

Lament: Responding to Sexual Abuse

Worship Resources compiled by [Worship Ministries of the CRCNA](#)

From *The Worship Sourcebook*

- Litanies of Lament (Pages 111-114)
- Prayers of Lament (Pages 229-232)

From *Lift Up Your Hearts -Songs of Lament and Professions of Faith in the Dark*

Please note that you will need to gauge the pastoral context and where people are in their own process of lament in choosing from the following songs.

- #332 As The Deer Pants for the Water (Psalm 42, 43)
- #339 He Knows My Name
- #343 Blessed Be Your Name (a little slower than normal)
- #348 Great Is Thy Faithfulness
- #410 How Long Will You Forget Me, Lord (Psalm 13)
- #414 All Will Be Well
- #422 Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior
- #424 Jesus, Lover of My Soul
- #428 O Lord, Be My Refuge (Psalm 11)
- #429 Don't Be Afraid
- #430 You Are Mine
- #431 The Lord is My Light (Psalm 27), sung as a lament with the spoken prayer
- #433 In God Alone w/ Psalm 62
- #434 Affirmation: My Only Comfort
- #446 We Cannot Measure How You Heal
- #451 When Peace Like a River
- #614 Come, You Disconsolate
- #616 As A Deer in Want of Water (Psalm 42, 43)
- #649 I Call to You, My Rock (Psalm 28)
- #652 I Lift My Eyes Up (Psalm 121)
- #658 Bring Peace to Earth Again
- #660 Jesus, Draw Me Ever Nearer
- #664 I Need Your Help, O Lord My God (Psalm 55)
- #666 I Will Give You Rest (Matthew 11:28-29)

- #707 Goodness is Stronger than Evil
- #903 O Lord, Hear My Prayer

Other Musical Resources

These have not been evaluated musically or theologically...

Not congregational but the victims may relate to this song:

[“Moved by Mercy”](#) by Matthew West

Always Will Be	Aaron Shust	contemporary	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=47fn6zXmol8	http://www.worshipitogether.com/songs/always-will-be-aaron-shust
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My God, My God	Psalm Project	contemporary remake	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaJ-moljATU&index=3&list=RDUihzbujmr1k	https://thepsalmproject.nl/wp-content/themes/TPP/sheets/unplugged/Psalm%2022%20D%20piano%20score%20NL.pdf
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How Long?	Lamentations -Bifrost Arts	folk	https://bifroststarts.music.bandcamp.com/album/lamentations	sheet music available with album download
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Our Song in the Night	Lamentations -Bifrost Arts	folk	https://bifroststarts.music.bandcamp.com/album/lamentations	sheet music available with album download
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Song for Rachel	Sandra McCracken	contemporary/folk	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFZy-cT8xfM	http://www.sandramccracken.com/godshighway/
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We Stand Together	March Alan Schoolmeesters, DeMarcus Green	contemporary	https://commonhymnal.com/common-hymnal/we-stand-together	https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55b6ea29e4b03ad201a97dad/t/5863510fff7c501ec52ff907/1482903824025/WE+STAND+TOGETHER.pdf
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We Lay Our Broken World	Anna Briggs/Kenneth G. Finally	Iona/Wild Goose	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0D5pod-Xb0	http://tendernessmusic.com/tracks/we-lay-our-broken-world-in-sorrow-at-your-feet
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Other Hymns of Lament and Healing

“God Weeps” FWS 2048

“God! When Human Bonds Are Broken” WOV 735

“Healer of Our Every Ill” FWS 2213; SNC 205, WOV 738

“How Long, O Lord” (Ps. 13) FWS 2209,

“In All Our Grief” WOV 739

“In Labor All Creation Groans” SNC 270

“Open Our Eyes” SNC 263

“Out of the Depths (Ps. 130:1) FWS 2136

“The Servant Song” FWS 2222; SNC 277

“There Is a Balm in Gilead” WOV 737

“We Cannot Measure How You Heal” SNC 69

“Who Can Sound the Depths of Sorrow” SNC 63

Sources

- FWS The Faith We Sing (Abingdon, 2001; 1-800-672-1789)
- SNC Sing! A New Creation (CRC Publications, 2001; 1-800-333-8300).

Additional Music Ideas You might consider other hymns with themes of healing, and justice. These are some suggestions from the New Century Hymnal (NCH):

“I Was There To Hear Your Borne Cry” (NCH #351)

“Help Us Accept Each Other” (NCH #388)

“My Life Flows On In Endless Song” (NCH #476)

“Amazing Grace” (NCH #547)

“Out Of The Depths, O God, We Call” (NCH #554)

“Lead Us From Death To Life” (NCH #581) – particularly the chorus “Let Justice Flow
Like Streams” (NCH #588)

**Additional music you might consider for choir, band, teaching the congregation, or
simply for listening:**

“God Is Our Refuge And Strength” by Andra Moran

<https://www.etsy.com/shop/AMMOMusic>

“Light Of Heaven” by Andra Moran

http://www.andramoran.com/track/8132/light-ofheaven?feature_id=59929

“Here In This Place” by Christopher Grundy

<http://sites.fastspring.com/christophergrundy/product/catalog>

“From My Hands” by Christopher Grundy (particularly the second verse)

<http://www.christophergrundy.com/recordings/> On the CD “In This Life”

“Welcome To This Circle” by The River’s Voice <http://www.riversvoice.com/shop.php>

“God Who Remembers (Psalm 136)” by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan

<http://www.psalmmimmersion.com/#!/god-who-remembers/c23dt>

“Move (Psalm 109)” by Richard Bruxvoort Colligan

<http://www.psalmmimmersion.com/#!/move/cd4h38>

“I Am Welcome” by Bryan Sirchio

The full song whose chorus is in the included liturgy can be found on the “Fully Alive”
album at <http://sirchio.com/cds/f/c/1342>

“Stand With You” by Bryan Sirchio <http://sirchio.com/songs/f/c/196>

Other Worship Resources

From

<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/march-2002/give-us-peace-beyond-our-fear-resources-dealing-pain-domestic-violence>

Prayer for a Victim or Survivor of Crime

Lord God of liberation,

you saw your people as slaves in Egypt

and delivered them from captivity.

You see works of violence and weep.

Relieve the suffering of [name].

Grant peace of mind and soul

and a renewed faith in your protection and care.

Protect us all from the violence of others.

Keep us safe from the weapons of hate,

and restore us to tranquility and peace.

At Your Feet

Artwork from Art Explosion (© 1998, Nova Development Corporation, 23801 Calabasas Road, Suite 2005, Calabasas, CA 91302-1547, 1-818-591-9600). Used by permission.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

—Adapted from Book of Blessings, © 1988, United States Catholic Conference, Inc., Washington, D.C. 202-541-3000. www.usccb.org. Used with permission. All rights reserved.

Prayer of Dedication

Leader: We offer ourselves to you, O God, our Creator.

All: We offer our hands.

Leader: Use healing touch to comfort sisters, brothers, and children who are afraid.

All: We offer our eyes and ears.

Leader: May we see and hear the signs and stories of violence, so that all may have someone with them in their pain and confusion.

All: We offer our hearts and our tears as their hurt and sorrow echo within us.

Leader: May we be healed as we embrace each other.

All: We offer our anger.

Leader: Make it a passion for justice.

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror overwhelms me.
And I say, "O that I had wings like a dove!
I would fly away and be at rest; truly I would flee far away;
I would lodge in the wilderness;
I would hurry to find a shelter for myself from the raging wind and tempest."

It is not enemies who taunt me—I could bear that;
it is not adversaries who deal insolently with me—
I could hide from them.
But it is you, *my equal, my companion, my familiar friend*,
with whom I kept pleasant company;
we walked in the house of God with the throng.

