End it now

“It is estimated that at least one of every three women globally will be beaten, raped, or otherwise abused during her lifetime.”

“It is estimated that in 30 to 60 per cent of families in Australia where domestic violence is a factor, child abuse is also occurring.”

“Approximately 1 in 3 women in New Zealand have experienced at least one act of physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.”

It’s time to end such violence.

This Sabbath, August 24, is the Adventist “enditnow” Sabbath. It’s a day set aside by the General Conference to focus openly and honestly on the debilitating evil that is domestic violence. Visit <www.enditnow.org> to learn more about saying “no” to violence and to sign the petition.

Also, be sure to check out last week’s issue of RECORD for commentary and spiritual insight into the issue of domestic violence.
**But for God’s grace**

“I could feel the anger welling up inside. Every pointed barb my little brother shot hit. Like a wounded bear, caged and cornered, he would poke me and provoke me until I would attack.”

**We must listen**

Pastor Trafford Fischer highlights the issue of domestic violence in our churches, providing some practical tips on how to help those who are experiencing it.

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**Photo of the week**

Egyptian Muslims lock hands and surround the Seventh-day Adventist church in Heliopolis to protect the property on Sunday, August 18, as approximately 300 protesters march by. Head to <record.net.au> for more groundbreaking Adventist news.

**Watch/download InFocus**

Mark Isaacs worked with asylum seekers on the Nauru island immigration detention centre for 10 months. He was working with The Salvation Army under conditions of strict confidentiality. But after he left he went public with his
Angry words

Fists are dangerous weapons, but so is the tongue. While they leave no physical scars, angry words can cause a tremendous amount of pain and anguish.

Concerns about Australia’s immigration policies. Did he do the right thing?

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from Linden Chuang, RECORD editorial assistant

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Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
I could feel the anger welling up inside. Every pointed barb my little brother shot hit. Like a wounded bear, caged and cornered, he would poke me and provoke me until I would attack. Bigger and stronger than him, I wanted him to stop. Usually I’d grab him, my hands around his throat or squeezing his arm, willing him to stop. He had to learn a lesson. I was conflicted, controlled by my emotions.

We were only little kids at the time. All brothers fight, right?

I didn’t want to hurt him. I just wanted respect. I hadn’t always had it at school. In the first few years, I was teased and provoked by those older than me—stung by the names they called, never able to run fast enough to catch them and make them pay.

I was a nice kid, a gentle giant, very patient but I had a tipping point. I had an overdeveloped sense of justice and on occasion I would just lash out. But I felt guilty every time my temper got the better of me. It became my daily prayer: “Dear Jesus, please take away my temper. Help me to control it.”

With the moderating influences of age and maturity, the fighting stopped. My brother and I got along better and better.

When I met my wife, I was drawn to her outgoing nature, her generosity, her sense of adventure. The image she portrayed to the world, however, hid the darkness of low self-esteem.

You see, she had been abused in previous relationships—hit, dragged by the hair, verbally abused and attacked. I couldn’t believe it. It was so foreign to my experience, so outrageous. I was angry, hurt. I promised her I would never hurt her like that, never hit her. I wanted to make her feel safe and secure, to erase the past with love. She has tried to forgive and move on.

My wife likes to stir me; she knows what buttons to push. One day I felt my emotions surging up in the familiar way—a king tide, threatening to spill over the breakwater and engulf all before it. Electricity flashed out to my extremities, my fingers twitched. But I stood still. I had made a promise and in that moment, my promise stopped me in my tracks.

But now I know. I know that I have in me the base human desire to control and exert my authority. I have pockets of darkness in me that need to be completely filled and lightened by the Holy Spirit.

My conscience held me back. Not everyone’s does. So I want to make a few things clear. Violence is never OK. Jesus talks about even anger being like murder. The only way to control our unhealthy habits is to surrender them and be filled with the Spirit so we give out His fruits.

Men, we should promise our women and children never to raise a hand in anger against them. We must stand up against violence. I was challenged by Ephesians 5 where it says I must love my wife as Christ loved the church. That means laying down my life for her. No-one damages or hurts the thing that is more important than his own life. And I praise God every day that He has changed me and saved me.
“There but for the grace of God, go I.”

