

Pause-Pray-Pledge

A Daily Programme
for the
16 Days of Activism
for No Violence against
Women & Girls



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Each year, we are challenged by this campaign to address the issue of gender-based violence.

Each year, we raise our voices and take pledges to end this pernicious cycle of violence. Then the 16 Days of Activism ends and gradually, like in all things, our resolve weakens and our attention is drawn to other issues.

This year, we want it to be different. Miranda Pillay has produced a profound, daily programme that combines reflection, prayer and action – a programme that will enable us to lay a firm foundation to make 2020 a year in which we become yearlong, daily activists against violence of all types, but especially that visited on women and children.

Miranda holds a PhD in Theology and is a well-known gender-justice activist and theologian. She has taught New Testament Studies, Homiletics and Gender Ethics at the University of the Western Cape, where she currently is a Research Fellow. As a member of the Anglican Church, she continues to serve her faith community on parish, Diocesan and Provincial levels. She also serves on the 'Theological Advisory Council on Gender-based Violence' of the South African Faith and Family Institute (SAFFI).

I commend this Daily Programme to you. Let's make this next year one of deep and lasting activism – starting by pausing, praying and pledging each day for the 16 Days starting next Monday 25 November.

Chris Ahrends
Rector :: 20 November 2019





Pause-Pray-Pledge: 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women & Girls

1. Introductory Remarks

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a much talked-about topic. While abuse and violence against women and girls are regarded as a world-wide problem, South Africa has been dubbed the 'rape capital' of the world. South Africa also has the highest incidence of intimate femicide (the killing of women by current or estranged husbands or boyfriends). In 2019 Gender-based violence has been declared a national crisis by the South African government. This was in response to the spate of rape and murder of women in August and September 2019. August 2019, which is celebrated as Women's Month in South Africa, turned out to be the deadliest month for women in this country. The rape and murders happened in public spaces such as a post office; the 'safety' of a grandmother's garden; the sanctuary of one's own bedroom.

Every day women and girls suffer abuse just because they are women. Women are bruised physically and emotionally; they are manipulated psychologically, spiritually, economically and 'fenced in' when paternalistic, patriarchal systems of government and culture and religion close ranks to keep women in their subservient place. This is violence against women! Every day women and girls are sexually violated – either brutally forced or subtly coerced. This is rape! Most often girl children are raped by a father, a brother, a cousin or and uncle. This is incest! Every day women and girls endure uninvited and unwanted sexual gestures and touches. This is sexual harassment! Most often women are killed just because they are women. This is femicide!

The voices of some women whose deaths made headlines in August and September 2019 will haunt us for years to come:

- ❖ **Meghan Cremer:** I was found dumped in a sand mine on a Philippi farm with a rope around my neck. I was a 30-years old avid showjumping-horse rider.
- ❖ **Uyinene Mrwetyana:** I was raped and murdered in a post office in Claremont before my body was dumped. I was a 19-year old University of Cape Town student.
- ❖ **Jesse Hess:** I was murdered on a bed in our Parow home. My grandfather, Chris, was tied up and killed in the toilet. I was a 19-year old theology student at the University of the Western Cape.
- ❖ **Janika Mallo:** I was raped and found half-naked with my head bashed in in my grandmother's garden. I was a 14-year old schoolgirl.
- ❖ **Leighandre "Baby Lee" Jegels:** I was shot and killed by a police officer ex-boyfriend – a police officer. He also shot and wounded my mother, Rita. I was a 25-year old boxing champion.

It was in resistance to femicide and the violation of women's bodies and their human dignity that many women (and some men) took to protesting out of anger (#EnoughisEnough) and fear (#AmINext) and hope (#JusticeforJesse) and resilience (#IAmNotNext).

But despite protest marches and declarations by government and statements by civil society – including the church – GBV continues unabated. While preparing to address a Provincial Mothers' Union (of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa)¹ on the conference topic "We will not be silenced: Say NO to Gender-based violence", a 24-year old school teacher, Allison Plaatjies was found murdered in her Clanwilliam flat.

¹ The Provincial Mothers' Union Conference of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa was held at the Berachah Retreat Centre, Malmesbury, South Africa, 31 October-3 November 2019.

Allison, who started her teaching career in 2019 became a GBV statistic on Saturday, 26 October 2019. Her boyfriend of three years is the accused. Might Allison's murder and the general femicide be regarded as 'normal' since , one in four women in South Africa experiences some form of abuse or violence – usually from someone closely involved in her life?

It is in response to this question that I think we need to pause and consider the many root causes of violence and the many different ways women are violated – physically, emotionally, psychologically, economically and spiritually. We should also pause to consider the impact of violence against women and girls – particularly the negative, often devastating, impact violence has on the wellbeing and flourishing of women and girls. It is also necessary to pause and consider how we (women and men) unconsciously contribute to violence against women and girls through our inherent gender biases that privilege men and discriminate against women through the language we use in jest and in worship; by us supporting or ignoring laws and practices that are discriminatory against women; by us failing to influence unjust gender policies.

