

Healing or hurtful? the response of the church in Western Australia to the abused in their midst.

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How the churches should respond to those of its Church members who have experienced abuse, physical, emotional or sexual, either in childhood or adulthood is examined through the analysis of qualitative questionnaire data from a sample of 830 church members in Western Australia representing 20 Christian denominations and groups. Interviews with 22 of the respondents who had experienced severe abuse provide a profile of these participants' experience of the churches' response to and outcomes of the disclosure of abuse, reflections on theological teaching, understanding and personal experience of forgiveness, repentance, and justice. with recommendations on the role of the church. Interview data from the Aboriginal participants completes the source of qualitative material. Recommendations for the church community are then generated within the framework of programs already established.

Introduction

The reality of the prevalence of interpersonal abuse/violence has been an ongoing revelation. The pioneering work of Kempe (1962) on 'the battered child syndrome', Pizzey(1974) on wife abuse, *Scream Quietly or the Neighbours will Hear*, and Finkelhor (1979, 1986) on sexual abuse of children, have provided the motivation and groundwork for a growing body of research and practical response.

Inevitably the role of the religious community, its theology, policies, responsibility, accountability and views on pastoral care have entered the picture. It was to become the role of the Reverend Marie Fortune (1982, 1983, 1988, 1989). in the United States to pioneer the Christian churches' active participation in addressing the issue of abuse, raising both negative and positive aspects. Negative aspects included abuse being perpetrated within the church, either by clergy, church leaders and workers or by church members within their own families and the failure of churches to address the issue seriously. Positive aspects included the pastoral role and proactive stance the church should take towards the abused. Fortune's foundational work, including the establishment of the Center for the Prevention of

Sexual and Domestic Violence, inspired many in the Australian church to confront the issue of abuse and interpersonal violence. Church related Australian studies to date have focussed on identifying the incidence and nature of abuse of women in specific denominations, Anglican women in Melbourne (Last 1994), Anglican and Catholic women in Brisbane (Conrade 1992), on Baptist clergy or those preparing for ministry and leadership, Baptist and Lutheran, (Ayers-Palmer 1993), and on the extent to which Western Australian Anglican clergy were called on to address any form of abuse as a pastoral issue (Dixon 1992). Ormerod (1995) and Parkinson (1997) plus extensive media coverage on several court cases have drawn attention to the necessity of the churches taking a more proactive stance towards dealing with the abused within its community.

This paper describes some of the qualitative data gathered from 850 West Australian Christians (581 females and 292 males) representing over 20 denominations and groups who completed a questionnaire on their experience of abuse, physical, emotional or sexual in either childhood or adulthood. In addition 22 participants, survivors of severe abuse who had sought therapy from a Christian practitioner, psychiatrist, psychologist or counsellor, volunteered to be interviewed in depth. Interviews with participants who were members of the Aboriginal Christian community (urban and rural) completed the sources of the qualitative data.

Questionnaire responses

Two open ended questions provided qualitative data in the 25 item questionnaire. The first invited a response from every respondent irrespective of whether abuse had been experienced.

In what way can the church respond to members (adult or children) who have experienced abuse?

The second question was intended for those who had encountered abuse.

Can you describe any way in which the church has been helpful or hurtful in responding to your needs in relation to abuse?

To the first question on ways the church could help, 60% of the sample wrote a response. Ten categories were identified, which, although there was some overlap, clearly indicated a range of strategy and concern.

The most frequent suggestion was to provide 'counselling' and 'skilled helpers'. The emphasis was on the congregation providing this, which included the training of clergy and workers, employing someone trained and linking up with available counsellors. Identifying help outside the congregation, such as specialists or authorities was suggested less frequently, suggesting a preference to keeping the issue 'in house'. Responsibility to raise community awareness was accorded fewest responses, which was surprising in the light of the churches history of social involvement. The question of the extent to which this social issue appears to be

viewed differently with respect to church outreach invites further research.

