ending domestic abuse](#) – could you use it to find out more about domestic violence and how you can help prevent it?
- The World Council of Churches continues to support the '**Thursdays in Black**' campaign, in which women and men wear black as a peaceful protest against rape and violence. Churches can hold services where clergy and congregations dress in black or are given black ribbons or badges. Look for prayers in resources above; you might also take the [Thursdays in Black](#) or [We Will Speak Out](#) pledge.