**DOMESTIC ABUSE entitled:**

# NO EXCEPTIONS.....

**.....A Faith Perspective** on the myths and realities of domestic abuse – it's time to face the facts and speak the truth.....

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

**Dr Mairead Tagg**

**Rev. Kathy Galloway**

**Saturday, 07 September 2002**
**in**
**Caledonian University, Glasgow**

# NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL CARE

**Catholic Church in Scotland**

*Episcopal President*: Right Rev. John A. Mone *Co-ordinator*: David McCann


**May 2002**

***Conference : "No Exceptions, a faith perspective on Domestic Abuse"***

**An inter - church planning group, invite you to attend the above Conference, which will be held at the Caledonian University, Glasgow, on Saturday 7 September 2002.**

The momentum for this initiative grew out of an earlier event held in Paisley under the auspices of the Diocesan Social Care Commission. Those taking part on that occasion included Women's Aid, the police service, social services and various agencies involved in the care of victims of abuse.

Bishop John Mone, Episcopal President of the National Commission for Social Care of the Catholic Church, felt strongly that the Church was required to continue to respond to the evil of domestic abuse and make it clear that, no one must ever feel imprisoned in an abusive relationship.

Initial discussions rapidly broadened out to include other denominations, several of which were engaged in addressing this issue because of the World Council of Churches call to make 2001-10 a "Decade to Overcome Violence." The Methodist Women's Network, the Church of Scotland Guild, Union of Catholic Mothers and the Salvation Army were among those invited to share with the Commission in the planning of a day conference at which the Churches could share their resources and experiences with other concerned bodies and learn from them ways in which to respond to victims and perpetrators alike.

The group, have invited as the keynote speakers Dr Mairead Tagg of Womens' Aid and Rev Kathy Galloway of Church Action on Poverty (and soon to be leader of the Iona Community) who will make a presentation and a theological reflection on the theme. Various groups with appropriate expertise have been invited to hold workshops.

The Scottish Executive has shown a clear lead in its determination to tackle this flaw in the fabric of our society, so often hidden because of fear, shame or embarrassment. If politicians can speak out for a society *"*where no woman waits in fear for the sound of a key in the lock and where no child cowers under the bedclothes, terrified about what is being done to his or her mother…",* can the Churches in all conscience remain silent?

We hope that you will show your support for this ecumenical initiative by joining us at the Caledonian University Campus, Glasgow on Saturday 7 September 2002 (9.30a.m. - 3.30 p.m.). Attached are the flier and application form.

Jean Urquhart

Mrs Jean Urquhart
On behalf of planning group.

? *from a speech by Margaret Curran MSP, Scottish Parliament, 2001*


*National Commission for Social Care, Conference Planning Group*
**19a Park Circus, Glasgow G3 6BE. Telephone: 0141 331 0083 Fax: 0141 332 2190**
**e-mail nacosoca@business.ntl.com e-mail admin nacosoca@ukgateway.net**
Child Protection Information Line; Tel/Fax; 0141 353 1177

## OPENING PRAYER

**May we begin to listen ;**

**To the hurt and heartbroken with experiences unspoken**

**To those tired and worn down, in every one of our towns**

**Response; WHO NEED OUR PROTECTION**

**(the bell will be rung)**

**May we learn to hear;**

**All that is said and not turn away, in another direction**

**And give no attention, to those**

**Response; WHO NEED OUR PROTECTION**

**(the bell will be rung)**

**May we have courage to give voice;**

**To the fearful and silent, who bear pain alone**

**Who need help to make changes for their loved ones at home**

**Response; WHO NEED OUR PROTECTION**

**(the bell will be rung)**

**05 September 2002**

Delegates were warmly welcomed to this quite unique inter-church conference on domestic abuse by Jean Urquhart, Chair of the Planning Group.

The Keynote Speakers - Dr Mairead Tagg- Greater Easterhouse Women's Aid and the Rev Kathy Galloway - Leader of the Iona Community are known to some and by the end of today, I am sure, will be remembered by everyone.

Our guests are - the Reverend Professor Robert Davidson who today is representing the Moderator, Dr Finlay Macdonald. He himself is a retired Moderator and was a Professor of Old Testament at Glasgow University. Professor Davidson is a former Convenor of ACTS (Action of Churches Together in Scotland) and last year he led a delegation from CTBI (Churches Together in Britain & Ireland) to the conflict zone of the Middle East.

Bishop John Mone, Bishop of the Diocese of Paisley, first had a conference on domestic abuse in Paisley in the year 2000. He felt strongly that this issue should not be forgotten and suggested having another conference with national coverage. Other churches were also saying this and working to this end. As a result an inter-church planning group came together.

Workshop leaders have willingly offered themselves so that we have a wide choice of topics, today, touching on the many aspects of abusive situations. Over the course of the day we hope to learn of ways to listen, to hear & to act in response.

Good wishes & apologies have been received from the Moderator, Archbishop Mario Conti, Glasgow, Archbishop O'Brien, St Andrew's & Edinburgh, The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, Margaret Curran, MSP, Minister for Social Justice, Margaret Ewing, MSP, who has been ill recently, we wish her well. Mr. Alex Mosson, Lord Provost of Glasgow is also unable to be here today, but we are happy to welcome his representative Baillie Christopher Mason, later.

I have the pleasure of chairing this day. My name is Jean Urquhart, chair of the Social Care Commission, Paisley Diocese, and a member of the National Commission for Social Care. I have also had the privilege of chairing the planning group.

***Dr Mairead Tagg, Easterhouse Women's Aid.***

**PROFILE;** Dr Mairead Tagg is a Research & Training worker in Greater Glasgow Easterhouse Women's Aid since 1995. She is the author of the research report 'Mixed Messages' (1997) detailing the response of three statutory agencies to women experiencing domestic abuse. In terms of legal work, she appears as an expert witness for abused women & children, specialising in providing reports in relation to women who have killed or seriously injured abusive partners. She is currently part of the core expert group 'Justice for Women' which has made a series of recommendations regarding the treatment of children within the Justice system.

**PRESENTATION;** When I sat down to write this presentation, I was astonished to find that I didn't know where to start. My head felt so full of information and thoughts and feelings about this topic that I felt as if I was drowning. In my mind I started travelling back in time over the years I've worked for Easterhouse Women's Aid. I re-visited good times and bad times and I remembered many remarkable women and children who have used our service.

I found myself reflecting on information I would want to share with you about domestic abuse, and I also began to reflect on what our service users would want you to understand about their experiences.

Perhaps the first thing I should do is to clarify what I mean by domestic abuse. I mean the physical, psychological, sexual or financial abuse of a woman by a current or former partner. It is recognised as a gendered crime; a crime committed overwhelmingly by men against women. It is part of a continuum of violence committed by men against women and children. It is a world-wide phenomenon. A UNICEF study published in June 2000 concluded that up to half the female population of the world is subject to domestic abuse. Violence against women, including domestic violence, is the cause of more death and disability to women aged between 15 and 44 than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war.

