



Picture: Mike Walters

1st December 2022

Bold artwork champions campaign against gender-based violence

St Peter's Church in Carmarthen has found an unexpected way to play its part in a global campaign calling for an end to violence and abuse against women and girls.

The church is supporting the annual United Nations' 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence and Abuse by exhibiting a bold and thought-provoking piece of conceptual art in the shape of a 4ft 6ins double bed on show at the very centre of the church.

The artwork, entitled *A Silentnight of Bad Dreams*, is the creation of Kidwelly artist Heather Witt who hopes her unusual work will provide a talking point in Carmarthen and help publicise the cause.

The abstract piece takes the shape of a double bed with abusive slogans and profanities scrawled across its two pillowcases. The shocking sentiments of the words serve to mirror the loneliness and thoughts felt by victims of domestic abuse as they climb into bed with abusive partners at night.

"The words on the bed are shocking," admits Heather. "But so too is the statistic that one in three women experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime and most often by an intimate partner. These words may be hard-hitting and uncomfortable to read, but sometimes things just need to be said.

"We welcome everyone to come into the church to see the work and we invite them to make their mark by writing their own contributions on the bed as well as a short prayer to put inside the pillowcases. We want people to 'make a mark, make a smudge, make a difference'."

The 16 Days campaign unites people from all around the world in raising awareness about gender-based violence, challenging discriminatory attitudes and calling for improved laws to bring an end to the abuse.

Although St Peter's may seem an unusual venue to display such a graphic piece of conceptual art, it is Heather's connection with the Mother's Union which inspired her to think of the church as a location.

Globally, the Mother's Union is a major supporter of the 16 Days of Activism campaign. It joins with more than 6,000 organisations from some 187 countries calling for an end to gender-based violence.

The campaign, which began on November 25, runs until December 10 which is International Human Rights Day. On this day, the church will be taking part in a march with candles, lanterns, and torches from the Guildhall in Carmarthen to St Peter's Church for a 5pm Evening Prayer service. Everyone is welcome to join in the march which meets at the Guildhall at 4pm.

Revd Canon Dr Matthew Hill said that as an inclusive church, St Peter's is proud to be playing its part in the campaign. "Please join us in the march of witness and the service on December 10," he said. "Together we can challenge and change the travesty of the murder of women by their partners and the evil of Domestic Violence."

St David's Mother's Union Trustees and Friends are publishing 16 videos throughout the 16 days. These are available each day on YouTube from 9am <https://www.youtube.com/@stdavidsmu> Facebook from 10am <https://www.facebook.com/groups/367139454151710>

Everyone is welcome to view the artwork which will be on display at St Peter's Church until December 10. The church is open daily.

Ends