

Shalom!

A JOURNAL FOR THE PRACTICE OF RECONCILIATION
Summer 2018 VOL. 38, NO.3

Gender-Based Violence

THIS IS THE second of two issues on gender issues, specifically related to attitudes toward women. The Spring 2018 edition focused on affirming women in ministry leadership in the Brethren in Christ Church and featured the stories of women who have followed God's call into pastoral and leadership positions. Now we turn our attention to the less-than-positive treatment of women in our world, including in the church.

As the current Me Too movement at-tests, many women have experienced unwanted sexual advances, a form of violence against women. Gender-based violence is often physical (beatings, hair-pulling, rape, etc.), but it is also emotional or psychological as women are coerced into submission, threatened, intimidated, demeaned, and objectified. According to readily available statistics, women (including young girls and teenagers) also routinely experience violence ifrom domestic abuse, human trafficking and the sex industry, and pornography. The situation is not pretty and often feels very dark and hopeless.

But there is reason for hope. As several of the articles in this edition demonstrate, caring and courageous Christians are finding creative ways not only to speak out about issues like human trafficking and domestic violence but to act in practical ways. It's one thing to draw attention to the issues (a very important "one thing," if you ask me, as someone who tries to do that each quarter in these pages), but it's often much more difficult to do something that will actually

change people's lives—especially when you are dealing with such disturbing issues as sex trafficking and pornography. I am grateful for all of the ministries featured in this edition and what they are doing to share God's love with women who desperately need it and to help them escape the violence.

Editorial notes:

1. If you haven't yet renewed your subscription for 2018, please do so as soon as possible. You can send a check for \$20 for a one-year subscription, payable to Brethren in Christ U.S., to the editor at the address on page 2.
2. Check out the new landing page for *Shalom!* that was recently added to the BIC U.S. website: bicus.org/resources/publications/shalom. While you're there, you can renew your subscription, give a gift subscription to someone else, make an extra contribution to *Shalom!*, or read back issues you may have missed.
3. The Fall 2018 edition will be on "Being a Third Way Church." In these days of hyper-partisanship and extreme polarization—when Republicans and Democrats, and conservatives and liberals are pitted against each other—how can the church be the church, witnessing to a "third way," the way of Jesus? If you or someone you know would like to write for this edition about how your church is forging a third way, please contact the editor.

Harriet S. Bicksler, editor

THIS ISSUE OF SHALOM!

The Most Dangerous Place 2

Looking Past the Obvious 3

From Anger to Hope 4

Escape from Tears 5

The Peace Promise Story 6

MIDNIGHT MUSINGS 7
Surprise

Hope for a Relationship with a Sex Addict 8

Gender Equity in Africa 9

Crying Into the Darkness 10

BOOK REVIEW 12
Two Called and Courageous Women

The Most Dangerous Place on Earth

by Eric A. Seibert

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, OR intimate partner violence as it is sometimes called, affects people from all walks of life regardless of race, gender, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. The National Coalition against Domestic Violence defines domestic violence as “the willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and/or other abusive behavior as part of a systematic pattern of power and control perpetrated by one intimate partner against another. It includes physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, and emotional abuse.” While domestic violence can occur in many different settings, it most frequently occurs at home.



Shalom! A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation is a quarterly publication of the Brethren in Christ Church U.S. Its mission is to educate and stimulate Christ-like responses to the needs of society by providing biblical, theological, sociological, denominational and personal perspectives on a variety of contemporary issues.

EDITOR

Harriet S. Bicksler
127 Holly Dr.
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055
EMAIL: bickhouse@aol.com

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

Jonathan Stanton, Sarasota, FL

DENOMINATIONAL LIAISON

Perry Engle, Upland, CA

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Lois Saylor, Harrisburg, PA
Jonathan Stanton, Sarasota, FL

The views expressed in *Shalom!* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Brethren in Christ Church U.S. Please direct all correspondence, including changes of address, to the editor. A third class non-profit mailing permit is held by the Brethren in Christ Church U.S., 431 Grantham Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055. Third class postage paid in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.
Website: bicus.org/resources/publications/shalom

Home should be the safest place on earth, a sanctuary from the evils of the world, a place where you can let down your guard and know you are unconditionally loved and accepted. Unfortunately, many people do not experience “home” like that. For them, home is extremely dangerous, a place where they experience physical, emotional, and sexual trauma. In fact, some have called it the most dangerous place on the planet, particularly for women and children.

The statistics are not encouraging. Every three seconds, someone in America is the victim of physical violence by an intimate partner—a spouse, a fiancée, a boyfriend or girlfriend. That means over 10 million women and men are the victims of domestic violence each year in the United States alone. A 2013 survey found that over 20,000 calls were made to domestic violence hotlines in the United States in a single day. According to a survey conducted by the CDC, “nearly 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime.” As this last statistic suggests, domestic violence disproportionately and overwhelmingly affects women.

While some wives do abuse their husbands, women are most often on the receiving end of domestic violence. In addition, the problem of violence in the home is not limited to intimate partner violence. Child abuse, elder abuse, and various forms of sexual abuse occur with alarming frequency in many homes—even in many Christian homes. However, in this article, I want to concentrate more narrowly on domestic violence, the kind of abuse that happens between intimate partners.

Whether we realize it or not, domestic violence happens to people all around us, to people we know. No one is immune to this kind of abuse, not even Christians. While there is a difference of opinion, some research suggests that Christians are just about as likely to be victims of domestic violence as those outside the church.

So what are we to do?

Speak out

For far too long, we have regarded domestic violence as a private matter, so we have looked the other way and excused behaviors that should never have been tolerated. Part of what is needed here is a huge cultural shift in the way we think about, talk about, and ultimately respond to the problem of domestic violence. It is abuse that is systematic, intentional, and deliberate. In theological language, domestic violence is sin. We should not shrink from naming it as such and condemning it in the strongest possible terms.

Reject any sort of religious justification

A second way to combat domestic violence is to reject any sort of religious justification for it. Religious abusers often use the Bible to justify their abuse. One of the most notoriously problematic passages is Ephesians 5:22: “wives, be subject to your husbands.” But using Eph. 5:22 in this way is a gross misunderstanding of its context and meaning, because the passage actually begins: “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ” (v. 21). The church also needs to be very careful in how it talks about forgiveness. Abused women may hear “you need to forgive” as “you need to continue to let your husband abuse you and remain silent about it.”

