

*Praying for an End to Violence Against Women
White Ribbon Day and Related Occasions*

The Liturgy Commission offers the following resources, in addition to those provided in *A Prayer Book for Australia*, to help individuals and groups pray for an end to violence against women. The Millennium Development Goals and White Ribbon Day are two of many initiatives which focus on the plight of women and girls among the most vulnerable in every society.

1. A litany of lament (with response **we cry out to you: bring justice**)
2. A litany for transforming relationships (with response Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**)
3. A litany for an end to violence – women and girls (with response **Come, Holy Spirit!**)
4. A form of Confession and Absolution
5. A form of Blessing
6. A list of suggested Bible readings
7. Notes for the use of the resources

1 A Litany of Lament

Hear us, Lord Jesus Christ, when we cry to you for all the women and girls who are victims of violence.

Hear us, Lord Jesus Christ, for they are stripped and beaten as you were stripped and beaten, they are humiliated and used as you were betrayed and shamed.

For the beaten girls and the battered women, blamed and bruised by angry men, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the young girls given or sold in marriage, and for unwilling brides with no way out, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women raped as a weapon of war and for the children they bear in grief and shame, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the victims of rape who are killed or take their own lives, and for the rape survivors who live with its scars, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the girls denied access to education, told they are stupid or worthless or expendable, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the girls and women sold or tricked into the sex trade, and for sex workers exposed to disease and violence, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the mothers whose children are taken away by armies, governments, churches or family members, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the girl-children who are unwanted and rejected, the first to be aborted or abandoned, the last to be fed: **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women bashed in their own homes, and for their children who see and hear the violence, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women trapped in destructive relationships, manipulated, controlled, justifying their abusers, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women who hide their bruises and lie about their injuries for fear of the next attack, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women bullied in their workplaces, belittled, underpaid, threatened with losing their job, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women in prison, abused and abusing, beset by poverty, mental illness and addictions, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women attacked because of their sexual identity, targets for physical or spiritual assault, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the women and girls denied religious freedom, forced to submit by custom or law, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

For the older women, frail in body or mind, fearful of violence, manipulation or neglect, **we cry out to you: bring justice!**

We cry to you, Lord Jesus Christ, for our sisters, our daughters, our mothers, ourselves. **Bring justice. Bring healing. Bring hope. Amen.**

2 A litany for transforming relationships

God of wisdom and care, we pray to you for all whom you call to share in the work of transforming the world so that girls and boys, women and men, may live, work and learn together with respect and dignity.

For maternal and children's health workers and advocates for girls' education, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For law-makers policy-makers and lobby groups, shaping structures that protect and promote women's wellbeing, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For marriage counsellors and relationship educators, developing healthy partnerships and good parenting skills, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For religious leaders and communities of faith, shaping beliefs about the worth of women and girls, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For women in business, industry, politics and education, leading by example and providing role models, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For police and community workers sifting through the damage done by domestic violence. Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For prison chaplains and restorative justice programmes, giving hope where violence has shattered many lives, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For counsellors and social workers offering a new start for survivors of domestic violence. Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For women's refuges and men's support groups creating safe spaces for problems to be named and tackled, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For campaigners against human trafficking and the sex trade, pricking the conscience of complacent societies. Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For organisations, programmes and individuals offering support to survivors of rape and sexual abuse, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For specialised care for traumatised children bringing healing and hope for a life beyond suffering, Living God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Hear our prayers, O God, for you will take no rest from your work of healing until you have wiped away the tears from every face, through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

3 A Litany for an end to violence against women and girls

Come, Holy Spirit!