What follows is a brief description of why gender-based violence is understood to be socially driven by patriarchal attitudes, beliefs and practices. Thereafter, a brief explanation of the purpose of 16 Days of Activism for NO Violence against Women and girls is given, followed by a 16-Day Pause-Pray-Pledge Programme.

2. To say “NO to Gender-based Violence” is to challenge the Patriarchy of our Cultures and Faiths

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a very broad term and includes violence against women (VAW); intimate partner violence (IPV); sexual abuse and the rape of women and girl-children; sexual harassment; corrective rape of lesbian women; and homophobia. One of the social-drivers of GBV is

‘silence’ not because advocates for gender justice do not speak out against the scourge; and not because women who are victims or survivors of GBV are ‘voiceless’, but because they are deliberately silenced by people in positions of power and through dominant systems and organizations in society.

Gender-based violence is a complex social issue which has received much attention in South Africa post-1994 – not that GBV did not happen in apartheid South Africa, but rather because the explicit democratic values of the South African Constitution has served to unmute previously silenced voices. Thus, many people have now discussed, debated, described and analyzed in different spheres and at many forums and from many platforms. However, work done by activists against gender-based violence and the concerns raised by those who work with survivors of gender-based violence at grass-root levels reveal that the issue is not only a topic for discussion or debate. GBV is the lived-reality of many women, girl-children and people who identify as LGBTQI – if they survive the violence.

It is clear that we need more than statements and pledges and marches as reactions to GBV. Both reactive and proactive interventions are needed from all spheres and levels of society – including the church. GBV is multi-faceted and manifests in different ways. For example, while brute violence is easily recognized by the bruises and fractures it leaves, there’s still much silence around sexual abuse. Mental and emotional abuse are often ‘covered up’ by paternalistic sweet-talk while financial abuse keeps women dependent and in-want and in-need. Spiritual abuse serves to keep women in their subservient ‘place.’

Like all other forms of abuse, spiritual abuse is the result of a person or system that legitimizes the controlling, manipulative or dominant behaviour of a person or group over others, based on particular understandings of sacred texts and traditions. These particular (often hierarchical) understandings justify and sanctify the power some people

have over others. While not dismissing the other social drivers of violence such as drug and alcohol abuse or the high rate of unemployment, the historical nature of gender-relations confirms that gender-based violence is entrenched in culture and religion and reinforced, powered and maintained by patriarchy.

Generally speaking 'patriarchy' refers to male rule and male headship which have become embedded in the structures of society, including the church. Moreover patriarchy in the inner consciousness of both, women and men, serves to uphold the grand narrative of male supremacy. Put simply, patriarchy is a complex social driver of gender injustices and discrimination against women and girls. A few examples come to mind: When sons, and not daughters, are entitled to inherit land or property, it is patriarchy; when certain professions and 'callings' are reserved for men, it is patriarchy; when "all that girls need to learn is how to become a good wife, mother and home-maker", it is patriarchy. When educating boys are considered more important than educating girls, it is patriarchy. When a wife is expected to forgive a cheating husband "seventy times seven" and when it is considered her wifely duty to stay in an abusive relationship "for the sake of the children", it is patriarchy.

Consider also the patriarchal nature of our sacred texts. For example in the Bible narratives, male characters are almost always given names while women characters are often unnamed. Patriarchy is when the genealogy (lineage/ decent) of biblical characters is traced along the male blood-line. Patriarchy is when we pray to the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob and forget about Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.

It is a sad fact that patriarchy is so firmly rooted that it is frequently given a cultural and religious halo through the beliefs, customs and practices of different communities. So that, when one challenges patriarchy – male headship or male authority or the injustices of social and economic inequality – it is seen to be an attempt to destroy African tradition or

subvert Afrikaner ideals or undermine good Christian values.

Patriarchy is entrenched both, in the structures of society as well as in the inner consciousness of both women and men. The fact that patriarchy is condoned, defended, perpetuated and justified as 'holy' and god-ordained explains why many women remain in abusive and violent relationships; why women defend their partners' behaviour and carry the blame – not only for the abuse they suffer but also for 'causing' their partners' bad behaviour.

Thus, to say “NO!” to gender-based violence is to say no to male privilege and power inherent in patriarchy. To say “NO!” to gender-based violence is to protest against the abuse of power in private spaces of our intimate relationships and our families; it means “NO to violence against women” in public places of learning and places of work and places of worship; it means “NO!” to violence against women and girl children in the streets, on the playgrounds, in the field, on the beach, in the post office! It means “NO!” to violence against women even when a woman goes out alone at night and even if she'd said “yes” to a date or “I do” in marriage.

To say “NO” to gender-based violence is to raise our voices against the power given by culture and religion for men to justify their behaviour and claim headship and control over women's bodies; over their economic independence; over their feelings and emotions; over their faith and belief in God. Thus, while it is “NO!” to brute violence of rape and murder and wife battering it's also “NO!” to the systems that are the root causes of GBV – including the patriarchy embedded in our religions and cultures.

3. 16 Days of activism for NO Violence against Women and Girls

25 November marks the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women* and was started by activists at the inaugural Women's Global Leadership in 1991. The 16 Days of Activism for NO Violence against Women includes *International AIDS Day* (1 December) and ends on

International Human Rights Day (10 December) and, for Christians it falls within the Season of Advent.

