

Press Release



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World Christian students throw light on pastors and priests who prey

The sexual abuse of female church members by church leaders is often ignored, overlooked or played down, according to a groundbreaking new book published this week. The book, *When Priests and Pastors Prey*, published by the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), claims sexual abuse of adult women by clergymen is a “silent killer” in many churches and families around the world.

“Research indicates that 90 to 95 per cent of victims of clergy sexual exploitation are women,” said Dr Valli Batchelor, book project co-ordinator. “These victims are often so trapped in confusion, guilt, shame and self-blame that they are unable to see themselves as victims.”

Dr Batchelor added that female victims often feel unable to speak out against the abuse they’ve suffered. “Women victims are likely to remain silent, suffering severe consequences from depression to suicide,” she said.

The book, which takes an uncompromising stand against all forms of sexual abuse and violence by church leaders, features stories from women survivors of clergy sexual abuse, research from pioneer experts and theologians, calls for action, reflections from different regions around the world, and examples of best practice in religious and secular organisations.

“Whilst this book includes painful survivor stories, and accounts of indifference and obstruction of survivors by church hierarchies, its focus is on the protection of woman and the prevention of abuse by clergy across all cultures,” Dr Batchelor said.

The book is being launched at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), 17-25 May 2011, in Kingston, Jamaica. Contributors include former US President Jimmy Carter, feminist theologian Rev Dr Marie Fortune, award winning journalist Amanda Gearing, and students and WSCF members from around the world.

Notes

1. The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), founded in 1895, is an international organisation for Christian students with member movements in over 100 countries around the world. WSCF’s values include social justice, youth leadership, ecumenical dialogue and gender justice.
2. The full title of the book is *When Priests and Pastors Prey: Identifying, Preventing and Overcoming Clergy Sexual Abuse of Women*. The book is published by WSCF and is endorsed by the World Council of Churches (WCC).
3. The International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC), in Kingston, Jamaica, 17-25 May 2011, organised by the WCC, is a "harvest festival" celebrating the achievements of the Decade to Overcome Violence which began in 2001. At the same time it encourages individuals and churches to renew their commitment to nonviolence, peace and justice.

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