Stop blaming victims and believe their stories

A third way to combat domestic violence is to stop blaming the victims and start believing their stories. One of the reasons it is so difficult for women to escape from their abusers is because the people they turn to for help often completely fail them. Rather than helping them, they sometimes make the problem worse.

Recognize the warning signs of abuse

Responding effectively to domestic violence also requires us to be able to recognize the warning signs of abuse. Elaine Weiss provides “five warning signs”: the person 1) has limited social contacts; 2) acquiesces to all “his” rules; 3) is the object of public ridicule by her partner; 4) seems fearful of her partner; and 5) has unexplained injuries. When-

ever you see one or more of these indicators, you may be looking at someone who is the victim of domestic violence.

Talk to people you suspect are being abused or at risk of abuse

When you recognize even one of these warning signs, and sense something might not be quite right with your friend's marriage, the next step would be to have a conversation about this. But how do you do that? Most of us are not trained in what we should and should not say in these situations. While we want to help, we also don't want to say something that will make things worse. We often take the easy road and say nothing at all, but our silence will only allow the abuse to continue unchecked.

Seek professional help

If you believe someone you know is in imminent danger, or if someone you know finally comes to the point where she is ready to leave her abuser, be sure to involve other trained professionals in helping her. The most dangerous time for women suffering from domestic violence is right before, during, or right after they leave. In those precar-

ious moments, there is a high likelihood that an abuser will try to seriously harm or even kill the person they have been victimizing and controlling. That is why it is so vitally important to enlist the help of professionals in these situations—trained pastors, skilled social workers, victims' rights advocates—who can help victims of domestic violence escape from their oppressive situations as safely as possible.

Finally, I want to speak directly to perpetrators—those who abuse your wives, terrorize your children, or act violently toward your girlfriend or boyfriend. The church affirms that you have been created in God's image and that God's love for you is unconditional. We in the church also love you. In fact, we love you so much we are unwilling to stand by and watch you destroy yourself and those around you. There are probably many reasons for the pain inside of you, and we realize you may not really like who you are when you act so violently. The church will not enable your abusive behavior, but will do everything possible to get you the help you need. The church can help you find a pro-

gram that will insist you take responsibility for your actions as you begin the long and difficult journey of repentance, change, and healing.

As followers of Jesus, we are called to live nonviolently in all of our relationships. This includes the way we treat our spouse, our children, and all those who live under our roof. The good news is that there are many ways we can prevent domestic violence and come alongside those who experience it. Home should not be the most dangerous place on earth, but a place of safety and security, hope and healing, love and respect. With God's help, we can make it so.

Eric Seibert is a professor of Old Testament at Messiah College and attends the Grantham (PA) Brethren in Christ Church. This article is condensed from a sermon he preached at Grantham in January 2018, and is adapted from his recent book, Disarming the Church: Why Christians Must Forsake Violence to Follow Jesus and Change the World (Cascade, 2018). Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers, www.wipfandstock.com.

Looking Past the Obvious

by Ling Dinse

I RECENTLY COMPLETED my dissertation for my doctorate in social work and the title of my research was: "Barriers to exiting and factors contributing to the cycle of enter/exit/re-entering commercial sex work." Many people found my research topic interesting. A commonly asked question about my research was: how did you choose this topic? To answer this question, I have to begin with my childhood.

I grew up in the city of Hong Kong, and our family of nine lived in a 200-square foot government-subsidized apartment in the projects. I was left on my own to explore the housing projects when I was not working in the local sweatshops or doing piecemeal work assembling silk flowers, beaded necklaces, and 9-volt battery connectors. While exploring, I often saw the worst of humanity. I learned to avoid gangsters, pimps, and drug dealers from a very young age in order to sur-

vive the many threats of living in a dangerous environment. We children, however, never felt threatened by the sex workers. They would give us an awkward smile, and occasionally, they even gave us loose change to buy popsicles from a nearby convenience store. Life in the government projects offered very little hope in humanity. Violence and death were common occurrences. We were surrounded by brokenness. The popsicle treats offered by these kind women in the sex trade was one of the few good memories of my childhood. The kindness of these women stayed with me and that is how I came to be interested in researching ways to support sex workers leaving the industry.

My research found that the biggest barrier these women faced in leaving the sex industry, aside from financial need, was the stigma they experienced from society. These women were thought of as cheap or shame-

less. Society's stigma caused some of them to minimize social contacts to avoid further negative interactions with others. One of the saddest parts was how the women viewed themselves and how they thought the church viewed them. Consider these statements made by some of the interviewees in my research:

Tina: "I always assumed that there is something about me that people could read that I am a stripper. I felt like I always have to hide something or overcompensate in some way. . . . I think I live a life truly and honestly scared of other people, scared of them finding out, or saying the wrong thing."

Sarah: "I heard a lot of the dancers say they won't go to church because the church would burn down if they walked through the door. . . . They are terrified."

Kris: "I don't feel like I belong here [referring to churches]. I feel like everyone is

looking at me and I don't know why."

The labels society gave them and the scorn they received from others when people found out about their involvement in the industry in some way prevented them from leaving the sex trade. The fear of rejection and the fear of being judged by others kept them from interacting with others and terrified of stepping foot in church. These women's reactions should cause the Christian community to reflect on how we respond to marginalized groups in our society. Do we come across as judgmental and unwelcoming? Do we build walls instead of bridges and scare people away from our churches? Do we represent Jesus well when interacting with people that do not know

God?

I have the honor of having learned to know some of the women working in the sex industry. They are not that different from me; like me, they want to be good mothers and provide for their children. They are kind and compassionate and want to help people in need. Sam, in the industry for over 20 years, said: "You won't be able to help me get out, but if it can help other girls, yeah, I'll do it," when responding to my invitation to participate in the research project.

The results of this research challenged me to look past the obvious, and see every person as Jesus would see them—with the eyes of love, compassion, and respect. When you encounter someone, especially those that are

marginalized in our society such as the women working in the sex industry, what do you see? I can't help thinking that if more of Christ's followers see the women I encountered in my study as Jesus sees them, how many of them would no longer be afraid to enter the church and come to know Jesus? How many more people would come to believe in Jesus because of their testimonies?

Ling Dinse recently received her doctorate in social work. She is assistant professor in the Counseling and Social Work Departments at Lancaster Bible College. She previously served as a counselor at the Elizabethtown (PA) Brethren in Christ Church.

From Anger to Hope

By Tim Diehl

I WOKE UP one morning not long ago to a *Washington Post* article about sexual abuse and misuse of power in a large Christian denomination (the denomination I grew up in). According to the article, a woman reported that while pursuing a degree at one of the denominational seminaries, she was raped by a fellow student. When she reported the alleged rape, she was told by the head of the seminary to simply forgive the assailant and keep quiet about it all. Then she was disciplined and placed on academic probation for two years.

Sadly, news like this isn't rare. A church leader using his power and position for self-protection and maintenance of the status quo rather than caring for the most vulnerable is not exactly novel. In fact, it's practically cliché.

I got angry just writing that last paragraph. And, while anger might be an appropriate response, we need more than anger in the face of evil. We need something that moves us forward in hope.

I'm moved by the power of Paul's words in his letter to the Romans: "Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good" (12:21).

The brilliance in this statement is its simplicity and movement. Paul points us to the

key in defeating evil: doing good. It's not some grandiose vision that feels unattainable, but it also doesn't allow shoulder shrugging and ambivalence. When you are faced by evil, do good.

One of the ways our church is trying to do good is by partnering with Safe Berks, an organization that provides housing, counseling, training, food, and even legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse. In the face of rampant abuse of power, serving with an organization that empowers the most vulnerable seems like a profound act of aligning ourselves with the Spirit of Jesus.

Over the past 13 years, we've developed a simple, yet effective way to involve a significant number of our congregation in practical service with Safe Berks, all the while raising awareness among our neighbors about an organization that is doing a good work in our community. We call it our "Campaign for Safe Berks" and it takes place over the course of a week in June.

Throughout the week, people sign up for shifts during which they canvass neighborhoods and pass out flyers listing items Safe Berks needs (shampoo, deodorant, suitcases, toilet paper, etc.). We regularly pass out over 8,000 flyers and, in return, receive thousands

of donations from hundreds of homes. We also involve over 100 people from our congregation, enabling all of them to do something significant and, while they're at it, build relationships with those they serve alongside.

But it's not just the value of the donations, it also gets the word out to over 8,000 homes (an estimated 20,000 people) that if you are a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault, there is help. There's a place to go, people who care, hope. . . and hope is a big deal. In fact, it's the thing that doesn't disappoint us (which is another thing Paul tells us in Rom. 5:5). So offering hope is a powerful good.

Of course, hope alone isn't enough. There is more to do than simply offer hope, and we can't become complacent, imagining that we've "done our part." But at the same time, we need to be careful. In the end, the work of saving the world is what Jesus does, not what we do. And our small acts of good are in reality acts of hope on our part as well; just as Jesus turned water to wine and a few loaves and fishes into a feast for thousands, he can take our small acts of love and turn them into something significant.

I think of this when I hear what Mary Kay Bermondsey, CEO of Safe Berks, says

about our annual campaign:

"The Koinos community . . . has been a true friend to us for many years. The items they collect each year are those most needed by those who come to us to forge a new life, free from violence. The time, effort and love that goes into this drive fulfills both the material needs of our clients but also the emotional and

spiritual connection they need. We could not do the work we do without the Koinos community and all those that support us."

What we do is significant, but particularly in concert with the good done by others (note the "and all those that support us" part). It's not about any one person, or church, but all of us, together, learning to

love our neighbors.

That is where the magic really happens. Small acts of good done on our own can feel futile—like using a water dropper to combat a forest fire. But when we come together to follow Jesus' call to love our neighbors in whatever way we can, we find that each of our little acts of love is actually joining into the larger, restorative work Jesus is doing in the world. This is what God's Kingdom looks like: our little drops of water caught up in the work of the Living Water.

As a good friend recently reminded me, this is why we do these good work: not in the hope that others will join us, not even because we believe we can change the world, but because we believe that Jesus is changing the world and we want to be with him where he is.

Tim Diehl is pastor of Koinos Community Church, Reading, PA. Contact Tim at tim@koinoschurch.org if you'd like to know more about this project.



Left: Clyde and Asa Weitkamp (members of Koinos) at Safe Berks unloading one of the trucks packed full of donated items. Right: Members of Koinos distributing flyers for our Campaign for Safe Berks.

Escape from Tears

By Kirsten Grubb and Carmen Hall

THE PROVERBIAL FLY on the wall can feel the tension in the air. Members of Pacific Lifeline's team sit around the office table, trying to make the potential resident feel comfortable while they do their best to discern truth from stories told in desperation to gain housing for herself and her children. One of the first questions is, "Can you tell us what has happened in your life to bring you to the place of needing our services?" A staff member pushes forward a box of tissues; a woman who has suffered domestic violence and other traumatic issues often starts to cry remembering the life she had to escape. Many times she has left a life that started with hopes and dreams, only to have them crumble as she hid the fact that she was being beaten from friends and family out of fear of what may happen if the truth were known. When she finally found the courage to escape, she may have needed to let go of her family and friends due to safety issues; many domestic violence shelters require that she

will not contact anyone that her perpetrator may go to as he hunts down her location. Perhaps she gave up a profession and her children had to be ripped away from their friends and schools.

Mary Ann was referred to Pacific Lifeline with her three daughters. In her interview, she tearfully explained how she carefully planned for a year to make an escape to an underground domestic violence shelter. Now she hoped to move into Pacific Lifeline's shelter to develop self-sufficiency. Her sadness and shame were obvious: being alone, not belonging, unable to contact family and friends due to the possibility of the perpetrator finding them. Questions about how she would be able to create a new life, find a home she could afford, go back to her profession, pay bills, and take care of her daughters swirled in her head. All of these issues confronted Mary Ann with feelings of betrayal, loss of family, sexual exploitation, enduring hardship, being forgotten—perhaps

very similar to how the biblical Joseph might have felt when his brothers threw him in a pit and left him to die, only to be sold to shrewd Midianite merchants for twenty shekels of silver. But God had a plan for Joseph, and God has a plan for all the women that come to Pacific Lifeline's home.

