



Domestic Violence



Sanctuaries for victims of domestic violence

They look like any other homes on any other streets in America, but these two homes are special—they're where hope and safe refuge live. Two renovated houses next door to Presbyterian churches in Western New York offer victims of domestic violence a place to turn for refuge and hope.

They are the Orchard Park (Southtowns) and Amherst (Northtowns), satellites of the Family Justice Center, serving the city of Buffalo and Erie County and surrounding counties. These beautiful suburban satellites exist to help the one in four women and families who will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives. Women like Aasiya Hassan, a young wife and mother murdered by her abusive husband in 2010.

“Domestic violence affects every segment of society,” says Rev. Dr. Dick Young, pastor of Orchard Park Presbyterian Church. “It knows no boundaries—urban/suburban, rich/poor, black/white, religious/non-religious—it doesn't matter. Domestic violence is all around us, and unfortunately the church, like society, has for too long turned a blind eye. It was only after the horrific murder of Aasiya Hassan that some of us in the religious community got together and committed to make a lasting change.”

What began as a church mission project quickly grew into a broad-based community labor of love. Countless volunteers, businesses, churches, and community groups worked tirelessly to help the center become reality.

The Peace & Global Witness Offering inspires faith and equips and connects Presbyterians to respond to cultures of violence, including our own. It provides resources for creating communities of peace in response to tragedy and bears witness to the love of God for those who suffer violence because of their race or gender.

The Orchard Park/Southtowns satellite, adjacent to Orchard Park Presbyterian Church, opened in February 2011 and has provided free, confidential, and personalized services for more

than 400 clients. Services include safety planning, spiritual care, counseling, legal assistance and advocacy, as well as referrals to emergency shelters and community services.

The Amherst/Northtowns satellite, next door to North Presbyterian Church in Williamsville, has served about 100 clients since it opened in February 2014. It's referred to as the “house with the purple door.” Every room in the home was adopted by an individual, church, or community group and renovated from ceiling to floor.

Aasiya Hassan, the kind and gentle woman the Southtowns center was established to honor, could have been your sister, your mother, your friend, your neighbor. She could be sitting beside you today in church. She could be you or me.

The Peace & Global Witness Offering is used to expand global witness while maintaining Presbyterians' longstanding commitment of working toward peacemaking and reconciliation, especially in cultures of violence. Congregations and presbyteries keep 25 percent of receipts for peace and witness ministries of their choice and send 50 percent to the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Please give generously to the Peace & Global Witness Offering to help build ministries of reconciliation in a broken world.