Table 1. Ways Church Could Help in Response to Abuse

- **COUNSELLING** (154 responses)
Counselling. Get them to talk about it. Small group support.
- **INTERPERSONAL SKILLS** (130 response)
Being there to comfort (empathy) and to listen to the person who needs to share their burden. Listen to the pain. Be supportive and protective. Be comforting. Love, encourage and accept.
- **PRACTICAL HELP AND SUPPORT** (93 responses)
Offer shelter and assistance. Protect from further possibly abusive situations. Short-term care for children. Watch for signs.
- **PERSONAL QUALITIES** (86 responses)
Be 'Christ', patient, kind, caring, enduring, loving, tolerant, non-judgemental.
- **CONGREGATIONAL AWARENESS** (69 responses)
Assure parishioners of their rights and responsibilities. Speak openly about it. Provide teaching about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Make the congregation aware that there is support available.
- **PRAYER AND SACRAMENT** (61 responses)
Pray for them. Prayer for healing and ministry of reconciliation.
- **SKILLED HELPERS** (34 responses)
Have trained counsellor as a part or full time staff member. Increase training for non-paid church leaders in counselling. Pastors should have formal counselling training.
- **REFER TO SPECIALISTS** (29 responses)
Seek professional help. Direct them to better qualified people.
- **REPORT TO AUTHORITIES** (11 responses)
Report to abuse centre. Report to appropriate authorities.
- **RAISE COMMUNITY AWARENESS** (7 responses)
Churches need to support/lead/lobby for broad community programs, education etc. Taking it out of the closet.

To the question on ways that the church had been helpful or hurtful in helping respondents deal with abuse, 138 respondents gave 175 responses, 28 negative and 147 positive. Some had experienced both. Thirteen people had not shared their abuse with the church for such as reasons as they felt shame or that the abuse was 'no longer an issue', they had changed church, or had not felt that help was needed.

The most commonly cited positive experiences were 'prayer and sacrament' and 'personal qualities', followed closely by 'counselling.' The most frequently noted negative experiences centred round insensitivity and lack of awareness on the part of members of the congregation. While the church had proved helpful for 41% of the abused group in dealing with abuse that had happened previous to their becoming part of their current church, and not helpful for 55% of that group, 20% went on to describe ways that the church had been helpful or hurtful.

Table 2. Responses from the Church

- PRAYER AND SACRAMENTS (32 positive: 1 negative)

Praying with me and for me. The church held a seminar, a healing session. I have a very loving and caring church and our Minister has helped me by praying for me, encouraging me and allowing me to talk things over. I also have a Home Group and some very close friends to lean on. Prayer ministry.

- PERSONAL QUALITIES (31 positive 3 negative)

I felt I was loved and was an important part of the group. Care and friendship. Unconditional love. Non-judgemental. Some members do not acknowledge the victim's reality. Others who knew nothing of the reasons for my divorce made known that, in their eyes, divorce was not an option for Christians. Some people in the congregation criticised me for leaving my husband and made me feel the one in the wrong, when in fact I was the victim, so some hurtful experiences as well as helpful ones.

- COUNSELLING (30 positive: 1 negative)

Provided me with guidelines and a standard for acceptable behaviour. Counselling with church pastor has helped me to cope with and understand, and begin to cope with abuse. Friends from Uni (Christians) counselled me extensively and I received spiritual deliverance. The church family has modelled different (healthy) ways of relating and I have been accepted into other families who care for me. It has provided wonderful counselling and support.

They have never really understood and just kept making me feel like the perpetrator, not the victim. Not helpful in that ministers believe him and feel I should change. Told I was making too much of things and should have more forgiveness.

- **SKILLS (23 positive: 9 negative)**

Responding with compassion and understanding. Some church members have been very loving caring and supporting. Compassion in response, sharing concerns of the heart.

Being treated with respect by the priest meant a lot to me.

Not recognising me as a hurting person. Glossing over depth of hurts.

- **CONGREGATIONAL AWARENESS (14 positive: 12 negative)**

Helped through programs run to educate and understand and use of tools for strength, but few and far between.

- **PRACTICAL HELP AND SUPPORT (11 positive: 2 negative)**

Physical and emotional support. Pastor give his time free. Promise-keepers men's group is helpful. The church supported my emotional situation and a few members phoned me and visited me at home.

No-one followed me up. A reluctance to tackle issues. No one really wants to know and as a Christian you should have handed it over to God. Very little is thought about how you come to terms with self. There is a reluctance to tackle issues.

- **TRAIN HELPERS (5 positive: 2 negative)**

Include clergy training. Our church had some great people in training in counselling.