* In preparing for this editorial, I called my brother and apologised for any hurt I had caused.

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Jarrod Stackelroth is associate editor of RECORD.
We must listen

There are some aspects of our culture that we appreciate and applaud. We love our cricket and car racing, the weekend barbecues and Christmas holidays. There are other practices that we believe are detrimental to our society and we work to eliminate, or at least minimise their damaging effects. Smoking, obesity, binge drinking, gambling and racial discrimination are on the list.

As a Church we have taken up some of these causes—the Five Day Plan to Stop Smoking was up there with the best! But have we been as vigilant and energised with the issue of domestic violence?

We can be easily tempted to put domestic violence in the "not-our-issue" basket because we find it difficult to believe that any form of violence might be happening in our churches. We believe we have taken Jesus’ command to love one another seriously and are convinced that good Christian disciples of Jesus could not behave badly. When we hear that our senior elder is beating on his wife and children, we say “No, that can’t be true—he is such a nice Christian gentleman.” When we hear that our Pathfinder leader is emotionally abusing our Pathfinders, we say, “No, he's just a bit of a rough diamond—it’s just his style!” So our first response is not to hear, and when we don’t hear we don’t act.

Sadly, the statistics from a number of studies on the rates of domestic violence in Adventist churches clearly reveal there will be times when we will need to stop, listen and act. When someone reports to us that they are experiencing abuse or violence of any kind, we need to respond with warmth and compassion and a genuine willingness to hear their story. Leaving them in some kind of no-man’s land is the worst thing we can do—that’s what we call "secondary abuse".

The Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle, USA, has provided a number of guidelines for ministering to any person who may be suffering at the hands of a violent partner or acquaintance. Here is a selection to keep in mind:

- **DO** believe her. Her description of the violence is only the tip of the iceberg.
- **DO** reassure her that this is not her fault; she doesn’t deserve this treatment and it is not God’s will for her.
- **DON’T** react with disbelief, disgust or anger at what she tells you. But don’t react passively either. Let her know that you are concerned and that what the abuser has done to her is wrong and not deserved by her.
- **DON’T** blame her for his violence. If she is blaming herself, try to reframe: “I don’t care if you did have tea late or forgot to water the lawn—that is no reason for him to be violent with you. This is his problem.”
- **DO** emphasise that the marriage covenant is broken by the violence from her partner.
- **DO** assure her of God’s love and presence, and of your commitment to walk with her through this journey.
- **DO** protect her confidentiality.
- **DO NOT** give information about her or her whereabouts to the abuser or to others who might pass information on to the abuser.
• DO pray with her. Ask God to give her the strength and courage she needs.
• DON’T minimise the danger to her. You can be a reality check. “From what you have told me, I am very much concerned for your safety . . .”
• DON’T recommend couples counselling or approach her husband and ask for “his side of the story”. These actions will endanger her.
• DON’T send her home with a prayer and directive to submit to her husband, bring him to church or be a better Christian wife.
• DO NOT encourage her dependence on you.
• DON’T do nothing.
• DO consult with colleagues in the wider community who may have expertise and be able to assist you in your response.

“Am I my brother’s/sister’s keeper?” “Yes, I am.” Jesus compels us to express His love, His compassion and His protection to the vulnerable, the hurting and the abused. We would do well to stop, listen and act in His Spirit.

_Pastor Trafford Fischer is Family Ministries director for the South Pacific Division._
“But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgement. Again, anyone who says to his brother, Raca, is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, You fool! Will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew 5:22).*

Jesus makes it quite clear that verbal abuse is not acceptable amongst His disciples. In the Sermon on the Mount He gives us precepts to follow, one of which is to speak with respect to one another. He talks about our "brother" but I’m sure this advice was given to us to use for our sisters, brothers, spouses, children and parents.

I would like to address the subject of verbal abuse for two important reasons. One, our behaviour is often an indicator of how we see the world. Proverbs 23:7 states: “For as he thinks within himself, so he is.” What we think is reflected in our words and actions. Verbal and physical abuse are the result of a world view totally opposite from biblical teaching. Second, I believe it’s imperative for a Christian to deal with the topic.