I would also like to stress at the outset that most Scottish men don't abuse their partners and are sickened by violence perpetrated against women and children, but those who do

are serial offenders, causing unimaginable pain and distress over a long period of time - in some cases a lifetime.

A topic which I am regularly asked to comment on is, "What about abused men?" Since I am always asked, I will address the issue now. Violence is never acceptable behaviour. It doesn't matter who instigates the violence, it isn't OK. I *have* worked with men who have experienced violence from their female partners and of course it is distressing and humiliating. Men who have been assaulted by partners or ex-partners feel ashamed, upset, angry and hurt, just as abused women do. I am not dismissing the experiences of those men who have experienced violence from a female partner, but such situations are the minority

The primary difference in my experience is that a man who experiences violence from his female partner does not suffer the depths of fear, the mind-destroying terror that characterises women's experience. Many women I have worked with described themselves as "crazy with fear."

The reason for this is quite simple. Although women can be fierce in an argument they simply do not have the superior physical strength necessary to inflict serious injury on a man. Nor can they rape.

Men are not afraid of women. Ask most men whether they feel fear if they hear a solo woman walking up behind them on a dark night and they'll laugh. However, ask most women if they feel frightened if they hear a man coming up behind them in similar circumstances and most women will say that they feel increasingly uneasy and scared.

They have reason. Research suggests that approximately 2 in 5 women in the UK have been raped or sexually assaulted, that one in four will experience domestic abuse at some point in her life, that 1 in 7 will be raped in marriage, that one girl in two will experience some kind of sexual abuse, from flashing to rape, before her eighteenth birthday. Almost half of all women murdered in Scotland are killed by a current or former partner and domestic abuse costs the lives of two women in the United Kingdom every week. The safety expert Gavin De Becker conveys this fundamental difference between men and women's experience succinctly when he writes, "At heart men are afraid that women will laugh at them, while at heart women are afraid that men will kill them."

In the past domestic abuse has always been considered a women's issue. Women's Aid was started by women for women because no one else was willing establish a safe haven for abused women and children, let alone release funds or create legislation and policies that were centred on ensuring the safety and protection of women and children fleeing abuse and violence in their home. And it was tough. Women and children crowded together in squalid dormitories in sub-standard accommodation meeting indifference, hostility and judgemental attitudes on all sides.

Thanks to the untiring efforts of exceptional women and some sympathetic individuals, both male and female, in different agencies and institutions, we now find ourselves considerably further down the line with a growing public awareness of the issue and better services for all those affected by this scourge. And believe me, the service is needed. Last year Women's Aid received more than 52,000 contacts and it is conservatively estimated that 100,000 children in Scotland currently live in homes where they are witnessing the abuse of their mother, Around 60% of these children will experience abuse directly themselves. Perhaps our sheriffs and judges might consider this when they decide that a violent, abusive man is a suitable father to vulnerable and often traumatised children and insist on contact.

The Scottish Parliament has come in for some criticism since its inception, however it has offered unprecedented support to abused women and children. It has declared zero tolerance for domestic violence and has committed significant sums of money to tackle this blight. There is now a National Strategy in relation to domestic abuse and Multi-agency partnerships and domestic abuse fora are springing up all over the country, each committed to providing for the needs of women and children affected by domestic abuse.

Well, I hear you say, that's great, so what's your point? My point is that in spite of this support and changing attitudes, many thousands of women and children in Scotland are still being beaten, violated and terrorised in their homes, women are still approaching agency after agency looking for a supportive response and abusive men are still getting away with murder - in some cases literally.

Today I want to take you on a journey into the world of the abused woman. I want to show you what she lives through and how she survives. I want to share with you what happens when she tries to end the abuse in her life. More than anything, I desperately want you to

understand that domestic abuse is not a women's issue, it's a community issue, and all of us have a part to play. Domestic abuse touches all of us and we all have a responsibility to speak out, to leave abusive men nowhere to hide. I wonder how much of a surprise it will be to you when I say that every single one of you in this audience knows someone whose life has been affected by domestic abuse.

Domestic abuse cuts across all boundaries of class, race, culture, and religion. It happens in the homes of doctors and of drug dealers, of lawyers, of labourers and of community leaders. Abusive men may be charming, urbane and witty, affluent and successful, pillars of the church; respected by the community. Their dirty little secret is played out behind closed doors with no witnesses except their terrified children. There is no way to identify such a man. He keeps his vices well-hidden and his family are too frightened and ashamed to tell.

The process of devastation that domestic violence can create in a woman does not necessarily end when she escapes from the abuser. On the contrary it can have life-long repercussions. Can I just stress at this point that devastation that is caused to women by domestic abuse is also experienced by children?

A question I am regularly asked is "Why do women stay?"

It is important to understand that abused women do not stay either because they like it or because they have self-destructive personalities. Nor are they weak. The misery that women experience requires a great deal of strength and courage to endure.

Typically women describe a relationship which started, well with a man who was incredibly attentive and desperate to please. Over time, sooner or later, this loving behaviour is present less and less and he becomes increasingly jealous, critical, hostile and capricious.

A strange type of relationship develops that binds the abused to the abuser. It is called "anxious attachment." It arises in situations where the man regards his victim solely in terms ensuring that she is meeting his needs. This includes an over-riding need to control her in every way. The woman at this point is still trying to connect with him in a loving, way. When her attempts to make the relationship work in a normal manner are met with abuse, threats and intimidation, she becomes increasingly traumatised and confused. Her behaviour will soon be motivated by overwhelming feelings of anxiety and fear. Women describe themselves as "walking on eggshells," nervous, jumpy, always on the go, unable to relax. The same goes for the children.

Can I give you an example? You go home, and as you put your key in the lock you can hear the person you live with in the kitchen, so you call "Hi! I'm home!" and you get no reply. You think that this person hasn't heard you and you go into the kitchen and say, "Hello!" only to be told, "I heard you the first time!" So you say, "What's wrong?" and you're told "Nothing!" so you try again and get blanked. At that point you may think "hell mend you" and you make yourself a cup of tea and go through to watch the news on TV. How many of you actually pay attention to what's on? How many of you blank out what's happening, how many of you feel hurt confused and angry about this person's behaviour towards you?

That night in bed you play electric bums leaping to the far edge of the bed if you accidentally touch your significant other?. Next morning the silence is, if anything, heavier than yesterday. How do you feel? After two or three days of that treatment how many of you feel deeply lonely and abandoned in a horrible place? How many of you would do almost anything to get back to a state of comfort and closeness? How many of you would leave your home, your hopes, dreams, the years of your life that you've committed to this relationship because of that incident? Of those who would, how many could be persuaded back with a profuse apology and promises that it will never happen again?

The typical experience abused women have is of a man who moves in and out of abusive behaviours, occasionally appearing loving and close and then unpredictably returning to frightening, brutal behaviours. Confused by one day loving, the next day rejecting behaviour and struggling to get some positive responses from her partner, the woman clings anxiously to the abuser, trying harder and harder to make it all work.