Mary Ann's program was individualized for her needs, although supportive services at Pacific Lifeline are similar for all residents. Due to past domestic violence, our therapy team works to minimize or eliminate post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms and anxiety. They work to build up the resident's self esteem so she won't consider going back to her abuser as an option when things get hard (statistics show that many escaping from domestic violence do go back). They also work with the women to help them make healthier choices regarding relationships with men.

Meanwhile, our case management team works on building the resident's self sufficiency skills. Many have been crippled by

years of being dominated by their abuser. Many were not allowed to drive, work, or develop other life skills. Our case management team can be seen in the passenger seat of a donated car, teaching a woman to drive; in the grocery store, teaching a woman how to read labels, use coupons, and stay within a budget; and in the shelter, teaching women how to organize their clothes into drawers or properly clean a bathroom.

Mary Ann's self confidence blossomed while at Pacific Lifeline. She graduated from our shelter program and moved into one of our permanent homes, where she and her daughters lived until she saved enough to

purchase her own home. She has remained in the same job she found while living in the shelter, earning many promotions. Yet her past trauma and present rebuilt life collide on a daily basis. She is now happily married to a loving husband, but she still fears what would happen if her ex-husband, a member of a dangerous gang, found her. She has raised her daughters in the stable home she created with the skills she learned at Pacific Lifeline, yet she fears her daughters will repeat the mistakes she made. While they no longer define her, domestic violence, poverty, and homelessness will always lurk in the shadows of her mind as she daily works to

continue to overcome.

Joseph wept when he saw his brothers again—not tears for what they had done, but tears of gratitude to God for what God had done with the harm they had intended. Likewise, Mary Ann continues to shed tears, not because of her past, but in recognition of the second chance God has given her.

Kirsten Grubb is the development coordinator and Carmen Hall is the executive director at Pacific Lifeline, Upland, CA. Pacific Lifeline is a ministry of the Pacific Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church U.S.

The Peace Promise Story

By Susan Vigliano

“I NEED HELP.”

Those three words were all I had the courage to type. After several years of talking to the church ladies at the club where I worked, I texted in desperation.

I already left my husband who was selling me to his friends, and now I was stuck in an abusive relationship with my boyfriend. I only had \$11 in my pocket, and my boyfriend made sure that I had nothing—no way to leave him, nowhere to go, and no way of escape. I was trapped.

Then, my phone vibrated with a reply text, “I can come, if you want to leave.”

Thirty minutes later, I was in a church lady's car with everything I owned. We drove to a church to figure out a plan. But how? What kind of plan could we make with \$11?

We talked about where I felt safe and what I wanted. “Home,” I replied. “I want to go home.”

I still don't know how, but within the next three hours we packed all of my belongings into two suitcases, purchased a phone that no one else controlled, ate dinner together, and then the church ladies bought me a train ticket to my home several states away and gave me cash for traveling. As we stood in the train station, they prayed with me, and I knew I would be okay.

Because of Peace Promise, I am now far away from my abusers; I am safe, and I am re-

covering. I have hope.

—*Jewel's story*

Human trafficking is a \$32 billion-a-year business with sex trafficking growing at the fastest pace. It is an industry that exploits the most vulnerable members of our community—those who experience poverty, little or no protection from family or friends, believe they have low personal worth or value, and have a history of childhood sexual abuse. Sex trafficking is happening in our own communities—in truck stops, strip clubs, erotic massage parlors, in our streets, and through escort services and online prostitution.

Since 1997, the accessibility and anonymity of internet pornography use has significantly contributed to the abuse of trafficked men, women and children. In the United States, the average age of entry into prostitution is 13. Most teens are lured into the industry by a pimp posing as a boyfriend and remain there by brutal force, coercion, drug dependency, and a sense of belonging. Once trafficked, only one percent of victims are rescued. The average life span of a person being exploited in prostitution is seven years, and the most common causes of death are drug overdose, suicide, and murder.

It is easy to become discouraged by the statistics and overwhelmed by the scope of the problem of sex trafficking. It is huge. It is

complex. And yet, it is very personal. It is ONE face. One woman. One name. One very specific set of circumstances that brought her to this place of exploitation. Despite the debilitating trauma, abuse, and addictions, there is hope.

Founded in 2008 to serve the Harrisburg (PA) metropolitan region, Peace Promise is an all-volunteer, grassroots organization that assists in recovering hope and strengthening the lives of those impacted by sexual exploitation in our community.

Peace Promise addresses the complexities of sex trafficking by offering:

- Outreach, intervention and advocacy for those involved in commercial sexual exploitation;
- Healing support and restorative care for sex trafficking survivors; and
- Community education and awareness regarding the dehumanization and identifiers of sex trafficking, prostitution, and pornography.

Peace Promise accomplishes its work through a volunteer team of committed and dedicated individuals who represent many different church communities located throughout central Pennsylvania. On a weekly basis, Peace Promise outreach volunteers visit adult entertainment venues forming friendships with the women who work there. The dancers affectionately refer to the

outreach volunteers as the church ladies who bring homemade dinners and desserts to share during the visits. Outreach volunteers communicate a simple message: “You are valued. You are loved. We are here for you.” Jewel’s story is just one example of the impact that a consistent, caring and nonjudgmental friendship can have in the life of a trafficked survivor. Once a survivor is safely transitioned out of the industry, Peace Promise offers an individually customized care plan based on that woman’s specific needs and goals. The plan is intended to facilitate healthy relationships, loving self-care and meaningful employment.

Many women express a desire to leave their current circumstances and find a job with flexible scheduling that allows them to care for their children and meet their basic living expenses. Even the most determined women are discouraged by the repeated employment rejections or struggle to work within traditional employment environments. For women in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction, or those with criminal records, employment options are nearly nonexistent. Peace Promise is strategically creat-

ing employment opportunities through its sister organization, Soaps by Survivors.

