Melissa Jackson Photo

Clergy referrals
in cases of domestic violence

N. Nason Clark
Professor of Sociology,
University of New Brunswick

Domestic violence impacts homes of believers and non-believers alike. As a social issue, it knows no boundaries of class, color, country or faith perspective (Stirling, Cameron, Nason-Clark, & Miedema 2004). Its prevalence around the globe, and its presence in Christian homes, cannot be denied (Kroeger & Nason-Clark, 2001). What is often denied, however, is the role of pastors in responding to those who look to their congregation for help when violence impacts their lives. It is imperative that religious leaders are aware of the nature and severity of abuse and the unique role they have in the journey towards justice, hope and healing for both victims and offenders. Yet, many clergy are ill-equipped for the task and unable—or unwilling—to access community-based resources for those who seek their assistance (N. Nason-Clark, 1999, 2001). Despite this, there is mounting evidence that a coordinated community response to domestic violence offers the most hope to reduce abuse and bring safety to women and children victimized by it. To be sure, collaboration between churches and community agencies presents both challenges and opportunities.

In October of 2008 the organization Peace and Safety in the Christian Home organized an international conference in Washington, DC, related to abuse in families of deep religious commitment. One of the panels brought together a multi-disciplinary team to discuss the issue of Referrals Between Clergy and Community-Based Resources. The response to the panel

was so enthusiastic that we have decided to share some of our remarks more widely in the hope that they might be of use to others as well.

Clergy Referral in Cases of Domestic Violence

In order to contextualize the issue of clergy referrals to secular agencies, we need to consider some of the empirical evidence. Highlighted below are several findings to emerge from selected studies of 20 years of research on violence amongst religious families (Fisher-Townsend, Nason-Clark, Ruff, & Murphy, 2008; N. Nason-Clark, 1997, 1999, 2000a, 2004, 2005; Nancy Nason-Clark, Murphy, Fisher-Townsend, & Ruff, 2003).

- In a study of 343 pastors of evangelical churches, we found that many clergy were reluctant to refer abused women and other family members who seek their assistance to professionals in the community or community-based agencies; 15% have never referred an individual who sought their help to a non-clerical counselor;
- Of those pastors who have referred on at least one occasion, 39% report referrals in less than one in ten of the cases of individuals or couples who seek their help for marital or relationship issues, while at the other end of the spectrum, 14% of clergy report that they refer in at least half of these cases;
- In one of our studies involving in-depth interviews with 100 evangelical clergy, it was found that the average pastor spent 16% of his or her professional time providing relationship or marital counseling (two afternoons a week). Of those individuals receiving pastoral counsel, 37% are seen on an ongoing basis, which we defined as three or more sessions;
- The overwhelming majority (85%) of clergy in our sample report that the demand for pastor counseling has increased and pastors regard counseling as one of the greatest stresses in their current work. Only 8% of religious leaders feel well equipped to respond to situations involving domestic violence;

What leads clergy to refer:

- The most frequently cited reason: a case was too difficult to deal with single-handedly. A recurring theme that pastors discussed was the disjuncture between congregational expectations for counseling availability and expertise, and the pastor's own perception of inadequacy to provide these services;
- Pastors with more preparation, knowledge and experience about domestic violence were more likely to refer parishioners than those with little or no training;
- A few pastors (less than 10%) noted that sometimes the lack of secular resources makes a referral impossible.

Are clergy satisfied with the results of referrals?

- The overwhelming majority of pastoral counselors report that they have been satisfied with the counsel parishioners received when they followed through on clerical advice to seek the help of a secular counselor;
- Only 8% of clergy reported dissatisfaction with the advice offered by secular sources in cases where they referred individuals or couples for non-clerical counsel.

These data identify the demand for pastoral counsel and pastoral perceptions of being ill-prepared to respond to the needs of victims and abusers in the aftermath of violence in the home. Yet, parishioner needs outweigh feelings of inadequacy amongst pastors, and so most ministers report substantial, ongoing experience counseling men, women, couples, and families impacted by domestic violence.

From our studies, we have learned that there are a number of factors that shape pastoral counseling strategies and their willingness or reluctance to make referrals to

professionals in the community or community-based agencies. One that might come as a surprise is the role of personal experience, and personal crisis in their own lives.

Personal experience: My personal experience has been very interesting because I've had both a sister and a brother that found themselves in violent situations… I realize that it can happen, and it can happen to anybody at any time…My training has shaped me, [but]…I guess experience more than anything (Clergy interview #543).