Often this is because she is desperately trying to keep the family together, to protect her children, to make sure that they have their father around; to do the right thing. On a more sinister note sometimes she struggles on because he has told her that the only way she will be leaving is in a box. In order to keep this show on the road, she has to pay a heavy price.

She has to deny her own hurt, anger, fear and pain and effectively numb out, otherwise she will be overwhelmed and fall apart. Unfortunately, when she is tired, or unwell, or just off guard all the feelings she has been refusing to feel - feelings of despair, rage and terror flood her - and she all but drowns until she forces herself back to a state of numbness and carries on. Women describe themselves as being like robots. It's what you do to survive.

Many survivors of abuse develop problems with self-protection because they train themselves not react to situations that are genuinely terrifying and dangerous. During the process of abuse women cannot imagine themselves being in a position of real choice. Because it is far more sensible to keep the person who is most in control of your continued survival happy, women may come to view agency workers who may wish to help as powerless and even dangerous.

After all the police, women's aid or social workers all go home. We are not there twenty four hours each day or seven days each week. We are not obsessed with her and we are not threatening to kill her. How can she trust us - it's her life, her children's lives that are on the line. When she spurns our well-meant attempts to help her we are offended and frustrated, and paradoxically we now decide that it's all her own fault for not leaving - after all haven't we been offering her a way out?

Women can find themselves enmeshed in increasingly hostile, controlling, abusive relationships with the very people and agencies that were once offering to help her. They are demanding that she leaves he's demanding that she stay, they're saying, "think of your children and leave" and then " a man has a right to see his children so you have to keep handing them over to him which means seeing him again so don't run too far will you?"" he's saying "If you try to leave I'll kill you, I'll take the children; I'll kill the children I'll kill myself". No wonder so many abused women describe themselves as going mad with all the pressure and the conflicting demands..

When Brian Keenan, Terry Waite and John McCarthy were released after their hostage ordeal, they were feted as heroes and given a rapturous welcome by the media and society. Abused women and children live a hostage-style ordeal every day of their lives and get precious little recognition of their suffering except for criticism and judgmental attitudes. This is because the appalling nature of what is being done to them is misunderstood; it's invisible. It's not always a haemorrhage or a broken bone; the terrorist doesn't wear a balaclava or brandish a, so it's not real.

It's hard for us to believe that woman and children living in Scotland today have endured a form of captivity similar to the men I've mentioned, but the truth is that they have and they do. While agencies are overall more aware of the issues that she is trying to cope with and the service offered is undoubtedly more effective, there are still tooo many women and

children falling through the gaps in services. To be honest, even if she and the children do get away, there is precious little help available to help them deal with the aftermath of emotional and psychological distress they are carrying. It's usually the woman herself who has to mend not only herself but her children in the face of complete societal indifference. The myth is "once she's left the nightmare is over." For many women it's just going to go on and on.

Many people still think that domestic abuse is about black eyes and broken bones, however for may women it is the psychological and emotional violence which causes the worst, most lasting damage Emotional abuse has been described by as “the most painful” and “the most damaging to self esteem” compared to other forms of abuse. Emotional abuse shreds a woman's sense of self, by systematically attacking her personality, her style of communication, her skills and accomplishments, her values and her dreams. This violence can bring on profound depression and illness, suicide, and murder of the abuser.”

The picture for children isn't any better. The effects on children who witness violence at home include low self-esteem, nightmares, acting out behaviours, anxiety, headaches, bed-wetting. Asthma peptic ulcers, lower social competence, increased aggression, self-harming behaviour, and increased school drop out rates. Leaving doesn't automatically mean that these symptoms of distress disappear.

Abused women are four times more likely than non-abused women to attempt suicide at least once, three times more likely to be diagnosed with mental illness, fifteen more times more likely to develop an alcohol dependency and eight times more likely to become drug-dependent.

When you see the blear-eyed woman with her children and judge her an unfit mother, or the dull stare of the drug-user and condemn her as a parasite on society, think twice before you write her off. She may be living through hell on earth. An abused woman will use alcohol and non-prescription drugs to numb out the pain and distress that she is experiencing. It is a coping mechanism, an attempt at self-medication. It may be the only thing she is able to do to care for herself at that time.

The problem is that when women approach friends, family and agencies for help they may immediately be judged and discredited because they are drug or alcohol dependent.

People often do not understand why she has become this way, and often she is too ashamed to explain.

This can have profound repercussions for the woman, which can include an almost total loss of credibility with agencies with which she may be in contact as part of her help-seeking behaviour. Her own family may reject her.

Let me give you an example. I have written a court report for a woman who had three of her children adopted out from underneath her. She was written off as an unfit mother because of her "failure to protect the children from witnessing his violence towards her". One of the charges against her was that her GP wrote in his report that she had a valium dependency. Well he should know - he'd been prescribing them to her for over seven years.

A negative effect of women using alcohol and drugs to numb out their distress is that it can lead to agencies putting the cart before the horse. It is then suggested that the woman is being abused because she is drug or alcohol dependent, rather than she has developed the dependency in an attempt to numb out the misery of the abuse. Men who use violence against women regularly use threats of disclosure of drug or alcohol dependencies or of mental health issues to discredit women. They regularly threaten to tell agencies that women are unfit mothers. Often they do and are believed because no one bothers to dig a little deeper.

Actually women who experience abuse have traditionally been regarded with mistrust and suspicion, and there has always been the issue of the extent to which a woman might contribute to her own destruction. In the United Kingdom this woman-blaming attitude was exemplified by the psychiatrist Gayford (1975) who suggested that women are abused because of their own self-destructive nature.

In this unedifying study abused women were given such titles as “Go-go Gloria’, “Tortured Tina” and “Fanny the Flirt”. Subsequent research has totally discredited this model, however agency response has continued to be underpinned to a greater or lesser extent by the belief that if she is being abused, a woman is somehow partly responsible.

In our research into statutory agency response to abused women, workers responses suggested that domestic abuse was seen to occur in problem families where drug or alcohol abuse was an issue and where children would grow up to perpetuate a never-

ending cycle of abuse. A small number of workers believed that abused women are weak and a much larger number believed that abused women keep on choosing abusive men.

Some advocate marital or family therapy as a more neutral "middle way". This is downright dangerous and is predicated on the belief that he is motivated a) to be honest and b) to take responsibility of his actions and c) to change his behaviour. He isn't. When family therapy is utilised then the cause of her distress, her abusive partner, is brought in as part of the cure - this kind of social homeopathy is counter-productive. How can she talk honestly about what is happening to her when she then has to go home with this man and, perhaps, because she has broken silence, receive a lethal dose of him. So she accepts his assertion that her "nagging", her "mood swings", her "PMT" are the reason that the relationship is in trouble, just so she doesn't have to tell the truth. It is then recorded that she accepts that she is the problem; discredited again!