The *16-Days Campaign* focuses primarily on generating an increased awareness of the negative impact of violence on women and girls. While such awareness-raising and a consciousness of the systemic nature of VAW should be evident in our every-day practices and interactions with others and decision-making policies of organizations, the 16-day focus period could be used to organize strategies to work towards the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. Considering this and the *United Nations Secretary General's UNITE by 2030 to End Violence against Women Campaign*, it is my view that global and national campaigns such as these will remain campaigns of meaningless rhetoric unless we also do something locally... in homes, our faith communities, our places of work and our places of learning. Perhaps the following 16-Days of "Pause-Pray-Pledge Programme" could be a source of inspiration to move us to (individual or communal) action and pro-active interventions that will lead to the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

4. A Pledge Against Gender-based Violence

By signing the following pledge, individuals and communities indicate their willingness to work towards the elimination of gender-based violence (GBV) and especially to end violence perpetrated against women and girls. Signing the pledge is also an indication that together, men and women, will use the 16-Days of Activism (25 November – 10 December) as a focus period to strategize an action-plan that will provide reactive and proactive responses to GBV with the intention to put an end to the scourge that violates the dignity of women and girls and, also to think critically and creatively on how to challenge the patriarchal privileges afforded to men that so often serve to manipulate women into believing that it is their 'religious duty' to endure suffering.

A PLEDGE AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

I solemnly make the following PLEDGE:

- I reject the patriarchy and the misery it has brought to women, girls, families and communities down the ages
- I reject gender-based violence; the abuse of children and especially of the girl-child; the mothers; sisters; grandmothers; aunts; cousins and all my loved ones
- I reject the practice and culture of rape, of slander, of pornography, of vulgarity, of abuse in its many faces and guises - stereotyping, bullying, smacking, corporal punishment, sexual harassment, inappropriate humour and demeaning language and snide comments
- I reject all forms of violence in my private relationships, including verbal, emotional, sexual, mental abuse
 - AND
- I pledge to never commit nor support gender-based violence or abuse, in any form or type
- I pledge to actively speak out and work for gender justice, no longer as a bystander seeing it as a women's issue
- I pledge to speak up against gender-based violence and abuse of all forms, against the patriarchy and sexism in all its forms
- I pledge to understand, learn and be taught about gender-based violence;
- I pledge to teach other people how we can end gender-based violence so that it will be prevented

Signed: _____

5. 16-Days to “Pause- Pray-Pledge”: Towards a Commitment to Act

Day 1 of 16 Days

PAUSE: While the 16 Days campaign against gender-based violence is a global campaign, the South African reality is that a woman is raped every 26 seconds; that one out of four women suffers abuse perpetrated by an intimate partner (boyfriend or husband); that a woman is killed by her husband or boyfriend every 6 hours. More women are killed by their current or ex-intimate male partner in South Africa than in any other country. Thus, it is important that the focus be on **NO Violence against women and girls**. This is an urgent call since women and girls suffer sexual violence and rape - including date rape, acquaintance rape, marital rape and incest - just because they are women. The intension is not to dismiss the importance of campaigning against all forms of gender-based violence (GBV); or to ignore the fact that intimate partner violence (IPV) also includes same-sex partner abuse; or to deny the reality that child abuse (irrespective of gender) is rife. However, all facets of violence against women and girls and all the different ways in which violence is perpetrated against women and girls need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. At this point we, South Africans, can do no other – considering the fact that women are not safe when carrying out usual, everyday tasks such as going to a post office, or driving a car or answering the doorbell or disagreeing with a boyfriend or husband.

PRAY: Here we stand, in sorrow for the violence perpetrated against women and girls in our midst. We can do no other but ask for courage to speak out, stand up and act in solidarity with women and girls who are betrayed, exploited, violated, abused, humiliated, silenced...

May the voices of the women and girls who were silenced in recent months symbolize a prophetic call for justice and wake us from our slumber of ignorance to the fact that many women and girls suffer in silence – often to the point of death. Compassionate One, create in us a spirit for discernment to explore ways to effectively address the root causes of gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, child-abuse and violence against women. Come Holy One, come sanctify our communities, our churches our homes, our hearts and grant us the wisdom and courage to speak up and speak out during the 16-Day Campaign and beyond.

PLEDGE: On this first day of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 2 of 16 Days

PAUSE: It is widely acknowledged, but also sometimes denied, that the power inherent in paternalism and patriarchy justify, perpetuate, exacerbate and sustain gender-based violence. Men and women often defend patriarchy as 'the natural order of things' which leaves little room for change. Male headship is often upheld by arguments that present patriarchy as “palatable” and benevolent. Thus, oppression is the result not only of the obvious tyrant or oppressor, but oppression is caused by the everyday practices of well-intentioned members of a family, the church and wider society. Therefore, brute violence is not the only form of oppression but violence against women (VAW) also manifests itself in the subtle ways women are exploited or marginalized or excluded. Women are marked as the 'other' and at the same time ignored and made invisible.