Personal crisis: I know what it's like to be three mortgage payments behind and I know what it was like to have practically no food in the cupboards, and if it wasn't for my wife's extreme love for me, I would have been just another statistic, another clergy marriage breakup…I got some counseling and it was really, really good (Clergy interview #373).

Personal pain: The major factor that influenced my counseling was, and I have my wife's permission to say this to you, about four years ago she began to remember incidents of abuse when she was a child…the last 4 years or so the primary thing that, that has shaped my, my counseling…I've joined a spouse's support group…We've had a couple of very good counselors…whose knowledge of marital counseling were always far beyond what mind was (Clergy interview #480).

Clergy who reported extensive counseling experience (about 15% of our interview sample of 100 conservative Protestant clergy) tended to have views about the efficacy and nature of both pastoral and secular counseling that set them apart from colleagues who had less relationship counseling experience. In many ways, it was their attitudes about counseling rather than their level of training that distinguished ministers from one another.

Generally speaking, the clergy who reported extensive counseling experience also reported fairly extensive referral patterns. As a group, they were less pessimistic about the difficulties associated with referring a parishioner to a secular counselor for help, and they were far more knowledgeable about what resources were actually available in their local area. Says one pastor, a 50 year old male working within a small city context, "When I move into an area, one of the first things I do is…to make contact with other helping agencies…I don't refer people to…secular counselors were often unless I know the individual very well, their type and style of counseling services" (Clergy Interview #350).

Other clergy within this more experienced pastoral counselor group reported that there are many different agencies, including transition houses, hospitals and mental health clinics that are useful resources in the community. Some of the clergy who reported extensive counseling experience had rather formalized links with community agencies or the professionals in their community. Rev. Williams, a younger male working in an urban environment reports, "I am in connection with the [name] Psychiatric Hospital in [small city] and I'm in connection, communication with a number of psychiatrists who are there. I meet with the head of psychiatry in [small city] area, I would say, maybe once a month (Clergy Interview #552)

Our data reveal that the majority of pastors have at some point referred individuals, couples, or families to a counselor or social worker, to a psychiatrist or psychologist, and to a mental health community agency. Yet, referrals for most pastors happen irregularly and with some degree of angst. Many pastors do not know of the community resources available and worry about what might occur after a referral has been received. Some claim only to refer to those professionals in the community who they know to be believers.

For the most part, clergy with the more

extensive counseling experience did not differentiate in their referrals between those counselors or professionals in the community who were explicitly Christian and others. They made their referrals based on a knowledge of the person and their counseling or professional skills. And, for the most part, they were satisfied with the support and counsel their parishioners received when they followed through on their advice about referral. Pastors with more extensive referral networks were far more able to outline the specific role of the pastoral counselor in a coordinated community response, likely in part, because they personally had been challenged by their own networking opportunities to think through their own uniqueness. These clergy also talked far more explicitly about the spiritual emphasis of their own counseling.


Melissa Jackson Photo

Interestingly, those with limited experience in relationship counseling were the most reluctant to refer those individuals, or couples, who did seek their advice. In a sense, referrals were most unlikely to occur where they were perhaps needed most. Clergy with less experience seemed to have little knowledge of what secular resources are available and little faith in those with which they were familiar. They tended to feel that secular and sacred counselors would be likely to work at cross-purposes, yet they were unable for the most part to explain exactly what a pastoral counselor could offer to a damaged or hurting person or marital relationship. While educationally, these pastors did not differ from their more experienced counterparts, their answers indicated that their ministry style set them apart. Less experienced pastoral counselors were adamant that their counseling approach was very different from the secular world, yet they were unable to articulate how this was so.

In an effort to think more fully about referral patterns, obstacles and opportunities, we offer the points of view of three seasoned professionals: the senior pastor of a large Baptist church; the executive director of a community-based agency; and a licensed clinical psychologist.

From the Point of View of the Pastor

As is true for many religious leaders, my early years as a pastor in a small rural charge were marked by both a religious idealism about devoutly religious families and a naïveté about issues of domestic violence. In my personal experience growing up in a devoutly religious family, home had always been a safe place. I presumed that violence rarely occurred in the homes of those who consistently participated in the faith community. With little training about family violence, I think that at the earliest stage of my pastoral ministry I might have considered it a personal failure to have felt the need to refer a member of my congregation to a secular resource in the community. I would also have been concerned about whether I could trust a secular agency or counselor to respect and affirm the religious faith of a member of my church. Although experience has since taught me the importance of making referrals, I would have to say that the latter concern is not always unfounded. Secular community resources are not always supportive or understanding about the religious faith of victims of domestic violence. Though I hope those instances are not common, stories about such unsympathetic responses to devoutly religious victims may serve to reinforce the reluctance of clergy about making referrals.

