

**NOVEMBER PRAYER 2023**  
**INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**



**Prepare the space for prayer:** Use candles and the colour orange. Invite participants to consider wearing orange to be in solidarity with all women around the world who experience or have experienced violence. The colour orange continues to be a UN tool unifying all activities to bring global attention to the initiative. Invite mission partners to consider different ways of painting the world orange including through decorating buildings, wearing the colour orange and orangising digital spaces throughout the 16 days.

**Leader:** Welcomes all participants, leads the Calls to Worship; and lights the Candle

**Welcome .....**

**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 be in relationship and share the earth. (Adapted from: Blessing the Earth, Carter Heyward, USA)

**Lighting the candle:**

God of light and mercy, 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 girls and women who have experienced gender-based violence, whose experiences we have heard and ministered to while recalling and lamenting the lives destroyed and lost.

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 friend and the Cosmic Christ. Amen.

**Reader:**

The global theme of this year's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence, which runs from 25 November to 10 December 2023, is "UNITE! Invest to prevent violence against women and girls". Violence against women and girls remains one of the most prevalent and pervasive human rights violations in the world. Despite many countries passing laws to combat violence against women, weak enforcement and discriminatory social norms remain significant problems. Globally, an estimated 736 million women — almost one in three — have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both, at least once in their life. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women provides the following definition: 'The term violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.' The most recent global estimates show that, on average, more than 5 women or girls are killed every hour by someone in their own family.

The theme and activities of the UNiTE campaign this year is 'Invest to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls. It calls upon all UNITE networks, civil society and women's rights organizations, organizations working with men and boys, the UN system, the Generation Equality Action Coalitions government partners, human rights defenders, schools, universities, private sector, sports clubs and associations and individuals to step up and support different prevention strategies to stop violence from occurring in the first place.

The beauty and preciousness of life is intimately linked with its fragility and mortality. We can experience that every day—when we take a flower into our hands, when we see a butterfly dance in the air, when we caress a little baby. Giftedness and fragility are intertwined and the capacity to experience joy, sorrow and grief coexist. . "For I am your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you, do not fear; I will help you." - Isaiah 41:13

**Show Video:** [https://youtu.be/BPx\\_T8VXeVs](https://youtu.be/BPx_T8VXeVs) You may wish to find an appropriate video in your own language.

**Leader:** As I share this reflection with you I invite you to remember your own story of encountering gender-based violence.

In 1990 after the Civil War in Sri Lanka, a baby girl was born on November 25, 1996 to a displaced family. In 2010, the girl and her family relocated to their native village in Pungudutivu where she became a pupil at Pungudutivu Maha Vidyalayam. The now 18-year-old girl showed promise and carried high expectations from her teachers for her academic career. She was aspiring to become a teacher herself or enter the field of media. Her friends spoke highly of her and described her love of history, and they knew she was destined to enter state university. Her family described her as a very straight forward young girl who always helped those in need. Then on one dark and unfortunate day, she met her untimely fate in a rape and murder, which horrified the whole country.

**Reader:**

Scripture Reading: St Luke's Gospel Chapter 13: 10 -17. **Jesus Heals a Crippled Woman on the Sabbath**

10 On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, 11 and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." 13 Then Jesus put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

14 Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

15 Jesus answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? 16 Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

17 When Jesus said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things Jesus was doing.

**Leader:** Invitation to spontaneous sharing and prayer, recognizing that we are called to speak out against all injustice and oppression, and the example of Jesus in his relationship with women is the answer to the problem of gender-based violence

**Psalm of a Brave Women**

**Side1** She is unafraid to wage peace in place of wars of conquest.

**Side 2** She is swift to know and name the facts, to question the way it always is, to lift her story from the ancient annals of anonymity.

**All** Make us brave enough, O, Holy One, to challenge our history.

**Reader** One brave woman can change the course of theology.

**Side 1** She sees herself in the image of God. Whose power pushes the least to life, whose mercy measures a just response. Who loves beyond the limits, Who is visible and decisive.

**Side 2** She speaks of a God she knows by name and faithfully follows her Spirit's lead beyond and above all textual claims, all ritual traditions.

**All** Make us brave enough, O, Holy One, to challenge theology.

**Reader** One brave woman can change the course of spirituality.

**Side 1** She knows what prayer is all about, she comes at life from the inside out.

**Side 2** She does not dwell on introspection nor try to match some other path or feel compelled to seek direction but tastes what is and what will be from the source within, my Mystery.

**All** Make us brave enough, O Holy One, to challenge spirituality.

**Reader** One brave woman can change our relationship to creation.

**Side 1** In the beginning one woman rose from sleep to tend her Garden gifts in a paradise not of her making.

**Side 2.** Woman knows how her garden grows, what it takes to bring to life, how it hurts to be raped and razed and forced to submit to domination, so she will reach down deep inside to bring about the new creation.

**All.** **Make us brave enough, O Holy One, to challenge our relationship to creation.**

**Reader** One brave woman can change the way we order our world.

**Side 1** She, who clothes her naked body, feed her child from within herself, makes sheltered space in her loving arms for utter helplessness, cannot pretend such basic necessities do not extend to all of God's creation.

**Side 2** Her love would have people off the street and given shelter and something to eat, for true compassion knows no defeat but only a new beginning.

**All** **Make us brave enough, O Holy One, to challenge the way of our world.**

### **Concluding prayer**

**Reader:** Let us pray for women... O Compassionate One, for they are humiliated and used as you were betrayed and shamed. For the beaten girls and the battered,

**All:** **May they be strengthened!**

**Reader:** Violence against women and girls is a serious violation of human rights and life-threatening. Many women who experience sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. For the women raped as a weapon of war,

**All:** **May they be protected**

**Reader:** For the girls and women sold or tricked into the sex trade, and for those prostituted, and exposed to disease and violence,

**All:** **May they be courageous to face life**

**Reader:** For the mothers whose children are disappeared due to war and violence

**All:** **May they be consoled!**

**Reader:** For the girl-children who are unwanted and rejected, the first to be aborted or abandoned, the last to be fed, for the girls, denied access to justice

**All:** **May they be given the quality of life!**

**Reader:** For the women trapped in destructive relationships, controlled, justifying their abusers, For the women humiliated in their workplaces,

**All:** **May they be respected!**

**Reader** For the women in prison, and for those experiencing mental illness, and addictions, For the women attacked because of their sexual identity, targets for physical or spiritual assault,

**All:** **May they be protected from all harm!**

**Reader:** We cry to you, O Compassionate One, for our sisters, our daughters, our mothers, ourselves.

**All:** **Bring justice. Bring healing. Bring hope. Amen**

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