PRAY: Ever-present God, today we pray that our eyes will be opened to see that our views of unjust gender relationships and particularly the justification of patriarchal power and male-headship are shaped by our own cultures and traditions – including the traditions of our faith. May our tired ideas of position, power and status that serve to subjugate others in Your name, be brought into Your light. Invade our understanding so that we can discern when we are complicit in creating, upholding and defending unjust social systems. Create amongst us and through us relationships that are life-affirming for all – women and men and children. Amen.

PLEDGE: On second day of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 3 of 16 Days

PAUSE: To say *NO to violence against women and girls* is also to protest against the abuse of power in the private spaces of intimate relationships and families. No, means NO! Even if a woman agreed to go on a date and even if she said “I do” in marriage. It’s NO! Even if she’s a child ... NO!, especially since she’s a child and might not know how/ whether to say no. To say *NO to violence against women and girls* is to protest against the idea that women and girls are ‘natural targets’ and vulnerable to abuse in public spaces, in places of learning and places of work and places of worship. It means NO to targeting women and girls just because they are women – whether in the streets, on playgrounds, in the field, on the beach or in a dark alley. To say *NO to violence against women and girls* is to protest against the idea that a woman is responsible for a man’s actions – regardless of what she wears or whether she’s out alone at night.

PRAY: Merciful God, we acknowledge our culpability in the violence perpetrated against women and girls especially when we ask questions such as “what was she doing there alone?”, “Why did she go there?”, “What was she wearing?”, or when we make women and girls the scapegoat for the behavior of men. Forgive us. We confess, dear God that we comply to, and defend stereotypical gender roles that privilege men. Forgive us. Open our ears to hear that *NO violence against women and girl* means NO even if our cultural norms and traditions have us believe that some (types of) women deserve what they get. Come Gracious God, change our hearts - make it ever new.

PLEDGE: On this 3rd day of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 4 of 16 days

PAUSE: Historically women have been economically dependent on men in contexts where a man is seen as the bread-winner and provider. Moreover, traditional gender roles dictate a woman’s place as ‘home-maker’ and that she has to provide the support her husband or father needs to be a successful provider. This, together with the (religio-cultural) teaching that a woman must ‘love and obey’ her husband may contribute to women staying with abusive men – till death them do part. Today, the backlash against the emancipation/ liberation of women in societies that espouse the value of equality blames the liberated voices of women for the myriad of social problems many people face in South Africa.

PRAY: Ever-present Lord, you see their tears – the tears women shed in silence because they are afraid. We know you grieve with them. You have seen their tears – the tears women hold back because they are made to believe that they deserve the abuse. We know it saddens you. You have seen the tears women cry without being comforted. We mourn the lack of compassion. You have seen the tears of women who weep alone because they feel isolated. May we be present to those who suffer abuse and comfort one another in tangible ways. You have seen the tears of women weeping together because they feel each other’s pain. Move us – women and men to weep together. Amen.

PLEDGE: On this 4th day of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 5 of 16 Days

PAUSE: In a study amongst working men in Cape Town, the *Institute for security Studies, 2014* reports that 42.3% men admitted to having used physical violence against a partner in the past 10 years. Power over others is characteristic of a militaristic/imperialistic/patriarchal society where mighty men flex their muscles to claim ‘territory’ and control. In such contexts where it is expected of men to conquer, they too may be considered victims – but they continue to enjoy patriarchal privilege. Where are the other 57.7% men? Are they culpable in their silence?

PRAY: Merciful God, we see every day how power and competition corrupts others – in our government, corporations, education, industry, churches and also in families. Help us see that when we benefit from

systems that oppress others, our humanity too is at stake. Come Lord, shatter our complacency and press us uncomfortably to challenge the status quo of privilege and control in which women and girls are abused, violated, made invisible and exploited. Amen.

PLEDGE: On day 5 of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 6 of 16 Days

PAUSE: Some years ago, during the period of *16 days of Activism against gender-based violence* KFM, a local Cape Town radio station, invited listeners to call in and comment on the fact that despite awareness raising and intervention programmes on gender-based violence, there has been a marked increase in violence against women. A woman called in and explained in Afrikaans that the reason why husbands beat their wives is because women 'don't know their place any longer'. When prompted to explain what this meant, she was adamant that the Bible clearly states that "*Vroue moet hulle mans onderdanig wees want die man is die hoof van die huis*": "women must be obedient/ submissive towards their husbands because the man is the head of the house [hold]". This caller's views were both challenged and supported by other listeners who called in to participate in the radio talk-show.

It is true that women often accept and defend male dominance (and patriarchal violence) - based on particular understandings of selected proof texts. The texts of the Torah, Christian Bible and Qu'ran are often ab(used) to justify discrimination against women, sustain the subjugation of women, and condone violence against women. I agree with Fariied Esac who says, "Driven by the call to justice and compassion we should admit the male-

biased context of the text". Thus, our theological task is two-fold: Firstly, we should not ignore the patriarchal bias embedded in sacred texts, neither should we ignore our own implicit gender biases. Secondly, we should seek resources in our religious traditions that could serve to speak out against the oppression of women which is manifested in the marginalization, powerlessness, exploitation, cultural imperialism and violence against women. If we fail to this, we are guilty of spiritual abuse. Like all other forms of abuse, spiritual abuse is the result of a person or system that legitimizes the controlling, manipulative or dominant behaviour of a person or group over others. This oppressive behaviour is usually justified by a particular understanding of a faith community's sacred texts and tradition which in turn shape their view of God and 'others'.