When I moved to a second, and much larger, congregation, my illusions about the homes of church members were soon shattered. The church had an effective, thriving ministry for single parents, some of whom

had been the victims of abuse, perhaps at the hands of a quite religious spouse. I recall that at an initial meeting with the two women who coordinated the ministry, they explained to me in a very matter-of-fact way that one of their initial responses when contacted by a victim of family violence was to refer them to a good, affordable lawyer. They then explained to me that they knew which lawyers in town were less expensive than others, which were more sensitive and helpful to victims of domestic violence, and which ones treated the faith of the victims with respect and understanding. Because of the very spiritual aspects of the Christian marriage vows, such understanding is a very important concern for a religious victim who contemplates separating from, or even putting an end to, a marriage to an abusive spouse. Because of my idealistic desire to preserve marriages, I was at first taken aback by the idea. As I became more familiar with the needs of victims of abuse, I came to understand how important such referrals are.

Soon afterward I was contacted by a leading mental health professional in the community who asked if he could refer a client to me. When I expressed my surprise, he explained that within his office there were a number of qualified counselors, but that not all were sensitive to issues of religious faith. In such instances, he wanted to be able to send clients to a religious leader who could provide spiritual guidance as part of the healing process. He candidly assured me that if I referred someone from my congregation to his office, he would make sure that they were directed to someone who would understand the importance of their faith and of their religious community. His willingness to include me in his network, and his assurance about how my congregants would be treated dispelled the fears that I had had about making referrals to agencies outside of the faith community. More importantly, it enabled me to begin building helpful relationships with service providers in the secular community. Once I knew some of the people to whom I could refer people, and once they knew me, I was much less hesitant to recommend them to a member of my congregation.

As I look back now and reflect, I believe that the most significant reason why I had been so reticent about making referrals to community agencies and secular professionals was the lack of relationships with people in those agencies. I didn't know the people at the local women's shelter, I didn't know the local advocates for victims of domestic violence, and I had few contacts with secular agencies in the community. Pastors are often in this situation. I would like to say that after realizing that I needed to build those relationships, it was an easy task to carry out, but it was not. Unlike the mental health professional who contacted me, it was sometimes very difficult to build bridges to some agencies or individuals. The problem is not only that clergy may not trust secular agencies; those agencies may not trust religious leaders, and therefore they have done little to facilitate helpful relationships that could make referrals less difficult. To build bridges with some agencies and individuals, I had to be very intentional and determined. Some service providers made it clear to me that they considered the church to be a patriarchal institution that is part of the problem. By volunteering to serve on a community group organized to combat domestic violence, I was able to eventually

I didn't know the people at the local women's shelter, I didn't know the local advocates for victims of domestic violence, and I had few contacts with secular agencies in the community.

build relationships with a wide variety of people but it took time and patience.

One might assume that because clergy realize that they are not adequately trained to respond to domestic violence, they would be more likely to refer victims of domestic violence to other resources in the community, but that assumption would be wrong. Why might this be so?

- First, untrained clergy may underestimate the seriousness of the abuse. When the abuser claims to be sorry and promises not to repeat the abuse, the untrained religious leader may consider the problem solved.
- Second, untrained clergy are unlikely to understand what resources are needed by both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. They may assume that a few words of pastoral guidance will suffice, or that a few sessions of pastoral counsel or marriage counseling will resolve the problem, instead of realizing how difficult and dangerous the situation is for the victims. Clergy may sincerely believe that the abuse has ended when it is simply being hidden from others.
- Third, untrained clergy may not know what resources are available in the community. If they are unaware of therapists, advocates, shelters, or support groups they will obviously not refer people to them. Clergy are fearful that they will put a member of their congregation in a place where their faith will be questioned or criticized. Clergy will rarely refer to someone, unless that person or agency is known to them personally or has been recommended by another trusted pastor or denominational leader.
- Fourth, some clergy simply do not know how to make referrals. It may seem like a simple thing for people who are involved in the domestic violence community, but for a pastor who is accustomed to making referrals only when it is in-house (within the congregation or the denomination) they may be quite unaware of how to make referrals, especially if those referrals are to fee-for-service professionals.
- Finally, some clergy may be skeptical about referring to agencies or professionals who are not expressly Christian. Some have had bad experiences with referrals. Some have concerns about other aspects of referrals: the costs seemed excessive, or the waiting list was long, or the person to whom the referral was made was unwilling to communicate with the religious leader or allow the pastor to be part of the healing process. Some consciously feel that referring someone seems like shuffling the victim to someone else—as if they have failed to do their job adequately—instead of understanding that a referral is intended to provide the help that the religious leader cannot provide.