She may feel forced to lie about her Housing history or Benefits entitlement because she needs to get away or because she is desperate for money to feed the children or pay the rent. She may be coerced into illegal or anti-social behaviour in order to placate her abuser or to obtain enough money to survive. She may deny the amount or level of abuse she is experiencing because she is afraid that the Social Work Department will take her children

As a result of this kind of behaviour she is likely to be discredited, blamed and unsupported. Workers do not understand why she is behaving this way - that she is desperately trying to exercise some kind of control in a situation where by definition she has no control at all.

They do not understand the terror she is experiencing or the danger she is in. Because of this women are all too often offered an inconsistent, judgmental service which can further silence her and leave her feeling that she has no option but to stay with the abuser.

Basically unless the woman appears to be poor but honest with patched but shining children she is likely to find herself judged and found wanting. If she is aggressive or hostile - which are normal responses to the abuse she has experience - she is likely to receive a grudging or inappropriate service as agency workers respond only to her anger.

The children fare no better.. The Children's Act Scotland is regularly being used by violent and abusive men to continue to abuse and intimidate their family after they have fled the violence. In spite of the fact that men who use violence against women are significantly

more likely to abuse children in the home, violence towards the mother is regularly discounted when awarding contact and residence awards to abusive men. Sheriffs routinely award child contact and residency to men who have abused their families. A recent study in London has showed that of 58 women who left their partners because of domestic violence, 53 of them continued to experience violence at child access. One thing we have learned in Women's Aid in more than 25 years of providing a direct service to abused women and children is this - if she's not OK, they're not OK. It's quite simple.

Another problem in the way we respond to women experiencing domestic abuse is the response has traditionally centred on the woman and/or children, while the real cause of the problem, the abusive man, is often invisible in agency assessments of the situation. Research has shown that abusive men do not expect to face any repercussions, social, legal or financial because of their violence.

The focus is on the woman to leave the man, her home, her community, her social supports as she will be held accountable for her children's safety. Yet research shows that one third of women continue to experience significant levels of abuse long after leaving, while women are most likely to be killed or seriously injured at the point of leaving or after they have left.

I would suggest that there is no other crime in this country where the victim is treated in this way. For example, we do not say to people who have been burgled , "Well you chose to have nice things in your house, so it's your own fault you were robbed," or " you need to leave" or "You must take total responsibility for protecting your home from thieves or we'll take it away from you." We don't expect to have to pay the police to investigate crime and catch the criminal.

We do say to women who have experienced abuse, however, "Well you chose him so it's your own fault," or "You must leave," or "You must take total responsibility for protecting your children from his criminal behaviour or we'll take them away from you."

It costs around £1400 for a non-harassment order to try to keep the abusive man away. If she is working, she will often be expected to pay some or all of this amount within a ten month period. If she tries to protect her children from further contact with th4e abusive man she can expect to lose everything. We know that women who leave abusive men tend to experience quite extreme poverty - yet we expect them to pay for the right to feel safe in

their home. Having told them that they must leave to protect the children we then expect them to facilitate contact between their children and the cause of the problem.

It's time to turn this issue on its head and to focus on the cause of the problem - the violent abusive man. If anyone is to be held responsible and accountable it must be him. I would like to hear a lot less abut father's tights and a lot more about father's responsibilities. A good father is a wonderful asset to children - a bad father is a nightmare.

So where do we fit in as individuals, as communities as churches? Our response is crucial. A poor response is ineffective adds immeasurably to her entrapment and distress. It might also cost her her life. We have just two choices to be part of the problem or part of the solution. Sitting on the fence is not an option.

We become part of the problem when we fail to keep confidentiality; when we trivialise and minimise her experience of abuse; when we blame *her* for *his* violence. We add to her distress and the unbearable anxiety and pressure she is experiencing when we try to force her to leave, or threaten to take her children because of his violence - when we don't put her safety right at the centre of what we do to help and support her.

Women and children can die when we fail to put together effective strategies to ensure their safety... As institutions, as communities and as individuals we need to declare zero tolerance for this running sore on the face of society. Abuse survivors need effective protection, both while they are in the situation and after they have left.

We fail her when we do not respond to her fear. She is an expert in her own abuse. We fail her when we fail to recognise the dynamic of love and protection between her and her children. Research has shown that in the overwhelming majority of cases, the best way to protect the children is to protect the mother. As I have said, in Women's Aid, with more than twenty five years of work in this area we know that if the mother is not OK, then neither are the children. We cannot protect them if we do not support her.

We fail her when we punish her for his violence or when we record domestic abuse as "family difficulties." We fail her when we tell her to try harder to please him or when we judge her unfavourably because of her distress and anger due to her suffering. We can do better.

We fail her when we blindly believe what the abuser tells us, when we fail to recognise that he has his own agenda that includes preserving the status quo. Just because he doesn't attack us doesn't mean he doesn't attack her.

Many women do not want to leave. They simply want the violence to cease, yet there is no service offered in this area to families. Such a service would have to concentrate on her safety while addressing issues of his abuse. We may feel sceptical that his behaviour will change, however she may not be able to leave until she has tried all ways to end the abuse, and in some cases he may learn to make better choices. The clearer we are as agencies and as communities that domestic abuse is completely unacceptable, the more motivated abusive men will be to end their violences.

Like Martin Luther I too have a dream. A dream of a time when we stop focusing on women who are experiencing abuse as the problem and turn our attention instead to the real problem - her partner's violence.

A dream of a time when we have adequate, securely funded, flexible resources to support women and children who are experiencing domestic abuse, and for such services to be implemented by workers who are all properly trained in this kind of work.

A time when any man who uses violence against his partner or children will be given clear, unambiguous messages by friends, family, religious leaders, colleagues and agencies that his behaviour is totally unacceptable. A time when he will be held accountable for his abuse and responsible for ensuring that he takes whatever steps are necessary to change.

We can only achieve this by an ongoing commitment to challenge any tolerance, tacit or explicit, of domestic abuse. St Adomnan recognised this when he rang his bell against the abuse of women and children. Abuse thrives on silence - so let's make some noise!

**Mairead Tagg**

***Rev Kathy Galloway, Leader of the Iona Community***

**PROFILE;** Our second Keynote speaker is Rev Kathy Galloway, who is known to many of you as the new Leader of the Iona Community. Until recently she worked tirelessly for the agency, Church Action on Poverty dealing with many issues throughout Scotland & beyond. She is also a practical theologian and writer. As a member of VASHTI (Scottish Christian Women Against Abuse), supports women who have experienced abuse in a religious context. She is a member of the Churches Together in Britain & Ireland (CTBI) Working Group on Sexual Abuse.

**PRESENTATION;** I want to begin this morning by telling some stories.

I want to tell you about a young woman who was sexually assaulted, not by a monstrous stranger but by a man close to her, whom she loved and trusted. The violation took place, not in a dark alley, but in the home of a family member, her

abuser. She was tricked and exploited through her kindness, and through having been socialised to take care of men. She said no, but her refusal was not respected. After raping her, the man treated her with hatred and contempt, and she was thrown out of the house. When she sought help from another of her brothers, she was told to keep quiet and say nothing about it to anyone.