PRAY: Loving God, as we rest in the blessed assurance of Your Word, let us be mindful that it is made 'new' every morning. May we be alert to the fact that the heritage of our sacred texts speaks in a male voice, usually to male advantage. Open our minds so we can "hear the Word of the Lord" for our time in our different contexts. Open the ears and eyes of our hearts to discern anew the just purpose of your ancient Word in our lives and relationships today. Inspire all who teach and minister to advance relationships that will flourish and bring wholeness to all. Amen.

PLEDGE: On day six of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

DON'T LOOK AWAY

ACT AGAINST ABUSE



Day 7 of 16 Days: Advent Sunday & International AIDS Day

PAUSE: It would be absurd to talk about *NO Violence against Women and Girls* and ignore its impact on their health in a context of HIV and AIDS. A report on the 7th SA Aids Conference in 2015, noted that one in four new infections occurred among young women and girls between the ages of 15 and 24. In his response to this statistical fact, Cyril Ramaphosa said, "We must confront the reality that the astonishingly high infection rates among young South African women has much to do with the behaviour of men. It has much to do with how older men relate to women. It has much to do with the forms that social interaction takes and how sexual relations are conducted". In some previous writings I have argued before that our '**common vulnerability**' is of equal concern when the young man thinks it's socially acceptable for him to "sow his wild oats"; when the young woman thinks that she "has to please a man" if she wants to be married; when the middle-aged man thinks an extra-marital affair is the cure to his looming impotence; when the older man who lures young girls with gifts and money thinks that the sex is consensual; when the faithful intimate partner thinks it cannot happen to her/him; when the white woman thinks it happens to black women only; when the heterosexual person thinks it happens only to homosexuals; when the economically affluent thinks it only happens to the poor.

Of greater concern is the fact that generally, church responses to HIV and AIDS fizzled out when donor funds were depleted. And, in cases where there is a response to the AIDS pandemic it generally takes the form of handing out food parcels to 'poor orphans' somewhere 'out there'.

PRAY: Gracious God, we give thanks for the compassion and empathy with which some individuals and faith communities continue to encourage and care for HIV-positive women, men and children. Move us to respond from a

sense of our own brokenness and common vulnerability and so de-stigmatize the disease as we work towards a zero-infection rate. Help us see our culpability in the spread of the HI-Virus when we fail to recognize the genderedness of the disease in cultures where many women cannot negotiate safer sex and many girl children have no say in their first or subsequent sexual encounter.

PLEDGE: On this International AIDS Day the 7th day of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 8 of 16 Days

PAUSE: Violence is a form of oppression perpetrated by groups who perceive themselves superior to other groups. So, the *NO violence against Women and girls Campaign* is also about men as a group. Thus, Emma Watson, in her “HeForShe Speech” at the United Nations (2014) makes an appeal to men, “We want to galvanise as many men and boys as possible to be advocates of change”. It is true that men too are “imprisoned by gender stereotypes” in a hetero-normative patriarchal society. As Emma Watson concludes, “When they [men] are free things will change for women as a natural consequence. If men don’t have to be aggressive; women won’t be compelled to be submissive; if men don’t have to control; women won’t have to be controlled...”

It is my view that those who defend differentiation of social roles, talents, capabilities, privileges, obligations etc. (explicitly or implicitly) believe that skewed gender power-relations can be justified by “nature”. Thus, believing that it is “in women’s nature” to be irrational, weak and “in need of control” while it is “in men’s nature” to be rational, powerful, in control and strong. Furthermore, male dominance is often justified as being God-

ordained. This results in a 'mighty men' syndrome where female subservience becomes a virtue and male control an act of benevolence. But, there are also those who, in their talk and walk advocate for justice – a justice that goes beyond distribution of material goods based on what a particular person group deserve by virtue of their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender, age, etc. Such a vision for justice calls into question the (overt and covert) discriminatory rules, policies and practices deemed normative in organizations – including the family and the church.

PRAY: Gracious God, we thank you for men and women who radiate and embody Your image of love, mercy, righteousness and justice in relationships – in their families their churches their places of work and wherever they go and whatever context they find themselves in. May we all draw nearer to Your grace and love so as to draw courage to risk challenging unjust, abusive relationships. Help us to be intentional about seeing Your image in others and so bring to wholeness ourselves and others. Help us see that the bondage of power and control brutalizes men and neutralizes women and distort Your Image in us. Amen.

PLEDGE: _On day 8 of the 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...



Day 9 of 16 Days

PAUSE: Some white South Africans joined the struggle for liberation from racist oppression. Like racial oppression, gender oppression includes brute violence which has its roots in others forms of oppression viz. marginalization; exploitation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. African women theologians have implored men to join women in the struggle against violence, discrimination, humiliation, sexism – for their own sake too. As Denise Ackermann has argued in an interview with Bastienne Klein in 2004:

“Just as some whites joined the struggle for liberation from racist oppression, men must join women in the struggle against discrimination, abuse and violation. It is about their humanity as much as it is about ours. Solidarity is what we ask for”.