- **REFER TO AUTHORITIES (1 positive: 1 negative)**

Interviewed respondents

The sample of 22 interviewees comprised 21 females and one male, aged 26 to 57, representing nine of the denominations and groupings of the questionnaire sample. The majority of the sample had experienced multiple types of abuse, and some were abused by several people. Table 3 demonstrates the range of abuse and perpetrator in this group of adult church members, of whom currently two are now not attending church (page 66).

Three areas were explored in the interviews

- **the church's initial and ongoing response** on the disclosure of abuse.
- respondents' **attitudes and insights** concerning **healing, forgiveness, repentance, and justice.**
- respondents' theological understanding and teaching received in relation to abuse.

Table 3. Interviewee incidence and nature of abuse

	Childhood		Adulthood	
	N=22	Agent	N=22	Agent
Physical Abuse	19	Father (8), Parents (3) Housemother (1) Nuns (1) Brother (1) Neighbour (1) Family Friend (1)	12	Husband (7) Father (2) Mother (1) Friend (1) Prowler (1) Defacto (1)
Emotional Abuse	19	Mother (6) Father (5) Siblings (8) Grandfather(1) Stepmother (1) Nuns (1)	19	Husband (7) Mother(5) Sister (3) Boyfriend (1) Defacto (1) Brother (1) Stepmother(1) Peers(1) Employer (1) Priest (1)
Sexual Abuse	18	Father (4) Uncle (3) Neighbour (3) Brother (2) Grandfather (2) Family Friend (2) Foster family (1) Mother's Lover(1) Priest(1)	12	Husband (5) Priest (2) Friend (2) Employer (2) Doctor (1) Defacto (1) Brother-in-law (1)

Church initial and ongoing response

Eighteen of the subjects recorded that they were listened to or accepted either by the clergy or some other supportive person in the church when they first disclosed their abuse. Most were directed to professional help. One response encapsulated what several indicated, namely that, after the initial support, there was less evidence of continued support.

He listened and accepted, but I had the distinct impression that he was out of his depth, that he put it in the 'too hard' basket, and that I was a bit of a nuisance talking about the abuse to him.

Negative experiences included minimising of difficulties, breaches of confidentiality and lack of support. The most consistent and satisfactory support came from professional help. The outcome within the church community was far less positive, characterised by lack of ongoing support, pressure to try to make a marriage 'work', and to assume prayer would provide an instant recovery. The loneliness and quiet desperation are encapsulated in these responses.

If they encouraged me to stay in the situation, because they believed that my husband would become a Christian again, then they could at least provide emotional and practical support until that happens.

For three years I was looking for someone to talk to, but could find no-one.

I told the minister (at first accepting), but I have been very disappointed that he has never asked how I am coping.

It was like I was a wounded soldier. I'd get a prayer but then sent back to the battlefield! Supposed to be fixed after prayer but it wasn't. There was no follow up. They presumed everything was OK, but it wasn't.

When asked how supportive the church had been for the long haul, only four had found adequate support. A further three had changed churches until they found a supportive one, which meant support from both the leaders and the congregation. Two no longer attended church.

Attitudes and insights

Healing

Nineteen of the subjects said that at least some healing had taken place, and for many 'quite a lot' had occurred. 'Marilyn' hoped that one day healing would take place. Each described healing as a gradual process, which required both considerable outside help and a lot of effort on their part to face up to the reality of abuse and to continue on the journey. Their Christian faith was a mainstay in the process.

I have been able to cope and get help, only after I was prepared to accept it. It is on-going.

Acceptance that it happened, was real, and is over now.

Healing is almost complete - through recognising and admitting I was abused, and forgiveness.

Healing did not occur until issues were brought out in the open.

Sometimes I think the healing is complete, but never quite there. It is still hard to feel. It is easier to turn off like I used to.

You never really 'arrive'. It is an ongoing thing, on a daily basis. I have had a lot of 'physical' healing, but deep heart surgery takes longer. I used not to trust men, but now I do. I can even speak at men's groups. I have gone back and faced my perpetrators and told them I've forgiven them. That was a major release.

I am not free yet, but I have had such a lot of growth, I am excited about it all.

Bloody hard work.

Counselling was a major source of healing, both professional counselling outside the church and counselling within the church.

Feeling and being respected by my counsellor instead of judged (as by pastors).

At the Ladies Retreat, I dealt with all the bitterness and forgave those who hurt me.

