

Overcoming Family Violence Worship Materials



Reading: Isaiah ch.61 vv.1-4, 7

Isaiah's message, fulfilled in Jesus Christ, is deliverance for all who have been oppressed, broken in heart or made captive to the power of others. The effects of sexual violence are truly devastating. Yet the spirit of God proclaims 'comfort for all who mourn', 'a garland instead of ashes', 'the oil of gladness instead of mourning'.

A bowl of water is placed in the middle of the worship space, with some oil nearby. In a time of silence a large stone is handed around the group, and participants invited, if they wish, to give to the stone any emotion or memory which they wish to let go. (some gentle music can accompany this exercise, which needs to be done with sensitivity and the awareness that some may need to talk and pray further afterwards) When the stone has been passed around the group, the facilitator may place it in the bowl of water with a simple affirmation, such as 'Thanks be to God'. After this, participants may make the sign of the cross in their neighbour's hand with the oil, saying 'God heals us of all violence. Be strong in love and peace'.

Liturgy for Overcoming Violence against Women, Men and Children

(adapted from Peter Pollock, NCCA Christmas Bowl kit 2004)

Place an unlit candle centrally for lighting.

Reader 1

Compassionate God, you promised life to those who trust in you,
you gave Lazarus new life, you assured us that 'today, you shall be with me in paradise!'
Tender God, something is wrong;
women and men are brutalised and children abused,
lives are lost or forever changed as a result of inhumanity,
violence perpetrates violence through generations.
Someone must say no, someone must say stop!
All God, we say NO! We say STOP!

Reader 2

Ever living God, we pray for women, men and children
victimised through violence and oppression,
heal their emotional and physical wounds,
comfort them in their sorrow and need,
foster and restore their trust,
empower them with renewed life,
and present to them alternatives - new paths.

Reader 3

Merciful God, forgive the perpetrators
of these crimes against all humanity;
in their blindness to reality,
they know not the limits of their strength, or the hurt they inflict;
bring them to repentance and justice.

*All Readers We light this candle in homage to all who are victims of family violence.
We pray, in your compassion, that hearts may be changed,
violence eliminated, and lives restored to health and prosperity.*

SEEDS OF PEACE

Leader

God of all tenderness and compassion,
open our hearts to hear your call, to reach out to all who have been created by you;
open the doors of our community
to embrace women, men and children experiencing violence and oppression,
to see their need, and to respond with love.
Lord, you are our refuge and strength, our very present help in trouble;
stretch out your hand and bring these women, men and children close to you.
Give us the spirit to break the silence;
to stretch out our hands, giving courage, hope and peace. Amen.

God of compassion,
We bring to the safe harbour of your consolation
those who have suffered and are suffering from sexual abuse.
We bring to you their fragility and woundedness;
the pain too long concealed;
the deep scars of betrayal,
the confusion and the longing for wholeness.
We name with them
the theft of childhood innocence,
the assault on the sense of self;
the denial of tears and protest;
the rending of relationship even with you.
Grant your tears when theirs have run dry;
grant your voice when theirs is silenced;
grant your wholeness for their brokenness. **Amen**

*God whose spirit dwells within us,
Thank you for the uniqueness of each girl, boy, woman and man.
Thank you that each one of us is valuable and special in your sight.
Help us to know this, deep within our hearts.
God whose spirit dwells within us: We give you praise.*

*God whose spirit dwells among us,
Thank you for the gifts of listening and sharing.
Thank you for wisdom and creativity.
Let us use our gifts for God's work.
Let us help others to recognise their special gifts.
God whose spirit dwells among us: We give you praise.*

*God whose spirit is dancing among us,
Thank you for friendship, for laughter, for sharing of stories.
Let us sing and dance with joy!
God whose spirit is dancing among us: We give you praise.*
(From 'Out of the Shadows' Mother's Union Resource Kit 2002)

Suggested song: Monique Lisbon *Evermore*
(from *Whispers of Peace*)