PRAY: God of truth and mercy, you know our hearts and our minds even before we speak. Give us courage to stand up for the unjust ways in which women are treated, even if it means we stand alone. Help us to be mindful of the way we speak about others. We want to change the way women and girls are treated in our homes, our churches and public spaces. We also want to change the way we raise our sons and grandsons. We pray for courage to risk being different and insight to challenge the injustices often perpetuated by “the way things have always been done”. Amen.

PLEDGE: On this 9th day of 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 10 of 16 Days

PAUSE: While many South African males have stood up against white supremacy and racial oppression in apartheid South Africa, they are slow to recognize gender oppression – particularly the discrimination against women in contexts of male supremacy. “African theology”, says Tinyiko Maluleke “has remained largely beholden to the supremacist ideas when it comes to gender relations” and “patriarchy speaks to the supremacy of the male”.

Because patriarchy is seen by many South Africans as 'God's order' many women defend its perceived 'benevolence'. Moreover, many 'well-intentioned' men who benefit from such covert positional and discursive power do not 'see' how such benefits are idolatrous and cast on them the shadow of being culpable/ guilty in the perpetration of violence against women and girls. Often women and men are blind to the fact that their silence and complicity make them culpable. Often both men and women uphold and defend cultural norms and religious practices that discriminate against women and girls.

PRAY: Gracious God, We know that many people continue to suffer oppression not only as a result of the actions of a tyrant, but also because of the everyday actions of people whose intentions are thought to be 'good', especially those who think they know what's good for others. Deliver us from our blindness and illuminate our blindspots. Enlighten us through your Spirit of love and justice. May we be intentional about challenging norms and values that masquerade as benevolence and goodwill.

PLEDGE: On day 10 of 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 11 of 16 Days

PAUSE: Today we commemorate the anniversary of Nelson Mandela's death on 5 December 2013. At the opening of parliament in 1994 President Mandela said, "It is vitally important that all structures of government, including the President himself, should understand this fully: that freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression". Today, decades into the transition from discriminatory apartheid laws to the promotion of democratic values, it is sad to note that many South Africans still see advocacy for gender justice as going against traditional family values. For some, gender advocacy seeks to subvert Afrikaner ideals while for others it seeks to destroy African tradition or ignore the values they believe to be inherent in their faith. This may be why so many South Africans of all races see it as their (religious) duty to regroup forces and forge new alliances (across denominations of different faiths) in an effort to maintain or justify the perceived superiority of men.

PRAY: God of justice and truth, we thank you for all opportunities of fellowship in Your name. Thank You for the men and women who risk being branded 'sell-outs' for the sake of righteousness. Help us see when blind loyalty and turning a blind eye is being disgraceful. Guide the work done by government and civil society and our faith communities to address gender justice issues in ways that are liberating for all. May we be inspired to seek new ways of sense-making that will transform our lives and our communities – including our places of worship. Grant us wisdom to seek responsible responses to the challenges of our time as we persevere in faith.



PLEDGE: On the day 11th of 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 12 of 16 Days

PAUSE: Rape myths continue to prevail and are used to shift the blame of rape from perpetrators to victims. While rape of men and boys is reported more often than before, the rape of women is by far more prevalent. Sexism and the demonizing of women’s sexuality perpetuate rape-myth acceptance. Some rape myths include presumptions that women are tempting seductresses who invite sexual encounters; that women secretly want to be raped; that women eventually relax and enjoy rape; that men have urgent sexual needs that prevent them from controlling their behaviour; that a young man merely wants to “mark his territory” when on a date with a girl he likes. These untruths make it difficult to hold men responsible for the sexual violence perpetrated and also make it difficult for women to achieve justice because the myths about rape constitute biases that are re-inscribed every time a woman or girl is questioned about the validity of the sexual violation. Bottom line is that myths about sexuality serve to justify rape. Rape operates as a social control mechanism to keep women in their ‘place’ because the fear of rape limits their ability to move about freely and fear also keeps women in their submissive place. Only when rape victims are murdered is rape seen for what it is – the violation of women’s bodies, their sexuality and their dignity, as was with Uyinene Mrwetyana who went to collect a parcel:

The Parcel

In Memory of Daughters

The parcel she went to collect
the one that took her life
and broke my heart
the one I packed with
joy-filled things
to show her how much I miss her
and how well I know
the things she loves
just as was she
the one I loved
the moment she was
wrapped in sacred secret love
within my womb
as only a mother understands
and sends into the world
only to be snatched
one cold stark day
caught and robbed
torn open, broken, battered,
emptied, caste aside
by a man from whom
she went to fetch
the parcel of my love
who stole the parcel of my love.