In the summer of 2017, a Peace Promise board member and survivor offered her talent of making homemade, organic soaps and lip balms for a Peace Promise fundraising event. Employed full-time in the healthcare industry, making soaps was a hobby—a way to relax after a long day of taking care of patients. During the holiday season, her handcrafted soaps and lip balms were sought-after gifts for friends and family members. She never dreamed that her soaps would become a God-breathed opportunity of hope for those caught in the grips of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Today, Soaps by Survivors creates beautiful, all-natural bath and beauty products and sells them at awareness events. All proceeds benefit Peace Promise. The products are currently made by a small group of volunteer survivors and community members. The long-range plan is to offer a living wage employment opportunity in a supportive and loving environment to women who are escaping sexual exploitation.

Over the past decade, Peace Promise has witnessed tremendous growth. It started as a

conversation between a few moms with infants and toddlers who were heartbroken over a national news documentary about human trafficking. Unable to let the documentary images fade into the responsibilities of motherhood, they got together to pray and seek God’s heart for trafficking victims and survivors. Over the span of several years, God slowly extended invitations to leave the prayer rooms in churches and homes and introduced them to times of prayer in truck stops known for high trafficking rates. Eventually, these women were welcomed into two local strip clubs. Prayer and God’s heart for reconciliation and restoration remain the foundation of Peace Promise. Each month, a group of volunteers gathers to pray for the women and the ministry knowing that each story of freedom begins with the Author of hope.

Susan Vigliano is associate pastor of the Mechanicsburg (PA) Brethren in Christ Church. She is also the founder and president of Peace Promise. More information is available online at peacepromise.org and on Facebook. Learn more about Soaps by Survivors at soapsbysurvivors.org.

Surprise

By Zach Spidel

I KEEP BEING being surprised by the revelations of sexual abuse or misconduct that rock the church on almost a regular basis in these sad times. One would think that this very regularity would put an end to my surprise. But while my surprise has been dulled by the drumbeat of revelations, it has not vanished.

Why is that? It is at least in part because I expect better from the church and hope for better from the church. The worst of these recent scandals are those that have taken place in the church, because it is precisely in her midst that there should be a presupposition of trust, safety, and accountability. People who publicly bear the name of Christ have used his name to prey on others, and many others around those offenders, also bearing the name of Christ, have helped them do it.

This help is usually not active, though in some cases it has been. Mostly, the help rendered has been of the crucial, passive sort. Turning a blind eye to the sin, which was half-known or partially guessed. Averting one’s eyes. Keeping quiet. Putting the reputation of the institutional church ahead of the wellbeing of her members. By many people’s passive actions, the heinous activities of a few have harmed multitudes—both the actual victims and many more for whom the church’s testimony has been invalidated.

But if my surprise is partly driven by an expectation of better than this from the church, I must also reckon with two other components of my surprise, both of which present me with a larger problem of which I am a part and with which we all, as Christians, must wrestle.

First, my surprise is at least partially due



to a theological deficiency, specifically a deficiency in my ecclesiology. We Anabaptists focus on the need for the church to be separate in order to practice a full obedience to Christ. We Pietists focus on developing an inner heart relationship with Jesus of fiery intensity. We Wesleyan holiness folks focus on sanctification and even hold out the hope for “entire sanctification” (however defined). All three streams are beautiful and all three share a similar weakness—a lack of appreciation for the inevitable and universal effect of the fall on the church herself. Ironically, this tendency to believe not only that things should

be different with the church (we're called to a higher standard), but that they are different (we've already been delivered from sin's gravitational pull) actually exacerbates the effects of the fall in our midst and amplifies its consequences.

The twentieth-century theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, speaking of Origen, the mid-third-century theologian, once said, "The primitive Christian dream of the sinless bride of Christ had come to an end. Origen was the first to look the whole truth in the eye: this spotless one is pure only because she is daily, hourly absolved by the blood of Christ from her daily, hourly new faithlessness and harlotry." If the church is the church today it is surely only due to such a continual absolution. For the sins of the church in America are very great and very many (in this area and others).

Such an admission does not form a permission, "Might as well give in to sin, then." Rather, the frank admission of reality will lead us to confront our sin and to grow in holiness by the help of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is real, but it is never finished. We can never say, this side of the resurrection, that we're done growing. The church must never fool itself into thinking that it no longer needs to be, as the Apostle Peter himself stressed, alert and sober minded as we watch out for the devil who prowls about looking for whom he may devour. A triumphalist theology of the church

or one that dulls the call of Peter to continue in watchfulness can only do the church harm by lulling us to sleep right as that cruel lion is preparing to pounce.

Finally, my surprise has a second negative explanation—this one not theological but



Cartoon by Nathan Pyle, Used by permission of the artist.

sociological. It is well represented by the above cartoon. I am a man, and a financially comfortable, locally influential, white man at that. There's nothing wrong with my sex or my race or the fact that my wife and I have enough money to live on. But these facts do situate me. My position in the world colors how I see the world. Knowing this, I and those like me need to be very wary lest we fall

into conversations like those of the two eagles above.

Beth Moore, the well-known Christian author, speaker, and leader recently wrote an open letter to her brothers in the evangelical church. The church needs to hear what she said and what many like her are trying to tell the church. In that letter, full of hard things we need to hear, she relates the story of meeting a Christian leader and author she had long admired—a person whose books she had read with relish. When she met him, this man looked her up and down and the first words out of his mouth were, "You are better looking than so-and-so" (he named another well-known woman in ministry).

Many men around that man were no doubt oblivious to his treatment of women. Some of them were oblivious on purpose, and some were so because when "Mr. Mouse" spoke up, they dismissed what they heard. We cannot do that any longer. Read Beth Moore's open letter. Grapple with your theology of the church.

Pray for forgiveness and wisdom on how to move forward. Listen to the voices of women in the church. Work to promote women in leadership, whose voices and gifts are badly needed. God, we pray, sanctify your church!

Zach Spidel pastors *The Shepherd's Table*, Dayton, OH.

