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**SERMON/DISCUSSION STARTERS**

**A) Luke 10: 25-37**

* As communities of faith, not to pass by on the other side in terms of our response to the victims of gender-based violence (GBV) or to see it as an issue for ‘good Samaritans’ to deal with.
* To grasp that our God is a God who lifts up the victim and restores them to wholeness and offers to them life and life in abundance and that as disciples of this God we are given that responsibility also.
* It points to the church, the body of Christ in the world, reaching out to assist victims of GBV in practical ways. The focus of the 2018 WDA, the Casa Noeli safe house, was a church-founded initiative in response to a need identified by civil society and offers practical support to the women who come there to enable them to move on with their lives by assisting them to access the necessary gateway services.
* It suggests that the church should be a safe place, and should shape safe places, for women to tell their stories.
* It invites the church to actively participate in moving towards the vision of the new creation where there will be nothing evil or harmful to the flourishing of humankind and where relationships will be radically restructured.
* The church can hold out the potential for a redemption of man-made structures and divisions, challenging them through the model of Jesus Christ, who calls us to *“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,’ and ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”* (Luke 10:27)

**B) Luke 18: 1-8**

* Allows for an exploration of the ways in which power can be abused in culture – the judge who exploits his absolute power position in society. In what ways might culture allow gender to exploit its power?
* In this parable we encounter a model of using one’s power to empower others – this demonstrates the use of power for service and advocacy.
* The parable also presents a model of the oppressed becoming agents of their own empowerment – the constancy of the widow to see her grievance redressed wins the day.
* The parable highlights the need for prayer – faithful, persevering and persistent prayer – not only out of compassion for women facing gender-based violence, but out of the conviction that our voices must be heard by even the most powerful or uncaring. Our sustained prayer might take many forms: prayer for women facing GBV and their situations, that they find the confidence to tell their story and the courage to act; that they might find protection; that the ‘judges’ may have a change of heart. And prayer for ourselves, that we might be able to let go of any attitude of ‘it’s not my problem’ or ‘there’s nothing we can do’ and that we will learn to hear the testimony of those suffering with compassion and without judgment. Prayer for the faith that, with God, we will have the courage to do something, and we will not give up even though the task seems insurmountable and cultural opposition powerful. This is valuable in the wider arena of sustainable development as well as in the work to address the issue of gender-based violence.

**C) 1 Corinthians 12: 12-27**

* Allows for a consideration of the unity in diversity that should be a characteristic of the body of Christ.
* Gives space to explore the value of the differing parts of the body, all created and designed with a purpose by God, each necessary to the full functioning of the body. What might this say about God’s purpose in creating humankind, male and female, in the divine image and in their ‘twoness’ being earthed in the ‘oneness’ of their flesh?
* The parts of the body have equal concern for one another. How might that enable us to reframe conversations around gender, to promote positive masculinities and the liberation of women and to develop an understanding that woman and man are more like one another than they are different.
* Every part of the body suffers if one part is suffering – how are we impacted by the suffering of women facing gender-based violence? In what ways might their suffering call us to explore our relationship with and theology of gender? In what ways might we ‘suffer’ if we fail to address the need of this part of the body of Christ of which we are also a part?