

Loving one another

A biblical discussion toolkit on gender-based violence.



‘Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic. In many countries there is a culture of impunity for those who carry out this kind of violence. It is seen as normal, acceptable, and even Christian churches very often hide, tolerate, perpetuate and even practise violence against women.’

Kathy Galloway



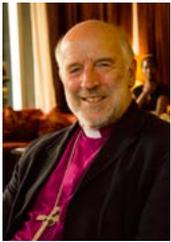
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Acronyms

GBV	gender-based violence
SADD	Anglican Service of Diakonia and Development

Foreword



I am delighted to have the opportunity of commending this course on gender-based violence. It is imperative that we should seek to make the world safe for women and girls. It is also highly significant that this material arises from an international and cross-cultural connection between Scotland and Brazil.

Some will wonder why it should be a priority to tackle the evil of gender-based violence. It is easy to believe that, in the developed world, this is not our problem. Sadly, such an attitude arises from the hidden nature of the issue, which only heightens the dangers for women and girls and makes it harder to address.

This booklet is intended to raise awareness of the problem and to help us to recognise that, for all of us in this society, this is 'our' problem. The material places gender-based violence in the context of our faith. To tackle such a serious denial of human rights is indeed a godly task.

**The Most Rev David Chillingworth,
Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane,
Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church**



Made in the image of God. The sacred story we share begins with that profoundly important claim. Humankind is made in the likeness of the Divine – male and female – and both are called to life that resembles their maker.

And what is the image of God if not love, justice and equality? How can we live in the image of God unless we share a deep and abiding commitment to cherishing the innate dignity and worth of each human person?

Gender-based violence is a global pandemic, which has undermined the will and purpose of God for too long. It diminishes us all, stifles the lives of women and girls and fractures our relationships. It is all too easy to assume that this is a problem that exists somewhere else. However, violence against women respects no boundaries: geographical, social or cultural.

This material exposes the spectrum of violence faced by women and girls and calls for change that goes to the heart of our faith. I hope you will read, engage, reflect and act.

**Sally Foster-Fulton,
Head of Christian Aid Scotland**



Peace to all of you.

'Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.'
(Romans 12:2)

As people of faith, we are called to transform our mind and behaviour all the time. We call this process 'conversion' (metanoia). We are given the power to overcome sin through baptism (Romans 6), and community holds us accountable for this process. We are all responsible for one another. Violence is present in our daily life in many forms and the victims in many countries have predominantly been women and children, particularly girls.

Benedictine spirituality reminds us to keep committed to peace and active hope. "Who is the one who will have life, and desires to see good days?" And if, hearing Him, you answer, "I am the one," God says to you, "If you will have true and everlasting life, keep your tongue from evil and your lips that they speak no guile. Turn away from evil and do good; seek after peace and pursue it." (Psalm 34:13-15)

Unfortunately, religion has played its part in perpetuating violence and upholding men's privilege. Theology and biblical interpretation have been used not to condone but to support violence, discrimination, stigmatisation and exclusion. But theology and biblical interpretation can also be used to bring life and liberation.

The resource you have in your hands is our contribution to the fight against violence towards women and girls. In it you will find beautiful biblical interpretations which defend life and praise the God of mercy, justice and righteousness.

I hope this resource helps us all to set out on the path towards justice and reconciliation. It is my prayer that together we can bear witness to the glory of God and become people of the Kingdom.

**Paulo Barasioli,
Country Manager of Christian Aid Brazil**

Origins of this booklet

Beginning in Brazil

This booklet is based on the invaluable work carried out by the Anglican Service of Diakonia and Development (SADD) of the Anglican Church of Brazil.

Gender-based violence (GBV), especially violence against women, is an ingrained problem across the world, embedded in countries in both the global south and north.

GBV is particularly pervasive in Brazil, where it seems almost rooted in the culture. Brazil has the seventh highest levels of violence against women, behind El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, Guatemala, Russia, Colombia and Belize.

In 2013, SADD was challenged by two themes – ‘What does God require of us?’ (Micah 6:6-8) and ‘Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence

against women and girls’ (57th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women). SADD made a commitment to confront GBV.

In partnership with Christian Aid, and with financial support from the Scottish Episcopal Church, SADD developed a course for use in Brazilian churches for preventing and tackling GBV against women. The course emphasised that domestic violence against women is the most common form of GBV, and it highlighted the important role of faith communities in addressing the problem.

Prevention and Intervention Strategies: Gender-related violence against women was received enthusiastically and is now in its second edition.

Faith communities promote the message that God cares for every one of us. Therefore, violence against



Sandra Andrade is SADD's national co-ordinator and works to raise awareness within the Church of the reality of violence in Brazil.

anyone is violence against God and a sin against humanity. Faith communities can be safe havens for those who have suffered violence, but if these communities do nothing, they may be part of the problem themselves. Bible stories portraying violence against women need to be interpreted carefully, lest people think these stories condone such actions today. Carefully communicated theology can be a means of promoting real change.

Let us go forth in the Peace of Christ, with courage and strength to witness the Gospel among all people, and serve God – our Father and Mother – with joy!

Inspired by the work of our Brazilian sisters and brothers, the Scottish Episcopal Church and Christian Aid Scotland hope this resource will engage, inspire and empower congregations to respond to GBV by:

- Recognising that GBV is a violation of human rights, and therefore a sin against all humanity.
- Acknowledging that as religious communities, we may commit GBV through acts of gender discrimination and omission.
- Acting together to promote services and implement strategies for change.
- Praying together to support each other on this journey.

Adapting for a Scottish context

The comprehensive Brazil material has now been adapted for use in other countries, including El Salvador, Burundi, Angola, Liberia, Honduras, Colombia and Uruguay, and produced in four languages.

For this Scottish edition, we have reduced the number of sessions, but address the same topics and use the same Bible passages. We trialled the material with a group in Perth, and took advantage of the standalone nature of the sessions to switch study weeks and engage in a joint study with a group in Brazil via the internet.

Course topics

The critical topics selected for the five weeks were:

- what we mean by GBV
- who are the victims
- where we find perpetrators
- local secular supports
- how individuals and/or the church might take this forward.

The Brazil material refers to 'texts of terror' (GBV in the Old Testament). Given the sensitive nature of the texts, we wrestled with whether to include this, and finally decided against it. However, following evaluation with participants, and our own reflections, we now include an optional sixth session. This probably fits best between sessions 3 and 4. Facilitators may choose whether to offer it and participants may choose whether to attend that session.

Participants' evaluation of the pilot course

Participants on the pilot course were very receptive and responded positively to the material. In particular, the global context was appealing in approaching the topic. A few of the comments from the evaluation are shared throughout this resource.

