



The Moderamen of the Cape Regional Synod **call on all congregations, presbyteries, ministries to address gender-based violence in church and society**

Background and definition

Violence against women and children have become the new ‘normal in South Africa. Approximately 49 000 sexual offences were recorded by the police last year. South Africa is nicknamed the ‘Rape Capital’ of the world. Transgender, intersex, and lesbian and bisexual women are at increased risk for violence. They may face corrective rape, forced impregnation or physical attacks. Gender-based violence include “acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.” whether occurring in public or in private life. Femicide is the act of killing a woman, as by a domestic partner or a member of a criminal enterprise. Every eight hours a woman dies at the hands of her partner (which can be the woman’s husband, boyfriend dating or cohabiting), ex-husband (divorced or separated) or ex-boyfriend, same sex partner or a rejected would-be lover). Children get killed and raped by men and boys they knew. Their fathers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins, boyfriends of their mothers, neighbours are usually the perpetrators. Violence in the domestic sphere is frequently perpetrated by males who are, or who have been, in positions of trust and intimacy and power – husbands, boyfriends, fathers, fathers-in-law, stepfathers, brothers, uncles, sons, or other relatives. In August 2019, more than 30 women have been killed in South Africa ... and the perpetrators are men and boys they knew. The rate of child homicide in the country is more than double the global average. The scourge of violence against women and children in our country should not fill us with shame ... No! It **should and must** fill everyone in our beloved country with disgust with what fellow countrymen are culpable of. **This must stop now.** We need action now.

No one is safe anymore in South Africa not at 2 am in the morning nor at 2 o’clock in the afternoon. Perpetrators who want to violate female bodies are everywhere looking for an opportunity to take what is not theirs. The embeddedness of patriarchal power in our country is reducing women and children to mere objects to those who desire to use and abuse them and throw them away. We are praying for a change of heart of our fellow countrymen... we are praying that the government of the day would act and not merely expresses words of condolences. *We need action* against the upsurge of femicide, child murders, rape, gender-based violence. Xenophobia ... **Now.** Action is more than knowledge about how many children and women get killed, raped, violated, abused, and daily in SA. It is more than being able to cite the statistics, newspaper clippings about gender-based violence in SA. It is rather about standing where the living and almighty God is already standing (Belhar Confession Art 4). He is standing with the afflicted amongst us and the Almighty is inviting us to rise up against the inhumane acts against fellow citizens in our country. **Now**

WHAT ARE WE CALLED TO DO WITHIN THE CHURCH?

1. We call upon congregations to break the silence against domestic violence, child abuse and xenophobia.
2. We call all congregations and ministries to become sites to pray for healing, wisdom, guidance and the courage to face the issues;

3. We urge congregations to provide safe spaces for members or others who experience gender-based violence to tell the truth of what happened to them and to provide support for survivors and even spaces for perpetrators to repent;
4. We call upon congregations to join the Thursdays in Black Campaign;
5. We call upon everyone to stop protecting perpetrators of violence targeted at children, the vulnerable, women and foreign nationals;
6. We call upon all ministers of the Word to preach about gender-based violence:
 - a) Gen 34, Jacob's Daughter Dinah.
 - b) Deuteronomy 22:25-27 specifies the punishment the Mosaic Law required for a man who raped a betrothed woman.
 - c) 2 Samuel 13, Prince Amnon raped his half-sister, Tamar.
 - d) Judges 19-21, the concubine cut into 12 pieces.
 - e) 2 Samuel 21: 1-22: resilience of Rizpah;
7. We call upon all ministries to do Bible studies on Scripture reading mentioned in 6 and to address toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinities refers to the socially-constructed attitudes that describe the masculine gender role as violent, unemotional, sexually aggressive, and so forth for example men is just like that: the expectation that **Real Men** are keenly interested in sex, want to have sex, and are ready to have sex most if not all times. Sexual and any form of violence against minorities and marginalised groups of people is about power and control, The ministries should replace this notion with partnership between men and women, where everyone will accept and respect each other notwithstanding race, class, gender, sexual orientation (Gal 3: 26-28);
8. We call upon government to address gender-based violence in a in a multifaceted manner and to implement a plan of action to stop the scourge.

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