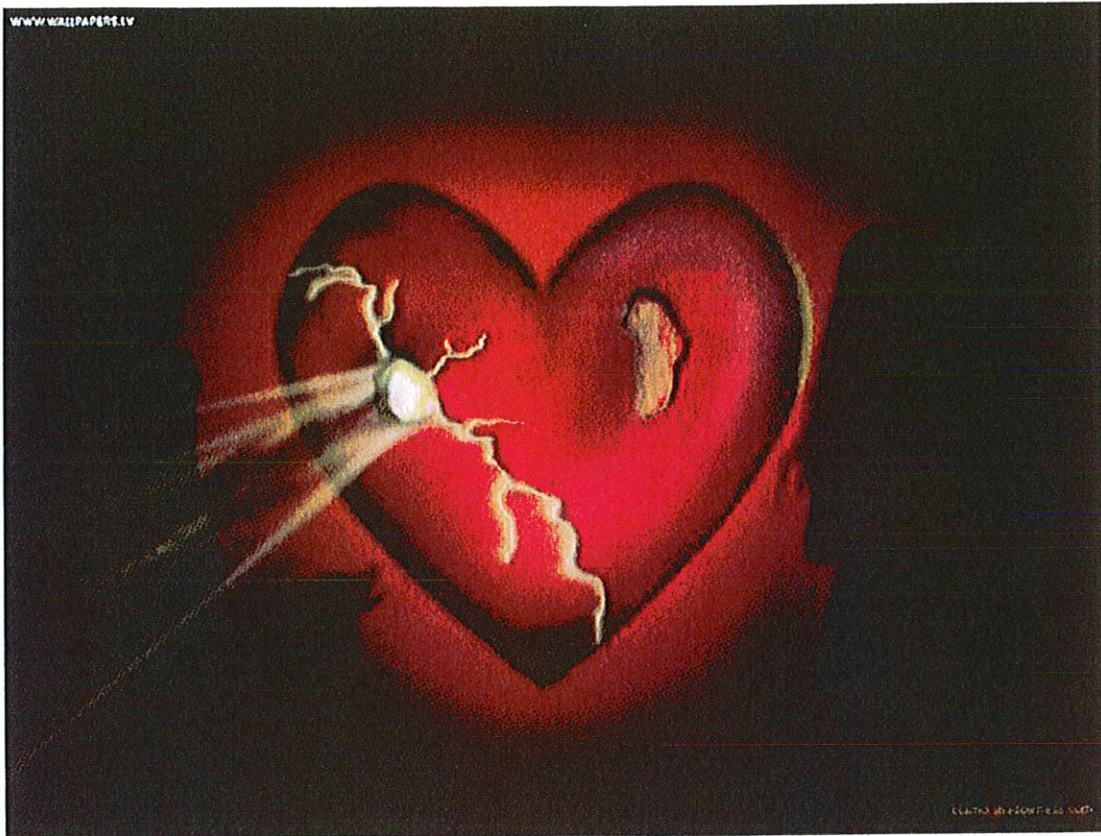


Prayer service for Healing from Clergy Sexual Abuse

The Light Shines Through the Broken Places



Please join us as we come together for a Prayer Service for Healing from Clergy Sexual Abuse. The Light Shines Through the Broken Places is a reminder that although victims are often broken the light of Christ may shine through their brokenness. The service will encourage us to find the courage to listen deeply and compassionately to those who were wounded in a place where they should have found love.

Prayer Service for Healing from Clergy Sexual Abuse
The Light Shines Through the Broken Places

Introduction - Good evening. We wish to thank you for coming here tonight. Those gathered here come from many walks of life, but we all share one thing. We have been touched in some way by clergy sexual abuse. Perhaps you or a member of your family was abused by a clergyman. Or maybe you are here to pray in solidarity and support with those who are hurting and in need of healing. Whatever your reason, we wish to respect you and your privacy, and to thank you for coming tonight.

Song – Broken Girl (video)

Rite of Cleansing – (Please stand)

As we begin, we acknowledge that much pain has happened within our churches and the world. It is a painful part of our church history.

We begin with a simple cleansing rite with holy water. I invite you to turn to the back of the Church.

Leader: As we sprinkle the entrance, let us pray for all those who have experienced the abuse which has taken place in the larger world, and for individuals and institutions who try and hide it.

