

STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



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 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,

Scripture reading: Luke 13: 10-17 – Healing of the woman

Look at and listen to Jesus in this passage:

- Who is the woman whom Jesus looks at in the synagogue, and how does He relate to her?
- In what way can we identify with this situation?
- What things today bend or hold back the life of people, particularly of women?
- Does the sight of those in need remind us of our own vulnerability?
- Which are some of my personal experiences of having been "straightened" by the Lord or having witnessed the liberation experienced by others?
- Can we see in this action of Jesus a graced opportunity to reach out with compassion?

Take time to share your reflections with the group

Every woman and every girl has the right to a life free of violence. Yet this rupture of human rights occurs in a variety of ways in every community, particularly affecting those who are most marginalized and vulnerable. Around the world, more than 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lives; 750 million women were married before age 18, and more than 250 million have undergone Female Genital Mutilation.



It is now widely recognized that violence against women, including harassment and harmful practices, are major barriers to the fulfillment of human rights, and a direct challenge to women's inclusion and participation in sustaining peace. Without tackling it, we will never fulfill the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is time to further our collective action to end violence against women and girls for good. That takes all of us working together in our own countries, regions and communities, at the same time, towards the same goal.

It is time for united action from all of us, so that women and girls around the world can live free from harassment, harmful practices, and all other forms of violence.

(Message by UN secretary General Antonio Guterres on the International Day for the Elimination of violence against women, 25 November 2017)

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 sexualized 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

What can **you** do to take action against gender based violence?

LISTEN.

Be open to learning from others who have more expertise and experience before you speak, think:

have you really listened?

what can **you** do to take action against gender based violence?

BELIEVE.

Believe survivors and those who have been affected by gender based violence
Hear their truths and support their stance.

what can **you** do to take action against gender based violence?

SPEAK OUT.

Join the conversation and use your voice to speak out against gender-based violence.

We all have role to play in ending violence.

what can **you** do to take action against gender based violence?

INTERVENE.

If you see someone being threatened or assaulted –
find a safe way to help.

What can **you** do to take action against gender based violence?

ACT.

Giving your time to an organization or group that works to prevent and address gender-based violence. Be the change you want to see and **take on a leadership role within your community.**

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.

Prayer

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.

From 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, Human Rights Day, the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign is a time to galvanize action to end violence against women and girls around the world. It is time for united action from all of us, so that women and girls around the world can live free from harassment, harmful practices, and all other forms of violence. Let's join the campaign in our localities to make a better world for women, girls and children of today.

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