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PRAY: Oh God, today we remember especially the women who were raped and murdered in 2019. Their gruesome deaths in a post office (Uyinene Mrwetyana); in a grandmother's garden (Janika Mallo); in the 'safety' of a home Jesse Hess; in the presence of a mother Leighandre

“Baby Lee” Jegels; at the hands of a boyfriend (Allison Plaatjies) have reminded us of the brutal reality of rape. We think of the many women who have survived a rape ordeal but who have been silenced by prevailing rape myths. Inspire us with a vision for life where women and girls will no longer be the scapegoat for the violence perpetrated against them. Instill in us a vision for gender justice that will address the stigma rape myths create for rape survivors. Move us to shape policies and practices that are life-giving and life-affirming. Amen

PLEDGE: On the day twelve of 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

DAY 13 of 16 DAYS

PAUSE: Not all men rape. But most men grow up in patriarchal societies where they learn all too much to think like a rapist as they learn to structure their experience of women and sex in terms of status, hostility, control, competition and dominance. In most societies it is common for men to regard sex as an achievement or accomplishment. This is the bedrock for culturally derived excuses that reduce men’s sense of moral responsibility for their actions. The attitude that sex is a male entitlement suggests that when a woman says “NO”, a man is entitled to ‘take her’ by force. This is why date-rape and marital-rape are not regarded as rape. The fact that women and girls are regarded as “sexually available” when they are out alone make men deaf to “NO violence against women and girls”. The following poem is an invitation for men to speak out against cultures that belittle, insult and ignore the dignity of women and girls. It is also an invitation to women who are the mothers and grandmothers of boys to

consider their contribution in shaping the men their sons and grandsons will become.

“Man to Man”

Do not rape in my name as a man!

A woman's body, a lesbians body, a girl's body is sacred,

It is her sacred temple

Revere it in my name as a man!

Do not make mother-in-law jokes in my name as a man!

Your mother-in-law gave birth to your wife, she is the grandparent of your children.

Honour her, in my name as a man.

Do not ridicule your wife in my name as a man!

Respect the woman you chose to marry, to be the mother of your children, to be your partner, your friend.

Cherish and honour her on bended knee - in my name as a man.

Do not demean your female co-workers in my name as a man!

Recognize their abilities to think, to be productive, their contributions.

Accept their intelligence, their equal standing - in my name as a man.

Do not disrespect or diminish your girl-child's capabilities in my name as a man!

Encourage her, love her unconditionally.

Nurture her ambitions, her passions and sing her praises so that she may grow to be a woman of substance, a woman of self-worth, in my name as a man.

Do not disrespect humanity with violence, sexism and oppression, in my name as a man!

In my name as a man let all of humankind live, work, love and play in freedom from oppression, violence, fear and hatred.

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PRAY: Come, dear God, come and bathe us in your justice and give us moral courage to root out the idea and belief that power and might are always right. May we realize that human worth is not caught up in dominance and achievements but that our humanity is reflected in the way we treat others. Let us remember that the women and girls we humiliate and violate may be someone's sister, someone's daughter; someone's mother; someone's aunt; someone's cousin; someone's niece; someone's grandmother – and that 'someone' might be me.

PLEDGE: On the 13th day of 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 14 of 16 Days

PAUSE: What we hear influences how we speak. How we speak influences our beliefs. What we believe influences our attitudes. Our attitudes shape policies and impact behaviour. Our behaviour and actions and reactions influence and impact others. Thus, discursive power (the power to speak and be heard) begets positional power (status and control over others). Positional power begets discursive power.

Positional power of 'whites over blacks' or 'rich over poor' or 'adults over children' or 'men over women' is shaped by discursive power - not only by 'how' we speak but also by the fact that some people have the 'power' to

speak and the 'power' to deliberately silence others. When, for example, a so-called 'progressive' church denomination refuses to allow women in the 'sanctuary' or a faith community turns a blind eye to teachings that are contrary to the liberating values it espouses, the question "who says what to whom to what effect?" becomes very relevant. If we claim to believe in a God who is just towards all, we have to be intentional about transforming our relationships and our places of worship and work and recreation.

We also have to be intentional about using gender inclusive language in our everyday interaction at home, in the workplace, in the churches, mosques and temples. We have to be mindful of how the language we use exclude others – especially women and girls who are for most of the time in the majority in worship services – in most churches. While the use of gender-inclusive language may seem unnecessary to some people who believe that the masculine pronouns 'he' and 'his' refer to both men and women it is a fact that English (and other modern languages) evolved through most of its history in a male-centred, patriarchal society which impacted on the way sacred texts have been translated and/ or appropriated. Traditional forms of English, in which words like 'man' and 'he' applied to both genders, are falling out of everyday use and are likely to be misinterpreted, especially by younger readers. While some readers may translate in their minds 'human beings' whenever they see 'mankind', research has shown that ninety percent of the time, 18 to 34-year-olds do not read 'man/men' to also mean 'woman/women'. This is why we have to encourage the involvement of the youth and young adults. Their opinions and views should challenge and shape our rules, policies and practices.

PRAY: Dear God, yours is the language of love. Your law is love. May we draw closer to your inclusive love by being mindful of the ways we exclude others by the way we speak and act. May we be mindful that the power we have through the positions we occupy in families, places of work, places of learning and places of worship gives us the power of 'voice' to exclude or

include. Give us wisdom to choose language that is inclusive and may we have the courage to challenge and change language that excludes others on the basis of their race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc. May we be a presence that will transform the places and spaces we enter. May Your language of love and inclusivity radiate in and through us, always. Amen.

