



Some of the content used in this worship sheet is sourced from the resources provided by the Methodist Church UK website. [Women Against Violence Sunday - The Methodist Church](https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/resources/seasons-and-themes/special-sundays/women-against-violence-sunday/)
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Call to Worship

Come to God, Who in Christ welcomes all; Bring to God, All you are and long to be; Entrust to God, Your burdens, hopes and fears. Let us worship God.

Hymn: StF 20 Be still, for the presence of the Lord

Watch on YouTube <https://youtu.be/ZugvUQ4m90U?si=HHFhPUFmlExopvkl>

Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here;
come bow before him now
with reverence and fear:
in him no sin is found —
we stand on holy ground.
Be still, for the presence of the Lord,
the Holy One, is here.

Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around;
he burns with holy fire,
with splendour he is crowned:

how awesome is the sight —
our radiant king of light!
Be still, for the glory of the Lord
is shining all around.

Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place;
he comes to cleanse and heal,
to minister his grace:
no work too hard for him —
in faith receive from him.
Be still, for the power of the Lord
is moving in this place

David J. Evans (b. 1957)

Opening Prayer

We worship you, the God of love: You hold the world in tender embrace, You feel the hurt and sorrow we bear, You comfort the wounded heart. We thank you that in Jesus Christ, You held women in high esteem, You understood their secret heartaches, You inspired their love and trust. We praise you, the Spirit of truth: You uncover the lies and distortions, You name the violence in our hearts, You seek to transform the pain. O God, we ask that you will reveal The persistent wrong in our lives, The reality we choose to ignore, The abuse we tolerate of other people. Change our heart and our lives, we pray, That your image may grow in us And in those we love. Amen.

We Believe :

All: We believe that abusive behaviour is wrong.

- 1: that women and men should live in safety,
 - 2: that no-one should harm another person;
 - 1: that women and men should know the constancy of love,
 - 2: that no-one should blow hot and cold in relationships
 - 1: that women and men should feel secure, content,
 - 2: that no-one should have violence used against them;
 - 1: that women and men should feel free to speak out,
 - 2: that no-one should constrain or deny the truth;
 - 1: that women and men should grow towards wholeness,
 - 2: that no-one should restrict another one's growth;
- All: We believe that a change of behaviour is right,
In the name of Christ, Amen.

Hymn: StF 611 Brother, sister, let me serve you

Watch on YouTube <https://youtu.be/QO92Lw9v8PE?si=w8JdJJlq1kDrCmZ>

*Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.*

*We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.*

*I will hold the Christlight for you
in the nighttime of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.*

*I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
till we've seen this journey through.*

*When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.*

*Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.*

Bible Reading John 18:33-37

Sermon: Protest and Protect

Today, as we observe 'Christ the King Sunday' and 'Women Against Violence Sunday', our hearts turn toward the dual themes of power and justice. Each year, on November 25, we observe the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. It will be helpful to see some information about violence against women in our world. Violence against women, especially intimate partner violence (IPV), represents a significant public health crisis and a profound violation of women's human rights. Globally, nearly one-third (27%) of women aged 15–49 who have been in relationships report experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner (World Health Organization, 2021). In addition to physical and sexual abuse, psychological violence is a widespread and harmful aspect of intimate partner violence. Behaviours that seek to control, manipulate, or cause emotional harm without involving physical force. Forms of psychological abuse, such as verbal aggression, threats, intimidation, and social isolation, often cause deep and lasting damage within intimate partnerships. In light of these harsh realities, as a justice-seeking church, we are called to respond proactively and compassionately to the persistent issue of violence against women.

The Gospel reading from John 18:33-37 provides a contrast between two kingdoms: the kingdom of this world, characterised by violence, domination, and hierarchy, and the kingdom of God, marked by love, truth, and service. Keeping this in mind, I would like to reflect on two callings for our meditation.

Firstly, Christ's Kingdom calls us for a counter-culture

When Jesus stands before Pilate, he embodies a kingdom that confronts all earthly expectations. Pilate, as a representative of worldly power, views kingship through the lens of violence and control. Yet Jesus proclaims, "My kingdom is not from this world. If it were, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over" (John 18:36). In this simple yet profound statement, Jesus redefines power and kingship.

Christ's kingdom does not rely on domination, coercion, or violence. It is rooted in truth, love, and sacrificial service. While earthly rulers maintain their authority through fear and oppression, Jesus establishes His reign through humility, compassion, and justice. His kingdom operates not with swords or stirring drums but with acts of love and mercy. As the hymn "Lead On, O King Eternal" reminds us:

"For not with swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums;

With deeds of love and mercy, the heavenly kingdom comes."

Jesus' ultimate display of kingship came not through conquest but through sacrifice. When Pilate and the religious authorities wielded the weapon of violence and nailed Jesus to the cross, it was in that moment of vulnerability that he was lifted up as King. The Bible declares that through his selfless love, He draws all people to himself, demonstrating that love, not force, is the ultimate power.

This countercultural vision of God's kingdom challenges the power structures of the world, particularly those that perpetuate violence, including violence against women. In Christ's kingdom, every person, regardless of gender, is valued, protected, and empowered. It is a kingdom that calls us to reject violence, abuse, and oppression in all forms.

Jesus models a counterculture of mutual respect, love, and commitment in relationships. His kingdom rejects any misuse of power and invites us into a community where relationships thrive on the principles of justice and grace. I encourage you to reflect on this with psychologist Robert Sternberg's Triangular Theory of Love, which identifies intimacy, passion, and commitment as key to healthy relationships. When these elements are absent or twisted, abuse often takes their place.

As followers of Christ, we are called to embody this countercultural kingdom in our lives, relationships, and communities.

Secondly, Christ's Kingdom protests violence and protects the victims.

Christ's kingdom protests all forms of violence and invites us to protect the vulnerable. Throughout Jesus' life and ministry, Jesus consistently uplifted those who were marginalised, silenced, and victimised. He spoke respectfully to the Samaritan woman at the well, a social outcast. He stood beside the woman accused of adultery, offering grace when others demanded punishment. He knelt to wash his disciples' feet, redefining leadership as humble service.

In contrast, violence against women is a tragic misuse of power, rooted in systems of patriarchy that devalue women and deny their God-given dignity. Whether physical, sexual, or psychological, such violence represents a culture of control that Christ's kingdom completely rejects.

Christ's kingdom is not built on hierarchy or domination but on community, inclusion, and care. This is evident in Jesus' command: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). His kingdom calls us to resist systems of oppression and to create a world where every person, particularly the vulnerable, is treated with love and respect.

As followers of Christ the King, we are called to reflect his kingdom in our responses to violence and advocacy for justice. I believe we can respond to violence in three ways based on Christ's example. Jesus bore witness to the truth, even when it was costly. We are called to challenge societal norms that ignore or enable violence against women, speaking out against injustice wherever we see it. So, let us speak the truth.

By practising love, we can respond to violence. Love is not passive but active. It is demonstrated in deeds of mercy, advocacy for the oppressed, and support for survivors. Christ's love moves us to take concrete actions that bring healing and hope. Also, by rejecting hatred. At the root of violence lies hatred, fear, and a lack of love. By embodying Christ's love, we resist the forces that perpetuate abuse, division, and oppression.

We must create spaces within our churches where women feel safe, valued, and empowered to share their stories without fear of judgment. This includes fostering environments of nonviolence in our relationships, communities, and congregations.

As Christ's followers, we are called to embody his compassion, standing alongside those who are silenced and offering them the hope and dignity found in God's love. Let us align our lives with the values of his kingdom, working together for a world where peace, justice, and respect prevail. Amen

Hymn: StF 255 The kingdom of God is justice and joy Watch on YouTube

https://youtu.be/KXZsAM4T7iU?si=VQPu1KEAv_hEY1pQ

*The kingdom of God
is justice and joy,
for Jesus restores
what sin would destroy.
God's power and glory
in Jesus we know;
and here and hereafter
the kingdom shall grow.*

*The kingdom of God
is mercy and grace;
the captives are freed,*

*the sinners find place,
the outcast are welcomed
God's banquet to share,
and hope is awakened
in place of despair.*

*The kingdom of God
is challenge and choice:
believe the good news,
repent and rejoice!
His love for us sinners
brought Christ to his cross:*

*our crisis of judgement
for gain or for loss.*

*God's kingdom is come,
the gift and the goal;
in Jesus begun,
in heaven made whole.
The heirs of the kingdom
shall answer his call,
and all things cry glory
to God all in all.*

Prayer of intercession

Adapted by Izani Bruch, Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile. A prayer by Virginia Mónico of the Liturgy Programme, CLAI (Latin American Council of Churches)

Loving God, who is always by our side and who loves us, help us find the strength to defend peace and justice in this world through simple action in our daily lives.

Loving God,

Help us build a world without violence.

Awake in us hearts of solidarity, and open minds and ears to hear Your eternal Word and to apply it to our reality which is marked by violence.

Loving God,

Help us build a world without violence.

Sustain us during difficult moments so as not to commit acts of violence that would harm others.

Loving God,

Help us build a world without violence.

Give us the responsibility of promoting peace every day in our homes, our places of work and study and our towns.

Loving God,

Help us build a world without violence.

Remove the veil from our eyes so we may see you walking amongst the vulnerable, the displaced, the sick, the destitute, victims of discrimination and of all types of violence, because although we all walk with you, many times hand in hand, we don't always realise it.

Loving God,

Help us build a world without violence,

Stir in us the strength to cry out to you, to cry out for your justice, to speak in truth, to renounce violence and to build a world with bricks of peace and love.

Loving God,

Help us build a world without violence. A world where "love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. Faithfulness springs forth from the earth and righteousness looks down from heaven" (psalm 85:10-11).

The Lord's Prayer *Our Father, who art in heaven*

Hymn: We shall go out with hope of resurrection (June Boyce-Tillman)

Watch on YouTube <https://youtu.be/k1gJ5y7Lxxk?si=qae5MGKnePjr89Oo>

*We shall go out with hope of resurrection,
We shall go out, from strength to strength go on,
We shall go out and tell our stories boldly,
Tales of a love that will not let us go.*

*We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted,
We'll dream our dream of hurts that can be healed,
We'll weave a cloth of all the world united
Within the vision of a Christ who sets us free.*

*We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken,
We'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed,
We'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
Vibrating love alive in every heart.*

*We'll share our joy with those who are still weeping,
Chant hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
We'll leap and dance the resurrection story
Including all within the circles of our love.*

Benediction May the God of justice and compassion, who sees every wound and hears every cry, be our strength and shelter. May Christ, who uplifted the oppressed and brought healing to the broken, walk beside us as we seek peace and justice in our world. And may the Holy Spirit, who breathes life and freedom into every heart, empower us to stand as voices of courage, hope, and love, especially for those silenced by violence. May the blessings of Triune God be with us now and always. Amen.