I want to tell you about a young woman trafficked to a foreign country as a domestic servant; about how the wealthy woman she was working for, unable to have children and desperate, used her as a surrogate mother, then when she herself unexpectedly became pregnant, threw her and her child out and abandoned them to a hostile environment.

I want to tell you about another young woman, handed over by the man she was living with to a group of thugs, to be passed around from man to man like a piece of meat, of how she was gangraped to death, of how her body was cut into pieces, of how she was unmourned and unprotected by her partner.

I want to tell you about a thirteen year old girl sexually abused by her pastor to the extent of being forced to have sexual intercourse, about how she was threatened that if she did not submit and stay silent, she would be taken away from her parents.

My last story is one of a gentle woman in late middle-age describing the seventeen years of extreme violence, physical, psychological and spiritual, that she suffered at the hands of her husband, a Christian minister. In dispassionate tones, she told how she finally found the resolve to leave him when her doctor, with whom she was discussing whether she would need a mastectomy, such were the wounds she had received on her breasts, asked her what she would do if she found herself in a field with a raging bull. 'Run', she answered. 'That's what you should do now', her doctor said.

I don't really want to tell you these stories. They're not pleasant to listen to, and they arouse powerful and mixed emotions in me, and perhaps in you too - of anger, of shame, of defensiveness and fear, and perhaps of a resentment that I should have to tell them at all and know that you may not like me for telling them. But I tell them for a number of reasons.

**The prophetic breaking of silence**

First, the stories come from different sources and different places, but one of the interesting things about them is that they are only a selection from many I could have chosen. In the last few years there has been increasing media coverage of violence against women and children. You probably are aware of much of it yourselves; the reports on domestic child abuse, which is so much more prevalent than attack by strangers, or the Metropolitan Police/Women's Aid survey indicating that every minute or so in London, someone calls to report an incidence of domestic violence, and that these figures suggest that the unreported incidents are much higher.

These stories are just the tip of the iceberg. But horrendous though they are, it is good that we are hearing them. Because beyond the words that tell them, the stories have a sound. **It is the sound of silence breaking.**

It is only very recently that the relentless onslaught of violence against women has even begun to be acknowledged in this country. This is a global pandemic; recognised as a major health hazard to women by the British Medical Association, but found in every country in the world. Violence against women takes many forms: domestic violence, incest and child sexual abuse, sexual harassment, rape and sexual violence, unrealistic and degrading representations of women in the media, trafficking in women (a modern form of slavery) female genital mutilation; institutional gender violence; sexual violence as a weapon of war, and this is by no means an exhaustive list. Our focus today is particularly on domestic abuse, but that form of violence is

not really separate from the others – together they form part of the climate and culture of abuse of women which allows all of them to spawn. They are many heads of one Hydra.

When a silence is broken in the interest of confronting injustices, what we are hearing is **prophesy.** Prophetic voices are those which read the signs of the times in the light of the justice and love of God, and speak out against all which distorts or diminishes the image of God in human beings. In doing so, they may come into conflict with the status quo, with powerful interests who have an investment in the way things are. They may struggle with questions of resisting and confronting established power. The Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann, reflecting on Israel as a community of intentional resistance to the oppressive power of Egypt, identifies what he calls **liturgical resistance (1)**, the imagination of a free space outside the hegemony of the oppressor. Through the regular re-enactment of the Exodus story, using poetry, sacrament, sign and drama, it provides a script for an alternative practice, which incorporates:

- The public voicing of pain
- A critique that ridicules established power
- The song and dance of the women as a gesture of defiance.

It seems to me that what we are seeing, and hearing, now is a kind of modern version of that resistance, women breaking through barriers of culture, nationality, religion, politics and status with a public voicing of their pain that says; we will no longer keep silent about this, it is no longer acceptable to hide the bruises, to cover up for the perpetrators, to maintain the front of respectability.

And what we are seeing and hearing is a critique that will not any longer accept as valid or legitimate the established power on which violence against women and

children was predicated. Twenty years ago, it was routine for the police to dismiss appalling violence as 'just a domestic.' Not any more. Though provision is still patchy, police support is much improved, and there are a few parts of the country where the police are genuinely pioneering new and effective ways of responding to domestic abuse.

Twenty years ago, it was still quite legal for a man to rape his wife. Not any more. Gradually, the law is beginning to reflect in practice what it previously only reflected in theory; that women and children have the fullness of humanity, not just men, and are entitled in their own right to protection and equal treatment under the law. Of course, there are still some glaring exceptions to this, and I want to come back to these, but particularly with Britain's incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights, we are moving nearer to a time when the law may actually be used to deliver justice rather than guard the interests of the powerful. And it is extremely encouraging that the Scottish Parliament has taken domestic abuse as a priority for response in its first term.

But it is not just the public voicing of pain, and the public critique which matters. In the imagining of a free space, a place free from abuse and violence, a place of wellbeing for women and their children who have experienced terrible things, it is not enough just to survive; though for many, that is miracle indeed. It is also important to have the song and dance of the women, the defiant determination that says, we will not be diminished, we will not be shamed, we will go on struggling and hoping and having a laugh and getting dressed up and making the best that we can of our lives. A couple of years ago in Bosnia, visiting a women's centre in a community where young girls had been abused, traumatised and deeply impoverished, it was wonderful to talk about fashion and film stars.

At the WCC General Assembly in Harare, the Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama spoke powerfully… *'what is love if it remains invisible and intangible? Those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen cannot love God whom they have not seen. The devastating poverty in which millions of children live is visible. Racism is visible. Machine guns are visible. Starved bodies are visible. The gap between rich and poor is glaringly visible. Our response to these realities must be visible. Grace cannot function in a world of invisibility. Yet in our world, the rulers try to make invisible the alien, the orphan, the hungry and thirsty, the sick and imprisoned. This is violence. Their bodies must remain visible. There is a connection between invisibility and violence. People, because of the image of God they embody, must remain seen. Faith, hope and love are not vital except in what is seen. Religion seems to raise up the invisible and despise what is visible. But it is the 'see, hear, touch' gospel that can nurture the hope which is free from deception.*

Telling the stories, breaking the silence, coming out of the shadows, however uncomfortable or disquieting it may be, really matters. It is prophetic, saying no to an unjust and dehumanising status quo; but also envisioning a life and a community which is peaceful, just and free from abuse. The prophetic voices are, of course, those of the women who speak out with great courage, and often at great cost, of what they have experienced. But ' the wound of the daughter of my people wounds me too'. For as the hearings on violence at the Women's Decade Festival in Zimbabwe affirmed, 'your story is my story', and to accompany and affirm women in their breaking of the silence is also important. I congratulate the organisers of this event for an important stand on violence against women.

