



WORSHIP

Reflection

What can we do about preventing family violence? Is there hope?

Isaiah 2:1-5

1 The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

2 In days to come

the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

3 Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 He shall judge between the nations
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.

5 O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!

[NRSV, Updated Edition © 2021]

God gave Isaiah a vision of hope. He saw a hope-filled vision of the consummation of God's kingdom. The vision also comes to us from the future as we long to shape the days in which we are living here and now. The vision can inspire us and call us to act now. We are reminded that hope is not wishful thinking but requires action to bring about the change we want to see. This lesson from Isaiah reminds us of some practical actions for hope.

People were coming to learn, to be taught through God's Word and ways, because this journey needs the person's entire life to live out God's ways of love and peace. Transformation is needed. It happens when one realises that weapons of violence can be reshaped for peaceful purposes: (Isaiah 2:4)

- They shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
- and their spears into pruning hooks,
- nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
- neither shall they learn war any more.

Many scholars think that the kingdom described in this text was inaugurated when Jesus began his mission work. Jesus made this declaration in Mark 1:15: "... the time is fulfilled and the kingdom is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel ...". What we see in the gospels is the dramatic entrance of God's kingdom into the world through the preaching, teaching, healing mission and work of Jesus. Before Jesus' ascension, he empowered his Church and gave them the authority to carry out his mission work. And the work of God's kingdom continues today, through you and me.

Should the elevation of teaching of God's Word help people find deep spiritual understanding? I think it should. We encourage the worship, teaching and mission of God in our parishes and local communities when we give it a high priority, allowing it to transform a society from being a place where lives are damaged by violence and by the fear of speaking out, into a peaceful and loving society where freedom and respect are acceptable and appreciated.

Family (or domestic) violence is a community issue and requires the Church's intervention to prevent it. I list here only a few practical ideas – and I do believe a small step goes a long way to stopping the family violence cycle and the cumulative harm it causes through generations of people:

- Allow yourself to listen, be prepared to act, and don't ignore the seriousness of situations where family harm and abuse are involved.
- Connect and work collaboratively with other parishes, denominations and community/government organisations in your local areas ie: Police, Oranga Tamariki, Health Boards, Community Probation, Shine, your regional Presbyterian Support etc. Pray together, open lines of communication, practice risk assessment, and share resources.
- Enhance the training of leaders, women, men, youth/rangatahi and children to increase their awareness of healthy and unhealthy relationships, how to role model healthy and respectful relationships, how to stay safe, and how to improve their understanding of the nature and causes of family violence.
- Revisit your policies and ensure that leaders and those in the pews are made aware of them.

Sisters, brothers and children in Christ: our God is a God who does not give up on creation. Our God is on the move, and we are called to be 'on an adventure of hope' with God. May the first Sunday of Advent be an opportunity for our Church to become a prophetic voice of hope in our society where family violence has become a big problem. Be bold in your teachings and worship, be faithful in your mission and let the light of hope shine in your community.

Call to worship

[based on Romans 13:11-14]

Wake up! for our salvation is near;
the night is gone, the day is dawning;
lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light.
We must live as peacemakers and pray constantly for justice.
Let us come and worship God with clean and pure hearts;
open our eyes to the signs of God's presence around us.
Lift up our songs of praise and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ,
the true light of Hope;
we must clothe ourselves with Christ
and walk with the Spirit in the path of his light!



Prayer

Tatou tatalo – Kia inoi tatou – let us pray.

We gather today to remember those who are affected by violence and abuse and to express our concerns.

Loving God, there are women, children and men who live in fear of violence right in their own homes. There are people who are living under pressure, due to the impact of violence and abuse on their mental, physical and spiritual health.

God of compassion, may your perfect love drive out all fear and anxiety. In your mercy, create opportunities for these women, children and men to share their pain, to reveal their struggles, and to expose the hurtful actions of others.

We ask, O God, that you would free all those who are living with abuse from their sufferings – whether it be physical, mental or spiritual – so that they may walk in hope and enjoy a life filled with the freedom of your blessings.

Lord, we pray for those who have been abused within our churches, our schools, our workplaces and in our wider communities across Aotearoa. In the midst of their distressing circumstances, give them courage to speak out.

Help us to deeply hear and act as we seek you, even though violence is often embedded in churches, homes, work, schools, and in many other places within this land of Aotearoa. Teach us to be aware of the many different ways in which violence is carried out against women, children and vulnerable people, in all sorts of ways, in our communities and in our country.

