

Worship to End Domestic Violence

This short liturgy can be used as a personal devotion, as part of a group study, as material to be incorporated into other acts of worship, or in any way you find meaningful. You will need: a globe or atlas showing where you are; a Bible; some candles; a basket of stones; and some products of the area where you are, as signs of the generosity of creation in every time and place.

Call to Worship

In the beginning the Spirit God danced over the void.

It was a dance of creation, of joy, of freedom of wholeness, of power... .

And God, knowing that all that is good is shared,

held the Earth tenderly and yearned for relationship.

And humanity was born in the yearning of God.

We are born to share the earth.

adapted from: Blessing the Earth, Carter Heyward, USA

Lighting the candle

God bringing light and banishing fear, we light this candle as a sign of our willingness to be your light in the world. We remember before you our own communities; the places where we live and work; the people whose lives are connected to ours. We bring before you all the people whose stories we have witnessed in this Lent study and all those whose stories have shaped our lives.

In Jesus, you show us how to confront violence and how to transform it into peace and justice. Fill us with your peace, that we may be peacemakers. Fill us with your truth, that we may speak truth to power. Fill us with your courage, that we may bring hope to those who live in fear. Fill us with joy, that we may be your beacons in the world.

We ask it in the name of Jesus, our brother and our friend,

Amen

Invite participants to take a stone from the basket to hold as the Gospel is read.

Reading John 8:2-10

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, ‘Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?’ They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.’ And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, ‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, sir.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.’

A 2010 Lenten Study compiled by the World Council of Churches, the World Student Christian Federation and the World YWCA <http://women.overcomingviolence.org>.

Prayer of confession and laying down of stones

After each prayer a stone is laid down, at the end of the formal confession everyone is invited to come forward and lay down a stone in a communal act of confession. If you wish to say a word of confession aloud you are welcome to do so.

God of heaven and earth before you we confess our sin

God of transformation hear our prayer

We confess the terrible physical and sexual violence that so many women and girls across the globe are subjected to.

God of transformation hear our prayer

We confess how even into our own time scripture has been used to justify violence against women and their exclusion from a full role in society.

God of transformation hear our prayer

We confess a violent culture which turns women's bodies into sexualised commodities and sees women as part of the spoils of war and commerce.

God of transformation hear our prayer

We confess the structural violence of our institutions including the church which too often exclude women from decision-making, power or authority.

God of transformation hear our prayer

please move forward to lay down your stones

Assurance of forgiveness and transformation

There appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment". When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. (Luke 13:11-13)

Let us stand to listen to words we can trust, words which help us and our societies to stand up straight, be transformed and walk humbly in God's paths. (*please rise*)

Behold says God I am making all things new.

I will wipe every tear from their eyes (Rev. 21:5, 4)

For the mountains may depart
and the hills be removed,
but my steadfast love shall not depart from you,
and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,
says the Lord, who has compassion on you. (Isaiah 54:10)
In the name of Christ we are forgiven,
Alleluia, amen!

Prayers

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Great God we give you thanks that you call us out of silence to name hidden and domestic violence.

Today we pray for all those women who despite suffering from violence, continue to care for family and children, to grow and prepare food, carry water, earn a living and offer support to others.

We pray for women who are trafficked as domestic or sex workers; for women who are raped and do not know how to find words to name their pain or a way into the future.

We pray for transformation of our societies which often find it easier to judge the victims of violence than to solve the problems of injustice

We pray that women's voices may be heard and taken into account in all peace and reconciliation work.

We pray for a transformation in the violent way many men act towards and think about women.

We pray for right and just relations between women and men that together we may transform and overcome violence in all its forms and learn to celebrate our diversity and interdependence

We look forward to the age of peace, when violence is banished, both women and men are able to love and to be loved, and the work and wealth of our world is justly shared.

Benediction

May the God of Eve teach you to dance.

May the God of Hagar bring you comfort in the desert.

May the God of Miriam bring companions to you when you struggle.

May the God of Deborah teach you courage for your battles.

May the Christ who knew Mary and Martha show you the way of balance.

May the Christ who healed the bent-over woman heal your pain.

May the Christ of Mary Magdala send you out to proclaim your story.

In the name of Christ who is the memory, hope and authority of the future.

Adapted from a worship created by Jane Stranz for the World Council of Churches