Verbal abuse is an abuse or battering which doesn’t leave any physical evidence. It’s therefore difficult to prove that abuse is happening. Verbal abuse creates emotional pain and mental anguish. It’s a lie that a person tells you about you, and after hearing it repeated over and over you believe it.

What it is

Verbal abuse includes withholding, bullying, defaming, defining, trivialising, harassing, diverting, interrogating, accusing, blaming, lying, taunting, put downs, name calling, yelling and raging amongst others. It’s also the most common form of abuse, but generally it’s not taken as seriously as other abuse because there’s no visible proof and the abuser usually has a “perfect” persona around others. Sometimes the abuser uses sarcasm in front of people as a put down or pretends it’s just a joke.

Examples

* Mark hides his need for control in his relationship with his wife under sarcasm, jokes and puns. “Why doesn’t she understand I’m just joking?” he says. The reason is that she is the object of those sarcastic remarks, jokes and puns. These remarks are made in order to keep the other off balance, never knowing when it’s coming.
* June can’t stand being seen as responsible for any failure. When she makes a mistake, her response could be: “I may be wrong, but you are ‘wronger’.” If her spouse says she has hurt his feelings, she claims not to remember having said what she did. The abused person is told they’re too sensitive.
* John isn’t subtle. His wife and kids never know what to expect when he comes home. Will it be the loving husband/father or will it be the one who flies into a rage who threatens them with physical abuse, swears and calls them names? The family walks on eggshells, never
knowing when the abuse will start.

Verbal abuse is manipulative and controlling. It's also insidious. Little by little the abused person’s self-esteem diminishes, usually without the person realising it. It's also unpredictable. In fact, unpredictability is one of the most significant characteristics of verbal abuse. The person being abused is stunned, shocked and completely thrown off balance by the partner’s sarcasm, put down or hurtful words.

“Reckless words pierce like a sword but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18). How true! Can you see Jesus using words that are intended to hurt or that bully another? I cannot!

We are the temple of the Holy Spirit and as such we are to treat it with care. That goes for our treatment of others as well. Proverbs is full of very good advice for our lives and I’d like to end with the most famous one found in Proverbs 25:11: “A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” May we remember who we are and whose we are as we walk this earth.

*All Bible texts taken from the New International Version.

Erna Johnson is Women’s Ministries director for the South Pacific Division.
Nile Union Academy volunteers evacuated

Gabal Asfar, Egypt

Six adults and two children were evacuated August 16 from the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s Nile Union Academy in Cairo ahead of nearby protest marches.

The evacuation of the volunteers was strictly precautionary, local church leaders said. The group is currently staying in Beirut, Lebanon, on the campus of the church’s Middle East University.

“We knew there were a couple of major demonstrations planned and decided to evacuate [the volunteers] in case these marches created a dangerous situation,” said Llewellyn Edwards, president of the Adventist Church in Egypt and Sudan.

Local Muslims lock hands and surround the Seventh-day Adventist church in Heliopolis to protect the property on Sunday, August 18, as approximately 300 protesters march by. This photo was taken by photojournalist Mohammed Abdel Moneim and is used with the permission of the Al Akhbar newspaper.

The marches, however, did not threaten the safety of the academy or the surrounding area. When protesters passed the nearby Adventist Church in Cairo, Edwards said local Muslims locked arms and surrounded the property to protect it from attack. The gesture, he said, demonstrated continued solidarity among Egyptians, despite growing turmoil in the country.

Egypt’s military-backed government is cracking down on protesters loyal to former president Mohamed Morsi, who was ousted in July. Extremists have targeted Coptic Christians and other Protestants in the country in recent weeks, burning churches, homes and businesses.

The United States’ Department of State released a warning last week urging US citizens living in Egypt to depart immediately due to “continuing political and social unrest.” Members of the Crisis Anticipation and Management Committee at Adventist world church headquarters met to discuss the situation and concurred.
The volunteers had arrived at Nile Union Academy about a month ahead of the autumn semester.

