



October 13, 2014

Dear Pastor, Clerk of Session, Youth Leader, Peacemaking/Outreach Chair,

On September 20th, the Peacemaking Committee of PEVA presented a Seminar on Anti-Bullying at the First Presbyterian Church in Norfolk. Several key takeaways were discussed that we would like to share them with you:

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- Definition of “bullying” – Bullying is a multifaceted form of mistreatment, mostly seen in schools and the workplace. It is characterized by the repeated exposure of one person to physical and/or emotional aggression including teasing, name calling, mockery, threats, harassment, taunting, hazing, social exclusion or rumors. (World Health Organization)
- The five types of bullying are verbal, social, physical, cyber and workplace.
- The effects of bullying include social exclusion or rejection, social anxiety disorder, conduct disorder, depression, anxiety, somatic systems, suicide, use of alcohol and drugs, skipping school, receiving poor grades, low self-esteem, and more health problems.
- Those at risk of beginning bullied include youth who seem different from their peers (e.g. overweight), who have few friends or do not socialize well with others, who suffer from a developmental disability, and who have poor self-esteem.
- Those at risk of becoming bullies include those who receive harsh parenting by caregivers, and those who have attitudes of accepting violence.
- What to do – talk to children, know what your children are doing, recognize signs of bullying, report bullying incidents to schools, law enforcement and other service providers, observe, and support the victims.
- Resources: Bullying: A Spiritual Crisis by Ronald Hecker Cram, www.stopbullying.gov, www.pacer.org/bullying, www.stompoutbullying.org, www.thetrevorproject.org, **Luke 10:29-37, Matthew 5:43-45**
- PEVA website has more resources at <http://www.pcusa-peva.org/article357897c7366070.htm>

Several suggestions were made by the presenters, as well as the attending participants (ages 10-85) regarding how churches could help to alleviate bullying.

- Sensitivity training
- Open, free discussion about bullying
- Sharing seminar information with pastors, sessions, youth leaders and mentoring programs
- Anti-bullying conference(s)
- More seminars and training in the community
- Sermons on bullying
- Community involvement
- Use of social media to start mass movement against bullying
- Educating the older generation
- Getting “in tune” with what is going on in the young people’s daily life and developing trusting relationships between children, youth and adults.

To follow up on the above suggestions, the Peacemaking Committee is encouraging these actions to help alleviate bullying in our homes, schools, workplaces and communities.

PASTORS – Sermons on anti-bullying

SESSIONS – Readings: **Luke 10:29-37, Matthew 5:43-45** and other resources listed above

SESSIONS – Policy on anti-bullying in the workplace and place of worship

YOUTH LEADER – Anti-bullying conference (Churches may combine efforts)

Bullying has been identified as a crisis, particularly in our schools. Because many of these children also attend our churches, the Peacemaking Committee is committed to doing what it can to alleviate bullying and ask that each church within the Presbytery join us in doing so. We believe that our work on bullying within the Presbytery will have far-reaching effects.

Sincerely,

Gerry Ellis, Chair
Peacemaking Committee

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