All: Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy), Christ have mercy (Christ have mercy), Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy) (optional sung)

Leader: As we sprinkle the doors, and walls, let us pray for all those who have left the church, or felt excluded because of their abuse.

All: Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy), Christ have mercy (Christ have mercy), Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy)

Leader: As we sprinkle the pulpit/lectern, let us pray for all those who can no longer hear the voice of God, because of their pain and anger.

All: Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy), Christ have mercy (Christ have mercy), Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy).

Leader: As we sprinkle the altar, let us pray for all those who have sacrificed their innocence at the hands of priests or church workers.

All: Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy), Christ have mercy (Christ have mercy), Lord have mercy (Lord have mercy)

Opening Prayer - God of healing and compassion. We ask You to look upon the people gathered tonight. We stand before you with our pain, our sorrow, our anger, and frustration as we face the ugly realities of clergy sexual abuse in the church. See the fragility, brokenness, and despair of those in pain. May the anguished cries of the victims/survivors break open our hearts so that this very pain creates in

us a more compassionate heart. Give us the wisdom and energy to respond to this horrific abuse of power with humility, love and tender mercy. Give us the openness to listen deeply and the courage to ask the questions that will help guide us in supporting and walking with those who have suffered such a deep betrayal at the hands of the church. Help us to enter into a spirit of openness and healing as we pray for innocence lost.
Amen.

Psalm 142 – (Please be seated)

Leader: “I pour out my complaint before the Lord;
before him I tell my trouble.”

Victim: Who was I to tell? Who would listen to my complaint? Those I tried to tell would not listen or would not help. I was left alone to deal with the pain and the shame. I was too young to carry this burden. Years later I still feel overwhelmed, like drowning in a flood, with wave after wave of pain. Did you hear me God? Did you hear my cries of pain, my anger, my pleas, my questions?

Leader: “When my spirit grows faint within me,
It is You who know my way.
In the path where I walk
Men have hidden a snare for me.”

Victim: Are You with me God? I can’t carry this alone. Do You search and find me like the lost sheep? I need to believe You see me, even when others push me away. He set a trap for me to turn me into an object of his pleasure. He laid snares to make me believe it was my fault so that I would carry the guilt and the shame. I am still carrying it and it is not mine and yet it is so hard to put it back squarely on his shoulders and on the church’s shoulders. It belongs to them not me! Even the church officials laid snares with their lawyers and experts to try to trip me up and discount my pain. Jesus, You do know my way. You too, walked the path. You journeyed into the depths of pain, violence and shame, into death, before rising to new life. Evil did not win!

Leader: “I look to my right and see;
No one is concerned for me.
I have no refuge;
No one cares for my life.”

Victim: Even if someone does care for me I can’t see it. How do I trust? How do I believe I won’t be betrayed again? I don’t believe I am worthy of anyone’s care or concern so I push them away. You stole that from me. The lies and secrets have left me chained to isolation and loneliness and a sense of unworthiness. You stripped me of my power and most of the time I do not have the strength or courage to call out or even accept the hand being offered. In desperation I have risked reaching out and accepting the hand but they don’t know how long and hard the path is and grow impatient. They don’t understand how hard it is to keep reaching out. Too many times I have heard, “get over it”; “it happened years ago – get on with your life”; “just forgive and move on”.

Again my soul is cut deep. It is a long often spiraling journey and often leaves me bleeding at the side of the road. No one wants to “get over it” and “get on with life” more than I do. That is my sentence however, for what was done to me as a child. I did not ask for this sentence. Is there anyone who will stand with me with patience, compassion and gentleness? Who will stop at the side of the road to help

bind my wounds? At times I will appear irrational – fighting against the very thing I want or need. Can you remain solid when I can't seem to find my inner grounding? Do I have the courage to risk trusting once again?

Leader: “I cry to You, O Lord;
I say, “You are my refuge,
My portion in the land of the living.”

Victim: I long to be in the land of the living again. I long to be whole again. Huge parts of me are lost so that only part of me feels alive. I long to know joy and happiness in every part of me. The wall my heart is barricaded behind is high and strong. It is scary to come out and make You my refuge and trust You will not abandon me in the land of the living. I know how dangerous the world can be and how fragile and vulnerable I am on my own.