**Women, religion and violence**

I said earlier that I wanted to tell these stories for a number of reasons. As well as the prophetic importance of breaking the silence, they are also a reminder that

biblically, the prophetic word was addressed quite specifically to the **community of faith**. Nor did the prophets go in very much for making high-sounding abstract generalisations of the 'justice and peace is a great idea and wouldn't it be great if more people did it' kind. Their call was historical, contextual, directed against specific concrete social and economic practices in a particular place at a particular time. That is to say, it was political.

It was rooted in a passionate belief that the covenant relationship of God with the people of Israel demanded that the relationships of the people **with each other** should reflect and replicate that covenant. No pious practices, sacrifices, visiting holy places or indeed any kind of formalism that left social morality unaffected could avert the reality of God's judgement. It was a dangerous illusion to suggest that no harm could befall a people chosen to receive the covenant. It was precisely **because** they were people who had been liberated by the Exodus, had received both the Law and the promise, that they were particularly under judgement. Of all people, they were the ones who should turn from oppressing and enslaving others.

And as followers of Jesus, sharers in the new covenant, we too have to take a relationship to the judgement of the world. By the authority of scripture, church and tradition, we stand in judgement on the world and find it wanting. But that judgement is a two-edged sword. For in confronting the world with our texts and dogmas, we are in turn confronted by the world, which shows us to ourself as church.

And nowhere is this more evident at the moment than around issues of personal violence and abuse. We are becoming well aware of the catastrophic damage that has been done to the Christian church by disclosures of child physical, sexual and emotional abuse. This is often attributed to a few bad apples, deviant individuals who failed to practice what they preached. And it is true that when people who represent an institution are guilty of malpractice, their guilt tends to stick to other, more

innocent people as well, just by virtue of association. But it is not a satisfactory excuse on any count. What a genuinely horrified society sees is not just the perpetrators-but the people who looked on and did nothing, who knew what was going on and crossed to the other side, who covered up, kept silent, colluded and were complicit. 'For evil to triumph, it is only necessary for good people to do nothing.' But even beyond the complicity, we have to ask harder questions about whether there are aspects of our religion which have legitimated and given authorization for abuse and violence. Perhaps we have to face the fact that some at least of these people, far from failing to practice what they preached, were in fact practising, albeit with excessive zeal, **exactly** what they preached. 'for your own good'.

Of the stories I told at the beginning, two related to violent physical and sexual abuse of women by clergy. **It is not true that abuse only happens in poor or working-class homes. It is not true that abuse is only perpetrated by atheists and non-Christians. It happens everywhere; it may be happening in your church, in your community, in your street.** And our scriptures are full of stories of violence against women, dozens of them, they are commonplace. The woman raped by one brother and silenced by another was Tamar, daughter of king David. The woman trafficked into slavery and sexual surrogacy then brutally thrown out and left to die was Hagar. The woman offered for gangrape by her partner, and then mutilated to death and after death was the Levites' concubine in the book of Judges.

Or what about the daughters of Lot, offered by their father as sexual playthings to save **his** honour? Or Dinah, Jacob's daughter, another rape victim, or Jepthah's daughter, dead because her father could dispose of human life as easily as taking the rubbish out, and he made stupid promises? Long-ago times, different cultures, different ways of understanding the world. Of course. Indeed. And yet....the really frightening thing about these stories is not the fate of the women, terrible though

that was. The first awful thing is that **no one** in the stories cares about the women; their suffering is not regarded with compassion or regret or even anger. There is no loyalty to them, no care for them, no tenderness towards them. **They do not matter**. The only offence considered is that given to the honour of the men to whom they were attached. All their stories became men's business.

The second awful thing is that it has taken the Christian church nigh on 2000 years to notice that no one cared about these women. This is our holy book, but we have read it with blinkers. We have read it, women too, through the eyes of men, and it has materially affected the ways that women have been treated for centuries..

Shall I speak of a million women burned as witches? Or about women refused any pain relief in childbirth because it was their destiny to bear children with suffering? Shall I speak of the insults, calumnies, degradations, humiliations, offenses, wounds and deaths offered to women by men of the Christian church just because they were women and bore the curse of Eve.

I do not forget that, as Monica Furlong rather acerbically said, if we had to wait for the churches to promote tertiary education for women, the Married Woman's Property Act, the franchise, entry to the professions, equal pay for equal work, the Sex Discrimination Act, and many other measures vital to women's health and wellbeing, we should still be waiting. Indeed, the churches frequently opposed such reforms.

Shall I speak of the rapes, the batterings, the abuses still going on, of the countries, many of them Christian, where rape is used as a weapon of war. Shall I speak of the violation of pastoral relationship by inappropriate, unsavoury and in some cases criminal abuse of authority towards vulnerable people? Shall I speak of the suffering of women at the hands of the church?

No. I would rather speak of the pathology of worshipping a God who could be thought to desire human sacrifice, who could be assumed to place male honour over female life. I would rather speak of the dangers of theology which is happy to persist in willed ignorance about the biology of human life so it can continue to consider female menstruating bodies as unclean and women as weaker vessels; a theology which has laid on women not only the duty to endure violence in marriage but also made her responsible for her abuser's salvation through her own example of patient endurance, and which has placed a higher value on the maintenance of the institution than on justice and female health.

I would rather speak of a church which turns women away from the sacrament and is embarrassed by them in the community when they leave abusive marriages; which has consistently closed ranks and has preferred silence to truth.

I would rather speak of an idolatry of the Bible which has legitimized the beating and abusing of children in terms of 'sparing the rod and spoiling the child', which has made of honouring thy father and mother a fetish, which has made the possession of a penis the definitive factor in authority and decision-making. I love the story of the feeding of the multitude by the lake, not least for the bit that says, *'everyone ate, and had enough*.' It is, I think, one of the most beautiful lines in the Bible, this picture of sufficiency, of sharing -'everyone ate, and had enough.' But the story also demonstrates, simply and rather appallingly, two thousand years of a particular blindness of Christian history: ' *the number who ate was about five thousand men**, not counting the women and children***.' (Or, as the Jerusalem Bible has it, '*to say nothing of the women and children'*. (Matt.14,21)I What a history of exclusion that sums up, of the people who are not counted, who have been, and continue to be, invisible in so many ways- in their poverty, in their unnoticed labour, in their wasted potential.

I would rather speak of an understanding of gender relationships which has sanctified the domination and control of one gender by another. Domestic violence and sexual violence are rooted in the belief that one partner has the right to control the other, and that, to quote the Southern Baptists of America, only last year, the proper role of the woman is one of 'gracious submission.' I was interested to read recently that former US President Jimmy Carter, a lifelong Baptist, and his wife Rosalyn Carter, have left their church in protest.

The thing that most appalls me is not the extent of the violence so many women suffer, terrible though it is. It is that for so many women, all their Christian conditioning has brought them to believe that to be beaten and raped nearly to death is somehow their duty to endure. It would be considered a terrible injury in war or civic society, but in Christian marriage, the most intimate and supposedly loving of all relationships, it's been thought OK?