Hope for a Relationship with a Sex Addict

By Brian Hoerning

JUST THIS WEEK a couple of what everyone would say are really good Christian guys told me about being found out while "watching porn." The reason I heard about it was not that they felt bad about doing it, but because they got an email the next day saying that they had been filmed through the porn site and that the film was going to be emailed to everyone in their contact list if they did not pay a ransom. They both panicked! Both guys were terribly shamed—not because they watched the porn but because it appeared their secret sin was now about to be

exposed! One was married and had to confess what he had done to his wife. His life was about to come apart. But so was hers!

Turns out the email was a hoax. But what if it wasn't?

Well, the church would then be openly confronted with what is secretly already going on in their congregations. The percentage of Christians who view porn at least once a month is only one percent lower than non-Christians (64 vs. 65 percent).

I work in the Care and Recovery ministry at Solid Ground Brethren in Christ

Church in Rancho Cucamonga, CA, and am on staff with Standing Stone Ministry (www.standingstoneministry.org). With Standing Stone, my wife and I come along side pastors and spouses as well as staff and board members who find themselves trapped in an addiction or are married to someone who is. More importantly, I also teach pastors who are not addicted how to effectively counsel those who want help.

I've been in recovery since 1989, and over those almost 30 years, I have seen an explosion in the availability and use of porn.

When I was a kid, I had to find porn; today it comes to me. What folks in and out of the church don't get is that porn releases the same chemicals in the brain as drugs like heroin. Think of it this way: your home is housing a stash of drugs (porn on computers, cellphone, iPads) that if used can easily become an addiction that will ruin lives, marriages and families. Fifty-six percent of those seeking a divorce now say the use of porn played a part in their decision. In the meetings I attend, more than 50 percent of our sharing focuses on what we guys can do to stay married and to rebuild trust.

The addiction is a family issue in that both the addict and his wife are forced into isolation. This is especially true for wives who have no one to talk to about what is going at home. It's also important to keep in mind that addiction to porn has nothing to do with sex! Instead, it is a way for the addict to medicate pain that, in most cases, has roots going back to early childhood abuse (97 percent of the time) with the result being toxic shame. The learned behaviors that accompany addictions are lying, isolation, and self-hatred, to name just a few. When you bring this kind of baggage into a marriage, true intimacy is impossible. How can you be intimate with a person whose level of honesty is always in question? The addict will not talk about his addiction because he believes at his core that if folks really knew him they would reject him. He desperately wants to stop and hates the "lying pervert" he perceives himself to be.

Wives blame themselves for not being enough. They do not understand that their

addict husband cannot stop. Can an addiction be stopped? Yes, but can the addict do it himself? No! He needs faith, grace, and community, not a small group Bible study. He needs to join a group of other addicts with whom he can be completely honest.

So, what can you who are addicted and you who are married to an addict do about this mess? II Kings 6 tells the story of the prophet Elisha taking his disciple to the river to cut some trees for a new dorm. One of the ax heads falls into the river. The disciple is distraught because the ax was borrowed. Elisha asked where the ax head fell and made it float back to the surface. Elisha then told the disciple to pick it up.

Like the disciple, the addict and his spouse need to acknowledge that this is an impossible problem. By this I mean the addict needs to admit that he is powerless, and the spouse needs to admit she is powerless as well. She cannot change him, and he is powerless to change himself.

Like the disciple, the addict and his spouse need to acknowledge that they don't have the power to fix the problem and they need to call on someone who does. That's where God comes in!

Elisha did not put the ax head back; he told the disciple to do it. There is action required on the addict's and the spouse's part. These three points just happen to also be the first three steps of the 12-step program.

First, admit there is a major problem. According to a new Barna Research book called *The Porn Phenomenon*, "When 54 percent of Christian young adults ages 18 to 24 seek out porn at least occasionally, and when two out

of three youth pastors and more than half of senior pastors have a current or past struggle, we have a genuine crisis on our hands."

Second, our God is the God of the impossible; there is no sin or addiction that is too big for God. The power to stop these addictive and co-dependent behaviors is available only through God's grace and is acquired, like salvation, through faith alone.

Third, recovery cannot and will never occur in isolation. I surrendered my life to Christ more times than I can count, but only found recovery when I was got out of isolation with a group of fellow addicts. For my wife, this meant plugging into Al-Anon meetings. Ladies, don't try to do this alone; you need help and community as much as your husband does. Together watch the movie, "When Love is Not Enough: the Lois Wilson Story." It's free on YouTube.

Last, believe that there is hope and answers for those who want recovery. Jeremiah 29:13 says, "You will seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your heart." This promise holds true today as much as it did when Jeremiah wrote it. I am among hundreds of thousands who have been there and have successfully found God to be true.

Brian Hoerning is part of Standing Stone Ministry at the Solid Rock Brethren in Christ Church, Rancho Cucamonga, CA. Brian is eager to be a resource to others on the issue of pornography. You can reach him at 909-997-3816 or brianh@standingstoneministry.org.

Gender Equity in Africa

by Rich Stuebing

KEUMJU JEWEL HYUN has worked on leadership development and economic empowerment in Kenya, and her colleague Diphus C. Chemorion is on staff at St. Paul's University, also in Kenya. Together they have edited a book of well-written essays, *The Quest for Gender Equity in Leadership: Biblical Teachings on Gender Equity and Illustrations of Transformation in Africa* (Wipf and

Stock, 2016), the majority by Africans with earned doctorates. The book has particular relevance to Christians in Africa who are attempting to address the "natural order" of gender hierarchy in African culture.

The term equity is preferred throughout the book and is used to denote equal treatment and opportunity rather than equality, a word more common in western writings.

The foreword sets the tone by suggesting that the only solution to reconciling the widely varying hermeneutical and theological views on gender equity is to treat the issue as a matter of justice. Since the world of ideal harmony was shattered following the fall, "masculine dominance, male superiority, and oppressive submissiveness are a product of a fallen world, and not of God's design or di-

vine will.” The concluding chapter repeats the position of most contributors that “the equity that God instituted was replaced by a hierarchical model derived from Israel’s cultural milieu.”

