



THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

7 March 2013

Issued by the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa:

Statement on the abuse and violence against children and women in South Africa

The Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa is deeply alarmed and shocked by the violence and abuse against children and women in South Africa. Daily we are confronted with the horrifying stories which describe how children and women are abused, violated, injured and even killed. In recent times we have been appalled to hear about the increasing numbers of rape and violence against women, noting that this information does not in any way reflect the actual reality since most people do not report their experiences out of fear for their lives, often times believing that the police and legal system in the country does not take them seriously nor is it adequately geared to protect them.

As a Church we recognize that all human beings are created in the 'image of God' and we are thus called to treat others with dignity, respect, worth and value and this applies no less to children and women in our society. We are called to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:3-4). The call is to serve others with humility, love and devotion and not to injure, hurt, violate, abuse or kill another. In light of this, we call:

1. All churches and religious bodies/faiths to affirm the value and worth of life by regularly and intentionally preaching, teaching and instructing its members and community on this theme.
2. All churches to provide 'safe spaces' and facilities for people to freely share their stories and/or seek help.
3. The President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Jacob Zuma, to continue to be vocal about abuse and violence against women and children and, further, he should instruct the Minister of Women, children and people with disabilities, Mrs Lulu Xingwana, to work with her Department and others to provide constructive, comprehensive and concrete proposals as to how all sectors in our country can work together to address this matter with urgency.
4. The police and all law enforcement authorities to uphold and protect the rights of all individuals and avail care, warmth, respect and serious attention to those who are abused, raped and violated, and to earnestly pursue those who perpetrate such abuse and violence.
5. The Authorities within the Police Departments to provide the necessary training, equipping and expertise for their staff to carry out their work with a greater sense of effectiveness and efficiency. There are many cases that linger for years without being resolved or even looked at; this must be given top priority because offenders who are not brought to book continue to believe that they will constantly get away doing wrong whilst those who have been violated are anxiously waiting for justice and closure.
6. The Judicial System to exercise due, just and rapid diligence in bringing cases to a close, protect 'victims' and witnesses, mete out just and deserving sentences as per crime, and to restore confidence in the legal system.
7. All South Africans to pray and work for a safer country where people can walk, work, sleep and live without the fear of being violated, abused, burgled, assaulted, raped and murdered – a country in which we honour, appreciate and value God's gift of life.

"Blessed is the person who fears the Lord, who finds great delight in his commands"

The Rt Rev Rod Botsis
Moderator

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