

Worship Resources for Domestic Violence Awareness
Compiled by Rev. Martha Freeman & Dr. C. John Weborg

Call to Worship

We gather in the name of God,
who loves us and who is in our midst.

We gather in the name of the One
who proclaims justice and mercy,

We gather to name our sorrow
and share new visions.

We gather to heal our pain
and rekindle our hope.

We gather because the journey is long.

We gather because we hunger and thirst
for a new heaven and a new earth.

The spirit of life has called us to be together.
The spirit of compassion has called all of creation
to be transformed by love.
May this gathering serve to strengthen,
encourage and renew us.

Thanks be to God.

--Mennonite Central Committee, mcc.org

Lament

O God, from generation to generation you have shown steadfast love.
From the genesis of time, you have cared for your family.

Why, now, have you turned from your children?

You allow abuse and neglect.

Must your wrath be inflamed against children?

You allow death to come to babies.

You allow children to be struck with violence.

It is your honor that burns in ashes.

Where are you, Yahweh?

Must children scream in silence?

Their wounds drip with bitterness; their bruises pulsate with anger.

Their eyes are dimmed from despair.

Their bellies howl with pain.

Some try to care for them, to heal their hunger and pain.
Some try to help them in your name.
Why are you silent, Yahweh?

O God, you brought deliverance from Egypt; deliver the children.
You destroyed the enemies; crush the evil in their lives.
You played with Leviathan; restore their play.
O God, you fashioned the limits of the earth;
weave limits of love for the children.

Remember, Yahweh, you molded your children from the dirt,
And said, "Behold, this is good."
You listened to the cries of the widows and orphans,
And said, "Behold, they are good."

Come, O God, hear the voices of the children; do not be silent.
Do not let evil mock your name.
Let the children rise.
Let the children praise your name.

The Covenant Hymnal – A Worshipbook pg. 913

Litany of Hope

Group 1: We believe that beyond the violence,
Group 2: there can be love;
Group 1: beyond the despair,
Group 2: there can be hope;
Group 1: beyond the torment,
Group 2: we will find rest;
Group 1: beyond the brokenness,
Group 2: there can be healing;
Group 1: beyond our agony,
Group 2: we will find joy.
All: O God, transform our disbelief and gently carry us from darkness to
light.

*--Carolyn Holderread Heggen,
Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and
Churches, 1993, Herald Press*

Prayer of Confession

God of love and justice
we long for peace within and peace without.
We long for harmony in our families,
for serenity in the midst of struggle.

We long for the day when our homes
will be a dwelling place for your love.

Yet we confess that we are often anxious;
we do not trust each other,
and we harbor violence.
We are not willing to take the risks
and make the sacrifices that love requires.

Look upon us with kindness and grace.
Rule in our homes and in all the world;
Show us how to walk in your paths,
Through the mercy of our Savior. Amen.

*--Ruth Duck, *Flames of the Spirit*,
The Pilgrim Press*

Prayer

Jesus, courageous and vulnerable, you broke into the vicious circle.
May we break into cycles of violence.
Jesus, bold and brave, you confronted the traditional customs.
May we confront patterns of hatred and prejudice.
Jesus, assertive and strong, you challenged the perpetrators.
May we challenge victimizers and abusers in our day.
Jesus, clear and direct, you drew a line in the sand.
May we refuse to accept injustice.
Jesus, amazing and powerful, you got them to drop their stones.
May we find ways to be in the world
That increase safety, establish fairness and promote peace. Amen.

*--adapted from *Roll Away the Stone: Lenten Reflections at the
Close of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches* ,
eds. Caryn Douglas and Ted Dodd*

Prayer

God of compassion, give us openness and compassion for those who suffer from domestic violence and other forms of abuse. May our churches be a safe place where those whose lives are affected by abuse can name the truth of the violence in their lives and be heard with a spirit of oneness and caring. May it be a place where perpetrators of abuse are called to account. May it be a place where all can find justice and healing. May we hear and respond to Jesus' call "Come, follow me" as we work to end violence in all its forms. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ who knows the pain of violence. Amen.

--Adapted from Lord, Hear Our Prayers, MCC DV Worship Resources

Prayer

God of power, steady each of us as we strive to make sense of a fragmented world. We have lived in terror, when we needed to have safety. We have lived with betrayal and duplicity, when we needed peace. We have had to isolate ourselves, when we needed comfort and warmth. We have hidden and longed to be free. Help us to bear these losses; help us to bear the time spent in anguish; help us to bear the reality of the past. Bring us into that safe place where we may be open to receive the everyday comforts of this life, to love and to be loved, and to experience your grace. Amen.

*--from Service of Healing for Traumatic Cruelty,
St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, PA*

Reading based on Matthew 25:35-46

Right: I was hungry and you gave me bread.

Left: I was thirsty and you gave me drink.

R: I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

L: I was naked and you clothed me.

R: I was sick and you visited me.

L: I was in prison and you came to me.

R: I was raped and you stood by me.

L: I was beaten and you sheltered me.

R: I was harassed and you helped me act.

L: I was abused and you intervened.

R: I was in pain and you comforted me.

L: I was bleeding and you staunched my wound.

R: I was orphaned and you mothered me.

L: I was alone and you took my hand.

R: I was unworthy and you believed in me.

L: I was victimized and you empowered me.

R: I was confused and you brought me insight.

L: I was silent and you listened to me.

R: I was seeking and you searched with me.