People often ask why women don't just leave their abusive partners. Perhaps the difficulty of doing that has some light thrown on it when we ask, why don't abused women just leave their churches? Many do, of course, and continue to do business with God elsewhere. But as with abused women, it's not so simple. I do not want to suggest that all, or even many men in the churches are abusers, or that all women are invisible, or suffer violence in the church. But part of what it means to be church, to be part of the body, is the recognition that if one part suffers, all the other parts suffer with it. '*The wound of the daughter of my people wounds me too.*'

**Interconnected concerns**

During the WCC Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, its mid-decade team visits to churches around the world identified a number of key concerns that showed remarkable consistency, whether the women were coming from poor southern countries or rich northern ones. These findings have been confirmed by

dozens of other local, national and international women's networks and organisations globally, including the UN Decade for Women. Furthermore, they unite women of different faiths and none. These four concerns are:

**The invisibility of women**; their low level of access to and participation in structures of both society and church; in leadership, in decision-making, in availability of resources, education and information

**Racism and xenephobia**; which are emerging in new forms across the world; in ethnic cleansing, in the increased numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers; in internal ethnic and racial conflicts, as well as in the more wearily familiar guises.

**Economic injustice;** the adverse impact of globalised economic systems affects women and children disproportionately

And last, but by no means least, **violence against women.**

All of them affect women everywhere. Global problems show up as local issues. They show up, among things, as domestic abuse. In a globalised world, the violence of poverty that is a denial of human rights may affect 95% of women in one country and only 20% in another. But the causes of their poverty will be the same. They are redundant to the requirements of a globalised free market economy. Poor women in Britain don't have very much visibility and are afforded very little respect, failing as they do to conform to the media and consumer-driven image of the 'have-it-all, do-it-all' successful woman. They're more likely to be allocated a social worker, lectured by government ministers and find their neighbourhoods routinely referred to as 'sinks.' Their only crime is to be poor, but in our culture, that is treated as a moral failing.

And for women who are already invisible, who are economically oppressed, who suffer violence, racism renders all of these more acute, more fearful, more life-threatening. Women from ethnic minorities, refugees, asylum seekers, gypsies, those perceived to

be outsiders of one kind or another, have less access to resources and less resources to access; are more likely to be victimized, stereotyped, patronized; are less likely to be asked what their needs are, or even to be communicated with in appropriate ways or in their own language; and some women who experience violence may be caught between community pressures to stay silent and racism if they break the silence.

The church that offers hurt also offers healing. We are beginning, slowly and painfully, to recognise that our churches are institutionally racist ;the journey to recognising our institutionalized gender violence is an even slower one.

Part of that journey has been the struggle for women to distinguish between the God who, in Jesus Christ, loves, affirms and believes in women, and the church which doesn't always seem to. Women stay because they love Jesus. They know that, to quote Musimbi Kanyoro, General Secretary of the World YWCA: *'during his life here on earth, Jesus visited the towns and villages and saw with his own eyes the problems facing the people. He saw poverty, the inequality, the religious and economic oppression, the unemployment, the depression, the physically ill and the socially unclean. His heart was filled with pity. He pronounced what his mission was all about: he came to preach the good news to the poor and to release those who are captives and give health to those who are ill.* **(2)** In him, they see the possibility of a new kind of community, a true community of women and men.

In searching for hints of that true community, women all over the world have been reading the Bible and the history of the church from another angle, rediscovering the hidden histories, the silenced voices, the notes on the margins. They are seeking the God of Jesus Christ, the motherly God who comes close in the Word made flesh. They are seeking the women and men whose spirituality is one of hope, of courage, of compassion, of inclusion, of persistance and resistance. They are drinking from these

wells being uncovered in many places, in many traditions, in the wisdom of the body and the wisdom of the earth.

But if we truly experience that 'the wound of the daughter of my people wounds me too', then solidarity is not enough. One of the hard lessons of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women was that it had really been about women being in solidarity with each other and solidarity from the churches with women was a rarer commodity. But perhaps it was necessary for women to stand together to gain the confidence not to seek solidarity from churches but to hold them accountable.

Increasingly, women will not readily go back to a time when they would endure regular beatings from their partners at the injunction of the church. They have recognised that to do so is not only to accept a devalued status as human for themselves, but is to be complicit in another person's injustice and in the harming of their children. They will separate, remove themselves from another's overwhelming need to be dominant. But this does not mean their wish is to see abusers in their turn be degraded, dehumanised and controlled.

We have children, female and male, and we love them all. We want there to be instead a culture which does not glorify violence, which does not represent it a thousand ways every day in our media as an ideal of strength and power. If we start small, where we can, if we pay attention to the boundary disputes before they grow into internecine warfare, if we continue to break the silence on violence against women and demand that our churches take it seriously and address it as if women matter, perhaps we can begin to create a culture of right relationship rather than a culture of violence, a world in which it is so easy to go to war, or to war by proxy against the bodies and spirits of women. And if even a tenth of the money that is spent worldwide on armaments was diverted into training, resourcing and encouraging the skills of

peacemaking, conflict resolution, confronting violence and **doing justice**, perhaps we might live in a safer world. It would be a good investment in the future.

For the sake of that future, therefore, and the vision of the true community of women and men, I want to ask for your solidarity and to hold you accountable, and I encourage you to ask the same of me.

If you believe that all are made equally in the image of God, that that image is broken every time violence is perpetrated on women and children and on men who do not conform to dominant images of masculinity

Then I hold you accountable for refusing any theology or ideology that legitimizes violence, and for breaking the silence and complicity with violence of our churches.

If you are a man, I hold you accountable for taking responsibility for male violence and refusing to see it as a 'woman's problem' or expecting women to solve it for men.

And I, for my part, will be accountable for recognising and affirming the solidarity demonstrated by considerable numbers of men in the church, and for working for a diversity of human community in which women and men are valued equally.

**Kathy Galloway**

**Notes**

**(1)** W. Brueggemann, *Texts That Linger, Words That Explode* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press 2000)

**(2)** M. Kanyoro, quoted in *"Your story is my story, your story is our story', the book of the Decade Festival* (Justice, Peace and Creation Team, WCC, Geneva 1999)

**Drama Presentation; By members of VASHTI**

**<u>Domestic Abuse</u> - <u>Myths & Reality</u>**

***MYTHS*; After each statement is read out, someone comes forward and *places* a scarf over the woman sitting on a chair.**

1. **It's just a tiff…**
2. **Abuse is a private matter. No one should disrupt family sanctity…**
3. **Abuse doesn't happen in Christian homes…**
4. **Women ask for it. They drive men to violence…**
5. **Abused women like it or they wouldn't stay…**
6. **Drinking causes abusive behaviour…**
7. **The abuser is not a loving partner…**
8. **Pregnant women are safe from violent attacks by their male partners…**
9. **There's no point in helping abused women. They'll just go back again…**

***REALITY*; After each statement is read out, someone comes forward and *removes* a scarf from the woman sitting on a chair.**

1. **It is not just a tiff, it is violence and abuse…**
2. **Family sanctity does not exist when one or more member are abused…**
3. **The proportion of abused women within the churches is no different from society at large…**
4. **Stress & conflict are part of any relationship - violence is never an appropriate way to solve a problem…**

5. **Women stay for various reasons - the hope that he will change; the guilt of breaking up the family; or simply that they have no place to go…**
6. **Drink nor drugs cause abusive behaviour, the abuser does…**
7. **The abuser may be passionately loving at times thus keeping the abused partner in the relationship…**
8. **Pregnancy makes women even more vulnerable and this may well be the time that the abuse started…**
9. **Women go back for varied and complex reasons - harassment from partners; external pressures; lack of support from church or community…**

Delegates broke into small groups for a short time and then an opportunity was given for questions to the speakers.

*Baillie Christopher Mason*, representing the Lord Provost, welcomed everyone to the City of Glasgow and spoke about the need to speak out
Rev Professor Davidson then brought the morning session to its conclusion with Grace.

A buffet lunch was served, courtesy of the Glasgow City Council

## *Workshops*

**Each workshop was held twice so that delegates could attend two.**

1. Children's Voices by Women's Aid
2. Working Together - Possibilities & Barriers
3. The Police - Response to Domestic Abuse
4. Housing
5. Out of the Shadows -
6. Responding to Domestic Abuse in a Church Context
7. Children & The Legal System

8. Use of Experimental Techniques with Domestically Abusive Men by SACRO
9. Castlemilk Domestic Violence Project
10. Women's Health by GGHB
11. The Media & Abuse
12. Specialised Services to Black & African Women
13. Abuse & Disability ;- Our experience, does it count?
14. Elderly Abuse by Age Concern
15. It couldn't happen to me - work with young people Glasgow City Council Education Department

After the delegates had attended the workshops of their choice they again gathered for a plenary where questions were raised on the many aspects of abuse and its effect, particularly, on women and children.

Dr Lesley Orr McDonald asked if she could address the delegates to say a little about her work with the World Council of Churches (WCC). She highlighted the work being done globally on abuse.

Alison Twaddle, Secretary of the Guild of the Church of Scotland gave the vote of thanks to all who came together to help plan the conference and to those who had offered support, particularly the Scottish Executive, both for financial support and for making this issue a priority for the Parliament - to eradicate this ugly flaw from the fabric of our society.

It has been a challenge to the Churches, who must not remain silent when our political leaders speak with such a prophetic voice and therefor it is good to have Bishop John Mone and Professor Robert Davidson at the top table representing two of the major denominations and we thank them for their presence and good wishes.

Also to be thanked are the City of Glasgow for their hospitality and for the thoughtful greetings conveyed by Baillie Christopher Mason, and the staff of the Glasgow Caledonian University for their help with the practical arrangements for the day. The Conference has been challenged by two excellent addresses - from Dr Mairead Tagg of Women's Aid on

the myths and realities of domestic abuse; and from Rev Kathy Galloway on the need to respond as faith communities from the context in which we find ourselves today. The range of workshops offered by individuals and organisations, both secular and religious has been greatly appreciated and thanks go to all who have prepared and presented them. Lastly we must record our thanks to all who participated in the planning team, particularly Jean, who chaired both the planning group and today's conference so efficiently and to the office staff at the National Commission for Social
Care. For those of us who have been involved from the start, it has been a
valuable learning process, as we hope it has been for everyone here today.
Thank you for your presence. Please join me in thanking all who have
contributed to the day. "

*Financial Support was received from; Scottish Executive; The Guild - Church of Scotland; Methodist Church; National Council - Union of Catholic Mothers; The Women's Network - Methodist Church.*

Major May Patrick of the Salvation Army, was invited to bring the day's proceedings to a close with a prayer.

About 120 delegates from Ireland to the borders attended this day conference on domestic abuse. Initially churches and related organisations of all denominations, Christian & non Christian, were invited. It soon became clear that other contacts should be made. These included agencies working for the welfare of young and old alike, including the voluntary sector, statutory and political. Professionals from different areas were approached and they warmly welcomed such a conference, which not only gave an opportunity to raise awareness of this issue, but, also enabled them to meet and discuss the work being done at present and a vision for the future. It also highlighted the need for communities to be much more aware of certain sign & symptoms and learn how to respond appropriately.

*Jean Urquhart* ; Bishop John Mone of Paisley and Revd Professor Robert Davidson were special guests to the conference. Bishop Mone opened the proceedings with a prayer,

accompanied by the ceremonial ringing of a bell, in memory of St Adomnan, who proclaimed a law in the year 697, to protect women and children against violence.

Baillie Christopher Mason, representing the lord Provost, Mr. Alex Mosson, welcomed us to the civic hospitality, with best wishes from the City Council.

Revd Davidson, representing the Moderator, Revd Finlay McDonald, kindly said Grace for us, before we went into lunch.

There are many acknowledgements to be made to those who contributed to the success of the Domestic Abuse Conference. Thanks to the conference & events staff of Caledonian University, for making the venue a comfortable experience for delegates, who were absorbing information on an uncomfortable topic. Glasgow City Council afforded a splendid buffet, which made us feel well cared for, on a day when we heard about those who, unfortunately, experience abuse. The National Commission for Social Care gave generously of administrative time and expertise, as well as use of premises for planning meeting.

The inter-church planning group gave of their time & energy, with great good humour, co-operation and the best of networking.

Workshop leaders donated precious weekend time to afford a wide range of topics to delegates. Workshop themes raised awareness of many kinds of abusive situations and responses to them.

Financial support was gratefully received from the Scottish Executive and Scottish Churches, allowing this conference to be viable.

Participants brought life to the conference with their enthusiasm and commitment. Thank you for attending.

The intention is not to stop here, but to keep the conference aims alive by continuing to co-operate as churches together, to combat ignorance and apathy on the subject of domestic abuse.

Evaluation Forms; On reading these, it is clear that conferences on domestic abuse is asked to be held on a regular basis and in different parts of the country.

Overall, the feeling was that the day had been successful but did raise the need to address the issues on an ongoing basis.

It had been agreed that all donations received at the conference would be used by Easterhouse Women's Aid project who are about to open a new women's refuge.

Women's Aid National Helpline Telephone Number; 0800 027 1234

Vashti; Scottish Christian Women against abuse; Tel; 01738 850 995

*The Planning Group - 18 September 2002*

***Extra copies of this report can be obtained from;***

***National Commission for Social Care, Conference Planning Group***
**19a Park Circus, Glasgow G3 6BE.**
**Telephone: 0141 331 0083  Fax: 0141 332 2190**
**e-mail  nacosoca@business.ntl.com**
**e-mail admin nacosoca@ukgateway.net**
**or Church Web Sites.**