Although women are often considered to be inferior in African cultures, the writers see hope in the fact that culture is dynamic, modern governments frequently support equity, and education and Christianity often bring positive change. Contributions include accounts of the process that the Anglican Church in Kenya and the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe followed in deciding to ordain women, the reasons for the low numbers of women leaders in the churches in Kenya, and reasons why women in Africa are not being treated as equal before God. The biblical section includes overviews of women in leadership in both the OT and NT, and takes the position that women should have equal roles in church leadership, often suggesting that culture has wrongly affected biblical interpretation in both Africa and the West. Relevant passages regarding women in ministry are addressed with balance and sensitivity by author Hyun and scholars like Aida Spencer and Lois Semenye. These include many biblical examples of women in leadership and also address the teachings of Jesus and Paul. *Shalom!* readers may be most interested in the latter chapters, which discuss how gender equity is practiced in some African societies.

A Roman Catholic contributor summarizes the problem as “African traditional culture has been the common obstacle and the cause of gender inequity.” I often observed

this problem during my 40 years in Zambia, and many Zambian proverbs denigrate women (one of the most popular being “women are as common as duikers’ dung”). Therefore, my wife and I constantly taught that biblical teaching cuts across both African and western cultures in treating men and women as equal before God. Yet it will take years of such focus to overcome cultural practices like “ritual cleansing,” where a widow is forced to have intimate relations with her late husband’s brother in order to “cleanse” the evil spirit that caused his death (in the height of the AIDS crisis, that was often a death sentence). Widows are especially vulnerable to abuse because traditional practices often mean that widows are stripped of all of their material possessions. Our church members in Lusaka once actually hid a widow and her house keys until the relatives left town!

The final chapter is by a senior Kenyan leader, Judy Mbugua, and is the most practical in its application. She illustrates how gender equity should affect families (e.g., relationships with spouses, attitudes toward children of different sexes and cultural practices like female genital mutilation). In order to overcome unhelpful traditions, her advice is for husbands and wives to share household tasks, speak words of encouragement, deliberately set aside time together at the end of the day, share financial planning and parent the children as a team. Of course, such advice is also applicable in the West!

This advice may seem unnecessary to a westerner, but it is critically important in

Africa. Examples abound, such as the birth of a boy being celebrated, whereas the birth of a girl may be a disappointment. Some parents (especially fathers) will not play games with their children, lest they lose respect. When a girl reaches puberty, her father may stop any relationship with her due to a fear of being accused of incest, a powerful method of witchcraft. Fathers may not care for their children because that is considered the responsibility of the mother. Parents not only keep their finances separate; they often have no knowledge of their spouse’s finances.

My observation is that well-meaning western missionary men may have brought the baggage of a fear of secular feminism without considering the contextual problems facing African women. Thus they have sometimes exacerbated the problem of African women’s rights in the name of teaching the Bible. The teaching in the home churches of some western missionaries may not differ much from colonial tendencies that desperately needed to change 50 years ago!

This book is an excellent addition to the discussion of gender equity in the African context because of its quality and the broad range of topics covered. Both the scholar and the lay leader would benefit from having it as a resource that derives special credibility from its mainly African authorship.

Rich Stuebing is retired from 40 years of teaching in Zambia in association with Brethren in Christ World Missions and attends the Grantham (PA) Brethren in Christ Church.

Crying Into the Darkness

by Dee Martin

“**I KNOW EXACTLY** where you are from! I used to travel down there all the time to pick up business,” exclaimed Karen (not her real name). “It’s a real hub for prostitution.” A church board member and I had met Karen while on break during an all-day seminar focused on domestic sex trafficking. Karen had just recently exited the sex industry. The keynote speaker that day, Mary Frances Bowly, stated, “Where there is a strip joint, within a 2-3-mile ra-

dius you will find children being trafficked. They are close to these locations because demand is present.” This seminar was three hours away from our home, and God had pointed us to our own back yard.

Six months earlier, Hollowell’s pastoral team leader, Blaine Lougheed, challenged the staff where I was serving to ask the Lord to reveal areas where our church should engage. A week later, two out of three staff members shared that the Holy Spirit had

been pressing human trafficking on our hearts.

With the prompting of the Holy Spirit and clear confirmation at the conference, we took steps towards engagement. As we learned about human trafficking and sought practical ways to engage, repeated themes came to the surface to direct our steps, with the first step being education. The second step was to join forces with those already at work, and then lastly find

the gaps and fill them.

We began educating our congregation. Kim Checkeye, the director of Truth for Women, spoke about human trafficking during a Sunday morning service. A fellowship meal and an informal Q & A with Kim gave those interested an opportunity to dig a little deeper. The congregation was also given *The White Umbrella* by Mary Frances Bowley, to increase their awareness of the issue. We also offered a Sunday school elective that used the book *Undaunted* by Christine Caine and a video series called *Trauma and Trafficking: A Christian Response*.

While the congregation was learning, we also canvassed the area to find other churches, nonprofits, and government agencies that were involved in the fight against human trafficking who we could join. We collaborated with another church to host a screening of the documentary *Nefarious*, produced by Exodus Cry. The Lord also called us to prayer, and we started a nondenominational prayer meeting every first Friday that continues to meet at our local truck stop. We discovered small organizations—like Compassionate Humans Against Trafficking (CHAT), She’s Somebody’s Daughter, Truth for Women, Stop Trafficking Our People (STOP), and Valley Against Sex Trafficking (VAST)—that were already making inroads into the issues of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. We became their financial supporters, prayer warriors and volunteers. The Lord also opened the door for us to engage with government agencies like Pennsylvania Alliance Against Trafficking in Humans (PAATH) and the South Central Human Trafficking Response Team.

As we learned and engaged, we began to see a gap. We realized our small rural community believed this issue was more of an international issue, or at worst a big city problem and not a rural one. As our Sunday school elective ended, the burden to fill this gap compelled us into action. We wanted to protect the most vulnerable among us, the children, so we targeted educators and those who worked with youth and children. We created Hollowell Forums, and within eight weeks pulled together our first forum, “Targeted for Profit: An Educators’ Forum on Human Traffick-

ing.” A few months later came “Tricked: An Educators’ Forum on Human Trafficking.” We then decided to broaden the scope. A Nazarene church in Lima, Ohio had developed conferences for women called “Break Every Chain,” which focused on equipping women with knowledge and resources to engage in the fight against human trafficking. The church gave us their materials and we started planning. Hollowell provided the initial launch point, but it went far beyond our walls. The core planning team represented 10 different congregations. The business community and other community members rallied with donations. The local high school allowed us to use their facility, and volunteers came out of the woodwork to help organize three events to help educate our community about the growing epidemic of human trafficking.

