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News and Updates from CONNECT



CONNECT Newsletter

Issue No. 12

Faith and Intimate Violence

Studies show that women who are actively involved in their faith communities are no less vulnerable to intimate violence than those who are not. **No woman should have to choose between safety for herself and her children and her community of faith** yet, in New York City, there are many women of faith who must struggle with this complicated and painful choice.

What to Do?

From the streets of Brooklyn to the streets of Queens, CONNECT asked the women of New York what they wanted and needed most when forced to deal with abuse. Our on-the-ground research (2003-2005) confirmed what we had learned from experience and what we continue to hear to this day: Women of faith prefer to turn to their religious leaders and faith communities when they are dealing with abusive partners - and when they do so, their suffering is too often dismissed, misunderstood or attributed to some failing on their own part.

On the other hand, research and subsequent experience confirmed that faith leaders and communities who are educated, prepared, and committed not only offer tremendous support to families struggling with intimate violence but also are critical partners in the movement to end it.

CONNECT Faith

That was the beginning of **CONNECT Faith**.

Addressing intimate partner violence as a theological, pastoral, spiritual, and social justice issue, we collaborate with New York City's diverse faith communities to prevent and eliminate family violence. We offer ongoing education for religious leaders and people of faith as well as information about resources and appropriate referrals. Technical assistance is available for religious leaders dealing with crisis intervention as well as the long term work to develop culturally and religiously relevant practices and policies. Every month, the Interfaith Theological Roundtable, which welcomes all faiths, meets to discuss the practical, pastoral, theological, and spiritual challenges of working with victims and perpetrators of violence in a faith based context.

"A Sanctuary of Safety, Intimate Justice, and Peace"

A recent autumn Sunday morning found **CONNECT Faith** in a joint project with The Riverside Church. Dr. Traci C. West, Professor of Ethics and African American Studies at Drew University Theological School, author of the groundbreaking *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women Violence and Resistance*

Faith Communities and Intimate Violence

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Mission

CONNECT is dedicated to preventing interpersonal violence and promoting gender justice. By building partnerships with individuals and communities, we strive to help change the beliefs, behaviors and institutions that perpetuate violence. Through legal empowerment, grassroots mobilization and transformative education, we seek to create safe families and peaceful communities.

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Legal Advocacy Helpline:
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Ethics, and a member of CONNECT's advisory board, preached a powerful sermon.



The sermon titled **"God's Shalom Instead of Shaming Violence"** focused on bringing the issue of abuse to the forefront of the social justice ministry deeply embedded in this particular faith community. Following this extraordinary service, congregants were invited to meet for the purpose of making Riverside "A Sanctuary of Safety Where Justice and Peace Can be Experienced by All" and the *Intimate Justice Working Group of Riverside Church* was born.

In the coming year the *Intimate Justice Working Group* and **CONNECT Faith** will educate the church about domestic violence through seminars, Bible studies, and a variety of groups and resources that will respond to the needs of the church and community.

Not by CONNECT Faith Alone

This is not an issue limited to one congregation or faith or even only to those within faith communities. Communities of faith, their leaders, and the secular entities who interact with them have the potential to play a significant role in helping to prevent and eliminate family violence. Envisioning a city where safe families and peaceful communities can flourish, **CONNECT Faith** is committed to working in collaboration with New York City's diverse faith communities to create and strengthen their response to gender and family violence. **You can help support CONNECT Faith** by attending an [Interfaith Roundtable](#), by seeking training and assistance from CONNECT Educators, or by forwarding this email to friends and family. If wish to become a partner or for more information about CONNECT Faith please contact us at connectfaith@connectnyc.org.

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*NEXT Newsletter Issue:
What links animal abuse
and human violence?*

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