

A LITURGY FOR RAISING AWARENESS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Caroline Downs -please feel free to use or adapt any or all of this liturgy.

GATHERING

We gather together, aware of the violence around us which has increased since the onset of the ongoing pandemic.

We are aware of the physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect of vulnerable human beings precious in your eyes in the United Kingdom and in other parts of the world. We offer this worship as our part in breaking the silence.

Loving God, who calls new life into being, hear now our prayers for all who have been harmed.

Let us pray

Compassionate God, your Son wept over the city of Jerusalem;
we pray for all those who suffer any kind of domestic violence and exploitation.

May our churches reflect the love of our Lord Jesus to those who have experienced this kind of suffering. May we be messengers of hope and love, and offer on-going care and support in any ways that we can. We thank you for meaningful campaigns aimed at speaking out against domestic violence, and we pray for all who seek to find healing and hope after trauma. Create in us new hearts, O Lord, renew our spirits, and help us to know how to best work for the healing of your kingdom, through Jesus Christ your Son. **Amen.**

This hymn we offer as a prayer

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
Forgive our foolish ways:
Reclothe us in our rightful mind;
In purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence praise,
In deeper reverence praise.

In simple trust, like theirs who heard
Beside the Syrian sea,
The gracious calling of the Lord,
Let us, like them, without a word:
Rise up and follow thee,
rise up and follow thee!

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
Where Jesus knelt to share with thee,
The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love,
Interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
Till all our strivings cease;
Take from our souls the strain and stress,
And let our ordered lives confess
The beauty of thy peace,
The beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
Thy coolness and thy balm;
Let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
Speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still small voice of calm,
O still small voice of calm.

A reading based on Matthew 25:35-46

I was hungry and you gave me bread.
I was thirsty and you gave me drink.
I was a stranger and you welcomed me.
I was naked and you clothed me.
I was sick and you visited me.
I was in prison and you came to me.
I was raped and you stood by me.
I was beaten and you sheltered me.
I was harassed and you helped me act.
I was abused and you intervened.
I was in pain and you comforted me.
I was bleeding and you staunching by wound.
I was orphaned and you mothered me.
I was alone and you took my hand.
I was unworthy and you believed in me.
I was victimized and you empowered me.
I was confused and you brought me insight.
I was silent and you listened to me.

I was seeking and you searched with me.
I was knocking and you opened the door.

(Adapted from: Breaking the Silence of Violence by Women in Mission and Ministry Office at the Episcopal Church Centre)

An Address may be offered here.

A Poem

This powerful poem was written by women from the South Africa survivor network which works with Tearfund.

We were silent because we were afraid that we would be judged.

We were silent because we have gone to our pastors and they have judged us.

We were silent because of the stigma that stays with us wherever we go.

We were silent because if we speak, we have nowhere to go.

We are not being silent any longer.

Too many people are suffering because we have been silent and you have been silent.

We ask you today to join us in breaking the silence.

We survivors are creating a platform to speak out.

Share our voices, faces, and experienced wisdom.

We are asking you to join our movement.

Speak out against violence. Violence against women is against Christian values. It Must End.

We can only break the stigma of sexual violence by speaking out - but without you and your churches, we cannot change things.

You are powerful and influential and you must help us do this work.

We want to work hand in hand with you.

We are more than willing to come to speak to your congregation, to be the voice and faces of rape in South Africa.

We ask you to open doors for us.

We want to enter your church with our truth as the real survivors, not just marginalized women.

We have been harmed, but we have the power to change the world.

We are fighting for ourselves and every other woman who is still silent. Will you fight with us?

Let us pray

(Adapted with thanks from the Anglican Church of Australia)

God of love, may we find the insight to recognise violence in all forms, and courage to name it and speak out for justice. May the Lord Jesus bless each one of us with compassion for the vulnerable, and grace to stand with them, sharing his strength. May the Holy Spirit bless us with prayerful hearts, and power to breathe peace, transforming the world. We pray for systems that tackle inappropriate attitudes, corruption and cruelty. Loving God, you are the one who desires that all people be brought into right relationship with one another and with you. Show us the path to justice and fill us with your healing power through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

This hymn we offer as a prayer

Be still and know that I am God,
be still and know that I am God,
be still and know that I am God.

I am the Lord that healeth thee,
I am the Lord that healeth thee,
I am the Lord that healeth thee.

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust,
In thee, O Lord, I put my trust.

Prayers for Our New Creation

(Adapted from A Service For Healing From Traumatic Cruelty, St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, PA)

Leader: God of all people, who dwells in the heart of our being, come quickly to help all who are assaulted by cruelty and abuse of any kind. Give us eyes to see beyond our doings so that we play our part in casting away the works of darkness, and may we trust in your mercy toward us and all of your beloved children

***People:* Heal us, God, and return us to wholeness by your love.**

Leader: God of wisdom, in a world where power is often abused and the victim blamed, help us to show your compassion and tender mercy towards our fellow human beings.

***People:* Heal us, God, and return us to wholeness by your love.**

Leader: God of justice, help us to accept that there is a potential for blindness and cowardice in everyone, and empower us to overcome this potential in ourselves.

***People:* Give us courage and confidence, O God, to bear witness with those who suffer.**

Leader: God of mercy, you have taught us that when we pray in faith, you will be among us; hear us now as we pray for our own concerns, either silently or aloud.

***People:* (Those present may add their own petitions, to which we may respond:) Hear our prayer.**

Leader: God of compassion, have mercy on those who are still caught in abusive relationships. Deliver them quickly from their oppressors. Frustrate the design of evil and establish your rule of justice, love and peace throughout the world.

***People:* Hasten the coming of your kingdom of love among us.**

Leader: God of all comfort, grant peace to those who have died in abusive situations, and bring them to that place where there is no pain or grief.

***People:* We pray to you, O God.**

Leader: O Lord, help us to be strong stewards of all you have entrusted to us. Give us the courage and your strength to stand against violence inflicted upon your precious people. These prayers we gather together in the words that our Lord Jesus taught us and in the language of our choice:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,

for ever and ever.

Amen.

Psalm of Lament: Psalm 77 to be said together:

A lament liturgy was developed by Sarah Van Zetten-Bruins, co-pastor of Trinity Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Darla Olson.

**I cry aloud to God,
aloud to God, that he may hear me.
In the day of my trouble I seek the Lord;
in the night my hand is stretched out without wearying;
my soul refuses to be comforted.**

Silence

**I think of God, and I moan;
I meditate, and my spirit faints.
You keep my eyelids from closing;
I am so troubled that I cannot speak.
I consider the days of old,
and remember the years of long ago.**

Silence

**I commune with my heart in the night;
I meditate and search my spirit:
'Will the Lord spurn forever,
and never again be favourable?
Has his steadfast love ceased forever?
Are his promises at an end for all time?
Has God forgotten to be gracious?
Has he in anger shut up his compassion?'
And I say, 'It is my grief
that the right hand of the Most High has changed.'**

Silence

**I will call to mind the deeds of the Lord;
I will remember your wonders of old.
I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.**

Hymn

For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow brief life's span.

You, Creator God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
brings the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Fred Kaan

Tunes: Alleluia dulce carmen, Westminster Abbey, Picardy, Wolvesey

Benediction

As we conclude this time of worship and prayer,
we know that always, God goes with us:
through the presence of the Spirit and the presence of one another.
Hear these words of blessing:
May the grace of Jesus Christ,
the love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all, now and forever. **Amen.**