

# White Ribbon 2020



*Presbyterian ministers discuss messages around masculinity they received growing up*

## Greetings

As we launch this year's White Ribbon campaign, I want to share with you video of an interview I recorded this month with Presbyterian ministers. But firstly, I want to explain why such discussions between men remain necessary and how we can provide leadership in our communities.



## Shocking statistics of violence against women

A worrying recent survey by White Ribbon Australia shows 42% of young men do not consider punching and hitting constitute domestic violence, while 43% do not consider frightening, humiliating, degrading or punishing a person as domestic violence.

This is shocking and while we don't have a similar study for our country, New Zealand has the highest rate of reported violence towards women in the developed world. Police data for the year to August shows that women make up 90% of those violently assaulted by a partner or ex, and 98.6% of those sexually assaulted by a partner or ex.

Recent cases in the news of misogynistic behaviour by young men suggest that even in light of the #MeToo era, men continue to hold outdated views about sexuality, gender, and gendered violence.

What is it that prevents men from recognising and confronting this incontrovertible pattern of gendered violence and victimisation? Why do we stay quiet? White Ribbon invites us all to "stand-up, speak out and act to prevent men's violence towards women".

## Tackling unhealthy ideas about masculinity

Change begins by focusing on the attitudes which enable young men to think that violence is ok, or that it is 'masculine' to exercise power or control over another person.

The focus of our 2020 White Ribbon campaign is #Challenging the Outdated. It encourages men to speak about ideas or messages of masculinity that they received when growing up that they later found to be unhelpful for building healthy relationships.

## Four male Presbyterian ministers interviewed

To help the men of our Church start this discussion, I recently interviewed four male Presbyterian ministers. They speak of messages about masculinity they absorbed earlier in life, how they came to realise some messages were wrong and unhelpful in forming healthy relationships, and how they have changed. PCANZ Communications has made videos of this interview available to congregations (see links below) and I encourage you to stream or download them for use in your context to help men and teenage boys start a similar conversation.

## Jesus is the mentor of equality between genders

The great mentor of equality between genders and behaving in respectful ways to all people is Jesus. Growing up in a male dominated society where the cultural norm was for men to have power and control, Jesus was counter-cultural in his teaching, behaviour and attitude. For example, he invited women to be his disciples 'sitting at his feet' in an equal way with men, (Luke 10: 38-42). Unlike any other rabbi of his time, he used women as the central focus of some

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of his stories, (Luke 15:8-10). He entered into theological discussions with women, respectfully honouring their thoughts and opinions, (John 4: 1-26). He purposefully chose not to exercise power and control over women, even when culturally and legally he had a right to do so, (John 8: 1-11).

Sadly, domestic violence or family harm incidents happen inside our Christian community. If any congregation or fellowship would like to delve a little deeper into the biblical or theological basis of equality and respect in relationships and together discuss what the church can do to help prevent domestic violence, I recommend the book, *Dishonoured and Unheard* by Daphne Marsden. This book is written in the New Zealand context of the church we know and understand.

Together, let us all Challenge the Outdated and work to make New Zealand a place where all women and girls are respected and appreciated; a place where all women are safe and secure, and a place where men and women relate equally as children of God.

**Very Rev Ray Coster**

**White Ribbon New Zealand Ambassador**

E raycoster51@gmail.com

Watch or download from the [PCANZ Vimeo](#) channel or [website](#) the full interview by Very Rev Ray Coster with Moderator Right Rev Fakaofu Kaio, Rev David Sang-Joon Kim, Rev Martin Stewart and Rev Ryhan Prasad, or watch the video divided into four shorter videos.

Part 1: "What messages did you receive about being a man that you now consider outdated?"

Part 2: "How did you come to reject outdated messages about masculinity?"

Part 3: "What would you say to boys and men about masculinity in 2020?"

Part 4: "In what ways have churches shared unhelpful messages about masculinity?"



**White Ribbon Day is 25 November**

See resources for 2020 on the [White Ribbon website](#) and the [PCANZ website](#).



Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand