

Worship aids for domestic violence awareness month

Call to worship

Come to Christ, the living bread, who satisfies those who hunger and thirst for what is right.
Come to Christ, who gives living water, that you may never thirst again.

Come to Christ, that being filled yourself, you may minister to the hunger and thirst of others.
Come to God, in worship and praise, through Jesus Christ, who gives us life.

We gather today to worship a living God, a God who hears our cries, shares our tears, knows our anger, and is steadfast now and always.

We gather today to be in each other's presence as we remember, confess, name, and respond to the violence in our lives, in our families, our churches and our communities.

Let us walk this way together.

*Leader's Guide: World Community Day for November 1, 1996
(New York: Church Women United, 1996)*

Invitation to confession

Dear Friends, God knows and understands the heart of each one of us. In that understanding, God reaches out lovingly to call us to repent of all our wrongdoing and to seek new ways of living with one another. When we confess our sins as a community, we do not usually separate anyone from the whole body, but make our confession as one unit. Today, however, we want to be especially sensitive to the fact that the body of Christ is divided, for some are abused, some are abusers, and some condone the abuse by looking away. As the community of faith, let us join with God and with one another in making our confession before God.

"Striking Terror No More, The Church Responds to Domestic Violence," Beth Basham and Sara Lisherness, editors, Bridge Resources, Louisville, Kentucky, 1997.

Prayer of confession

We confess that we have too often offered the perpetrator/abuser cheap grace. Too quickly we have accepted the abuser's apology and advised the victim to "forgive and forget," "put it all behind you." In doing so we have stood in the way of genuine remorse that might lead the perpetrator to seek help and wholeness.

We acknowledge that we have misused the Holy Scriptures. We have emphasized the role of women to be subject to their husbands, children to obey parents. We have distorted the teaching of the gospel that Christians are called to share in the cross of Christ in ways that legitimate the destruction of the lives of many women, children, and other vulnerable people.

God, give us courage to name sin and thereby open the possibility for reform and renewal. Call us to remember and proclaim that we are created in the image of God, an image that is to be honored.

Taken from “*Turn Mourning Into Dancing*,” A Policy Statement on Healing Domestic Violence.

Unison prayers

1.

We are the church.

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

We offer our hands.

May we use them to extend a healing touch to comfort sisters and brothers and children, youth, and elderly who are afraid.

We offer our eyes and ears.

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

We offer our hearts and our tears.

May the hurt and sorrow of the abused echo within us.

We offer our own stories of violence.

May we be healed as we embrace each other.

We offer our anger.

Make it a passion for justice.

We offer all our skills.

Use our gifts to end violence.

We offer our faith, our hope, our love.

May our encounters with violence bring us closer to you and to each other.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ, who knows the pain of violence.

The prayer, “A Prayer for Domestic Violence Healing,” is from the background rationale of the 2001 Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) policy statement, “Turn Mourning Into Dancing.”

2.

We offer ourselves to you, O God our Creator.

We offer our hands to use healing touch to comfort sisters, brothers and children who are afraid.

We offer our eyes and ears. May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence, so that all may have someone with them in their pain and confusion.

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

We offer our own stories of violence. May we be healed as we embrace each other.

We offer our anger. Make it a passion for justice.

We offer all our skills. Use our gifts to end violence.

We offer our faith, our hope, our love.

May our encounters with violence bring us closer to you and to each other.

All this we ask through Jesus Christ who knows the pain of violence. AMEN.

Excerpted from the 1992 Women’s Interchurch Council of Canada Worship Service in remembrance of the December 6, 1989 massacre of 14 women in Montreal.

3.

Prayer to End Domestic Violence

Spirit of God, through your unconditional love made manifest in Jesus of Nazareth, you showed us how to manifest love, care and respect in our relationships. We confess that, even in this faith community, many women, children and some men are beaten and abused – verbally, emotionally, and sexually – by those who claim to love them. We pledge to be more caring in our personal relationships. We pledge our faith community to be a safe haven for those who are battered, a support for abusers sincerely seeking help, and an advocate for non-violence in the world. Help us to be signs of your unconditional love in the world. Amen.

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Litanies

1.

The Church

If this is not a place where tears are understood, Where do I go to cry?
If this is not a place where my spirits can take wing, Where do I go to fly?
If this is not a place where my questions can be asked, Where do I go to seek?
If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard, Where do I go to speak?
If this is not a place you'll accept me as I am, Where do I go to be?
If this is not a place where tears are understood, Where do I go to cry?

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2.

Litany for Children

One: O God, who came to us as a child, who welcomes the child, and who calls us to be more like children, we thank you for all the blessings that children bring.

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For the children in our neighborhoods, our towns and our cities, who play in our yards and on our playgrounds and sometimes in the streets, who bring life to our communities with their laughter and joy,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: For the children of our world, who live in different cultures and speak different languages, wear different clothes and learn different ways of doing things, and in whose faces, we see the face of Christ,

All: We thank you, O God.

One: O God of all children, who calls us to care for and protect the vulnerable, and to defend the rights of the oppressed, we pray for the needs of children.

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children in our families and in our faith communities who are lonely and neglected, who are ignored and brushed aside,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children in our neighborhoods, towns and cities who are ostracized because of the color of their skin or their differing abilities, who are victims and perpetrators of violence,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children of our nation who live in poverty, who live without healthcare coverage, who go to school hungry, who have no house to go home to,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: For the children of the world who lose limbs to landmines, who lose homes when they become refugees, who lose their lives to preventable diseases,

All: We pray to you, O God.

One: O God, as we strive to serve you in all that we do, help us to remember the children, listen to the children, celebrate the children, serve the children and love the children in all that we say and think and do.

All: Amen.

*Litany from the worship materials for the 2001 PHEWA Biennial Social Justice Conference,
"A Little Child Shall Lead Them."*

Benedictions

1.

Now, go and breathe deeply, for each breath is from God; go and serve gently, for the earth and its people are fragile; go with energy and strength, for God knows your every need and God's Spirit will grant you peace.

Peacemaking Through Worship, Volume 2, Ed. Jane Parker Huber, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1992, p 126

2.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and we have not yet recognized Your face in each of our brothers and sisters.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and we have not yet shared Your bread in grace with our brothers and sisters.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and we have not listened to Your Word in the words of our brothers and sisters.

Stay with us, O God, for the day is far spent and our hearts are still so slow to believe that you had to die in order to rise again.

Stay with us, O God, because our very night becomes day when you are there.

Peacemaking Through Worship, Volume 2, Ed. Jane Parker Huber, Presbyterian Peacemaking Program of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 1992, p. 127.