May your Spirit motivate us to take up the challenge to not look away. Open our eyes to see and take note of our concerns about family violence. Empower each of us to know the urgency of your call to address the many needs that surround us. Give us the fortitude to respond to the work before us according to your will.

Loving God, fill us with courage to share our faith, to show compassion for the abused, and give us an openness that empowers people to think about and ponder on these serious issues. May your caring nature watch over those who are violated and those who endeavor to care for these hurting people. Gracious God, we claim your love, your healing and the empowering of your church here on earth. We pray for communities and spaces where people can feel safe. Strengthen us, Almighty God, as we continue to dismantle systems that perpetuate violence.

We pray for the families and friends who are grieving the loss of their loved ones taken by violence. God of peace, we know you are with the broken-hearted, and you save those who are crushed in their spirit. May the friends and families of these victims know your peace, and find comfort and hope in you.

Fill us with your Holy Spirit so that we can create your culture of compassion, prioritise your teachings, and increase the health and safety of loving communities at this time and in this place. Make us more aware, and enable us to act on our awareness. Give us vision to see hope and to act in more loving ways as we journey forward. Holy Spirit, work in each of us so that we can help our churches be places of care, safety, justice, truth and hope for everyone. Amen.



Prayer of commitment

L: I will speak out for those who have no voices;
R: I will stand up for the rights of all the oppressed;
L: I will speak truth and justice;
R: I'll defend the poor and the needy;
All: We will lift up the weak in Jesus' name.

L: I will speak out for those who have no choices;
R: I will cry out for those who live without love;
L: I will show God's compassion
R: to the crushed and the broken in spirit;
All: We will lift up the weak in Jesus' name.

[Adapted from a song written by Dave Bankhead, Ray Goudie, Sue Rinaldi and Steve Bassett.]

Music suggestions

May the God of hope go with us

Words by Alvin Schutmaat, Ann Mitchell.

Tune: ARGENTINA (Traditional), Meter: 1.1.1.1.1.1.1.1 with refrain

Print music: <https://my.hymnary.org/song/446/song-of-hope?lyricSize=5&unit=11&header=auto&instrument=full&capo=None&nPages=2&>

Copyright: Public Domain

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.
Praying, let us work for peace;
singing, share our joy with all;
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed.
Praying, let us work for peace;
singing, share our joy with all;
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

We are marching in the light of God (S/Music)

Trad trans Anders Nyberg, Andrew Maries.

Tune: Siyahamba

© 1984, Peace of Music Publishing AB

Come in our dark time when spirits are desolate

Text: Shirley Erena Murray.

Meter: 12.11.12.11. Tune: LAURA

Text Words © 2011 Hope Publishing Company

We wait in hope for hope to come

Tune: O Waly Waly.

Words © 2013 Gareth Hill.

As we your people gather

Text: Howard Maple.

Meter: 7.6.7.6.D

Suggested tunes: (WOV 385) AURELIA

Words © 2015 Hope Publishing Company



YouTube song



Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7U2jiFAPTkw>

This song is about the protests against violence towards women in Iran [and around the world]. The song is titled: *Zan, Zendegi, Azadi* (which means Women – Life – Freedom) and it has been written by the Marsh Family to the tune of *Waltzing Matilda*. The voice of Aotearoa New Zealand joins with the voices of people all around the world calling for an end to violence towards women and children.

Benedictions

Open our eyes and our hearts
so that we may be able to see your image in everyone we meet.
Help us to beat our swords into ploughshares
and our spears into pruning hooks,
so that we may be able to live in peace and do justice.
And may we know violence no more,
as we strive to walk in the light of hope. Amen.

God of mercy and compassion,
of peace and reconciliation,
pour your blessing upon your church.
Let violence be turned into love, fear to trust,
despair to hope, oppression to freedom,
that violent encounters may be replaced by loving embraces,
and peace and justice can be experienced by everyone. Amen.

Rev Hana Popea, PCANZ White Ribbon Ambassador

created this reflection, prayers, call to worship and benedictions for the Church for White Ribbon 2022. She also selected the music suggestions for use on White Ribbon Sunday, 27 November (note, for copyright reasons not all music can be provided here, however your church can access via your own parish church [copyright licence](#)).

See further White Ribbon resources here on the PCANZ White Ribbon 2022 website
<https://www.presbyterian.org.nz/speaking-out/pcanz-white-ribbon/white-ribbon-2022>