As important as it is for clergy to be trained adequately about making referrals, it must not be left only to the religious leader to initiate referrals. There are important things that domestic violence advocates and therapists can do to help Churches and leaders with referral options.

- *Provide Community Resource Information.* Many religious leaders would welcome a detailed listing of trained, trusted community resources, along with clear guidelines about how to make referrals. It would be especially helpful if such resource lists could include recommendations by other local religious leaders.
- *Build partnerships.* As part of a community group seeking to address domestic violence, I was able to invite the local Ministerial Association to become involved in some significant ways. For example, the group planned to develop a pamphlet about spousal abuse to be distributed by local clergy to couples planning to be married. Instead, I en-

couraged the group to invite the clergy to design and write the pamphlet, which they did. In addition to making it much more likely that the pamphlet would actually be used by local clergy, by involving local religious leaders in the community response to domestic violence, a greater sense of partnership was established.

- *Network from within congregations.* There may be important community resources within local congregations that can provide a beginning to the bridge-building process. If a religious leader is hesitant about referring to someone outside his or her own congregation, is there an advocate or therapist or other resource person within the congregation or within a neighboring congregation of the same faith group to whom the pastor would be willing to refer.
- *Meet with groups of pastors.* Pastors will be much more likely to refer to people whom they have met. Can a presentation be made to a local ministerial association or (even better) to a denominational leadership group, where resource people are personally introduced to religious leaders? Can pastors who have successfully established a network for referrals talk about how such networks have been helpful?
- *Make referrals to religious leaders.* Community agencies must learn to make referrals to clergy. When a victim expresses spiritual concerns, rather than discounting those concerns it would be most helpful to the victim, and to the collaborative process, to be able to refer her to a pastor who understands and has experience in responding to domestic violence.

From the Point of view of an Agency Director

As I see it there are several challenges for religious leaders and churches with respect to the issue of domestic violence:

- Churches don't take it seriously enough because it is often kept hidden by the victims and offenders. As a result, church leaders and their congregations often are unaware of how pervasive, dangerous and harmful domestic violence is within their congregations and the broader society;
- Clergy/congregations lack training and information on how to best address the problem so they often resort to traditional theological positions related to family relationships, such as male entitlement, female submission, and prohibitions on divorce;
- Since outrage over domestic violence came out of the secular feminist movement, and since feminism has been so demonized by some in religious circles, anything coming from the feminist movement is distrusted;
-

Melissa Jackson Photo

Many clergy and members of the congregation will have personal relationships with families experiencing domestic violence. They will tend to "believe" the person (husband or wife) with whom they have the closest relationship since they do not have deeper knowledge about the family dynamic that occurs in situations like these. This will then color the response to the problem including who will be blamed and held accountable.

- Domestic violence challenges the faith of some believers. If God is in control of the Christian family, then God should

be able to empower the believers to simply stop abusive behaviors, right? These questions impact their response.

There are other issues deriving from the agencies with which a religious leader might wish to make a referral or establish a relationship.

- Secular agencies and clergy/congregations have different ideologies and values. Secular agencies view a woman's empowerment and safety as more important than keeping families together (even when the potential danger is low). They do not believe that husbands have a right to entitlement of any kind from their wives.
- There is fear/distrust on both sides – both sides can recount "horror" stories. For example, secular agencies can talk about cases where women being beaten were told by their pastor and Christian friends that if she "just becomes a better wife" that the husband will stop abusing her, thereby laying the blame on her. On the other hand, secular agencies can be disrespectful of a woman's faith and religious beliefs that they feel are preventing her from being safe. Some shelter workers have refused to help a victim find transportation to her church. Advocates at secular organizations may see both the Bible and Christianity as irrelevant, or even harmful.
- Domestic violence organizations are generally led by women and churches are generally led by men. Working together requires a mutual respect for the leadership of each type of organization, otherwise, there will be a feeling of "superiority/inferiority" that can prevent collaboration/partnership.
- While the work of domestic violence may draw strong women to advocate on behalf of victims, it is important for those in the churches to come without preconceived notions of who the workers are and what they believe. Similarly, those who work in the domestic violence field also have stereotypes of pastors and religious people.
- Community organizations often see themselves as the domestic violence experts and want to "teach" rather than "listen."
- Churches often want to solve everything within their own walls, no matter what the problem. Turning to an outside secular agency by some pastors is viewed as having "failed" their congregants. Referrals are thus viewed as failure on the part of the pastor.

