

“Restoring Sanctuary”: ADM awards \$80,000 grant to innovative model for churches to create safety for domestic abuse survivors

Sydney — An \$80,000 Grant, calling upon Christian women in Australia to form an innovative, collaborative, strategic and church-based response to the issue of domestic violence in Australia, has been awarded by Anglican Deaconess Ministries (ADM) to a robust concept supporting churches to create safety for domestic violence victims within their communities.

ADM is pleased to announce that the Restoring Sanctuary Innovation Grant, of \$80,000, is today awarded to Dr. Wilma Gallet and her group’s proposal.

Libby Sanders, the Program Manager of Mercy and Justice at ADM, shared, “We are delighted to award Dr. Gallet and her group the Restoring Sanctuary Innovation Grant. They developed a well-rounded and robust concept, rich in theology and domestic abuse understanding, shaped to support the diversity of churches in the Australian Christian community and, most importantly, victim-survivors of abuse. Dr Gallet has also brought together a skilled and well-rounded team behind the proposal. We are blessed to be able to support such a promising program.”

Dr. Gallett also noted the heart behind their program, sharing that, “the program aims to create communities where victim-survivors of domestic violence feel safe, believed, included and loved. A sanctuary is a sacred place, a place where the presence of God is felt; a place of safety and refuge. It is therefore fitting that the Church in the 21st century should provide sanctuary to those in need of support and in particular be a safe space for anyone who has experienced domestic violence.”

Dr Gallet’s proposed program outlines clear stages for participating Church communities to progress through, including a church-specific needs assessment, a workshop for both church leaders and congregants, support in policy formation and integration with local service providers, and planned resourcing for ongoing learning. The program has been intentionally constructed on a strong foundation of theology, trauma-informed care and a focus on the domestic abuse victim-experience - a Reference Group of victim-survivors will inform the program’s development.

The team is led by Dr. Wilma Gallet, a lecturer at the University of Divinity, with senior project management, research and domestic violence program experience. Wilma is joined by Nell Kuilenburg, who established and managed a Christian Women’s shelter for over a decade and has continued to work in this space, along with Christine D’Souza, a registered Psychologist with experience within the intersection of church communities and domestic violence. They are partnering with The Christian Research Association, including Professor Reverend Philip Hughes and Stephen Reid, to support the project.

ADM’s Restoring Sanctuary Innovation Grant was first announced on 25th November 2019, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Its focus was particularly to support structural and cultural change within churches that would allow for safer community spaces for victims of domestic abuse. Applicants for the Restoring Sanctuary Innovation Grant came from church ministries, community organisations and individuals across the country, and final selection included an external review committee with representatives from the Anglican clergy and Christian victim-survivor communities, across both urban and rural contexts.

On the intention of the grant process, Amelia Schwarze, the Area Specialist for Domestic and Family Violence at ADM, said, “we knew that churches were not un-affected in the domestic abuse crisis in our country, and yet many feel under-resourced in how they can best care for victim-survivors of abuse. We also knew that many women in the church were both well-placed and seeking to serve both the local church and victim-survivors in addressing domestic abuse.”

“Perhaps most encouraging was the spirit of collaboration and support we saw from the Christian women who applied – many sought to support and collaborate with each other, and all truly wanted to

see the strongest application raised up through this process. We were incredibly blessed to receive a number of very strong applications from passionate and skilled women from the Australian Church.”

Who is ADM?

Anglican Deaconess Ministries is a Sydney-based Christian women’s foundation, with a vision to see women, from generation to generation, flourishing in Kingdom work, and a mission to raise up women with theological formation for practical and public engagement.

To learn more about the Restoring Sanctuary Innovation Grant and the awarded concept, please visit www.deaconessministries.org.au/restoring-sanctuary.

For more information on Mercy & Justice at ADM and for interview opportunities, please contact Libby Sanders, Program Manager for Mercy and Justice, at libby@deaconessministries.org.au.