

Guided hour of prayer and reflection on gender-based violence November 25 – December 10th, 2020

Please see end for guidance on using this in a physical venue or as a Zoom event.

Introduction

Thank you for joining us as we pray and reflect on the plight of 1 in 3 women worldwide who suffer gender-based violence at some point in their lives (WHO, 2017), and also of those who suffer because they are gay or differently gendered. This service is part of Mothers' Union's support of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. As members of the body of Christ we draw near in faith to commit ourselves to be Christ's hands and feet in the world. Hands to raise awareness by pointing out injustice and unrighteousness, and feet to march for change and to run to those in need of help.

In this hour there will be four times of quiet with a prayer and short reflection at each quarter-hour.

[Explain the resources that are available for the times of quiet]

Let's begin with a prayer:

ALL: Loving Lord, who has called us to be the body of Christ,

make us ready to act as his hands and feet in the world.

to raise awareness of what must be challenged,

and to address the plight of the vulnerable. Amen

For reflection:

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to an upsurge of gender-based violence; this is being called the Second pandemic. Most countries have seen a rapid rise of reports of domestic violence as they went through lockdown. With people being confined to the house more, there are greater opportunities for perpetrators to be violent. Think what it might be like to be confined to your home, constantly alert in case your partner gets into an angry or frustrated state of mind.....

There are many reasons why gender-based violence occurs, one being cultural lack of respect for women (such as in Iran, India and Brazil) or prejudice against people who are gay or differently gendered. Other reasons include frustration, anxiety and boredom which can all mean that perpetrators lash out more frequently at their partner or children.

Often a perpetrator has been on the receiving end of violence, or witnessed it within the home during childhood, so the pattern of abuse is learned as a way of behaviour.

Sometimes it is the lure of earning money quickly that leads people to enslave and abuse others...

But it is possible to turn things around – the for abused, and for the abuser. There will be a time of silence until [the next quarter hour] to reflect and pray for those who suffer, those who work to rescue and rehabilitate them, and those who work with abusers to help change their attitude.

Second quarter-hour

Prayer: Merciful Lord, we lift our reflections and prayers to you, asking that the scourge of gender-based violence will be extinguished from your world. **Amen**

For reflection:

Murders: In the UK and Ireland data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show 80 women were killed by a current or ex-partner between April 2018 and March 2019 – a 27 per cent increase on the year before.

In Brazil, it was reported that 4 women were being killed every day (Feb 2020). Those women killed are often shot dead in their own homes at the hands of current or former boyfriends who have a history of domestic abuse.

Although we have the statistic that 1 in 3 women worldwide will experience Gender-based violence at some point, the prevalence varies greatly from country to country, being as low as 15% to a shocking 71% of women (WHO 2017) – now 85% (Timor Leste, OECD 2020).

Third Quarter-hour

Prayer: Father, across the world there are many people who live in fear of violence just because of their gender; we pray that you will protect them, and grant them freedom from the cycle of abuse that chokes their lives. **Amen**

For reflection:

Although women are numerically the main victims, those who are gay or differently-gendered are also often threatened with or suffer violence. There are still laws criminalising homosexuality in over 70 countries. In many others there is systematic persecution of gays and trans people despite there being no laws to condemn it. In UK, more than one in ten LGBT people (11 per cent) have faced domestic abuse from a partner in the last year. This increases to 17 per cent of black, Asian and minority ethnic LGBT people. (LGBT in Britain, 2018)

Throughout his ministry, Jesus treated outcasts and 'sinners' with respect and listened to them, responding to their needs with the same love as he did with those approved of by his society; for example, Jesus healed ten lepers when they asked, and when one returned to thank God for his healing, Jesus commended him for his faith, Luke 17 v 11-19.

As Christians, we need to challenge prejudice against any group of people simply because of one characteristic or behaviour, and instead model acceptance of the person as loved by Christ, whether we agree with them or not

Last Quarter-hour

Prayer: Father, we lament our attitudes and those of our society, when they lead to discrimination on the basis of gender. Give us courage to challenge prejudice when we come across it without condemning the other for their attitude, being prepared to give 'account for the hope that is in you, but make that defence with modesty and respect.' (1 Peter 3:15). Amen

Reflection:

As Christians, we are called to have compassion on those who perpetrate such violence as they are God's children too, and remember that their life experience is often the largest influence in their behaviour. We need to pray that more perpetrators come to realise that violence is wrong and seek help to change, and pray for those who are able to facilitate such change.

We read in 1 Timothy 1 that 'Christ is our hope' – what is it that we hope for? When we pray for God's kingdom to come, what would this mean for those who currently experience gender-based violence? How would conformance to Jesus' character affect our attitudes? How does Jesus want culture and societies to change – how could they change? Let's meditate and pray about these things and ask God to bring in his Kingdom.

Close

Prayer: Father, loving your creation as you do, with every person equal in your sight, we thank you for the opportunity to spend time thinking and praying for the large number of people across the world who suffer because of their gender, simply because others are prejudiced. We ask that you protect and affirm the victims, assuring them of your love and their value in your eyes.

ALL:
Lord of justice and mercy, who has called us to be the body of Christ, we offer up our prayers for those who are affected by gender-based violence, and as a sign of our unity with all who campaign for justice across the world. Amen

Final blessing

St Teresa of Avila's prayer:

Christ has no body now on earth but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours.

Ours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion is to look out to the earth.
Ours are the feet by which he is to go about doing good
and ours are the hands by which he is to bless us now.

Now may the God of peace equip us with all we need for doing his will.
May he produce in us, through the power of Jesus Christ, every good thing that is pleasing to him.
All glory to him forever and ever! Amen

To use this in a physical space

1. Space at least 3 tables well apart to allow for social distancing.
2. Print out resources; have a helper to place those for the first quarter's reflection on the tables, no more than 2 per table.
3. If you have AV facilities, you may prefer to screen the resources and keep people in their seats.
4. Clearly mark a one way system around the tables.
5. Explain all the guidelines before the service starts. Have hand sanitiser at entrance and exit.
6. At the end of each time for reflection, the helper removes the resources for the quarter just finished and replaces them with those for next.
7. For the world map, tealights can be made available for people to light from a bigger candle that the helper lights. A notice to request only the one tealight is touched by a person as they light it may be advisable.
8. Masks should be worn, preferably the whole time, but definitely when people move around. Only one person at any one printed page at a time.

To make this suitable for Zoom

1. Anything you want displayed, have it open and ready (if you copy it do use landscape orientation), then use share screen facility and click on the page you want. If you want several pages in succession, you can scroll down in the doc and the display should follow it. For example, there are several resource pages for every quarter, and you could display each one for 2-3 minutes.
2. There are 2 places where all are invited to join in with a prayer; this is of course optional, but the correct page could be screen-shared at the appropriate moment to enable participants to join in.
3. As people are not wandering around, you may wish to shorten each 'quarter' and make the service's duration shorter.