Church counsellor prayed with me re rejection, abandonment, neglect and fear.

At a meditative prayer retreat I experienced a real sense of cleansing. I had previously been bothered by feeling dirty.

On several occasions when I have gone forward for prayer I have had a real, definite answer. It brought peace to my psychological suffering. A series of prayer healing sessions has helped to attend to it in layers-stages.

Prayer counselling-deep honest self-assessment and willingness to accept myself as I am.

I sought out my own Christian, female mentors, not from my own church. So I got help from within the Christian community, but only at my own instigation.

The love and support of friends was another vital component of the healing process for some.

Very empathetic friend, very helpful and very healing.

The reality of their faith was powerful.

God has brought me a long way.

My faith has been the foundation upon which healing could occur. My faith is my strength, but I still - have a long way to go.

Learning to trust was a big issue - learning to not expect everyone to be abusive. Then trust in God and His word. Other people supportive, but I had to live through it. God's Word was all I had, plus the support.

I have got in touch with God's mercy and grace and that has had a healing effect.

Forgiveness

Virtually all agreed that forgiveness on their part was necessary for their own personal growth. About one third had achieved this, but most identified what a struggle it was. Some acknowledgment of the wrong done was important, and the lack of this made the process of forgiving harder.

I've got a way to go yet as far as forgiveness goes. I need to be more angry first before I can forgive. But I am open to the idea of forgiveness and hopefully it will be soon.

Forgiveness is necessary, or at least good to move towards it. But it is very important that people are not rushed or pushed towards forgiveness. I needed to work through anger as a legitimate response, before I could consider forgiveness. I have forgiven the minister now.

It is meaningless if you race in and forgive immediately, because that would not deal with it. I have forgiven my father, and stated it before God and the counsellor. It is an ongoing process to a certain extent. Other bits keep coming up that have to be forgiven. I need to work through the injustice of my personhood being taken from me, but then I can forgive. It frees me. God has enabled me to see Father with some compassion.

I think it is because I forgave that I have progressed so far in healing. In forgiving the perpetrator you can still be released. While you still hang on to the hatred and bitterness there is still a certain amount of bondage there.

That is where the psychologist and I are heading. At the moment I am very angry, but I have nowhere to direct the anger because the perpetrator is dead. I will probably forgive him eventually.

Haven't got up to that yet. The first step is to deal with the issues. Forgiveness will be an issue one day. God will lead me to that when the time is right.

It is very hard to forgive. I know I have to forgive. I know that Mum was sick. But I do not forget in that I have to learn from the experience.

Under God I have talked about it a lot. I need some acknowledgment of the abuse by Mother.

I forgave a long time ago. I was misled by the Bible passage about Absalom and Tamar, and took it to be God telling me not to discuss it.

I haven't worked out God's expectations of me. At the moment I simply cannot forgive. The counsellor has been very gentle with me. I know that I will have to get to it in the end.

Repentance

Responses to the question of repentance were far less intense or detailed. Although repentance by the perpetrator would have been welcome, and something of a miracle, most did not see this as a prerequisite for their own acts of forgiveness.

That has not happened. For me it does not matter. I've done what I have to do. I have to forgive them for my own sake as much as anything.

No I can forgive them before God.

None of my business. It's God's department.

It would be helpful if they repented. It makes it easier to forgive, but that is not the way God would have it that I require repentance.

Would be nice if he did, but I forgive because I need to, because of God and for myself.

Forgiveness can't heal the relationship unless the person is sorry.

I haven't got up to that yet. First step is to deal with the issue. Forgiveness will be an issue one day. God will lead me to that when the time is right.

Justice

Going to court or seeking justice was not considered so necessary for their own healing but rather to protect others in the family or community. Most felt that justice was up to God, and that this would eventually catch up with the perpetrator. However, some would now resort to the legal system if the abuse reappeared, but otherwise the effect on the family could be negative. Some disillusionment with the courts was also expressed when there was acquittal. It was also noted that forgiveness should not be used as an excuse for avoiding justice.

It's up to God. For me that is all I need. I knew that God will deal with them eventually. I am not against other people using the legal system. Every case is individual.

I would never want to do anything legal. I couldn't cope with that. Okay for others to do it if they want to. I admire them. It takes a lot of courage. I am too private.

Perpetrators should get punished for what they did, but it would cause pain to the grandchildren. The effect on them would be negative if it went to court.