My companion laid hands on a friend and violated a covenant with me
with speech smoother than butter, but with a heart set on war;
with words that were softer than oil, but in fact were drawn swords.
-Psalm 22:1-2 and Psalm 55:4-8, 12-14, 20-21 adapt

This worship service: <http://www.brethren.org/childprotection/documents/worship-resources.pdf>

Prayer from <http://www.umi.org/worshipresources> -will need to be adapted

Bidding Prayer Release

Holy and Almighty God, you have counted the hairs on our heads, and you watch over the lowliest sparrow. Hear now our prayers for all those within the church affected by sexual misconduct, abuse, or harassment.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Heal all children everywhere who have been abused or otherwise harmed by those entrusted with their spiritual care. Bring them justice and restore their innocence.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Bind up the wounds of adults who have been betrayed and abused by those in authority in the church, be they lay or clergy. Grant them hope and new life.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Make your judgement known to those who have committed misconduct, abuse or harassment. Enable them to grasp the depth of the injuries they have caused, and lead them to repentance and amendment of life.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Grant the congregations of The United Methodist Church--and of every denomination--the wisdom, the compassion, and the courage necessary to confront those who abuse; to comfort and support those who have experienced abuse, and to strive always for the safety of your children.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Empower bishops, superintendents, Boards of Ordained Ministry and other leaders within Annual Conferences and the General Church to hold all Christian leaders accountable to their holy calling, and to respond with grace and generosity to those who have been wounded by the church.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Sustain and inspire the leaders and participants in the "do No Harm" conference, that they grow in knowledge, discernment, and skill as they seek to be ever more faithful to your command to care for the least of these.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Pour out your Holy Spirit on the Response Teams across our denomination, who are charged with offering our justice, your grace, and your healing mercies in the midst of the devastation of sexual misconduct, abuse, and harassment. Enable them to be your ambassadors, offering hope and new life in the midst of pain and anguish.

Gracious God, hear the prayers of your children.

Guard our hearts, our minds, and our bodies, Almighty God, that we may be your faithful servants, doing good and not harm to all your children, and that every congregation can become a safe sanctuary. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. AMEN.

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From http://dovesnest.net/sites/default/files/Affirmation_of_faith.pdf

Affirmation of Faith

by Carolyn Holderread Heggen

Group 1: We believe that beyond the violence,

Group 2: there can be love;

Group 1: That beyond the despair,

Group 2: there can be hope;

Group 1: That beyond the torment,

Group 2: we will find rest;

Group 1: That beyond our brokenness,

Group 2: there can be healing;

Group 1: That beyond our agony,

Group 2: we will find joy.

All: Oh, God, transform our disbelief and gently carry us from darkness to light.

-From Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches by Carolyn Holderread Heggen. Copyright © 1993 by Herald Press, Scottsdale PA 15683. Used by permission.

From http://dovesnest.net/sites/default/files/Prayer_for_survivors_of_abuse.pdf

Prayer for Survivors of Abuse

by Carol Penner

Did I see you?

When I was hungry you broke bread with me.

When I was sick you sat by my bedside.

When I was in prison, you petitioned for my release.

When I was sexually assaulted, you listened to my pain.

When I was afraid to be alone, you stayed with me.

When I felt guilty and ashamed, you told me it was not my fault.

When I had to go to court, you went with me.

When I was filled with anger and hatred, you did not reject me.

When I was filled with sorrow and hopelessness, you held my hand.

When I kept my story secret for years, you understood why.