Over the last five years, we have seen a shift in our community. In 2014, the first comprehensive human trafficking law went into place and equipped Pennsylvania law enforcement with the tools to pursue and prosecute traffickers. Our district attorney hired a detective focused on the issue of human trafficking. A local human trafficking ring was shut down and prosecuted. Local reporting agencies have learned about human trafficking and opened the eyes of the community to this hometown reality. Local nonprofit organizations have thrived and helped to provide consistent awareness and educational opportunities to the community. A hotel minutes from our church known for being a hotbed for this activity changed hands with the new owner intent on changing its reputation. As community members have been informed, they have started to call in suspicions to the human trafficking hotline. Many churches have started to engage through prayer, financial support, and encouraging members to volunteer.

Wonderful things have been happening and God is at work, but the darkness persists. The call to engage is still strong. Engaging in this fight takes tenacity, flexibility, and a willingness to lay down what has worked in the past to meet the ever-changing needs of the moment. We don’t have a clear-cut plan for the future; however, we are willing to answer the call and follow wherever the Lord leads. We trust

that is enough.

The following passage of scripture was read right before a day-long human trafficking training and has rung in our ears ever since: “But this is a people plundered and looted, all of them trapped in pits or hidden away in prisons. They have become plunder, with no one to rescue them; they have been made booty with no one to say, send them back. Which of you will listen to this or pay close attention in time to come?” (Isaiah 42:22-23). Father, please give us ears to hear the cries of the oppressed, eyes to see those who are hidden and hurting, the ability to pay close attention, and a voice to cry into the darkness.

Dee Martin attends the Hollowell Brethren in Christ Church, Waynesboro, PA. where she served on staff for 15 years. She is currently a stay-at-home mom.

continued from page 12

picture of Miriam when she was a prophet and leader of the Exodus. She was a mature, dare we say old, woman at this point. One can ask if this depiction is a prejudice against age and even sexist if women need to be young to be “attractive” to readers. Young readers would miss this point, but that is precisely the problem. Lack of representation in the media and arts teaches subtle lessons about who and what is acceptable. This could have been an opportunity to clearly show that age along with gender is not a barrier to leadership and God’s call. Moses is depicted as older, why not Miriam?

The first two books of the series are worth reading and engaging children to teach the lesson that the authors want to teach that the Bible “elevates women.” The Bible does. God does. Jesus did. Paul did and the church should be teaching the stories of women active in the work of God and not cover over their leadership roles. These books are one way to teach that lesson.

Lois Saylor attends the Harrisburg (PA) Brethren in Christ Church and serves on the Shalom! editorial committee. Anna Haggard, one of the co-authors of this children’s book series, is the communication director for Brethren in Christ U.S. and also attends Harrisburg Brethren in Christ.

Address Service Requested

431 Grantham Rd., Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

BOOK REVIEW: Two Called and Courageous Women

By Lois Saylor

RACHEL SPIER WEAVER and Anna Haggard have co-written children's books telling the stories of women in the Bible. *A Brave Big Sister* tells the story of Miriam and *An Extraordinary Teacher* features Priscilla. Soon to be released in the Called and Courageous Girls series is *A Fearless Leader* about Deborah. Weaver and Haggard want their series to show how the Bible "elevates women" who are "faith-filled adventurers who lead, make brave decisions, and risk everything to follow God."

In *A Brave Big Sister*, Miriam helps to save the life of her baby brother and later helps her brothers, Moses and Aaron, lead the people out of Egypt. She is rightly identified as a prophet, leader in the Exodus, and worship leader. *An Extraordinary Teacher* shows Priscilla as a bright girl who grows up to marry Aquila, meets Paul, helps plant churches, and begins a life of teaching others about God including Apollos. Both books create positive pictures of these biblical women while introducing them to children. The books, we might add, are not "for girls." They are for children, both boys and girls, who need to know the stories of biblical women leaders and influencers in order to

grasp the full scope of the gospel and how God calls and uses people to further his kingdom.

Historic re-creation through storytelling tries to give voice and background to limited textual accounts of real life people. Dialogue and other facets of the story are imagined. So as readers we grant some poetic license to writers and we should do so with these children's books. But the books do raise questions at several points. For example, the Pharaoh of Egypt is said to be afraid the Hebrews "would take his place as king" when the biblical text says he was afraid the Hebrews would join forces with his enemies and leave Egypt (Exodus 1:10). The text also seems to suggest that Miriam prayed and consequently God spoke to Moses thereby opening the waters to cross the Red Sea. While we can certainly imagine Miriam praying at this crisis point, the text suggests too strongly there is a direct link between her prayer and God's answer, which overplays the point and may need to be "unlearned" later.

In *An Extraordinary Teacher*, Priscilla is said to have a "stack of books" and was "one of the lucky girls" to go to school and to study the Torah. In the first century it was

customary in Judaism for girls to learn at home. Books, or codices, were being developed in the late first century and Christians did not use scrolls and used codices exclusively, but Priscilla would have to have been a very, very "lucky" girl to have gone to school and have books to read at her leisure. Details like this may be inspirational but they too may have to be unlearned in the future.

In children's books, illustrations carry great importance in telling the story and engaging the young readers or listeners. The illustrations in this series are colorful and bleed all the way to the edge of the pages in a way that pulls the reader or listener into the story. But here too there are some oddities that seem to teach the wrong lessons regardless of how engaging the pictures are. The most blatant of these is the depiction of the grown-up Miriam. While she is credited with watching over her baby brother in the Nile River, she is also depicted as being a very young woman standing next to her younger brother who, by the time of the Exodus, is shown as bearded and grey. A youthful depiction of Miriam might be a tool to engage the young readers, but it also paints a false

continued on page 11