A few years ago I would have used 'forgiveness' as an excuse for no justice - an out.

Theological understanding and teaching

Respondents were asked what their understanding of God was during the time of the abuse, what their present understanding was and what teaching did the church offer. As children the commonest response was that they did not blame God, and that they compartmentalised and split off what was happening to them from their thoughts about God, although they knew he was there. There was a lot of self blame.

I had no concept of God at the time, but the Scripture teacher was a warm person, and different.

I had an image of God watching over me when my brother died. From then on I knew God was there, watching over me.

I didn't actively blame God, but I wondered why God didn't answer my prayers and do something to help me.

I wanted so much to be normal and have a normal family. I used to pray to God that I wanted to have only one mother. I knew that God loved me, but I wanted to 'fit in' down here on earth as well. I had a recurring dream of God and the devil fighting over me and God always won, so it did seem like God was there for me and caring.

Dad worked away at sea a lot. When he was away we were more or less a normal family. So I prayed that there would be a cyclone and he wouldn't be able to come in to land.

In adulthood respondents were still processing their understanding of God with the question asked by many as to why it happened and why it went on so long. They were very aware of evil in the world and that abuse is part of that. However, there have still been issues of trust and 'righteous' anger to work through. These thoughts and feelings are represented in the following responses.

I do not have an answer to the question of why did God not stop this. I don't know why we have to go through these things, but it can make you stronger if you use it in a positive way and not a negative way. In God's picture there are answers we do not necessarily know. I don't think I have to have an answer from God. I do not need it. I've moved on from that.

I concluded that Father's illness was due to battle stress. I did not blame God, neither did I consider it as a punishment from God.... I thought 'this is from mankind, not from God.' But I did ask 'Why did Father and Mother allow this, and not get professional help?'

Part of me still wonders why He allowed it and all the consequences as a result. And yet, I know God is a God of love, and evil reigns. Perpetrators allow themselves to be motivated by evil, hence there is free choice. This is not God's domain.

Going to church is now very difficult - it is too upsetting. I can't cope with God letting it happen to the kids. The consequences are so bad that they are all affected and none are Christians. The kids are angry with God. The price has been too high. How God can let it get to the stage that the consequences are so bad that we will never recover I don't understand.

Sources of teaching in the church were expected to be from the general preaching and teaching program within the church, dialogue with clergy and fellow members of the congregation and discussion in Home Groups or Bible Study groups. Not one respondent described having encountered any adequate biblical teaching on the topic of abuse, and certainly no open stance denouncing it. Nine respondents said there had been no mention of the topic. While some received love and support, and no blame, others were blamed or felt they were blamed.

Just said God was there when it happened. But that does not make sense to me.

'God has done this for a purpose' – very unhelpful.

'God doesn't let things like that happen to His people. There must be something wrong with your relationship with God for Him to allow it. You must not be praying the right way.'

The problem was presented in terms of spiritual warfare. Prayer would solve my symptoms. They were not interested in looking for the root cause of the problem. So God was presented over simplistically. However God was not portrayed as punishing, but as loving and victorious.

'God will bring healing into your life', but nobody came alongside me and told me that it was not right what was happening.

Churches' Role

Subjects were quite clear and very articulate about the role the church should play. They asked that their community would listen, believe, offer practical help, encourage referral to professional, particularly Christian, counselling, stick by them, not minimise their experience, get educated, and offer understanding, sensitivity and confidentiality.

Never tell anyone that it doesn't matter. Even if I have forgiven the perpetrator it is always with me.

They can keep an open mind about the possibility that the abuse is really occurring, instead of automatically assuming that it isn't, or that there must be some provocation. They can educate themselves about domestic violence and sexual abuse in families.

Do not shove down their throat what they have no right to say. You have to earn

the right to suggest anything and you have to earn the victim's trust. The survivor already knows about God. They know the platitudes and also about God's power. They do not want or need these things 'shoved in their face'.

It would be helpful for people to entertain the possibility that it might be 10 to 20 years of living in an unbearable situation which has made a woman a little strange, unsure of herself and confused, rather than assuming she is like that naturally.