Edwards is hopeful that the area surrounding church property in Cairo will remain safe. “There are local Muslims here who contact the academy staff each day to assure them of their safety,” Edwards said.
The Nauru Riot: Staff Condemn Cruel and Degrading Conditions

A Statement by Past and Present Salvation Army Staff Members

23 July 2013

In light of the recent events that have taken place in Nauru, a collection of former and current Salvation Army staff who have spent the last ten months working with asylum seekers at the Regional Processing Centres in Nauru and Manus Island would like to make a public statement.

For those of us who work and have worked in Nauru, this riot although shocking, was an inevitable outcome from a cruel and degrading policy. Since the opening of the Nauru Regional Processing Centre (NRPC) there have been incidents of unrest that have reoccurred in escalating seriousness. Salvation Army staff in Nauru have been predicting such a tragedy for a long time.

We have worked alongside these asylum seekers since the opening of the NRPC when the men were first housed in tents. Brought pedestal fans when the temperature within their tents soared to over 50 degrees. Used buckets to empty rivers of rainwater when the same temporary accommodation flooded during the wet season. We comforted men who were brought to Nauru in handcuffs by the Australian government under false pretences. We watched their numerous peaceful protests against the uncertainty of their future. We saw the scars of self-harm, and suicide attempts. We tried to motivate the hundreds of men on hunger strike to eat again.

The asylum seekers have been given no idea of when their applications will be processed, or when they can leave Nauru. If they are found to be refugees, they do not know if they will be resettled in Australia or on the other side of the world. Meanwhile their families are left struggling in their home countries.

Countless men have suffered physically and psychologically. The mental health impact of detention in this harsh physical and policy environment cannot be overstated. The service providers in Nauru have been unable to prevent the marked deterioration in health in wellbeing. Previously healthy, resilient men have been worn down. We have witnessed a man scratching in the dirt, suffering a psychotic breakdown for several days without treatment, read another man’s suicide note apologising to his family, and seen countless others who suffered similar mental breakdowns. Thousands of tax-payers dollars have been spent on flying asylum seekers to the Australian mainland for medical treatment on ailments suffered in detention.

The asylum seekers have voiced their concerns over and over again only to be continuously ignored by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). Despite this constant degradation and suffering, we have witnessed the strength, humility and resilience of these people. We have seen men from all cultures pour their energy into keeping themselves and each other alive and hopeful. The support and kindness that the men detained in Nauru offered to each other and the staff never wavered, even in the face of increasing injustice and frustration. There are countless examples of their good nature, not withholding the Tamils indicted in this current unrest. The Tamils who were always the men who put their arm around you in a friendly gesture and assisted in labour with no thought of reward.

The most recent incident in Nauru was not borne out of malice. It was a build up of pressure and anxiety over ten months of degrading treatment, and a planned peaceful protest that degenerated. It was a reaction to a refugee processing system that is devoid of logic and fairness. While we do not condone these actions and are horrified by what has happened, we can understand the frustration and the anger that led to such a demonstration. We would also like to offer our sympathies to the Nauruan people who have suffered during this period.

We have good reason to believe that those asylum seekers arrested and detained in Nauruan jail will not be provided with legal representation. It is likely that a large number of those men arrested in the riot did not in fact act criminally. As such we advocate for everyone to be treated as innocent until proven guilty in a court. This is especially pertinent given the comments of Minister Tony Burke already stating that visas may not be granted to those men arrested. We also believe that there are many injured men who are not receiving adequate medical treatment. We call for immediate action from human rights groups to be present in Nauru to assist those men in jail and those men who need immediate medical treatment.

We fear that their reputations and the reputation of all asylum seekers will be marred by an incident which was ten months in the making.
For those people who sit outside of Nauru, who have never met an asylum seeker, it is easy to judge these men as dangerous, destructive or ungrateful. But anyone who has worked in Nauru will see them as the desperate souls they are. Fathers, sons, brothers, who are trying to forge a life for themselves and their family. Frustrated and down-trodden by the degrading bureaucracy implemented by our government.

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Jack Rabl, Amanda Lloyd Tait, Amy Marden, Darren Wyatt, Martin Reusch, Laura Button, Jennifer Dennis, Kai Noonan, Stu O’Brien, 22 current and former Salvation Army staff members who wish to remain anonymous