PLEDGE: On day 14 of 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 15 of 16 Days

PAUSE: In October 2019 a man, Radius Masukume, risked his live and his livelihood when, while on his way to work, he jumped over a fence to fight off two men who were raping a 45-year old woman. This incident received much local media attention reporting on the injuries that the man sustained and the courage that he displayed. A fundraising page was also set up on a social media platform to “reward” the man for his courage. Moral courage is very important, because it is needed all the time - especially in contexts where (some) men regard themselves superior to women and other men. It takes moral courage to question cultural norms; to challenge the ‘way things have always been done’ and to hold those in power accountable for policies and practices that perpetuate violence against women and girls. This defying way of being and doing “is sometimes called the heretical imperative” because “Those who follow this way are uncomfortable to live with, but they help societies cleanse and renew themselves”.

PRAY: Dear God we thank you for the courage of men who show courage to protect women from harm inflicted by other men who use their physical power to control women and take control of women’s bodies and sexuality. We thank you for the men who physically walked a mile in women’s shoes during the 2019 #EnoughisEnough campaign in protest against the rape and murder of women. May we, women and men, exhibit and instill in one another moral courage to challenge the way women are seen and sexually objectified. May we, in our decision-making and choices and policies become the “heretical imperative” that will help rid our communities of the scourge of the violence perpetrated against women and girls. Amen.

PLEDGE: On day 15 of 16 Days of activism of NO violence against women and girls I commit myself to...

Day 16 of 16 Days: Human Rights Day

PAUSE: Representation ≠ Transformation! Despite the democratic principles of equality and no discrimination on the basis of gender and sexuality in our constitution; despite the quota system; despite the fact that many women now hold positions in previously male dominated spaces in government, companies and churches, the fact is representation ≠ transformation! Women who were previously excluded from occupying certain positions and spaces because of their gender, are expected to carry on doing what men have always done. It cannot be business as usual or church as usual if our intention is to promote equality in the eyes of the law or affirm equality in the eyes of God. Equality does not mean sameness! The promise of gender equality as ‘sameness as men’ only gives women access to a world already constituted, as the language of ‘equal rights’ and ‘equal opportunities’ reinforces the basic organization of society”. When

we speak of 'equality' the questions such as: "Equal to what set standard"? and "Equal according to whom"? have to be raised when we consider the influence of positional power and discursive power. For this and other reasons, as I have suggested elsewhere, the terms 'equity' or 'gender justice' are more appropriate in the promotion and fostering of a human right culture – A culture where women don't have to fear being exploited, marginalised, exploited and violated. "Equity" and "gender justice" have the potential to go beyond distributive justice (and quota systems) to address and correct the systemic issues that serve to keep women in their socio-religio-cultural-economic inferior, subservient place.

PRAY: We thank you Dear God for the 16 Days where we could PAUSE to POINT out the lived-reality of women who suffer abuse, humiliation, discrimination, exclusion and violence just because they are women. We PRAY for inspiration, courage, wisdom, knowledge and effective leadership so that the PLEDGE we have made on each of the 16 Days of Activism for NO VIOLENCE against women and girls will translate to ACTION in the next 350 days. Thank you for the creation of safe spaces during this period of 16 Days of Activism of NO VIOLENCE against women and girls where women and men could focus and reflect on who we are in You and to one another. Thank you gracious God, for the sacred space of prayer. We pray that, as we reach the end of this 16 Day period, our eyes will be opened to new horizons, new possibilities and new realities. May new perspectives unfold and, with them a new sense of meaning and purpose. We thank you for some of the 'uphill' moments along the 16-day Pause-Pray-Pledge Programme when we were confronted with the 'uncertainty' of challenging old certainties. May we experience many mountain-top experience of transfiguration and transformation in the days that follow as we re-discover our being in You and in one another. AMEN

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SOME FACTS ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

- ❖ 20% of South African women older than 18 experience physical violence,
 - ❖ 4 in 10 divorced or separated women reported physical violence,
- ❖ 1 in 3 children in South Africa experience violence while 1 in 5 children of school-going age experience sexual violence
- ❖ Between April and December 2016, 30 069 cases of rape were reported. While down from the previous period, it amounts to approximately 110 reported cases of rape per day across SA
- ❖ One woman is killed by a partner every eight hours in South Africa.
- ❖ 51% of women in a Gauteng survey experience abuse (emotional, physical or sexual) in their lifetime
- ❖ 78% of men in Gauteng admitted to perpetrating some form of violence against women
- ❖ 28% of men reported having perpetrated rape. Rape mostly starts in the teenage years; 75% of men who rape do it for the first time before the age of 20
 - ❖ One in 30 men (3.5%) in SA will be raped
- ❖ Over 33% girls in SA experience sexual violence before the age of 18 (e.g. unwanted touching, forced sex or being exploited into sex by much older men).
- ❖ 15% of children report occasions in their lives when one or both parents were too drunk to care for them, 50% of children in SA experience emotional abuse, neglect or witness violence against their mothers at some stage in their lives

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