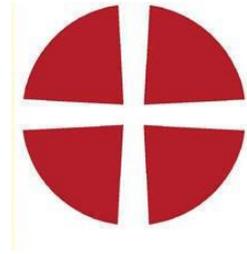


Service for Women against Violence Sunday



Notes

On the Sunday before Advent we are reminded of the nature of the one who is to come. We call him 'king' but his kingdom is very different from what people expect. The Gospel passage ([John 18: 33-37](#)) reminds us that God's kingdom is not one of power through violence (the model of kingship in Jesus' time); rather, God's kingdom is one where truth, life, and right relationships are valued. Elsewhere in the Gospels we discover more about the nature of God's kingdom. Elsewhere in John's Gospel we learn that Christ the King has friends, not servants, and in this way he subverts the notion of status.

Suggested hymns and songs

A touching place (Christ's is the world in which we move) (Iona Abbey Music Book)

Be still, for the presence of the Lord (StF 20)

Brother, sister, let me serve you (StF 611)

From Heaven you came, helpless babe (StF 272)

Gifts of the Spirit (When our Lord walked the earth) (Iona Abbey Music Book)

Great God, your love has called us here (StF 499)

Meekness and Majesty (StF 362)

Praise to God, the world's creator (Jan Berry/[SongSelect](#))

The kingdom of God is justice and joy (StF 255)

We cannot measure how you heal (StF 655)

We lay our broken world in sorrow at your feet (StF 718)

We shall go out with hope of resurrection (June Boyce-Tillman/[WorshipWords](#))

Call to Worship

Come to God

Who in Christ welcomes all;

Bring to God

All you are and long to be;

Entrust to God

Your burdens, hopes and fears.

Let us worship God.

Opening Prayer

We worship you, the God of love:
You hold the world in tender embrace,
You feel the hurt and sorrow we bear,
You comfort the wounded heart.

We thank you that in Jesus Christ
You held women in high esteem,
You understood their secret heartaches,
You inspired their love and trust.

We praise you, the Spirit of truth:
You uncover the lies and distortions,
You name the violence in our hearts,
You seek to transform the pain.

O God, we ask that you will reveal
The persistent wrong in our lives,
The reality we choose to ignore,
The abuse we tolerate of other people.

Change our heart and our lives, we pray,
That your image may grow in us
And in those we love.
Amen.

We Believe

All: We believe that abusive behaviour is wrong.

1: that women and men should live in safety,
2: that no-one should harm another person;

1: that women and men should know the constancy of love,
2: that no-one should blow hot and cold in relationships

1: that women and men should feel secure, content,
2: that no-one should have violence used against them;

1: that women and men should feel free to speak out,
2: that no-one should constrain or deny the truth;

1: that women and men should grow towards wholeness,
2: that no-one should restrict another one's growth;

All: We believe that a change of behaviour is right,

In the name of Christ,

Amen.

Poem/Meditation

Conspiracy of Silence

Fear is a debilitating presence:

What will happen?
When will he do it again?
How will I cope?

Much the same as usual.
You don't see the issues,
You don't hear the questions

Must I forgive him?
He's a child of God like me.
Should I stay with him?
I promised to and meant it.
Can I speak of it to you?
I can't be disloyal.

So I stay locked into myself -
Pain and loneliness writ large,
Gradually losing my trust, my hope.

Will you be as Christ to me?

Will you see with the eyes of truth?
Will you hear with the ears of discernment?
Will you speak out with the voice of challenge?

Will you show me that things can be different?
Will you condemn the violence and abuse?
Will you gently hold me, believe in me?
And strengthen me É.

I need the freedom Christ brings
a liberating presence.

Meditation (Prayer of Confession and Intercession)

You will need

- *a candle in front of a cross*
- *everyone will need an angular or rough stone and a candle (with disc)*
- *quiet music to play in the background until the stones have been laid down (see below for music suggestions)*

Let us come to God in prayer
For ourselves and others.

Take hold of your stone in the palm of your hand.
This is you - your life -
Complete with good and bad things.

Facing you are the positive facets of life:
Those things you're happy for others to see and know.
Facing down, out of sight, are the negative things:
Experiences, realities you hide away.

Pause

Now find a line of colour or dent or groove.
See or feel the pain etched in your life,
The characteristics you'd rather not have,
The way of life you know is wrong.

Pause

Trace the outline of your stone
Until you discover a sharp point or cutting edge.
Recognize the hurt you cause others
And the harm you do to the image of Christ in them.

Pause

In the quiet, let God reveal
The conflict and sorrows in your heart.

Silence

When you are ready, bring your stone to the cross
And there lay it down, asking God's forgiveness

For all that mars the image of Christ in yourself
And in those closest to you.

People move out to lay down stones

O God, who revealed in your son
That your kingdom is not from this world,
Take from us the addictions, power, violence
Which so grievously wounds you and our loved ones.
Stop us from acting carelessly and callously,
Transform us with your love, we pray.
Amen.

In God we hope and trust,
We look to God to save us and heal us
From all who try to harm us.

As we pray for all those who suffer at the hands of others,
Let us light a candle in solidarity with people everywhere
Who are abused in body, mind or spirit.

A woman lights the candle

O God, who shows us in Jesus Christ
How your kingdom will come
In love and justice and peace,
Be present to those of our community here
And those who are our friends, colleagues or neighbours
Who are suffering at the hands of a loved one
Or have to witness the suffering caused.

May they know your supportive presence with them.
Give them the strength to share their pain
And enable the rest of us to hear and believe,
That together we may act to change how things are
So that no-one need live in fear and humiliation.
We pray that your liberating kingdom will come
In truth and hope and love.
Amen.

Let us spread the hope for Christ's kingdom to come
As we spread the light among us.

Individual candles are lit so that the light gradually spreads round the congregation.

Possible background music

Try the following CDs with music by Margaret Rizza ([all available from Kevin Mayhew Ltd.](#))

Icons - instrumental music,

Fire of Love - tracks 1, 7, 12 have meditative singing

River of Peace - tracks 4 & 6 have meditative singing

Fountain of Life - track 2 - quiet song for use when no spoken words

Awakening in Love - track 3 - quiet song for use when no spoken words