Aboriginal Responses

Responses from the Aboriginal Christians indicate they have found that the Christian community can offer healing and alternative ways of responding. They have found that many older Aboriginal women are now coming to talk to their pastor about the abuse they received in their youth. In their words 'coming out of the closet' to talk of the physical, emotional and sexual abuse is a very big step. They are 'unloading a mass of internal stuff' that has dogged them for years, and appreciate that the pastor listens and helps them to talk. They find this very freeing. When asked what they want to do now about the abuse, 85% find that it is sufficient to be able to talk about it and be believed by a trusted Aboriginal person. The pastor offers a lot of biblical counselling, to work through with them to help their hurt be mended through God and prayer. They seek healing rather than justice. A great deal of abuse took place, partly due in their opinion to the close living conditions that Aboriginal people were forced to live in, rather than that it was their cultural way. Many older women were abused as children by relatives. Now they warn their daughters and put strategies in place to protect their children.

Material on adult abuse presented a particular pattern, namely pronounced physical abuse in association with alcohol. Fears that this enquiry might be considered intrusive were allayed when one woman thanked the interviewer, a trusted 'adopted' white woman, and said she saw the interest as an act of love and personal concern for her that to date she had not experienced. Effects on children of observing violence were noted. An Aboriginal pastor in a rural town area spoke sadly of burying young women killed in domestic disputes. For none is abuse an acceptable cultural practice.

Discussion

Responses from the whole sample, which included many who had not experienced abuse, indicated a sympathy and concern towards the abused, combined with a tendency to prefer the church to deal with its issues on its own. The experience of those who had suffered a high level of abuse was that the essential sustained support was not so available within the church community. The churches which participated in the study would appear ready for the essential task of becoming equipped through training, and the establishment of resources and networks to support its members. The evidence from the interviewed sample, confirming that recovery

from abuse is a prolonged process, demonstrates the important role the church can play in that recovery process for members of its community. This study also confirms the need for education of and awareness in congregations. Education involves both theological and psychological perspectives of the nature, effects and recovery characteristics of abuse. On the psychological side congregations need to have some deeper understanding of the profound and longterm effects of abuse, of the value and necessity of long term support and of the healing process. On the theological side there needs to be more indepth study and teaching of biblical perspectives and understanding of such issues as violence, covenant, suffering and care of children. There needs to be some awareness of the effect on the abused of simplistic and hurtful theological interpretations of their experience, particularly of blaming the victim.

Workshops and programs addressing these aspects have been developed for the church community and need to be accessed. Well trialled are *Train the Trainers Domestic Violence Manual* (Dingle (ed) 1995), produced by a joint project of the Uniting and Anglican Churches in Queensland, *The Church and Domestic Violence: A Training Package for Clergy and Pastoral Workers*, an Anglican project in Western Australia (Dixon, Manners and Prout 1993), described further in Dixon (1995, 1997), *Domestic Violence - it doesn't happen in our church* (Cox 1994), a Baptist project in New South Wales. Detailed discussion, information and challenge to the Christian community have also been generated by Horton and Williamson (1988); Alsdurf and Alsdurf (1989); Amos (1990, 1991); Ormerod (1995); Kroeger and Beck (1996) and Parkinson (1997).

Dealing with forgiveness was central to the experience of the abused and it is vital that attention is paid to what respondents had to say about their experience of the churches' role in teaching and counselling on this to combat superficiality or erroneous teaching, such as .being told to forgive, and often pushed to forgive quickly with little understanding of the complexity of trust, reconciliation and repentance. Thoughtful, informed and practical discourse, including both theological and psychological aspects, is available for this educative process (Fortune 1988; Shapiro and Turner 1988; Eastman 1989; Heggen 1993; Drane 1995; Kroeger and Beck 1996; Parkinson 1997; Williams 1998).

A cherished image of the Christian Church community is that it is a family that is nurtured and supported 'to grow in grace'. To be a functional and caring family, and one not characterised by coercion and misuse of power (Ormerod 1993), this community needs to take a proactive stance from the results of this study to name and promote healthy parenting styles and interpersonal relationships within the family. This needs to be promoted both within its own community and offered to the community at large, including schools. This study provides a practical basis to enable the churches to continue their pastoral efforts by implementing respondents' recommendations on what churches could do. The implication for the whole community, adults and children, is that the church must take a firm stand against

the continuing use of coercion in relationships, whether physical, emotional or sexual. As one woman said *Sticks and stones will break my bones and names will wound me for ever.*

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