Fear strangles me and keeps me hiding so no one can see or know the deep pain and sorrow that is lurking around every corner. Without warning I am thrown back into the past re-living what was done to me. Flashbacks, nightmares and panic become my lot in life. They shake my confidence until I feel like there is no hope, no light, that “really living” is just a cruel joke. I struggle and have to believe though. If I ground myself in You, Lord, I believe I can and will heal. I will get through the pain and anguish and once again live life with joy and peace, free of fear and emptiness.

Leader: Listen to my cry,
for I am in desperate need;
rescue me from those who pursue me,
for they are too strong for me.
Set me free from my prison,
that I may praise Your name.

Victim: Those who pursue me are no longer on the outside. The greatest demons now live right inside of me. They are buried deep within the memory of my cells. Their constant chatter slashes at my soul. The demons I have to face and go to battle with are shame and fear and worthlessness. They don't give up easily and I can't win the battle against them on my own. That is the legacy you have left me with by violating my body and my spirit.
So God, I cry to You please help me fight the battle. Bind the wounds, give me strength and show me the way. I'm holding on, so, please don't let me go. Don't let the demons keep me imprisoned and win the battle for my soul.

Reading Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners

Reflection - Leader: We are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our world. How can we as church bring good news to those who have suffered the affliction of clergy sexual abuse? (Pause)
For the times we have ignored the pain or added to the despair of a victim ...

All: Lord forgive us

Leader: How can we help bind the wounds of the broken-hearted? (pause)
For the times we have added to the pain of those who are hurting by our words or actions or inactions ...
All: Lord forgive us

Leader: How can I help free those who feel chained and bound by the abuse they have suffered at the hands of the church? (pause)
For the times that I have intentionally or unintentionally added to the chains that bind the victim/survivor ...
All: Lord forgive us

Song – You Are Mine (video)

Prayers of Intercession

Leader: I invite you to stand as we bring our prayers and needs to our God of mercy and compassion.
For the victims who have been wounded and scarred by abuse and betrayed by the church.
We pray ...
All: Lord, bind their wounds.
Leader: For those who know the terror and pain of violence and abuse, and for those who have acted violently and abusively. We pray ...
All: Lord, bind their wounds.
Leader: For those who have carried unbearable loss, anger and sorrow. We pray ...
All: Lord, bind their wounds.
Leader: For those who came seeking healing in your church, and found more pain. We pray ...
All: Lord, bind their wounds.
Leader: For those who have lived with shame and blame, and for those who have spoken lies of shame and blame. We pray
All: Lord, bind their wounds
Leader: For those who have hidden their suffering in silence, and for those who have silenced the suffering. We pray ...
All: Lord, bind their wounds.
Leader: For bishops who have placed the welfare of the institutional church above the welfare of God's people. We pray...
All: Lord, bind their wounds.
Leader: For the grace of renewal for all those people whose Christian faith and hope have been bruised by the scandal of clergy sex abuse. We pray ...
All: Lord, bind their wounds.
Leader: In thanksgiving for all those in the helping professions and all those who have the courage and compassion to walk with victims of abuse. We pray for their strength and their healing. We pray
All: Lord, bind their wounds

Leader: God, our rock and our strength on whom we lean, help us to create an atmosphere of trust which allows the unspeakable to be said. Help us to live with our painful memories. May we support each other and be safe places for one another. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Candle Lighting (Music Instrumental – I Am Not Nothing)

Leader: We are a people who have walked in darkness, who have been bent and broken by pain and shame, yet, let us continue to seek the light. Abuse is part of our legacy and let us use the painful knowledge and experience we have gained to strive for a safer environment for all children. The Paschal candle is a symbol of Christ, our light in the darkness. We begin by lighting a candle for those who have lost the battle to their pain and are no longer with us. We light a candle for those who are not here, who could not even enter a church building. We now invite those, who wish, to receive the light that banishes darkness. I invite you to sit as the light is spread.

Song – Beautifully Broken (video)

Closing Prayer

Leader: O God of peace and consolation, source of light in our darkness, gather us together as your people, and recreate in us a renewed spirit. Rededicate us to healing those who have been abused, and help us pray for those who have abused. Bind the wounds of your world, your church, your people, that all may come to know your loving embrace. We ask this through Christ, our Lord.

All: Amen.