How to overcome these challenges:

- Accept that differences will exist in theology/ideology and in leadership, gender and style. Accept it rather than fearing it;
- Create relationships with community organizations. Talk with directors of agencies about your concerns regarding their view of people of faith, how they approach helping the victim, and how they have partnered with churches in the past. There is nothing more powerful than creating personal relationships.
- Don't expect those in community-based agencies to agree with your religious views—only to respect them;
- Some people who work in agencies, like some people in the pews, are not very nice people. If you come across someone who isn't so nice, then try to build a relationships without someone else in that agency. If you have one bad experience with someone in an agency, do not assume that everyone else there is just like them;
- Move beyond stereotypes. Stereotypes go both ways – domestic violence staff often have stereotypes of pastors as well. Remember, staff working in agencies can be Christians too. Secular women – strong, opinionated women – can ALSO be good, kind, compassionate, friendly, and caring;
- Have confidence in the faith of your congregants. Christians have fears of be-

ing corrupted by the "world." But most Christians do not easily lose their faith in God. Whether they lose their faith in the institutional church will depend more on how they are treated by the church and its leadership than what they hear at secular agencies about Christians;

- Many staff in secular agencies have a great desire to work in partnership with churches. Some secular agencies are coming to see faith as a powerful tool in helping victims to heal.

Building bridges takes initiative, courage and tact.

From the Point of View of the Psychologist

Shortly after Jimmy Carter was elected President of the United States, he appointed a task force to study mental health issues across the country. We learn from their work that a substantial number of families indicated that if they were experiencing significant emotional problems, they would consult first their pastor, priest or rabbi. While some of my colleagues were surprised to hear of these findings, it comes as no surprise to any one connected to church leadership or congregational life. But is the same true for those who experience domestic violence? I wonder. Unfortunately, many victims of abuse are unable or unwilling to approach their own pastor with stories of pain and brokenness. And those that do are often disappointed with the response.

As we have already argued in this article, many clergy do not feel well equipped to respond to those who seek their assistance in the aftermath of domestic violence. Even though accurate, helpful information is available from secular sources (e.g., books, national domestic violence advocacy groups, community-based transition houses) many religious leaders do not know where to turn to find these resources nor are they always comfortable accessing them. There are even a growing number of domestic violence resources directed towards families of faith (e.g., books, videos, and web-based training and resources, available through The Rave Project www.theraveproject.org, PASCH, www.peaceandsafety.com and the Faith Trust Institute www.faithtrustinstitute.org).

Acquiring knowledge about abuse is central for religious leaders who are called upon to respond to women, men, and children in crisis. It is indeed a lack of knowledge about abuse amongst religious leaders that creates such a need for local expertise, resources and support. This is why it is so essential to have referrals between clergy and mental health professionals in the community. Yet, amongst many religious leaders, there is a reluctance to refer those who come to them for help. Sometimes, this is due to the fact that they do not know what resources are available. Sometimes, this is due to a suspicion on the part of clergy about the advice that might be given to parishioners from those who work in mental health and community-based agencies. Sometimes, though, religious leaders do not know what to do with the information they already have at their disposal – and they simply need some guidance about how to build bridges with their community.

Here are some initial steps that pastors can take:

- Start to consult with other local clergy, directly, or within local ministerial associations, about their experience with domestic violence, their response to families in need, and the community resources of which they are aware;
- Contact local community mental health centers to see if they run classes for men arrested for domestic violence. Ask some of your clergy colleagues to join you to meet with the leaders of these groups. I suspect you will be surprised at how well you will be received by the group facilitators;
- Build community relationships with

agencies and their professional staff by learning from them how to be more effective and "culturally sensitive." In time, you will have opportunities to help them to be "religiously sensitive" to clients of deep faith who come to them for help; Since most domestic violence facilitators have heard violent men in a batterer group at one time or another justify their family violence on religious grounds, your advice and support will be very helpful as they do their work. Humility first, and then wisdom.