GBV in Scotland

The Scottish Government definition's of violence against women and girls states:

Violence against women is a function of gender inequality, and an abuse of male power and privilege. It takes the form of actions that result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering to women and children, or affront to their human dignity, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

It is men who predominantly carry out such violence, and women who are predominantly the victims of such violence. By referring to violence as 'gender based' this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women's and girls' subordinate status in society. Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms, social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women's vulnerability to violence.

Accordingly, it encompasses but is not limited to:

- Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, within the general community or in institutions, including domestic abuse, rape, incest and child sexual abuse.
- Sexual harassment and intimidation at work and in the public sphere; commercial sexual exploitation, including prostitution, pornography and trafficking.
- Dowry-related violence; female genital mutilation; forced and child marriages; 'honour crimes'.

This definition does not deny that women use violence, including violence against a male or female partner. It does not deny that men use violence against other men, including male partners.

Evidence does show that men commit the vast majority of violent crimes and sexual offences. During 2012/13 alone, there were 60,080 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in Scotland. Of these, 44,916 (75%) had a female victim and a male perpetrator.

Evidence also shows that the tactics of coercive control – behaviour that seeks to strip away the victim's freedom and sense of self – are rooted in gender inequality, roles and assumptions.

For more information on the Scottish context see the Scottish Government's *Equally Safe* strategy in the accompanying material on p25.



Ereneude is 24 years old. She was sexually abused by her father and another man, and consequently had three children. Ereneude's children were also sexually abused by her father.

Sex or gender?

The words sex and gender are often used interchangeably, but they mean different things. When a baby is born, it is usually, though not always, clear from the genitals whether it is male or female. That is sex difference. Dressing a baby boy in blue and a girl in pink is a choice. That is gender difference.

Sex refers to the biological characteristics which distinguish people as male or female. These relate to the reproductive system, for example testicles or ovaries.

Gender refers to the quality of being male or female. It is about what we expect of women and men. This is not biology, although some gender differences stem from biological differences.

What we expect of men and women is often subtle, not noticed or seen as normal and accepted as the way things are. But what we think is acceptable and normal can change over time. For example, in Scotland, we no longer think that drinking and driving is acceptable. At one time, women were not considered intelligent enough to vote. A man giving up work to look after children would have been unthinkable.

We are all limited by expectations of what it is to be a man or a woman. But what is a 'real' man or woman? If a man cries, is he less of a man? If a woman does not want children, is she less of a woman? If a man is out of work is he still a real man if he cannot support his family? Do real women look like page three models? We can question and reject assumptions about masculinity and femininity. These expectations force us to live our lives in particular ways and, at worst, damage us and others.

What is wrong with difference?

In itself, there is nothing wrong with difference. But, difference can and has been used to favour certain people and discriminate against others. In the case of gender, difference sets women and men apart. It creates damaging division, often from the minute a baby is born. This division can cause discrimination.

As Christians, our actions are focused on God's mission, which includes:

- bearing witness to Christ's saving, forgiving and reconciling love for all people
- building welcoming, transforming communities of faith
- standing in solidarity with the poor and needy
- challenging violence, injustice and oppression
- promoting a culture of peace.

Challenging GBV is surely part of such a mission.

'In considering the pervasive nature of violence against women and girls, our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women. In penitence and faith we must move forward in such a way that our churches truly become a living witness to our belief that both women and men are made in the image of God.'

A letter to the Churches from the Primates of the Anglican Communion

Read extracts from the letter in the accompanying material on p25.

Notes for facilitators

This booklet has been prepared for those who wish to facilitate a discussion on GBV based on the Bible.

While this booklet has been part-funded by the Scottish Episcopal Church, any denomination is welcome to use the material. We suggest that you seek the support of local church leadership for this initiative and, if possible, include men as well as women, and clergy as well as laity in the discussion.

Facilitation skills

The facilitator will find it helpful to have some biblical knowledge, but does not have to be an expert since the study method draws out the wisdom of the group. It will also be helpful to have some experience in facilitation and an understanding of the sensitivities of GBV.

'It was great to find this being discussed in the Church ... exploring familiar passages from a new angle was refreshing and challenging.'

Ideally, each group should be guided by two facilitators, allowing each to focus on their strengths and be mutually supportive.

Venue

Choose a venue that is easily accessible, comfortable and large enough to create a welcoming and safe space appropriate for the group. Remember, the size of your venue will impact the openness of the discussion.

Know where to collect keys for opening the venue. Check that your venue has wi-fi if you wish to use video clips. Make sure your booking allows you enough time to open the venue and set up.

Session guidelines

1. While participants will most likely bring their own Bibles to the sessions, do print out and have a copy of the passage being discussed on an A4 page. This ensures everyone is using the same text and also enables them to underline and scribble in the margins. You can copy and paste the passage from a wide number of Bible resources websites – we used bible.oremus.org
2. Photocopy the session handouts made available at the back of this booklet. These include suggestions for worship. Beginning and ending with short prayers or a litany helps focus the session as worship. Feel free to experiment with other material.
3. Have a flipchart and markers to capture the discussion.
4. A good visual focus point provides interest early in the session and helps to create a relaxed and safe ambience. Creating an atmosphere of trust is vital for the sessions to work best.
5. Candles, a Bible and a simple symbol related to the Bible passage placed on a small table could work well. Suggestions for symbols are included in the sessions.
6. Invite participants to introduce themselves – even people from the same congregation may not know everyone's names. An icebreaker question which relates to the passage may be useful. For example, when studying the parable of the lost coin you might like to ask people to share a time when they found something precious which they had lost.
7. Explain that personal stories should be confidential. The sessions should take place with the assurance that whatever is shared remains within the group, and should not be discussed elsewhere. In rare circumstances, however, facilitators should alert an appropriate professional if they hear of plans to hurt others deliberately or to self-harm.

8. Remember that facilitators are enablers. Your task is to foster dialogue by using open questions and so create an empowering environment where everyone's voice is heard. Ensure that everyone has the space to speak and discourage those who would dominate the discussion. Encourage those who may be slow to speak and try to keep everyone on topic.
9. All participants should be present from the first session. We would certainly recommend no newcomers after the second session.
10. Plan to end with tea and coffee. You may request a small budget to cover such expenses.

Accompanying material

- The booklet does not intend to cover the topic of GBV exhaustively, but is an important instrument in raising awareness of the issue. Use other resources and sources you consider appropriate.
- You may wish to use other presentation or integration techniques to create a greater awareness of the issue, without losing sight of the theme and objectives of this course.
- The liturgical options should be used to underline the importance of using inclusive language, to engage men and to pursue the continuing commitment of the church community to end GBV.
- Provide guidance on how victims can access support and organisations can develop strategies to prevent GBV. Include faith-based material in this guidance – see list of resources on p28.
- Have leaflets and local contact information for relevant organisations – some are listed in the resources on p28.
- The Brazilian authors of this course suggested that facilitators should watch the short video *Ending Gender Based Violence* in preparation for the course (youtube.com/watch?v=8OUjabyVJJK). You may wish to show it at the first meeting of the

group. Facilitators may also wish to watch other films such as Baroness Scotland talking about tackling GBV (bbc.co.uk/news/world-34911605).

Contextual Bible Study

This Scottish adaptation of the material first used in Brazil differs from the original in that it expands some of the biblical references into a series of Contextual Bible Studies.

Contextual Bible Study is about allowing the Bible to equip us to change the world so that the kingdom of God may come on earth, as it is in heaven.

Contextual Bible Study can create a space in which to deal with difficult issues and offers additional resources for dealing with the problems that confront us in our own contexts. The discussion combines our personal life experiences and the stories and texts of the Bible.

In the book *What is Contextual Bible Study?*, John Riches explains that when groups or individuals undertake a Contextual Bible Study, they are committing to read the Bible:

- from the perspective of the poor, working-class, and marginalised
- collaboratively
- critically, using the critical resources of both biblical scholarship and local reading communities
- for individual and social transformation.

‘The symbols were very good – enabled us to get to the heart of the story quickly; and also helped us remember what we had learned.’

'It is possible to restore dignity to the lives of these women through very simple and humanising acts of welcoming and care.'

From SADD Brazil material



Lucimere Cordeiro Santana is the psychologist at the Casa Noeli safe house.

Session 1

What is gender-based violence?

Objective of the meeting: To make the group more sensitive to, and aware of GBV, and to be aware of how we are all diminished by its prevalence in our society. To raise awareness of faith leaders' commitment to end GBV.

Scene setting: Place a table in the centre of the circle. Cover it with a black cloth and place 20p coins and three unlit candles on it. Have contemplative music playing quietly.



Welcome and opening worship

Setting out on a new venture takes courage and reflects our faith.

Ask for three volunteers to light the candles during the opening prayer.

**All: Lord, by your presence,
Light up the past
That we might learn from it with thankfulness.**
(Light the first candle.)

**All: Light up the present,
that we might live in it with love.**
(Light the second candle.)

**All: Light up the future
that we might prepare for it in hope.**
(Light the third candle.)

Leader: As we read and wait; listen and pray, may we be always ready to encounter the God, who is already and always with us.

All: Amen

(From *Candles and Conifers*, Ruth Burgess)



Introductory question

As well as sharing your name, do you have a story to share about finding something important that you had lost? Allow participants time to share their stories.



Introduction to the series

Be assured that all personal stories shared here will remain confidential. Whatever is shared should remain within this group, and not be discussed elsewhere.

If we identify anyone with plans to hurt others deliberately or to self-harm, we are obliged to seek help from an appropriate professional.

We believe that the Church should be a safe haven for all and be a place where all forms of gender violence can be brought out from the shadows, and where together we can help each other to celebrate life in community and solidarity.

The Anglican Consultative Council's 4th Mark of Mission is to 'Transform the unjust structures of society'. As members of the Christian Church, we are called to reflect and act on this.

This series of sessions came about because the Scottish Episcopal Church's Provisional Overseas Committee supported Christian Aid to help Brazil's Anglican Church develop contextually based biblical material on preventing and tackling GBV against women.

We recognised that GBV is not a problem exclusive to Brazil and set about adapting this material for the Scottish Episcopal Church in partnership with Christian Aid Scotland.

We strongly believe that it is important for faith communities to be involved in challenging GBV in the everyday life of the Church. The 2011 Primates' letter, included on p25, echoes that belief.



Bible passage

We now turn to Luke 15:1,8-10, sometimes referred to as the parable of the lost coin.

Have the group read through the passage silently before one person reads the text aloud.



Questions

One facilitator asks the questions while the other facilitator captures the response on a flipchart. You may wish to alternate these roles.

1. What jumps off the page in the text?
(Individual reflection – share as a group.)
2. What verbs are at work in this passage?
(Discuss in pairs – feed back to group.)
3. What emotions are experienced by the characters in this passage?

Ask someone to re-read the passage aloud.
4. What examples of transformation are found in this parable? (Discuss in pairs – feed back to group.)
5. What has our society lost because of gender-based violence? (Individual reflection – share as a group.)

You may find it helpful to share this quotation from the Brazil material when discussing question 5:

'Violence against women and girls is a global pandemic in every region and in every country. The acts of violence, especially experienced by women between the ages of 15 and 44, cause more deaths and disabilities than cancer, malaria, car accidents and wars all together. One in every five women is a victim of rape or attempted rape during her life. In many countries there is a culture of impunity for those who carry out this kind of violence. It is seen

as normal, acceptable, and even Christian churches very often hide, tolerate, perpetuate and even practise violence against women.' Kathy Galloway



Conclusion

Play *Ending GBV* clip: [youtube.com/watch?v=8OUjabyVJJK](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8OUjabyVJJK)

Invite participants to take a 20p coin from the table. As they hold it, ask them to reflect on the following question:

As you hold the coin and take it with you, ask yourself 'What does our community need to find?'

Ask participants to bring a photo to the next session of a woman who has influenced their lives.



Closing prayer

Leader: Look at your hands,
See the touch and the tenderness –

All: God's own for the world.

Leader: Look at your feet,
See the path and the direction –

All: God's own for the world.

Leader: Look at your heart,
See the fire and the love –

All: God's own for the world.

Leader: Look at the cross,
See God's Son and our Saviour –

All: God's own for the world.

(From *A Wee Worship Book*, John L Bell and Graham Maule.)

The Grace said together.

Tea and coffee.

Session 2

Stories not statistics

Objective of the meeting: To encourage participants to understand that women who are abused are in all walks of life. To encourage the hope that change is possible.

Scene setting: Place small buckets on a black cloth on a table in the centre of the circle. (Small buckets can be sourced from craft stores or online.) Place three candles on the table.



Welcome and opening worship

It may be helpful to recap on the previous week to bring any newcomers up to date.

Three candles have been placed on the table. As they are lit, say together:

We have come together in this quiet space to reflect upon our lives in the light of the Christian mystery, to pray for ourselves and others, to deepen the sense of affection and understanding we have for all women and men.

Leader (reading slowly with a pause between each line):

Be still and know that I am God
Be still and know that I am
Be still and know that I
Be still and know that
Be still and know
Be still and
Be still
Be

As we read, listen and pray, may we always be ready to encounter the God who is already and always with us. **Amen.**



Introductory question

Do you have a photo and or a story to share about a woman of influence in your life? Allow participants time to share the stories.



Bible passage

We now turn to John 4:1-30, the story of Jesus with the woman at the well.

Have the group read through the passage silently before one person reads the text aloud.



Questions

One facilitator asks the following questions while the other facilitator captures the response on a flipchart. You may wish to alternate these roles.

1. What jumps off the page in the text? (Individual reflection – share as a group.)
2. What characters are in this passage – present or in the wings? (Discuss in pairs – feed back to group.)
3. How do the characters relate to each other? (Discuss in threes – feed back to group.)

Ask someone to reread the passage aloud.
4. What examples of transformation are found in this story? (Discuss in pairs – feed back to group.)
5. What transformation is required to challenge GBV in our society? (Individual reflection – share as a group.)

You may find it helpful to share this reflection from Paulo Ueti, country manager, Christian Aid Brazil, when discussing question 5:

In this encounter, Jesus says he needs the woman's help. His disciples are surprised at the fact that Jesus speaks to a foreign woman. However, it is a foreign woman to whom Jesus declares himself as Christ, the Messiah (verses 25-26), which should make us realise that our actions should reach all women, whether they are from our community of faith or not. The overcoming of violence against woman should be an answer to Micah's question: 'What does the Lord require of us?'

Conclusion

Invite participants to take a small bucket from the table. As they hold it and take it with them, invite them to reflect on the following question: What does the Lord require of us?

Ask participants to bring a flower with them to the next session.

Closing prayer

We pray, God our Mother and Father, for all those women, of all races and ethnic groups, of all creeds, tribes and nations, all ages, women from the country and from the city, deaf women, women in wheelchairs, blind, married, single, heterosexual, lesbian, and especially those that live in situations of violence, recognising that they, as well as any one of us, are also your daughters, created in your image and likeness.

Through Jesus, who inspires us to promote a culture of peace.

Amen.

(From the SADD Brazil material.)

The Grace said together.

Tea and coffee.



Rev Elineide Ferreira de Oliveira's church in Ariquemes, Brazil. As co-ordinator of the Casa Noeli dos Santos safe house, Elineide is on the frontline of the fight against GBV in Brazil.

Session 3

Where are the perpetrators?

Objective of the meeting: To face up to the fear of addressing GBV and consider the characteristics of perpetrators.

Scene setting: Place a bunch of flowers and three unlit candles on the table in the centre of the circle.



Welcome and opening worship

It may be helpful to recap the previous week.

Ask for three participants to speak and light the candles.

First person: I will light a light, in the name of the Maker
Who lit the world
And breathed the breath of life for me.
(Light the first candle.)

Second person: I will light a light, in the name of the Son
Who saved the world
And stretched out his hand to me.
(Light the second candle.)

Third person: I will light a light, in the name of the Spirit
Who encompasses the world
And blesses my soul with yearning.
(Light the third candle.)

**All: We light three lights, for the Trinity of Love:
God above us, God beside us, God beneath us:
The beginning, the end, the everlasting one. Amen**

(From *A Wee Worship Book*, John L Bell and Graham Maule.)



Introductory question

Allow participants time to describe the flowers they have brought and to share any stories related to them.



Bible passage

We now turn to Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan. Have the group read through the passage silently before one person reads the text aloud.



Questions

One facilitator asks the following questions while the other facilitator captures the response on a flipchart. You may wish to alternate these roles.

1. What jumps off the page? (Discuss with person beside you and share as group.)
2. Which voices are heard in the text? (Share as a group.)
3. Which voices are silent and why do you think that is? (Discuss in threes – share as a group.)

Ask someone to reread the passage aloud.

4. How does this text help or challenge us to respond and tend to those who both experience and perpetrate GBV? (Reflect individually and share as a group.)

You may find it helpful to share this reflection from the Brazil material when discussing question 4.

It is possible to restore dignity to the lives of these women through very simple and humanising acts of welcoming and care, following the example of the Samaritan, who was the neighbour to the one who was injured and was in danger of death by showing him mercy. May we be capable of noticing these women in situations of violence, those who are close to us, and may we be close enough to them that we

feel sadness in our hearts (which is the meaning of the word 'mercy' – from the Latin word 'misericord' which means miserable heart) by the situation of violence faced by so many women, who even in silence, ask for help. How can restoration and help also be provided for the perpetrators?



Conclusion

It can be intimidating or frightening to intervene in a situation of violence. Acknowledge this with the group. Offer suitable leaflets from support groups to the participants.



A meditation

The following poem is taken from the Brazil material. It is powerful and you should consider carefully whether it is appropriate for your group. Give each participant a flower and ask five people in the group to each read a verse.

Today I Received Flowers

Today I received flowers!

It's not my birthday or any other special day;
we had our first fight last night,
he said some cruel things to me that really offended me.
But I know he's sorry and didn't mean what he said,
because today he sent me flowers.
It's not our anniversary or any other special day.

Yesterday he threw me against the wall and started suffocating me.
It was like a nightmare, but we wake up from nightmares and discover that they are not real.
Today I woke up full of pain and with bruises all over my body.
But I know he's sorry
because today he sent me flowers.
And it's not Valentine's Day or any other special day.

Last night he hit me and threatened to kill me.
Neither the make-up nor the long sleeves could hide the cuts and bruises that I suffered this time.
I couldn't go to work today,
because I didn't want anyone to notice.
But I know he's sorry
because today he sent me flowers.
And it wasn't Mother's Day or any other special day.

Last night he hit me again, but this time it was much worse.

If I manage to leave him, what would I do?
How could I bring up my children on my own?
What will happen if the money runs out? I'm so frightened of him!
But I depend on him so much that I am afraid to leave him.
But I know he's sorry,
because today he sent me flowers.

Today is a very special day: it is the day of my funeral.
Yesterday he finally managed to kill me. He hit me until I died.

If only I had had the courage and the strength to leave him...

If only I had asked for professional help...
I wouldn't be receiving flowers today!

(Translation of 'Hoje Recebi Flores', author unknown)

Silence.

Invite any comments or reflections on the poem from the participants.



Closing prayer

God our Mother and Father,
we ask for your love and forgiveness,
for the hurt we have caused,
and the care we have not taken.
Too often we have disregarded situations of violence,
too often we have kept quiet and closed our eyes or ears
to circumstances we should have challenged.
We especially acknowledge with grief that,
as faith communities,
we have perpetuated oppressive attitudes towards
our sisters.
Help us to have the dignity and courage
not to conform to a culture of violence
but to be disciples of Jesus,
proclaiming your Gospel of Love.
In Jesus' name, Amen

The Grace is said together.

Tea and coffee.

Session 4

Hope and cake

Objective of the meeting: To inspire and encourage participants to believe that change and restoration is possible and to provide practical suggestions of where to seek support.

Scene setting: Place a cake with 12 unlit candles on a table in the centre of the circle. You may wish to light the candles at the end of the evening.



Welcome and opening worship

It may be helpful to recap the previous week.

Leader: In the beginning, God made the world:

Women: Made it and mothered it,

Men: Shaped it and fathered it,

Women: Filled it with seeds and signs of fertility,

Men: Filled it with love and its folk with humility.

Leader: All that is tender, firm, fragrant and curious,

All: God's is the hand that created you.

Leader: All that speaks, sings, cries, laughs or keeps silent,

All: God's is the hand that created you.

Leader: All that suffers, lacks, limps or longs for an end,

All: God's is the hand that created you.

Leader: The world belongs to the Lord.

All: The earth and all its people are His. Amen

(From *A Wee Worship Book*, John L Bell and Graham Maule.)



Introductory question

It isn't anyone's 12th birthday here, but 12 years features twice in our reading for this evening. That is why we have a cake with 12 candles. Do you have a story about waiting a long time for something you wanted to change?



Bible passage

We now turn to Mark 5:21-43, the story of Jesus healing the woman with the haemorrhage and Jairus' daughter.

Have the group read through the passage silently before one person reads the text aloud.



Questions

One facilitator asks the following questions while the other facilitator captures the response on a flipchart. You may wish to alternate these roles.

1. What jumps off the page? (Discuss as a group.)
2. What moments of touch occur in passage? (Discuss in pairs and share with group.)
3. What acts of courage are at work in this passage? (Discuss in fours and share with group.)

Have someone reread the passage aloud.

4. Where do we find courage in this passage as we respond to the challenge of GBV? (Discuss as a group.)



Conclusion

Light the candles on the cake and invite participants to reflect on the hope that with these conversations and discussions, GBV is being brought into the light.

Silence.

Ask different members of the group or one volunteer to blow each candle out. As they are extinguished, take time to remember all those whose lives have been kept from shining brightly because of GBV.

Suggest to the group, that just as the passage ends with Jesus telling those watching to give the restored girl something to eat, let's cut the cake and share it over tea, coffee and conversation.

Have available leaflets from relevant local organisations, such as Women's Aid, Rape Crisis, White Ribbon and local partnerships (see Resources, p28).



Closing prayer

As your daughters and sons,
we offer ourselves to you,
O Lord, so that we may be prophets of this century,
outraged by the injustices and violence,
especially gender based violence.

We pray that we may be capable of recognising
this violence
– its signs and marks often silenced – in the soul and
the body of women.

As sisters and brothers in Christ, may we challenge
injustice, oppression and violence, and act as
guardian for all women, in the loving strength of the
Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Say the Grace together

Tea and coffee.



Fran has been a resident of the safe house three times. The safe house broke her cycle of being threatened and beaten, and Fran now raises awareness about the safe house's existence and encourages other women to report domestic violence. She dreams of returning to school and becoming a police officer.

Session 5

What does God require of us?

Objective of the meeting: To create a sense of empowerment to respond to the issue of gender-based violence as a unified church.

Scene setting: Place the following items on a table: socks, hat, earmuffs, gloves and a pair of glasses. Place four unlit candles on the table.



Welcome and opening worship

Leader: God, who is Father and Mother, open our eyes,

All: So that we may see the needs of others, especially the afflictions of women who live in situations of gender-based violence.

(Light the first candle)

Leader: Open our ears,

All: So that we may hear their cries, even those silenced by the violence.

(Light the second candle)

Leader: Open our hearts,

All: So they are not without support.

(Light the third candle)

Leader: Open our lips,

All: To defend people whose right to life is violated.

(Light the fourth candle)

Leader: Show us where love and hope and faith are needed,

All: Use us to take them to these places.

Leader: Open our eyes, ears, hearts and lips,

All: So that we can build peace.

Amen.



Introductory question

Do you have story about a time when a part of your body was broken? How did the rest of your body respond? Allow the group time to share.



Bible passage

We now turn to 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, which is about how as the church we are all part of one body.

Have the group read through the passage silently before one person reads the text aloud.



Questions

One facilitator asks the following questions while the other facilitator captures the response on a flipchart. You may wish to alternate these roles.

1. What jumps off the page? (Discuss in groups of three and feed back to the group.)
2. What parts of the body and identities are named in this passage? (Discuss as a group.)
3. What themes can you recognise in this passage? (Discuss in threes and feed back to group.)

Ask a member of the group to reread the passage aloud.

4. How could this passage influence our gender-based relationships in the church?
5. How does this passage challenge us to respond to the issue of GBV?

You may find it helpful to share the following reflection from Brazil when discussing questions 4 and 5.



Rev Arthur works with Christian Aid partner SADD

This passage explores themes of equity and connectedness. The body metaphor becomes very important as a description for Christ, the Church and our relationship with God. This passage is all about respecting difference. The theme of suffering raises awareness that while anyone is in pain, we are all suffering. 1 Corinthians was written before Romans. This chapter is echoed very strongly in Romans 12, especially verses 4-8. Was the writer reminding them that they had forgotten the real meaning of belonging, and needed to repeat it? Maybe it is always like that – we continually need reminding not to think we are better than others!

Conclusion

On the table we have socks, a hat, earmuffs, gloves and glasses – all things we use to protect our feet, head, ears, hands and eyes from the elements. As we take care of our own body, may we always endeavour to take care of every member of the body of the church and of humanity, for the wellbeing of us all. Discuss together what you as individuals and as communities might do to ensure that happens.

Some practical suggestions to help with the discussion:

- posters placed on toilet doors with contact details for those who might seek support
- information about GBV displayed in the church, with signposting to professional services
- a person in charge of keeping these resources up to date
- training offered to provide meaningful and safe support
- using 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women and International Women’s Day to challenge GBV and celebrate women.



Closing prayer

May the path be gentle on our feet,
and may the wind blow softly on our shoulders.
May the sun shine on our faces,
and the rains fall peacefully on our fields;
And until we meet again,
may God keep us in the palm of his hand.
And for this, may the Blessing of God
the Father and Mother,
Son and Brother,
Holy Spirit and Divine Wind,
come down on us, today and evermore.
Amen.

(Irish blessing.)

Tea and coffee.

Optional session

Texts of terror

We have included an optional session on the theme of texts of terror, as this was included in the Brazil material. As with all the material in this booklet, it is up to you discern whether it is appropriate content for your group. If it is, we suggest that you include it after session 3.

As is suggested by the title, these passages are often neglected and describe shocking encounters in the Bible which may leave readers confused and angry. Emotions may run high in a discussion and so it will be important to create a safe space for honest expression for all involved.

Objective of the meeting: To address the difficult realities and emotions encountered when engaging with GBV.

Scene setting: Table with house keys on it.



Welcome and opening worship

Leader: For the troubles and the sufferings of the world

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: The whole creation's labouring in pain!

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: Lend an ear to the rising cry for help.

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: Come hasten your salvation, healing love!

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: We pray for the peace that comes from bringing justice.

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: We pray for power that will sustain your people's witness.

All: Until your kingdom come. Amen.



Introductory question

Where do you feel safe?



Bible passage

We now turn to Judges 19. Have the group read through the passage silently before one person reads the text aloud.



Questions

One facilitator asks the following questions while the other facilitator captures the response on a flipchart. You may wish to alternate these roles.

1. Are you aware of strong feelings in yourself as you read this passage? (Take time with this question. Discuss in groups of three and share with the group.)
2. List the characters in this passage. (Discuss as a group.)
3. Who is responsible for what happens to the daughter in this passage? (Discuss in the same groups of three and share with the group.)
4. What helpful ways can we respond to sexual violence locally and globally? (Discuss as a group.)

You may wish to photocopy and share the inspiring story of Rev Elineide (overleaf) when discussing question 4.

Conclusion

Invite participants to take a key in their hand. Ask them to reflect on the following question. What secrets need to be unlocked in our lives, our homes, our society in order for sexual violence to stop?

Closing prayer

God of love,
unlock the secrets and
release from shame
all those broken by sexual violence.

God of love,
unlock the taboos and
release the truth
for all those afraid to speak up.

God of love,
unlock the hurt and
release from pain
all those who need to be healed.

We pray in the name of the one whose
transformational touch healed and brought new life.
Amen

We pray in the name of the one whose
transformational touch healed and brought new life.
Amen.

Tea and coffee.



When Eliane tried to separate from her abusive husband he attacked her, stabbing her seven times. Eliane's horrific experience inspired her sister Rev Elineide to set up the safe house. Eliane works in the safe house, handling administrative duties and counselling women.

An inspiration: Rev Elineide's story



Elineide felt called to create a refuge for women fleeing violence after her sister was stabbed by her husband.

'I don't do this for money. I don't do this for recognition. I do this to see women rebuild their lives.'

Rev Elineide is the heart of Casa Noeli dos Santos, the only church-run safe house in Brazil. It provides a refuge for women fleeing domestic violence and can house up to 10 women and children at a time.

Parish priest Elineide felt called to create a refuge for women fleeing domestic violence after seeing her sister Elione suffer when her violent husband stabbed her seven times when she tried to leave him.

Elineide helps the women report crimes to the police, because the police station can be a frightening place and the officers don't always want to help. She makes legal referrals and finds schools for children who have fled with their mothers. When the women

leave the refuge, she travels with them to help them feel safe.

Inevitably, Elineide is drawn into their lives. When she thinks about what the women have gone through, the horror of it all sometimes threatens to overwhelm her. But Elineide has her faith to lean on, which gives her the strength to go on.

The safe house currently helps about 150 women a year. Elineide has big plans for the future.

'I'd like to turn this house into a teaching centre,' she says. 'It wouldn't just be a place of welcome and safety. I'd like to offer courses to train women and give them new skills and knowledge. That way, this house can become a model for others.'

Accompanying material

1. Equally Safe

Equally Safe is Scotland's strategy to take action against all forms of violence against women and girls.

The overall aim is to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls, creating a strong and flourishing Scotland where all individuals are equally safe and respected, and where women and girls live free from such abuse – and the attitudes that help perpetuate it.

There are four key priorities:

1. Scottish society embraces equality and mutual respect, and rejects all forms of violence against women and girls.
2. Women and girls thrive as equal citizens: socially, culturally, economically and politically.
3. Interventions are early and effective, preventing violence and maximising safety and wellbeing of women and girls.
4. Men desist from all forms of violence against women and girls and perpetrators of such violence receive a robust and effective response.

Equally Safe: Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls, Scottish Government, 2014, www.gov.scot/Resource/0045/00454152.pdf

2. Letter to the Churches of the Anglican Communion from the Primates of the Anglican Communion (extracts)

During our meeting we discussed the nature and prevalence of gender based violence... we shared stories of violence against women and girls from both the southern and northern hemispheres. We acknowledged with grief that gender based violence is a global phenomenon and that all but a very small percentage of such violence is perpetrated by men against women, with devastating effects on individuals, families and society. In considering the pervasive nature of violence

against women and girls, our churches must accept responsibility for our own part in perpetuating oppressive attitudes towards women. In penitence and faith we must move forward in such a way that our churches truly become a living witness to our belief that both women and men are made in the image of God. To think and behave in ways that do not live out this belief but disempower and marginalise, is to mar the divine image and therefore to offend humanity and God.

In recent years we have seen a growing resolve in the Anglican Communion to engage with the eradication of gender based violence. In 2009 the Anglican Consultative Council resolved to support the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and encouraged all Provinces to participate in programmes and events that promote the rights and welfare of women. The bishops at the Lambeth Conferences of 1998 and 2008... asked the churches to engage in raising public awareness about the victimisation and exploitation of women and children. Several of the official Anglican Networks have raised violence against women and girls as a priority issue for their own memberships and for the broader Communion.

We were heartened to know that there is an increasing amount of work being undertaken in the Communion as churches engage with awareness raising, advocacy. We thank God for these efforts and rejoice in them. To this end we... continue to map activities already responding to gender based violence, and to identify theological and practical resources.

As individual Primates we are committed, in each of our Provinces, to raise the profile of Millennium Development Goal 3 ('Promote gender equality and empower women'); to affirm and pray for God's blessing on initiatives already in place in our dioceses and parishes in response to violence against women and girls; and to attend to the training of clergy and pastors so that they are aware of the nature and dynamics of gendered violence and how certain attitudes and behaviours can be challenged and transformed. We are also committed to ensuring the development and accessibility of local, contextual and accessible resources, including liturgies, for example, for 25 November, the annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

as well as White Ribbon Day, and the first day of the global '16 Days Activism for the Elimination of Violence against Women'. We will work with our young people so that our boys and girls, young men and young women, are enabled to honour themselves and one another as human beings cherished equally by God, and empowered to be agents of change among their peers.

The full letter can be read here:
lawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/62921/gbv_primates_english.pdf

3. Theological Reflection on CSW58

At the 58th UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), our Anglican Communion delegation joined with numerous civil society groups to explore the systemic injustices constraining the lives and prospects of women and girls, and to advocate for transformation of the structures, practices and assumptions that perpetuate inequality, poverty and violence against women.

What difference does faith make to our participation? What does our theological perspective have to contribute to this shared work?

Partly, it's to do with our understanding of transformation. During this year's CSW, it was generally agreed that true equality and empowerment of women requires more than simply enacting transformation of the underlying norms of societies that, in so many contexts, operate as if girls are less valuable than boys, as if women's work is less significant, women's participation in decision making less necessary than that of men, and so on.

How does transformation of such unjust structures and norms take place? Education, awareness raising, resistance, and advocacy – all these things are important. Yet what is needed ultimately is the transformation of persons, and this is usually difficult and painful. It is not easy for anyone, whether oppressor or oppressed, to let go of entrenched patterns of behaviour and identity formation. The way to a new form of life can feel profoundly unfamiliar, threatening and dislocating. As Christians, we know

that the deepest human transformation requires a willingness to be vulnerable, to let go old certainties and to source our lives, not in culturally accepted patterns of domination or competition, but in the generous, reconciling, humanising and empowering love of God which is beneath and beyond all cultural and moral systems and which draws all people into fullness of life. One aspect of our contribution to the work of gender equality must therefore be to undergo and accompany others on this deeper journey of personal transformation, without which the fear-based patterns that underpin distorted gender relationships will remain in place.

What can we do when this work of transformation is refused and resisted?

The temptation is to become either cynical and withdrawn or anxious and ever more frenzied in our activism. When the need is so urgent – women and children trafficked daily into slavery, gender-based violence in epidemic proportions, women disproportionately affected by climate change, unjust legal, trade and macroeconomic frameworks, and profoundly discriminated against economically and in access to decision making (including in many of our Anglican dioceses and churches) – then despair or anxiety are natural reactions.

Yet, to paraphrase Jesus, we believe that 'it shall not be so among us'. The deep work of justice and reconciliation in which we are invited to participate is God's work. We are called to yield ourselves to whole-hearted, intelligent and costly participation in this work, but without anxiety or frenzy. We are to be prophetic but not reactive, our fierce love growing in the soil of prayer, listening, and discernment. Our faith teaches us that we become agents of authentic new life insofar as we entrust our own lives and work to God's larger truth, confident even in the midst of suffering and chaos that love is indeed stronger than death and that in Christ all things are already being made new. May it be so.

Rev Dr Sarah Bachelard, Benedictus church,
Australia, 2014

We believe that the Church should be a safe haven for all and be a place where all forms of gender violence, and where together we can help each other to celebrate life in community and solidarity.



Rev Elineide and her sister
Elione at the safe house

Resources and bibliography

Scottish secular resources

Scottish Women's Aid is the lead organisation in Scotland working towards the prevention of domestic abuse. scottishwomensaid.org.uk

TARA (Trafficking Awareness Raising Alliance) works closely with Police Scotland and Glasgow city council to provide support for victims of violence and ensure a safer community. communitysafetyglasgow.org/what-we-do/supporting-victims-of-gender-based-violence

White Ribbon Scotland is part of an international campaign to involve men in tackling violence against women. whiteribbonscotland.org.uk

Rape Crisis Scotland is the national office for the rape crisis movement. It supports the work of local centres and develops new centres in areas where there are no or few specialist services. It works with agencies such as the police, Crown Office and health services to improve the response to those who are affected by and who perpetrate sexual violence. rapecrisisScotland.org.uk

Women's Support Project is a feminist voluntary organisation which works to raise awareness of the extent, causes and effect of male violence against women, and for improved services for those affected by violence. womenssupportproject.co.uk

Black and minority ethnic resources

Shakti Women's Aid is an Edinburgh-based charity which provides help for black minority ethnic women, children and young people who are experiencing, or who have experienced, violence. shaktiedinburgh.co.uk

Hemat Gryffe Women's Aid is a Glasgow-based charity providing support for black and minority ethnic women, children and young people experiencing GBV. Staff speak Bengali, Cantonese, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. hematgryffe.org.uk

Amina Muslim Women's Resource Centre provides confidential faith and culturally sensitive services to Muslim women to enable them to live better, safer lives, free from discrimination and abuse. It operates throughout Scotland. mwrc.org.uk

Roshni raises awareness of child abuse within black and minority ethnic communities. It collaborates in the My Voice project, which enables young men and women aged 16-25, men over 25 and religious leaders across Glasgow and Edinburgh to share their opinions and experience of female genital cutting. roshni.org.uk

Faith-based resources

Restored is a British international non-governmental organisation working through the churches on violence against women

and girls. The website has useful faith-based resources and a 'first man standing' campaign. restoredrelationships.org

Side by Side is a growing global movement drawing together faith communities in many different countries to bring about justice and equality. Side by Side believes that gender justice can be achieved if individuals of faith – at all levels and from all backgrounds – work together to transform relationships. A Scottish group has recently been established. sidebysidegender.org

Thursdays in Black is a campaign of solidarity and advocacy focusing on ways through which individuals can challenge attitudes that cause rape and violence. The simple act of wearing black on Thursdays is a protest against societies that encourage violence in any form, mourns those harmed and killed in sexual violence, raises awareness, and hopes that a different reality is possible. thursdaysinblack.com

Church of Scotland has produced a seven-week Bible study combining stories from its partner churches and biblical texts to explore gender issues. Each week features a reflection and discussion points prepared by people from all across the church. churchofscotland.org.uk/___data/assets/pdf_file/0007/29293/Bible_Study_Cards_LORES.pdf

International Anglican Women's Network has a number of Anglican resources. <http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org>

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an annual, international campaign that runs from 25 November (International Day Against Violence Against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day).

Girls with Power and Dignity is a resource and reflections created for the 16 Days by Anglicans, ecumenical and inter-faith partners. There is a focus on girls in education and their safety. genderjustice-interfaith.net

Mothers' Union has produced a PowerPoint presentation for the 16 Days. <http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/193702/MU-presentation-16-Days-2015.ppt>

Anglicans and the 16 Days is an informative booklet from the Anglican Communion Office. http://iawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/62876/16_days_resource_2013.pdf

A crack, a slap, a painful plea, a poem written by the Rt Rev Laura J Ahrens, Bishop Suffragan, the Episcopal Church in Connecticut. ecwnational.org/16-days-activism-2014

We Will Speak Out is a coalition of churches and Christian organisations working towards the end of sexual violence around the world. Its 16 Prayers for the 16 Days is a useful resource. wewillspeakout.org/resource-type/16days

House of Sarah in Fiji is a project of the Association of Anglican Women which is working to build equal and respectful relationships within families, churches, schools

and communities. It has resources for the 16 Days. houseofsarah.org/resources

Anglican Men Speak Out! is a leaflet and video resource. iawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/62870/16-Days-2014-Anglican-Men-Speak-Out.pdf

Hand in Hand is a Bible studies resource produced by Tearfund to equip churches to have a positive impact in preventing and responding to sexual violence in their church and community. [tilz.tearfund.org/~media/Files/TILZ/HIV/Hand in Hand Bible Studies_SV.pdf](http://tilz.tearfund.org/~media/Files/TILZ/HIV/Hand%20in%20Hand%20Bible%20Studies_SV.pdf)

Think Prevent in the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, Australia, is a violence prevention programme. thinkprevent.com

Break the Silence is a sermon on Luke 10:29-37 and GBV by Rev Ann Drummond, Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. iawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/62873/16_days-_sermon_ann_drummond_2013.pdf

Responding to Domestic Abuse: Guidelines for those with pastoral responsibilities is the Church of England's guidelines for good practice at parish and diocesan level. churchofengland.org/media/1163604/domesticabuse.pdf

Clapping With Both Hands is a gender equality report and case studies from ACT Alliance. 178.62.114.239/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ACT_Gender_Good-Practice_Report_2012.pdf

Life Abundant for All God's People is a GBV Bible study that includes biblical texts and stories from World Mission Council partner churches, with reflections and discussion points. iawn.anglicancommunion.org/media/184187/world-mission-council-gbv-bible-study-2015.pdf

Bibliography

What is Contextual Bible Study?, John Riches et al, SPCK, 2010.

Of the Same Flesh: exploring a theology of gender, Susan Durber, Christian Aid, 2014, <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/images/of-the-same-flesh-gender-theology-report.pdf>

Participants' notes

Session 1: What is gender-based violence?

Objective: To make the group more sensitive to, and aware of GBV, and to be aware of how we are all diminished by its prevalence in our society. To raise awareness of faith leaders' commitment to end GBV.

Welcome and opening worship

**All: Lord, by your presence,
Light up the past
That we might learn from it with thankfulness.**
(Light the first candle.)
**Light up the present,
that we might live in it with love.**
(Light the second candle.)
**Light up the future
that we might prepare for it in hope.**
(Light the third candle.)

Leader: As we read and wait; listen and pray,
may we be always ready to encounter the God,
who is already and always with us.

Amen

Introductory question

Do you have a story to share about finding something important that you had lost?

Bible passage

Luke 15:1,8-10, the parable of the lost coin.

Discussion

Question for reflection

What does our community need to find?

Closing prayer

Leader: Look at your hands,
See the touch and the tenderness –
All: God's own for the world.

Leader: Look at your feet,
See the path and the direction –
All: God's own for the world.

Leader: Look at your heart,
See the fire and the love –
All: God's own for the world.

Leader: Look at the cross,
See God's Son and our Saviour –
All: God's own for the world.

The Grace said together.

Tea and coffee.

Session 2: Stories not statistics

Objective of the meeting: To encourage participants to understand that women who are abused are in all walks of life. To encourage the hope that change is possible.

Welcome and opening worship

As the candles are lit, say together:
**We have come together in this quiet space
to reflect upon our lives in the light of the
Christian mystery,
to pray for ourselves and others.
to deepen the sense of affection and
understanding we have for all women and men.**
Be still and know that I am God
As we read, listen and pray, may we always be
ready to encounter the God who is already and
always with us. **Amen.**

Introductory question

Do you have a photo and or a story to share about a woman of influence in your life?

Bible passage

John 4:1-30, the story of Jesus with the woman at the well.

Discussion

Question for reflection

What does the Lord require of us?

Closing prayer

The Grace said together.

Tea and coffee.

Session 3: Where are the perpetrators?

Objective: To face up to the fear of addressing GBV and consider the characteristics of perpetrators.

Welcome and opening worship

First person: I will light a light, in the name
of the Maker
Who lit the world
And breathed the breath of life for me.
(Light the first candle.)

Second person: I will light a light, in the name of the Son
Who saved the world
And stretched out his hand to me.
(Light the second candle.)

Third person: I will light a light, in the name of the Spirit
Who encompasses the world
And blesses my soul with yearning.
(Light the third candle.)

**All: We light three lights, for the Trinity of Love:
God above us, God beside us, God beneath us:
The beginning, the end, the everlasting one. Amen**

Introductory question

Describe the flower you have brought and share any related story.

Bible passage

Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Discussion

Reflection

Take some of the available literature to help you reflect on how you might best help someone experiencing domestic violence.

Closing prayer

The Grace is said together.

Tea and coffee.

Session 4: Hope and cake

Objective: To inspire and encourage participants to believe that change and restoration is possible and to provide practical suggestions of where to seek support.

Welcome and opening worship

Leader: In the beginning, God made the world:

Women: Made it and mothered it,

Men: Shaped it and fathered it,

Women: Filled it with seeds and signs of fertility,

Men: Filled it with love and its folk with humility.

Leader: All that is tender, firm, fragrant and curious,

All: God's is the hand that created you.

Leader: All that speaks, sings, cries, laughs or keeps silent,

All: God's is the hand that created you.

Leader: All that suffers, lacks, limps or longs for an end,

All: God's is the hand that created you.

Leader: The world belongs to the Lord.

All: The earth and all its people are His. Amen

Introductory question

Do you have a story about waiting a long time for something you wanted to change?

Bible passage

Mark 5:21-43, the story of Jesus healing the woman with the haemorrhage and Jairus' daughter.

Discussion

Reflection

As the candles are extinguished, take time to remember all those whose lives have been kept from shining brightly because of GBV.

Closing prayer

Say the Grace together

Tea and coffee.

Session 5: What does God require of us?

Objective: To create a sense of empowerment to respond to the issue of GBV as a unified church

Welcome and opening worship

Leader: God, who is Father and Mother, open our eyes,

All: So that we may see the needs of others, especially the afflictions of women who live in situations of gender-based violence.

(Light the first candle)

Leader: Open our ears,

All: So that we may hear their cries, even those silenced by the violence.

(Light the second candle)

Leader: Open our hearts,

All: So they are not without support.

(Light the third candle)

Leader: Open our lips,

All: To defend people whose right to life is violated.

(Light the fourth candle)

Leader: Show us where love and hope and faith are needed,

All: Use us to take them to these places.

Leader: Open our eyes, ears, hearts and lips,

All: So that we can build peace. Amen.

Introductory question

Do you have story about a time when a part of your body was broken? How did the rest of your body respond?

Bible passage

1 Corinthians 12:12-31, how we are all part of one body.

Discussion

Question for reflection

What might we do to ensure every member of the church is included and cared for?

Closing prayer

Tea and coffee.

Optional session: Texts of terror

Objective: To address the difficult realities and emotions encountered when engaging with GBV.

Welcome and opening worship

Leader: For the troubles and the sufferings of the world

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: The whole creation's labouring in pain!

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: Lend an ear to the rising cry for help.

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: Come hasten your salvation, healing love!

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: We pray for the peace that comes from bringing justice.

All: Lord have mercy.

Leader: We pray for power that will sustain your people's witness.

All: Until your kingdom come. Amen.

Introductory question

Where do you feel safe?

Bible passage

Judges 19, the Levite's concubine.

Discussion

Question for reflection

What secrets need to be unlocked in our lives, our homes, our society in order for sexual violence to stop?

Closing prayer

Tea and coffee.

