What is domestic violence?
Domestic violence is a pattern of violent behaviors used to control an intimate partner. It may be physical, but it may also take on more subtle forms such as emotional, verbal, or financial intimidation and control.

Sarah and Sam
Sarah met and married Sam, an intelligent, successful lawyer from her hometown. Sam asked her to relocate to pursue a job, and Sarah agreed. She left her family, social circle, and her own private practice.

A year later, Sarah became pregnant with their son. Sam became unbearably controlling and verbally abusive. He would repeatedly call her names. During her second trimester, Sam threw his first punch. Sarah's son was born with mental and physical disabilities, and she feels an intense need to protect him. There is little she can do with no career of her own and no way to provide for her baby's needs.

Is your congregation prepared to receive Sarah in the way she needs to be received? What can your congregation do to be prepared for the “Sarahs” in your community?

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men in the U.S. are victims of domestic violence at some point in their lives.¹

In the U.S., at least 3 women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends each day.²

Females age 20-24 are at the greatest risk of nonfatal intimate partner violence.³
Who is called to do this work? We are all called.

Jesus Christ calls each Christian and the whole Church into a mission of love and compassion toward all peoples, and scripture repeatedly calls the people of God to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. Therefore, we are all to:

- **denounce and combat** the beating, sexual abuse, raping, and killing that threaten the life and safety of women everywhere
- **encourage greater awareness** among members of our congregations about all forms of violence that threaten the life and safety of all.

Adapted from Social Policy Action “Violence Against Women” passed by the 1995 churchwide assembly.

Take Action

- **Post information for local domestic violence abuse assistance** in church restrooms.
- **Learn more through resources.** Visit [www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org).
- **Volunteer to lead** a Bible study on the root causes of domestic violence such as, “Speaking of Sexism: Called to Trust & Risk” available in the resource section at [www.elca.org/justiceforwomen](http://www.elca.org/justiceforwomen).
- **Make your congregation a safe space** for victims of domestic violence, and make it known.

What should I do if I believe I am victim?

- **Trust your instincts.** Seek help.
- **The abuse is not your fault.**
- **You are not alone.** Help is available.
- **Talk in confidence with someone you trust:** a relative, a friend or your pastor.
- **Set up a safety plan of action** for yourself and your children (i.e. hide a car key, money in a safe place; locate somewhere to go incase of emergency).

**National Domestic Violence Hotline 1.888.799.SAFE**

(Assistance is available in English, Spanish, and 170 other languages)


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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

For more information, contact the ELCA Justice for Women program at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2710.