

Mission Table 2015: Case Statement on Anti-Violence

Working Group Members:

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Definition of Violence:

Behavior involving force intended to hurt, damage or kill.

What Brings Us To This Priority:

Violence appears very early, with Cain versus Abel. None who live in this world have the luxury of avoiding violence. We are diminished by violence, yet we sense that humanity is habituated to the enacting of violence and has become inured to its lethal effect. In particular, those who are the most vulnerable in our communities are deeply and often affected by violence.

We believe the Evangel calls us to eradicate the culture of violence in our physical actions, words and thoughts. To follow Jesus, we have no other choice.

Our Unique History In Addressing This Priority

Our denominational history is rich with resistance against violence. From Roger Williams speaking in defense of First Nations People, to the Abolitionists, down to Walter Rauschenbusch and his student, Martin Luther King, American Baptists in particular have been on the forefront for the cessation of violence and the coming of *Shalom*.

Accomplishments

- Mission Table and ABC Activity
 - Metro Chicago devoted an Annual Meeting and several other activities to this issue.
 - ABC/Connecticut has a statement on gun violence and is studying bullying and the connection between mental illness and violence.
 - ABHMS is looking at understanding violence through the neurosciences
 - Violence is one of the top three priorities in the Philadelphia Baptist Association
 - AB Women's Ministries is creating Sacred Safe Spaces in churches where women can talk about their experiences.
 - Following events in Ferguson, MO and NYC, ABHMS issued a joint statement on violence signed by many regional and national executives.

Challenges

Among the challenges we found were the following:

- Some among us escape acting against, or thinking about, violence because:
 - We are isolated from one another.

- Some among us are insulated from the most vulnerable by income and privilege.
- Some among us do not understand how or why people get locked into violent situations (i.e., domestic violence, drug addiction) and therefore have less empathy or engagement.
- The prevalence of violence in our culture, such as amusement, media, public and private language, and bullying desensitizes us to the problem of violence.
- Part of the problem is an attitude that violence is not violence when it happens to another, but only when it happens to me.
- Commercial influences support a proliferation of guns in the United States.
- The pervasive nature of violence is not known uniformly across the denomination.

Constituents/Stakeholders

Inclusive of but, not limited to the following:

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|--|---------------------------|
| ● All of God's people | ● State agencies |
| ● Community members | ● Religious organizations |
| ● Businesses | ● Schools |
| ● Law enforcement | ● Health Care facilities |
| ● Lawyers and the legal systems | ● Former Gang members |
| ● A great variety of non-profit agencies | |

What Is The Adaptive Challenge?

To eliminate violence we need to have our hearts transformed from hearts of stone to hearts of flesh.

Soar Template We Imagine (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Results)

- Strengths:
 - Deep conviction and sense of urgency.
 - A cry in our nation for this topic to be addressed. (cf. the bereaved mother, Rizpah, 2 Sam 21).
- Opportunities:
 - ABC agencies and churches need to commit to finding collaborative partners to support, to learn from, and to avoid duplication of effort.
 - In order to discover productive collaborative partners ABC bodies would be wise to:
 - Not Christianize language to the point of prohibiting the relationship.
 - Be non-partisan, especially as relates to not-for-profits.
 - Know needs and goals of the people with whom we wish to partner (know your audience)
 - Have our own clear case statements.
 - Have our own sense of our goals and hopes.
 - In our preaching, teaching and overall engagement, cultivate an atmosphere and attitude of non-violence to one another and toward society.

- Understand the root causes and nature of violence in their particularity in place, time, culture and affect.
- Work with both victims and perpetrators to overcome shame and other repercussions.
- Stake out a space within the interfaith world so that ABCUSA will be known as an advocate against violence and for victims.
- Aspirations/Results:
 - Communities possess an active awareness of the pervasive nature of violence.
 - Acknowledge and work from the truth that violence takes place in every community, regardless of privilege, status, or station.
 - Communities be unafraid to address violence as soon as it is seen.
 - Be able to name violence for what it is in all of its manifestations.
 - Communities, families and people will know peace and safety.
 - Communities will resolve to address the issues of violence reactively and proactively.
 - Reduce the secrecy that keeps us locked in a cycle/culture of violence.
 - Keep a robust focus on both prevention (e.g., mentorship programs, jobs) and aftercare (on-going community for victims and their families as well as perpetrators and their families) and on-going education.
 - We will know one another's stories. We need to honor that we are each human and valuable in God's sight.
 - The attitude in our churches will be one of understanding, empathy and action.
 - The kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven.