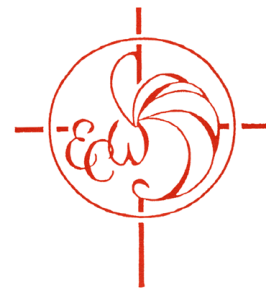




Prayers and Meditations from the Women of
Anglican Women's Empowerment
Episcopal Church Women
Episcopal Women's Caucus



For many of us in the church, action begins with prayer. Prayer grounds us and helps us speak the truth into the world, and so we offer you these prayers for each of the 16 days as food for reflection and action.

Violence against women and girls manifests itself in many ways. On one side of the spectrum, there is rape, domestic violence, and human trafficking. On the other, less physical but more insidious are pornography, girls forced into prostitution, and harmful assaults on girls' body image. Whether done by physical force, or words and pictures, violence against women and girls robs women of their souls and self esteem.

Every two minutes, somewhere in America, someone is sexually assaulted.

64% of women who reported being raped, physically assaulted, and/or stalked since age 18 were victimized by a current or former husband, cohabiting partner, boyfriend, or date.

Only about half of domestic violence incidents are reported to police; only 37% of all rapes are reported to the police.

The National College Women Sexual Victimization Study estimated that between 1 in 5 college women experience completed or attempted rape during their college years.

More than half of all rapes of women occur before age 18; 22% occur before age 12.

The International Anglican Women's Network (IAWN) has set the issue of violence against women and girls as its #1 priority for the next several years. Our General Convention has passed many resolutions on this issue, but this is the first time that women in the Episcopal Church have created this campaign through a partnership between ECW, AWE and EWC.

We encourage people — women and men, girls and boys — to mark the 16 Day period by using these prayers, every day during the 16 days, in personal or corporate prayer and worship. We also hope that sermons will be preached, articles will be written, and the bulletin insert will be used as we move through the 16 Day period. We have created a blog, <http://episcopal16days.wordpress.com> for the campaign where you can share your actions.

November 25 2010

O God of peace and promise, you call forth prophets in every age to offer visions of your in-breaking reign and to press those who harm others to change their hearts and ways: Pour your Spirit mightily upon us, that we, in our day, may boldly condemn all violence against women and girls, and effectively work for the safety, dignity and healing of all peoples; in Jesus' name, Amen.

Jeanne Person

November 26 2010

Prayer and Reflection on Gender Violence

Creator God, You created the earth and everything in it. You created everything interdependent and You created everything good. You created men and women in Your image, You blessed them both. Help us to see Your image on the faces of the victims of our violence. Help us to remember we have no right to subject anyone to violence. Help all of us who live in violence to realize and affirm our own dignity. Help us to realize we are made in Your image.

Help us to remember that we should never tolerate violence. Help Your church to realize that Jesus did not tolerate violence against women. Help us to fight violence in the HIV/AIDS era, for it hampers both prevention and the provision of quality care. We pray. Amen.

Reflection

John 8:1-12

November 27, 2010

IN MEMORY OF HER

She was young and pretty
except when he beat her.

She had three small children.
They saw terrible things
happen to their mother –
slaps
punches and
choking,

The court took them away
for their own protection.

The police offered help
She did everything right
a restraining order
probable cause warrant
social services came
provided job training.

She got her children back,
even found a good job.

Then, he violated
the restraining order,
came to the house
killed her,
smothered with couch cushions.

RIP

Marjorie A. Burke

November 28, 2010

Advent I

May we walk in the light of God
Who calls people of all nations
To turn their swords into plowshares
To turn their anger into gentleness
To waken to a new way of living

May we walk in the light of God
Who calls people of every house
To turn their anger into gentleness
To take closed fists and open them
Open hands of grace and peace
Awakening to a new way of loving

Guide our human love of sport
Especially football, statistically
Associated with inebriated violence
in homes, sport turned to fists
Fists turned to faces, women, broken
May our choices keep all safe

Pray for those who suffer from
All forms of violence and abuse
Pray for the power of God to
Prevail at an unexpected hour
To rise, the arbitrator of grace
Awakening new life, new hope

May we walk in the light of God
And create a world where women
Are not beaten, girls not abused
Men who waken to the love of God
Immanuel, God with us
Immanuel, God love us

May we walk in the light of God.

The Rev. Terri C. Pilarski

November 29, 2010

Holy One, we turn to you in this season of Advent, a time of preparation. As you prepare our hearts for the coming of your Incarnate One, open our minds to the pains of the oppressed in our midst, particularly women and girls. Remembering and sharing their plight, help us to be active participants in your mission of justice, compassion, and reconciliation. In the name of the One who was, and is, and is to come. Amen.

Amanda Akes

November 30, 2010

Gracious God, like a mother hen you shelter us under your wings: Bring your truth and love into homes where domestic violence has shattered the peace. Provide sustenance for the victims and accountability for the abusers. Send wise and courageous friends who can offer alternatives, and bring your healing power into broken relationships. May your church provide a haven of safety and peace for the abused and reach out to support all who serve the needs of the abused in our communities; Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Breaking the Silence- The Church responds to Domestic Violence
Anne O. Weatherholt-author copyright 2008 published by Morehouse

December 1, 2010

God of all creation, no sparrow falls but you take notice, look with compassion upon all who suffer from violence in their homes, in our communities and the world. Open our hearts and awaken our minds to act on behalf of our sisters, that our world might become a haven of peace and safety for all. We ask this in the name of the one who transforms our lives, Jesus Christ.

The Rev. Ann Fontaine

December 2, 2010

O God, you love all your children. Look with special care upon those daughters who suffer physically and emotionally simply because they are women. Surround them with your protecting angels this day, that they might know safety. Give them that measure of your Spirit that they might not lose heart, but entrust their lives wholly to you. Give us the courage to stand steadfast at their side, never wavering to speak the truth of their plight and to put our own lives to the test on behalf of our beloved sisters. Grant these petitions, we pray, in the love of the One, Triune God. Amen.

*Christ Episcopal Church
Cedar Rapids, IA*

December 3, 2010

O God, by your Holy Spirit you anointed Jesus Christ to open the eyes of the blind and give voice to those who are silent: Inspire us, by the power of that same Spirit, to see and recognize gender violence in its myriad forms, and to speak boldly and work effectively for its eradication, that, in your reign at hand, all women and men, and girls and boys, may blossom abundantly and rejoice to see your glory; in Jesus' name, Amen.

Jeanne Person

December 4, 2010

God of compassion,
You have given us freedom and choices in this life.
Some have taken those away from others and have hurt them as well.
Your heart must break when you watch the violence that some people must endure.
Especially women who because of their race, ethnicity, class, caste, religion, sexual identity, social status or age must live, endure, and die on the margins.
Loving God, we know you are always with us and within us. We pray that these women may feel your love surrounding them in the midst of their tragedy.
We, who have not experienced the violence, pray for the strength, courage and compassion to speak on behalf of these our sisters; that each of us in our own large or small way may do something to end their hurt. Amen.

*Christ Episcopal Church
Cedar Rapids, IA*

December 5, 2010

Advent 2

Let us pray for the Spirit of Wisdom to rest upon us
A spirit of understanding and knowledge
Grant us to live in harmony
God's mercy prevail

Let us pray for God's steadfastness to gird our spirit
May peace prevail like lamb and wolf
Grant us to live in harmony
God's mercy prevail

Let us pray, for voices crying out in the wilderness
Women living in fear, children hiding
Grant all a place of harmony
God's mercy prevail

Let us pray, repent of harm done to the innocent
Clear the chaff of abuse and hurt
Bear the Spirit of harmony
God's mercy prevail

Let us pray for the God of hope, joy and peace to fill
All hearts, one voice glorify
God, prepare the way
God's mercy prevail

The Rev. Terri C. Pilarski

December 6, 2010

A STONE FOR HATTIE

The Rev. Gigi Conner

I was sitting in a group of women who were talking about abuse. They spoke of being rejected, unnamed, filled with grief, sorrow for self, for the unnamed.

What to do with it? Where to go?

I remembered Toni Morrison who wrote *Beloved*. She said she wrote it because there was no park bench, no memorial wall, no statues, for those killed in slavery. I could picture hundreds of women coming together, carrying stones, to build a wailing wall.

Someone said that sounds like a story and what came into my mind was *A Stone for Hattie*.

Here then, is Hattie's story and some questions a group could ask in a discussion about child abuse.

What stones do we need to put in place, which mark our lives, our suffering, our tears, our survival?

How do we empower people to move out of silence into action?

How do we affirm children, provide safety, and convince them that they are loved and honored and precious in the sight of God and each other?

Who or where are the powerless children in our lives?

How can we, as a caring community, speak for these children; represent them to those in decision-making positions?

Where are the resources in our community?

What examples do our children see of God's love through us?

What examples of God's love do we see in our children?

Almighty God, giver of hope. Provide us with the courage and stamina to be bearers of hope to the children of the world, even when we are afraid. Teach us to stand up to evil and to speak for children and all others who are powerless and have no voice. Remind us that we too are children in your sight. In the name of Jesus Christ who came among us first – as a child. Amen.

A STONE FOR HATTIE

Once there was a little girl named Hattie Jones who was a very serious child except when she laughed. When she laughed her whole self expressed a joy and love of life. Trouble was, Hattie didn't laugh too often.

One day Hattie came to school with a broken arm. "What happened to you?" asked her friends. "I fell off my bike," said Hattie, but behind her eyes the real truth seemed to stay put. Several months later Hattie fell off her bike again. This time she broke her leg. "Guess I'm accident prone," she said. Then Hattie didn't come to school for a week. "Hattie had the flu," the note from home said. The teacher and Hattie's classmates wondered why the flu caused bruises on Hattie's face. "Fell out of bed," was Hattie's reply.

"Teacher," the children said, "We think something is wrong at Hattie's house. She can't ever play with any of us. She seems awfully sad most of the time." The teacher asked Hattie to stay after school. They had a long talk. Hattie cried. The teacher looked confused and angry.

Then Hattie didn't come to school for a week, again. "Where is Hattie?" the children asked. When the next week came and still no Hattie the children said to the teacher, "We are worried about Hattie. Please find out why she is not in school."

The next day the teacher said to the children, "I have some sad news to tell you. Our friend Hattie has died." There was silence in the class. Then the questions began to rain down upon the teacher like the beginnings of a flood. "Why?" "How come?" "When?" "Where is she now?" "Can we see her?" "Can we do something?"

The teacher said, "You need to know the truth. I have invited a person called a counselor to come talk to us. I want you to invite your parents or guardians to be with us while we talk. We all need to hear together and we all need to have a chance to talk about our feelings." The counselor came in the afternoon of the next day. The children and their parents and guardians gathered in a room with open windows and a large rug. They sat on the rug in a circle. The counselor began.

"Hattie died because she was a victim of something called child abuse. An older and bigger person in her house hurt her. A person in her house, filled with anger, directed that anger toward Hattie. Hattie did not do anything to make that person angry. She did not break her arm or leg by falling off a bicycle. Hattie did not miss school because she had the flu. Hattie was being abused. The person who hurt Hattie was also hurt as a child and did not know any other way to express anger. Sometimes adults do not pay attention to children. They do not give love to children. This is also called abuse."

The parent, guardians and children were shocked. One of the parents said, "Well, Hattie must have come from a poor home. Her people were probably uneducated." The counselor replied, "People who abuse children can be either rich or poor and many times are very well educated. Child abuse can take place in any home, in any neighborhood, and in any city. Child abuse occurs when an older person uses power over a child who is younger and smaller. This abuse can be physical or verbal."

This was a lot of information for the children to take in. They cried and they were comforted by others there. They also comforted each other. Some children were afraid and the counselor talked to them. After the session was over, a parent approached the counselor and said, "I need help. I was abused when I was little. I am afraid I might hurt my child. Please help me." The counselor agreed to help.

The children talked about Hattie and their feelings about her and her death for days. The counselor was present for many of those conversations. "We didn't get to say goodbye," said the children. "We won't ever get to see her again." The teacher and the children talked about remembering Hattie. Finally they decided to have a "remembering time" for Hattie. They invited their parents, guardians, relatives, and other classes in the school. They gathered on the playground next to the school. Once again they sat in a circle.

They sang some songs they knew including "Happy Birthday" because they wanted to sing Hattie's name. They read poems they had written about Hattie. They looked at school photographs so they could see Hattie. They passed around pictures Hattie had drawn so they could touch Hattie. An adult sighed, "This is so sad. Why did God let this happen?" "Hey, mister," one of the children said, "God didn't let this happen. Some person hurt Hattie, not God. I bet God is crying, too."

They all joined hands and asked God to take care of their friend Hattie, to hold and comfort her. They told God they hoped Hattie was laughing and having a good time wherever she was. They took turns saying goodbye. Some waved. Some blew kisses. Some said the words and some said their goodbyes silently. One child came into the circle carrying a stone. It was smooth because the children had taken turns rubbing and polishing it. The stone had *Hattie Jones* written on one side. The other side said, "We miss you." The stone was placed on the ground. They sang another song, then left, carrying the memory of Hattie and the memory of that day in their hearts.

The next day there was another stone next to Hattie's. It simply said, "Josh...luv you." And the day after that there was a stone that said, "Sally" and "I'm sorry."

An article about Hattie and the stone appeared in the local newspaper. Five more stones were added to those already there. The TV stations did a special report on child abuse and Hattie's stone. Ten more stones appeared. *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines sent reporters to take pictures. A wall began to emerge from Hattie's cornerstone. People of all ages would come by and read the names on the stones. Some older people cried, for themselves, for their lost childhoods, or for lost friends.

Children began to ask for help. A special children's hot-line was created with an easy-to-remember number 228 (CAT). A program was developed to help abusive parents understand their own behavior and to learn how to stop their own violence. Sometimes children played on the wall. It wasn't a well-designed, slick or even smooth

wall — just an up and down, rough and fit-them-whenever-they'll-fit stone wall. Children could climb up and down and sometimes over or under this wall built of love and sorrow.

The national networks sent reporters and there was even a special one-hour report on the effects of child abuse. The image of the growing wall of stones was flashed across the country. Legislators passed bills to provide financial aid for children who needed safe places to live. Health care was provided for injured children. Free counseling was made available for those who needed it. Laws were enforced to protect the children.

The news programs were beamed via satellite to all the different parts of the globe. In a playing field in Beijing, a stone appeared with the name *Shu Li*. Romanian children gathered around stones piled next to an orphanage. And in Soweto, people wept over a large mound of stones at the edge of the township.

From where she was, Hattie saw all this and smiled. "I'm glad I am remembered," she thought. "I am with many new friends from all over the world. They know people remember them too. We all hope help is now there for other children. But we hope for much more than that.

"We hope that someday, someday, there will never be a reason for putting down a stone that says *Hattie*."

December 7, 2010

O gracious Lord, we humbly pray
for the women of the world today.
Born of different colors and creeds,
we share the same concerns and needs.
Lord, lift our heads and dry our tears,
as you strengthen us and calm our fears.
Comfort those who, on bended knee,
seek a life where all live free.
We pray for ourselves as well as others,
as we pray for the future
of children and mothers.
Amen.

*Prayers from Lifting Women's Voices copyright DFMS 2009
For the Women of Our World Lonna Paul p 116*

December 8, 2010

Listen, God, to my prayer;
do not hide from my pleading;
hear me and give answer.

If an enemy had reviled me,
that I could bear;
If my foe had viewed me with contempt,
from that I could hide.
But it was you, my other self,
my comrade and friend,
You, whose company I enjoyed,
at whose side I walked
in procession in the house of God.

But I will call upon God,
and the Lord will save me.
At dusk, dawn, and noon
I will grieve and complain,
and my prayer will be heard.
(Ps 55:2-3, 13-15, 17-18)

December 9, 2010

Lord, my Creator, my Liberator, my Strength, hear my voice. I am your daughter. I used to think that did not mean much, that I was not important in this world. Now I know that I am precious to you. Now I would stand straight up boldly in prayer to you, but I make myself small to survive in the darkness. Even in my silence, I believe that you are hearing me. When night falls and the hard hands and loud voices of hate come, keep me safe. Let me wake to another morning. You keep giving me hope, and that is not dead yet. Give me a voice that others hear. And if they cannot hear me, place your voice inside their hearts. Please send help. May there be someone who walks like Jesus, someone who is not afraid to touch me and offer healing and rescue. Make the next morning the one that brings the light of peace to me. Lord, hear my voice. Amen.

*Christ Episcopal Church
Cedar Rapids, IA*

December 10, 2010

Advent 3

For the speechless tongues of those oppressed
For weak hands, feeble knees, widowed, spirits
Made lame, we pray

For those orphaned from war, violence, fear
Parentless children, silent, stifled cries. For the
hungry, we pray

For wives, beaten, abused, trampled, shot
Spirits abandoned, imprisoned by fear. For
Women, we pray

In the dry land of desert wilderness, parched
Stranded spirit, a deer that cannot leap. For the
Broken, we pray

Blessed are those whose help is God
Happy are those whose hope is God, for the
Good News, we pray

For the Good News of God, born human, who
Comes to live and love us, as us, be glad, rejoice,
Singing, we pray

For hope, like blooming flowers in a dusty desert
For hope, compassion bursting forth, be strong!
God is with us.

The Rev. Terri C. Pilarski

Other Resources

Lifting Women's Voices, Prayers to Change the World
Morehouse 2009

Women's Uncommon Prayers, Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated
Morehouse 2000

Breaking the Silence, The Church Responds to Domestic Violence
Anne O. Weatherholt
Morehouse 2008

Episcopal 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence <http://episcopal16days.wordpress.com/>

V Day <http://www.vday.org/home>

Unite to End Violence <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/>

Say No to Violence <http://www.saynotoviolence.org/>

Faith Trust Institute <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>

Polaris Project <http://www.polarisproject.org/>

GEMS <http://www.gems-girls.org/>

God is Still Speaking: Growing Safe and Healthy Congregations and Families in the Church <http://www.ucc.org/justice/sexuality-education/webinar.html>

Power and Control: Domestic Violence in America <http://www.powerandcontrolfilm.com/>