

**A Pilgrimage of faith from Remembrance through to Resurrection through the
songs of scripture
for use during the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence**

The MU 2026 theme for the 16 days of activism is **Together for Dignity and Safety**, which is aligned to the United Nations 2026 theme of Ensure Justice, Protect Survivors, End Impunity.

Services that focus on aspects of gender-based violence can weigh heavily on individuals. When planning your service, involve your safeguarding lead and think about having a separate area for private prayer with a couple of people available for prayer support. Make sure that those attending know that the service may be hard and alert them to support available.

This is an outline for a reflective service that you can use and amend to suit your settings. The words in **bold** are for everyone to say.

Additional resources available include a traditional Service of the Word outline, together with suggestions for intercessions, prayers and hymns, and a set of three bible-based reflections.

Welcome

Welcome to our service which is part of our 16 days of activism against gender-based violence. We draw near to Christ in whom we are all children of God through faith, and equally loved by him.

Greeting

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus,
All: **giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ.**

Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

All: **let us sing to God with thankful hearts.** cf: Colossians 3: 16, 17

Jesus Christ has made us a kingdom of priests to serve his God and Father.

All: **To God be glory and kingship for ever and ever.**

God of our days and years, we set this time apart for you.

Form us in the likeness of Christ so that our lives may glorify you.

All: **Amen.**

A Song of Humility – to **Remember** with sorrow our past failings to act

¹Come, let us return to the LORD
who has torn us and will heal us.

²God has stricken us
and will bind up our wounds.

³After two days, he will revive us,
and on the third day will raise us up, that we may live in his presence.

⁴Let us strive to know the LORD;
his appearing is as sure as the sunrise.

⁵He will come to us like the showers,
like the spring rains that water the earth.

⁶‘O Ephraim, how shall I deal with you?
How shall I deal with you, O Judah?

⁷‘Your love for me is like the morning mist,
like the dew that goes early away.

⁸ ‘Therefore, I have hewn them by the prophets,
and my judgement goes forth as the light.

⁹‘For loyalty is my desire and not sacrifice,
and the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings’.

Hosea 6: 1–6 [Common Worship: Canticle setting]

or

To use a prayerful plea in response to times of suffering as a victim or survivor of gender-based violence:

Psalm 142: A Song of Remembrance

¹ I cry aloud to the LORD;
to the LORD I make my supplication.

² I pour out my complaint before him
and tell him of my trouble.

³ When my spirit faints within me, you know my path;
in the way wherein I walk have they laid a snare for me.

⁴ I look to my right hand, and find no one who knows me;
I have no place to flee to, and no one cares for my soul.

⁵ I cry out to you, O LORD, and say:
‘You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.

⁶ ‘Listen to my cry, for I am brought very low;
save me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me.

⁷ ‘Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name;
when you have dealt bountifully with me, then shall the righteous gather around me’.

[Common Worship: The Psalter setting]

Jeremiah, the Old Testament prophet says:

‘For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD,
plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.
Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you’.

Jeremiah 29: 11–12 [NRSV]

**All: Father in heaven, along with Mothers’ Union members from across the globe,
being invited to pray, to campaign and to enable families to rise up from despair,**

**may we daily deepen our fellowship in Jesus, who shared the reproach of people and communities who are oppressed. Help us to work towards moral, social and economic justice
out into the communities we are all being called to serve in his name. Amen.**

Verses taken from Psalm 51: A Song of **Repentance**

Have mercy on me, O God, in your great goodness;
according to the abundance of your compassion blot out my offences.

For I acknowledge my faults
and my sin is ever before me.

Against you only have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
Behold, you desire truth deep within me
and shall make me understand wisdom in the depths of my heart.

Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean;
wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear of joy and gladness,
that the bones you have broken may rejoice.

Turn your face from my sins
and blot out all my misdeeds.

Make me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

Psalm 51: 1, 3–4, 7–11 [Common Worship: The Psalter setting]

An invitation to confession:

Within a dark and dysfunctional world
we are failing to offer the transforming light of Christ:
Lord, have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

Within an ambitious power-driven society alongside a despairing world
we are failing to share the transforming grace and love of God:
Christ, have mercy.

All: **Christ, have mercy.**

Within a suffering and loveless world
we are failing to be open to the healing transformation through the power of God's Holy Spirit:

Lord, have mercy.

All: **Lord, have mercy.**

**May the Father forgive us through the unconditional love offered by Jesus
and strengthen us to live in the power of the Spirit all our days. Amen.**

To pause for a time of silent reflection

‘For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise from another quarter And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?’

cf: Esther 4: 14 [RSV]

All: As Mothers’ Union members, help us to raise awareness of issues relating to gender-based violence and to offer to all affected by them the light and hope of Christ to all families during their dark times of fear and distress. Through our prayers, policy and practical action, may we be willing to share of the words of peace and hope they so long to hear. Amen.

Psalm 46: A Song of **Reverence**

- ¹God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- ²Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed,
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
- ³ Though its waters roar and be troubled,
though the mountains shake with its swelling.
- ⁴There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God,
the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.
- ⁵God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved;
God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.
- ⁶The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved;
he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
- ⁷The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.
- ⁸ Come, behold the works of the LORD,
who has made desolations in the earth.
- ⁹He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; he burns the chariot in the fire.
- ¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!
- ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge.

Psalm 46: 1–11 [KJV]

To pause for a time of silent reflection

The Psalmist declares:

‘Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress’.

