National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

Worship Service for December 6

These ideas can be used in worship preparation or integrated
as part of the suggested worship service beginning on page 3.

Focus Scriptures

(from *Revised Common Lectionary* Advent 2, Yr C)

* Malachi 3:1–4
God is the agent of transformation and cleansing.
* Philippians 1:3–11
The one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion.
* Luke 3:1–6
Every valley shall be filled ... and the rough ways made smooth.

Spark

Create a pile of large and varied rocks in a prominent place in the worship space. The rocks represent women and their stories of violence. Place smaller stones at the base of the pile that the congregation can remove. Have flowers available to replace them with. Christ has come to make the rough ways smooth, to transform a landscape of violence to one of wholeness for all women.

Theme Engagement Question

When have you experienced or witnessed someone taking action to stop the violence against a woman? How was God present in that situation?

Engaging Children

God created women in God’s image. Women are our mothers, aunties, friends. We honour *all* women. Using photographs or projected images of women and girls (include images of women who are differently abled, Aboriginal, elderly, from various ethnocultural heritages). Speak in the affirmative about what the people in the images were created to enjoy. Examples:

* Senior women: “These women were created by God to enjoy a safe place to live.”
* Aboriginal woman: “This woman was created to enjoy a country that notices if she goes missing.”
* Young women: “These girls were created by God to enjoy a world where everyone speaks with kindness to one another.”
* Women of racialized ethnocultural heritage: “This woman was created by God to enjoy respect within her family.”

Ask the children for suggestions about what other kinds of things women were created to enjoy? End with a unity prayer for a world where we treat one another as people created in God’s image.

Sermon Exploration

“Prepare ye the way of the Lord!” This Advent we are participants in God’s landscaping project. Our work is removing the obstacles of hardened hearts and silence about the violence to women. How can we fill the ditches of emotional violence with hope? What opportunities can we create to straighten the path of spousal violence?

Candles flick in this service and through the Advent season. Each week our story tells of a God drawing closer to us as light. Violence lives in shadow places. Apart from the light it festers and gains strength. Telling the stories of personal experience, pain and testifying to actions of resistance draws the Light of the season closer to us all. Social equality, financial freedom, public awareness, and telling our stories would be four meaningful Advent candles. Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

Statistical and Resource Information

Canadian Women’s Foundation [(www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence](http://www.canadianwomen.org/facts-about-violence)

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women
[(www.criaw-icref.ca/ViolenceagainstWomenandGirls](http://www.criaw-icref.ca/ViolenceagainstWomenandGirls)

Music

MV 179 “Sisters Let Us Walk Together”

MV 122 “This Is the Day”

MV 102 “Jesus, Your Spirit in Us”

MV 120 “My Soul Cries Out”

VU 642 “Be Thou My Vision”

VU 695 “God Is Passionate Life”

Worship Service

The congregation gathers in silence. Individuals are offered a white ribbon to wear if they choose. The white ribbon has become a symbol of personal commitment to never commit, condone, or remain silence about violence against women and girls.

Welcome

Centring Our Hearts and Minds

Invite the congregation into a posture of openness and readiness for God to transform us this day. A singing bowl can be played, allowing the note to fill the space, followed by silence. Alternatively a drum could be played followed by silence.

Light of Christ

Light a focus candle. A single voice begins to sing “Be Thou My Vision,” verse 1 (VU 695).

Call to Worship

God is the vision maker for a world of peace.
God is the joy of our heart
 that gives hope for wholeness in the lives of all people.
**We are awake to the Spirit’s presence in the healing of this world.
 To the physical violence against women; there will be an end.
 To the estrangement of our racialized daughters; there will be an end.
 To the abuse of our immigrant mothers; there will be an end.
 To the pain of our sisters; there will be an end.**Our confidence is in God who refines our hearts;
 and smooths the paths for a new day.
**Let us worship together!**

Singing Our Praise

MV 122 “This Is the Day”

Part of Our Story

Philippians 1:3–11

Prayer

God of Eve and Sarah,
 Christ of Dinah and Tabitha,
 Spirit of Mary and Samaritan woman at the well,
you are the source of our hope for a world of renewed relationships.
In the strength of ancestor mothers,
 we hear the call to keep moving forward in healing, justice, and transformation.
 The power of violence will be overcome with love.
A new day begins now:
 speech that degrades women will not leave our mouths,
 actions that cause physical harm will not be committed,
 silence that lets harm continue will be filled with truth-telling.
Open us, O God,
 to the wellspring of abundant life that is you.
Mould the good work of Christ within us.
Bring your light to shine in the darkness.
Take our hands and lead us into right relations
 with sisters and daughters close and far away.
For you, O God, come into the world
 as a child whose name is Peace.

Sung Response

MV 102 “Jesus, Your Spirit in Us” (sung through several times)

Our Story Continues

Malachi 3:1–4

Luke 3:1–6

A Message for Today

(See Sermon Exploration, page 2.)

Silence

With the community in silence for several minutes, invite them to focus on the phrase: “All women are made in God’s image. Violence will stop and peace will remain.”

During three minutes of silence, ring the singing bowl once per minute, signalling three instances of violence occurring in that time and the three opportunities for peace.

Response

*Option 1:* Using the idea from Spark (on page 1), invite participants to remove a stone from the rock pile and replace it with a flower.

*Option 2:* Invite participants to light a candle as a sign of solidarity with women and girls experiencing violence and as a commitment to shine light in the darkness of abuse.

*Music to accompany:* MV 179 “Sisters Let Us Walk Together”; VU 695 “God Is Passionate Life”

Litany of Hope

Let the streets be filled with marches for an end,
 to the cascade of violence against girls and women.
Let hope rise forth through our actions and prayers,
 for God has come to liberate us from mourning and tears.

**The violence must end, and peace will remain.**

She is poor and afraid, the spouse pushes her down.
 Harsh words mark her spirit and money controls her movement.
Children hear the wails, nothing can they do.
 In the morning she is black and blue.

**The violence must end, and peace will remain.**暴力將停止與和平將繼續 (Chinese)

She is missing, the little girl;
 last seen with an eagle feather in hand.
Elders beat the drum in ancestor wisdom,
 Parliament ignores.
 We ignore no more.
Let yesterday be the last day her story remains hidden.

**The violence must end, and peace will remain.
*La violence cessera et la paix restera.*** (French)

At home she knows that she is beautiful,
 so she doesn’t understand
 why the playground is so rough with its ridicule and hands.
They pulled her head wrap and cut a piece of her hair.
Told her she was dirty and left her there.

**The violence must end, and peace will remain.
*Vurugu kuacha na amani utabaki*.** (Swahili)

Come, Spirit of Truth,
 cast your light in our way.
 Open our mouths to let you out
and our hands stretch in loving embrace.
This is a new day. It belongs to you.
The violence ends and your peace is our truth.

**The violence ends, and your peace is our truth.**

Parting Hymn

MV 120 “My Soul Cries Out”

Going Out and Blessing

We leave this place, but we do not leave alone.
We go with the love and conviction of God,
 who sees the condition of violence and will not leave it so.
Change the landscape,
 bring in the light,
 take action for your sisters everywhere.
And may the presence of God be with you always. Amen.

*Prepared by the Rev. Dr. Danielle A. James, First United Church, Fort Saskatchewan, AB.*