Building bridges takes initiative, courage and tact. Sometimes, it will be the religious leader who will initiate the process of referral or contact. Sometimes it will be an agency administrator or one of their professional staff. I offer the following example based on my own experience. The first phone call may sound something like this:

Psychologist: "Pastor Whitmer? My name is Dan Schaefer. I run groups for men in this area who have been arrested for domestic violence. We help men learn more effective ways to resolve conflict with their wives and children, so the family does not have to live with the threat of violence. And I think I need your help."

Pastor: "And what kind of help could I offer you, Dan?"

Psychologist: "Increasingly we are getting referrals from the courts of church-going men who have assaulted their spouses, and I am having two kinds of problems. First, these men are very suspicious of our staff since we are not necessarily members of their church or denomination. Secondly, they are using the Bible to justify their violence. I'm wondering if I could buy you some coffee and you could give me your thoughts about how I can be more effective with these men?

Such a phone call accomplishes two tasks: you build a relationship with a community leader who has connections with and the respect of many men; and you will learn how to more effectively respond to people of deep faith. In the process, that pastor will learn of your services, meet you, and be confronted with the troubling incidence rates of domestic violence in your local area. This will increase the chances that he or she will effectively respond to those coming for help and increase the potential of referrals. On the other hand, you will learn first hand what the sacred texts have to say about violence in the family context. If you are smart, you will take good notes, and keep them around when you go to visit your next pastor—comparing and contrasting how various clergy and church traditions see the role of faith in responding to this social evil.

Concluding Comments

Bridge building takes time—time to focus on a shared vision of a community that takes domestic violence seriously; time to discover common ground that would enable progress towards this goal; time to learn the unique contributions different professionals and varying agencies in the region can offer to assist in a community-wide response. Usually one agency or one profession takes the initial lead in bringing others to the collaborative table. It could begin with a project that is sponsored by one agency, but others are asked to join in the efforts. It could begin with a single event to determine whether there is interest across the community in bridge building.

Referrals are a critical strategy in bridge-building. But learning when to refer, how to refer, and to whom to refer, is not as straight-forward as it may seem. You need to know about the resources in your community if your referrals are to be appropriate and successful. Others need to know about the skills your agency or profession brings to the table in order for referrals to be bi-directional. Training is a central component of the process of making referrals. So also is tact, courage and humility.

Selected References

Fisher-Townsend, B., Nason-Clark, N., Ruff, L., & Murphy, N. (2008). *I am not violent: Men's experience in group.* In C. C. Kroeger, N. Nason-Clark & B. Fisher-Townsend (Eds.), *Beyond abuse in the christian home: Raising voices for change.* Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock.

Kroeger, C., & Nason-Clark, N. (2001). *No place for abuse: Biblical and practical resources to counteract domestic violence.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Nason-Clark, N. (1997). *The battered wife: How Christians confront family violence.* Louisville, KY: Westminster.John Knox Press.

Nason-Clark, N. (1999). *Shattered silence or holy hush: Emerging definitions of violence against women.* Journal of Family Ministry, 13(1), 39-56.

Nason-Clark, N. (2000a). *Making the sacred safe: Woman abuse and communities of faith.* Sociology of Religion, 61(4), 349-368.

Nason-Clark, N. (2001). *Woman abuse and faith communities: Religion, violence and the provision of social welfare.* In P. Nesbitt (Ed.), *Religion and social policy* (pp. 128-145). Walnut Creek, CA: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Nason-Clark, N. (2004). *When terror strikes at home: The interface between religion and domestic violence.* Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 42(3), 303-310.

Nason-Clark, N. (2005). *Linking research and social action: Violence, religion and the family. A case for public sociology.* Review of Religious Research, 46(3), 221-234.

Nason-Clark, N., Murphy, N., Fisher-Townsend, B., & Ruff, L. (2003). *An overview of the characteristics of the clients at a faith-based batterers' intervention program.* Journal of Religion and Abuse, 5(4), 51-72.

Stirling, M. L., Cameron, C. A., Nason-Clark, N., & Miedema , B. (Eds.). (2004). *Understanding Abuse: Partnering for Change.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

If someone concentrates his attention,
solely on the metaphors used of God's Majesty,
he abuses and misrepresents that Majesty
by means of these very metaphors with which God has clothed himself
for humanity's benefit,
and he is ungrateful to that Grace
which bent down its stature to the level of human childishness.
Although God had nothing in common with it,
he clothed himself in the likeness of humanity
in order to bring humanity to the likeness of himself.

— Ephrem the Syrian, *Hymns on Paradise*