Psalm 107: 6 [NRSV]

All: We express our gratitude for the work of the Mothers’ Union, which over its 150 years of service has changed thousands of lives through its transforming Projects and Programmes. We pray that these will continue to meet the needs of our communities – both locally and globally. Amen.

Verses taken from Psalm 103: A Song of **Renewal**

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and all that is within me bless his holy name.

Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits;

Who satisfies you with good things,
so that your youth is renewed like an eagle’s.

The LORD executes righteousness
and judgement for all who are oppressed.

The LORD is full of compassion and mercy,
slow to anger and of great kindness.

For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his mercy upon those who fear him.

As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he set our sins from us.

As a father has compassion on his children,
So is the LORD merciful towards those who fear him.

The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom has dominion over all.

Bless the LORD, all you his hosts,
you ministers of his who do his will.

Bless the LORD, all you works of his, in all places of his dominion;
bless the LORD, O my soul.

Psalm 103: 1–2, 5–6, 8, 11–13, 19, 21–22 [Common Worship: The Psalter setting]

To pause for a time of silent reflection

The Psalmist declares:

‘Let my cry come before you, O LORD; give me understanding according to your word’.

Psalm 119: 169 [NRSV]

All: Keep us, O Lord, in purity of heart and faithfulness to your commands: that we might be renewed within through a right relationship with you. Amen.

Verses taken from Psalm 42: A Song of **Refreshment**

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?

By day the LORD commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?

Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Psalm 42: 1–2, 8, 11 [NRSV]

To pause for a time of silent reflection

Loving Lord,
we draw near to drink deeply of your provision
and be refreshed by your water of life.

Christ our Saviour,
we approach with worship and wonder
at the spiritual thirst you endured
to give us streams of eternal blessing.

We will drink deeply from your river
that our lives may be refreshed.

We will overflow with your life,
that others may be blessed.

With thankful hearts we worship you.

All: **Amen.**

As part of a global movement – to pause for a time for **Reflection**

God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face to shine upon us,
That your way may be known upon earth,
your saving power among all nations.

Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

O let the nations rejoice and be glad,
for you will judge the peoples righteously
and govern the nations upon earth.

Psalm 67: 1–4 [Common Worship: The Psalter setting]

To pause for a time of silent reflection

Within the Gospel of Luke is declares: ‘And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them?’

Luke 18:7 [NRSV]

**All: Lord of justice and compassion, as Mothers' Union members,
focus our hearts to continue campaigning for these issues you placed upon our
hearts.**

**Give us courage to stand with people who suffer gender-based violence,
to speak out against modern slavery, and to seek justice wherever there is
oppression.**

**Help us to continue challenging injustice, to raise awareness, and to be a people
who openly welcome, respect, and value all, regardless of background, culture or
circumstance. Amen.**

Our **Requests:**

One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent;
he will set me high on a rock.

Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me!
'Come', my heart says, 'seek his face!' Your face, LORD, do I seek.

Psalms 27: 4–8

A chorus offered as quiet prayer:

'Within the veil I now would come,
into the holy place to look upon Thy face.
I see such beauty there, no other can compare,
I worship Thee, my Lord, within the veil.'

Ruth Dryden ©1978 Genesis Music / Thank you Music

To pause for a time of silent reflection

Our God will hear our voice when we whisper our prayers.
He will meet our needs from the riches of his grace.

From the seed of an idea of our founder Mary Sumner,
let us take a moment to think of the impact we now have today
with communities around the world as members of Mothers' Union.
And, as we look to the future, may we remember this invitation to prayer and action
through the lives that are touched daily – both locally and globally,
lighting the way for generations to come at all hours of the day as we now pray for one
another.

Wave of Prayer as listed in the Prayer Diary

Let us affirm our faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

**All: Though he was divine,
he did not cling to equality with God,
but made himself nothing.**

Taking the form of a slave, he was born in human likeness.

**He humbled himself and was obedient to death,
even the death of the cross.**

**Therefore God has raised him on high,
and given him the name above every name:
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
and every voice proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

cf: Philippians 2.6-11

Trusting in the compassion of God,

let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.**

Give us this day our daily bread.

**And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever.**

Amen.

We say together the Personal Prayer of our founder, Mary Sumner:

**All: All this day, O Lord,
let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken,
whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breath, or the life I live. Amen.**

And as followers of the way and the truth and the life of Jesus,

we look forward to the promise of **Resurrection**, only possible through the risen Christ:

² Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. ³The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, ⁴they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery.

⁵Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' ⁶They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. ⁷When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her'. ⁸And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. ⁹When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. ¹⁰Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one

condemned you?' ¹¹She said, 'No one, sir'. And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.

John 8: 2–11 [NRSV]

For us to remember that impunity is failure to bring perpetrators of human rights violations to justice and, as such, itself constitutes a denial of the victims' right to justice and redress.

To pause for a time of silent reflection

We express gratitude that the Bible guides and directs us by stating:

'You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live.'

cf: Deuteronomy 16: 19–20 [NRSV]

All: May we, as Mothers' Union members, 'now go out in joy and be led back in peace', being restored to new life through the growing and deepening of our Christian discipleship.

Empowered by your Holy Spirit, may we reach out with hands across the world offering prayer, policy and practical action, and being commissioned to serve others as your Easter people of light and hope; out into our bleak and often despairing Good Friday world. Amen.

A Closing Blessing:

Now may the blessing of God the Father,
the world who made from one every nation that occupies the earth;

of God the Son who bought us for God
from every tribe and language and people and nation;
and of God the Spirit who brings us together in unity,
be with us and remain with us always.

cf: Acts 17; 26; Revelation 5: 9

All: Amen.

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