Blessed are you, Spirit of faith, for you reveal a God in whose image female and male are equally made and blessed and loved. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Blessed are you, Spirit of grace, for you fill the hearts of women and girls who dream of a life that is safe and free and joyful. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Blessed are you, Spirit of peace, for you inspire the women and girls who work for a world without violence. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Blessed are you, Spirit of courage, for you speak through the women and girls who question the patterns and challenge the causes of violence. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Blessed are you, Spirit of power, for you raise up women and girls to be wise leaders, passionate advocates, agents of change. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Blessed are you, Spirit of healing, for you enfold the women and girls who tend the wounds of abuse and shame and fear. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Blessed are you, Spirit of community, for you bring women and girls together to do together what cannot be done in isolation. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Blessed are you, Spirit of integrity, for you call women and men to be partners for change, working together with mutual trust and respect. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Breathe hope into places of conflict and build up the peacemakers, so that girls and women can live in safety. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Bring light into dark places

and stand by the truth-tellers, so that girls and women can be free of fear. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Lift up the lowly, scatter the proud and fight for the justice-workers, so that girls and women can flourish and thrive. **Come, Holy Spirit!**

Come, Holy Spirit, come to your beloved daughters today with freedom and with peace through Jesus Christ, who was born of the woman Mary, to bring abundant life to all. **Amen.**

4 A form of Confession and Absolution

There should be careful preparation of the congregation before this form of Confession and Absolution is used. It is not intended to be used in the main Sunday service.

The form on pp 200-201 in A Prayer Book for Australia is also suitable.

Holy God, we confess to you
our collusion with the habits of violence in our culture:
our silence... our fears... our complicity in the violence suffered by women.

Forgive us, we pray, and give us grace to stand up and be counted with those who bear witness to the truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Jesus said: Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
Receive God's forgiveness, and by the power of the Spirit take up your calling to be advocates for change, agents of healing and messengers of hope, in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

5 A Blessing for those working to end violence against women

The blessing at n.43 on p 69 in A Prayer Book for Australia may be appropriate, or the following blessing

God bless you with insight to recognise violence in all its forms, and courage to name it, speaking out for justice. **Amen.**

The Lord Jesus bless you with compassion for the vulnerable, and grace to stand with them, sharing his strength. **Amen.**

The Holy Spirit bless you with a prayerful heart, and power to breathe peace, transforming the world. **Amen.**

The blessing of the holy and glorious Trinity, eternal Wisdom, living Word, abiding Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

6 Suggested Bible readings

Psalm 35.1-24

Psalm 43

Psalm 56

Psalm 140

Genesis 1.26-28 God made male and female in God's own image

Ruth 2.1-16 Boaz protects the vulnerable Ruth

Lamentations 3.49-51 Weeping over the fate of the young women

Matthew 2.13-15 Joseph protects his family

Matthew 5.1-12 The Beatitudes

Matthew 5.13-16 Salt and light

Matthew 12.33-37 Accountability for careless words

Mark 4.30-32 Parable of the mustard seed

Mark 9.42-50 Sayings about stumbling-blocks

Luke 6.20-26 Beatitudes and Woes

Luke 6.43-45 Good trees bear good fruit

Luke 18.1-8 Parable about prayer

Romans 12.11-14 Wake from sleep, live honourably

Romans 8.9-17 Life in the Spirit

Ephesians 4.25-32 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God

Galatians 5.16-26 Works of the flesh and fruit of the Spirit

7 Notes for the use of these texts

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The liturgical texts and Bible readings are not intended to be used at a principal Sunday service.

A simple service of prayer and reflection, incorporating periods of silence, might follow one of the following patterns, or another suited to particular local circumstances.

A greeting

A collect or prayer of the day

A reading from the Bible

The litany of lament

A period of silence for reflection – perhaps five minutes

The litany for an end to violence – women and girls

A period of silence for reflection – perhaps five minutes

The litany for transforming relationships

A period of silence for reflection – perhaps five minutes

The Lord's Prayer

The Blessing

or

A greeting

A reading from the Bible

A sermon or group reflection on the Bible reading

The Confession and Absolution

One of the Litanies provided

The Lord's Prayer

The Blessing