L: I was knocking and you opened the door.

*---from Breaking the Silence of Violence
by Women in Mission and Ministry Office at the Episcopal Church Center*

Prayers of Intercession

Prayer for Victims

The Lord is my strength and my salvation.
Deliver me, O Lord, from evildoers;
Protect me from those who are violent,
Who plan evil things in their minds
and stir up wars continually.
The Lord is my strength and my salvation.

Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked;
protect me from the violent
who have planned my downfall.
The arrogant have hidden a trap for me,
And with cords they have spread a net,
Along the road they have set snares for me.
The Lord is my strength and my salvation.

Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked;
do not further their plans.
Those who surround me lift up their heads;
let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!
The Lord is my strength and my salvation.

I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the needy,
And executes justice to the poor.
Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name;
The upright shall live in your presence.
You, O Lord, are my refuge. Into your hands I commend my
Spirit.

--based on Psalm 140 (NRSV)

Prayer for a Victim or Survivor of Crime

Lord God of liberation,
you saw your people as slaves in Egypt
and delivered them from captivity.
You see works of violence and weep.
Relieve the suffering of (name).
Grant peace of mind and soul
and a renewed faith in your protection and care.
Protect us all from the violence of others.
Keep us safe from the weapons of hate,
and restore us to tranquility and peace.
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

--adapted from Book of Blessings, US Catholic Conference. www.usccb.org

Prayer for Justice

Almighty God, you created us in your own image.
Grant us grace fearlessly to contend against evil
and to make no peace with oppression.

And, that we may reverently use our freedom,
help us to employ it in the maintenance of justice
to the glory of your holy name;
through Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen,

--The Book of Common Prayer

Prayer of Dedication

Leader: We offer ourselves to you, O God, our Creator.

All: We offer our hands.

Leader: Use healing touch to comfort sisters, brothers, and
children who are afraid.

All: We offer our eyes and ears.

Leader: May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence,
so that all may have someone with them in their pain
and confusion.

All: We offer our hearts and our tears as their hurt and sorrow
echo within us.

Leader: May we be healed as we embrace each other.

All: We offer our anger.

Leader: Make it a passion for justice. Amen.

Litany

Reader One:

We gather together aware of the violence around us:
the physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect of children,
including abuse by religious leaders;
the murder and beatings of women by their partners;
the forced prostitution of young women in countries all over the world.

Reader Two:

the sexual harassment of women in the workplace, including the church;
the exploitation of women and children for profit and pornography;
the rape of countless women within marriages and dating relationships;

Reader Three:

The further violence perpetrated against women in the court system;
ritual abuse and mutilation of women and children;
the atrocities suffered by the victims of war;

(The leader may invite others to name those for whom they wish to pray aloud or silently.)

ONE: In naming these forms of evil, we feel grief and pain.

ALL: 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.

ALL: May we experience your presence among us as comforter, sustainer, and healer.

--from National Ministries ABC/USA

Litany for Our New Creation

Leader: God of all power and might who dwells in the heart of our being, come quickly to help us who are assaulted by evil. Give us eyes to see beyond our tormentors to your loving heart, which broke for us as we were broken. Give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to trust in your mercy toward us.

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

Leader: God of healing, take from us our self-doubt, shame and illness. Build in us the sure knowledge that we could never be sullied by the acts of others, or by the sacrifice of our bodies and our selves in the face of evil. Give us the vision to recognize ourselves as you made us: whole, beautiful, and clean.

People: Bring us to new understanding, and help us see ourselves as you do, in your infinite love.

Leader: God of wisdom, in a world where power is often abused and the victim blamed, we are confused by our own experience. We have trouble understanding what is our responsibility and what is not. Help us to give up our self-blame for falling prey to the coercion and tyranny of our abusers. Give us grace to allow them to carry the responsibility of their own acts. Help us to accept our limited ability to understand and forgive.

People: God, we give our abusers to you.

Leader: God of love, allow us to recognize all the ways in which our relationships with you, ourselves and the world have been damaged by our pain. Deliver us from the burdens of rage and fear. Guard us lest our own anger cause harm. Hold fast to us, lest we allow our fear to keep us from the company of those who would love us. Guide us as we seek ways to heal and make whole the relationships which we value in our lives.

People: Deliver us from our isolation, and bring us safely into the company of good and caring people.

Leader: God of justice, we remember with pain all the times others might have defended or rescued us, but chose to be silent. 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 torment, and bring them to that place where there is no pain or grief. Let their hearts and souls now ring out in joy to you,

People: We pray to you, O God.

Leader: Almighty God, who calls new life into being, hear now our cries. Grant us power to cast off our bonds and walk forth into the light of your loving presence. Create in us new hearts, renew our spirits and restore us to the joy of living, through Jesus Christ your Son. Amen.

*--from Service For Healing From Traumatic Cruelty,
St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, PA*

Affirmation for Women Survivors

This is not God's will for you,.

It is not your fault.

You are a valuable person who deserves a good life.

You are not responsible for another person's violent or abusive behavior.

You do not have to tolerate, understand or accept it.

You deserve to find a safe person who will believe your story.

You have the right to speak out about what has happened – when you choose to do so,

You have the right to make choices and changes in your own life.

There are others who have also suffered abuse in their lives, and yet have found a pathway to change.

There are companions who are willing to share your struggle.

Together with others we can work to transform the relationships, attitudes and structures which are used to abuse and violate women.

--issued by the Conference of European Churches, 1999