

A RESOURCE FOR THE JOURNEY OF HEALING
FOLLOWING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR ABUSE BY A CHURCH WORKER

notes for A Service of Thanksgiving and Prayer

1. Following an occasion of sexual misconduct or abuse by a church worker, the pastoral needs are many and varied. The stages of the journey from “victim” to “survivor” and beyond must be recognised, and must not be hurried. Pastoral and liturgical resources appropriate to each stage must be used with sensitivity and discretion, lest the damage done by the initial offence be compounded. For example, in the early stages of the survivor’s journey, feelings of hurt, anger, and shock may well need recognition and expression. In time, specific prayer for healing may be helpful. The liturgy provided here does not attempt to meet these needs, but relates to a later stage of the journey. In *A Prayer Book for Australia*, additional resources which may be helpful can be found in prayers 26-28 on pages 209-210, and in the blessing on page 221.
2. This liturgy should not be used too soon. The focus of this Order is on thanksgiving for support and healing already received by the survivor of misconduct or abuse, and on the survivor’s continuing trust in God. It may be used to mark a stage of closure or transition in the journey of healing. It is not designed as a specific service of prayer for healing, nor for the early stages of recovery from misconduct or abuse.
3. This liturgy is not designed for large, public occasions. It is intended for a small group of people limited to those chosen by and/or acceptable to the survivor. Such a group might include close family, supportive friends, supportive clergy or other advocates who may have been part of the survivor’s journey. The service may be led by an ordained minister or by a lay person, acceptable to the survivor. It is not appropriate for the offender to be present at this service.
4. This liturgy is designed to be used if and when the survivor is ready to participate in it. It should be celebrated in a place where the survivor is comfortable in praying. This need not be a church building. In planning this service, there should be thorough consultation between the person who will lead the service and the survivor and her or his supporters, so that all the words and actions of the service will be acceptable. The words provided should be adapted to the particular circumstances of the survivor and her/his community.
5. Touch, including the the laying on of hands for blessing and/or anointing with oil, should only be used at the explicit request of the survivor.
6. In this Order, *N* stands for the names of the survivor and her or his family, friends and support people. *M* stands for the name of the offender. Using the names of the people concerned is an important part of the prayer.

7. Space and silence are important in the celebration of this liturgy. It should not be rushed.
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This resource is published by the Liturgy Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia to be available in dioceses for 'trial use' under Section 4 of the Constitution. Responses are most welcome, especially given the sensitive nature of the situations to which these resources seek to respond. The should be made to the Revd Dr Charles Sherlock, Executive Secretary, c/o General Synod Office, PO Box Q190, QVB Post Office NSW 1230 or research@anglican.org.au.

A SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER
FOR THE JOURNEY OF HEALING
FOLLOWING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR ABUSE BY A CHURCH WORKER

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide under the shadow of the Almighty,
They will say to the Lord, "You are my refuge and my stronghold,
my God in whom I trust."

(Psalm 91.1-2)

The leader may introduce the purpose of the service.

Let us pray.

O God, we come to you in sorrow and in hope.
Take pity on our sadness when trust is betrayed.
Take pity on our sorrow at the harm done
to *N* and *her* family through the actions of *M*.
Take pity on the Church when its ministers fall short of their high calling.
Send your forgiveness, we pray,
through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
May forgiveness bear fruit in changed lives
and in a Church that shines with integrity, compassion and justice.
We pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

A reading from Matthew 15.29-31, or another suitable reading.

Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, and he went up the mountain, where he sat down. Great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the maimed, the blind, the mute, and many others. They put them at his feet, and he cured them, so that the crowd was amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.

May your word live in us,
and bear much fruit to your glory.

[If N. wishes, s/he may be anointed with oil, and/or receive the laying on of hands. The minister says these or similar words

Laying hands on you in the name of Jesus Christ,
we pray for healing.

God, the source of life and health,
grant you release from pain,
refreshment of spirit,
and wholeness in body and mind. **Amen.]**

Let us pray.

O God, giver of every good and perfect gift,
we praise you for your kindness and mercy shown to *N* [and *her* family].
Lord our God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Thank you for the courage and honesty *N* has shown.
Thank you for strengthening *her* for the journey of recovery.
Lord our God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Thank you for giving *her* comfort and support
through *her* friends and fellow Christians,
[especially *names*].
Lord our God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Thank you for caring for *her* through your Church's ministers,
[especially *names*].
Lord our God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Thank you for giving wisdom to *her* advisors,
[especially *names*],
[and understanding to *her* husband, *N*.]
Lord our God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Now we pray, help *N* to go forward in *her* journey of healing.
Take away all pain and fear, and give *her* peace.
Lord, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Walk with *her* in safety and preserve *her* from all evil.
Renew *her* family life and sustain *her* in the Church.
Pour out your Spirit upon *her* in blessing and strength.
Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

Have mercy on your servant, *M*.

Give *him* grace to accept the help *he* needs.

Give wisdom and skill to those who offer *him* their care.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

In the life of the Church, bless our relationships with integrity.

Give grace to [N and all] our bishops as they lead and teach us.

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

A prayer for N. to say

Loving God,

I thank you for all your care for me.

I commit *M* also to your care.

I commit myself to the future you have prepared for me.

Take all that has happened to me,

and, as you continue to heal me,

show me new paths of faith and service.

Make your peace fill my mind,

your forgiveness grow in my heart,

your healing renew my body,

your wisdom shine in my life,

through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are confident to say:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

Grace and peace from the Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Those present exchange a sign of Christ's peace.

The blessing of the living God,
holy eternal Majesty,
holy incarnate Word,
holy abiding Spirit,
be upon us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

Acknowledgements

Scripture passages are based on the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. Adaptations have been made where appropriate for liturgical use.

A LITANY
FOR USE FOLLOWING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR ABUSE
BY A CHURCH WORKER OR IN A CHURCH COMMUNITY

Notes

1. Following the disclosure of sexual misconduct or abuse by a church worker, not only the individual offended against, but also the communities of the survivor and the offender have pastoral needs which may call for appropriate liturgical resources. For example, in the early stages of the community's journey, feelings of hurt, anger, and shock must be recognised and given expression. The community's dependence on God for present help and future healing needs to be affirmed. This litany is intended for use at this stage. It is for the church community rather than for an individual. In *A Prayer Book for Australia*, additional resources which may be helpful can be found in prayers 26-28 on pages 209-210, and in the blessing on page 221.
2. This litany is intended for use in a formal setting, either as part of a larger liturgical action or as an occasional prayer at a gathering such as a synod or other church meeting.

Eternal Majesty, Ruler of all things,
have mercy on us.

Living Word, Light in our darkness,
have mercy on us.

Holy Wisdom, Teacher of truth,
have mercy on us.

Holy and blessed Trinity, one God,
have mercy on us.

In these days of anger and unanswered questions,
have mercy on us.

In the pain of broken trust and shattered lives,
have mercy on us.

In our compassion for all who are suffering,
have mercy on us.

In our grief for all that has been lost,
have mercy on us.

From the abuse of power
and exploitation in relationships,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From being too slow to recognise sin
and the damage it does,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From the habits of manipulation and co-ercion
that distort our common life,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From the paralysis of denial and fear,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From being too quick to attribute blame
or demand forgiveness,
Good Lord, deliver us.

From believing ourselves safe
through anything other than your grace,
Good Lord, deliver us.

For survivors of sexual misconduct and abuse
seeking courage and healing,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For counsellors and advisors
listening and guiding,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For leaders of the church
discerning how best to care for individuals and communities,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For church and community members
offering compassion and support,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For those who have harmed others
by their actions or their inaction,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who live with painful memories,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For all who are searching for healing and hope,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For courage to resist demonising and dehumanising others,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For wisdom in working for a future of justice and integrity,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For honesty and accountability in all our relationships,
Lord, hear our prayer.

For grace to change and be changed as you forgive us,
Lord, hear our prayer.

And now as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are confident to pray:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

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