When I called on God for help, you came and helped me

From:

<http://www.wcucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Break-The-Silence-Sunday-16-Worship-Resources.pdf> more parts of this service may be helpful (it also includes some music) but I thought this prayer and commitment was especially so:

Holy One, you filled the world with your love, and your spirit, breathing into each of us the breath of life. You named each of us, and claimed each of us as your own. But some of us, some of your beloved children have been hurt, deep in their souls. They have experienced great violation through rape, abuse, incest, and assault. They come, asking to be heard. They come, asking us to stand with them and work for justice. They come, needing to be healed by your unending love. We pray for that healing this day, O God. We pray for your love and grace to be poured out abundantly on all those who have been hurt by rape and sexual assault – the survivors, and all those that love them. May your healing presence guide each of them in their path towards wholeness, and hope. And may your courageous spirit fill the rest of us this day. Give us the strength to speak out, to be bold, to trust in you. Give us the words we need to comfort those who struggle, and the commitment we need to work tirelessly for the wholeness of all your people. These, and all our prayers, we pray with the words that Jesus taught his first disciples saying together...

Committing Ourselves To Change

In the presence of one another, we pledge ourselves to ending the violence of rape and sexual assault, working towards a vision of a healed community where all can live in dignity and peace.

We acknowledge the reality of rape and sexual violence, a plague that brings hopelessness and fear to our sisters and brothers.

We stand in solidarity with those who have been victims. We promise to be open to their stories, and with the grace of God, to listen without judgment.

We know the promise of wholeness, and hope that Jesus came to bring to the world.

We affirm the promise of God's love for all the survivors in our world, those whose stories are known to us, and those whose stories are still shrouded in silence and fear.

We know that we have not done enough, that we have been too silent when those around us have been struggling.

We look forward with hope, trusting in God's ability to give us strength to listen with courage, and to be silent no longer.

We believe that the future depends on us.

We believe that there is something we can, and must do, as people of the Good News, and as members of one human family to end the violence of rape and sexual assault.

We recognize that we cannot do this alone. We know we must learn to depend on each other, and on God, in the struggle to end sexual violence, and create justice.

Gracious God, help us to be aware of your loving disruption of our lives. Give us the courage to work with you, and with each other, to transform our hurting world. Empower us with your Spirit that we might break the silence of sexual violence. Help us listen, and move together from fear and pain towards your realm of peace and justice. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

A Prayer for Peace After Sexual Assault

by Julia Park Rodrigues

From Women's Uncommon Prayers Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated Edited by Elizabeth Rankin Geitz, Marjorie A Burke & Ann Smith et al Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg, PA, 2000

This is one survivor's prayer, and it moves through anger towards asking God to forgive their offender. This is not the path all survivors take, or need to. Coming to forgiveness is different for all survivors. This prayer is one approach, not the only approach.

Loving God, I know that you hold me in the palm of your hand.

I know it is so.

But why, O Lord, why?

I rage at this sin against me, at this defilement of my body,
this assault on my peace of mind.

I mourn my lost serenity, security, confidence;

I mourn the loss of my ease and open nature.

I hate what his assault has done to me.

I feel that my body and soul may never be the same.

What has been forced upon me may never be forgotten.

But send your healing upon me like cool rain.
Soothe my spirit with the balm of your tender love.
Help me to feel secure again, as safe as ever within the shelter of the Lord.

Let my anger not turn inward to self-loathing,
but outward for action and purpose: to help others like me,
to bring hope to those whose faith is not so strong.
Help me, with your grace, to move beyond victim, to call myself survivor instead.

May you forgive this man's offense against me,
and grant me the peace and serenity
of a mind and body made whole again.
Amen.

From

<http://www.usccb.org/prayer-and-worship/prayers-and-devotions/prayers/prayer-for-healing-victims-of-abuse.cfm>

Prayer For Healing Victims Of Abuse

God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,
soothe restless hearts with hope,

steady shaken spirits with faith:

Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,

heal your people's wounds

and transform our brokenness.

Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,

so that we may act with justice

and find peace in you.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

From <http://nouwen-network.com/sexualabuse.html>

A Prayer for Healing for Victims and Survivors of Abuse

Praise to you, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

source of all consolation and hope.

By your Son's dying and rising He remains our light in every darkness,

our strength in every weakness.

Be the refuge and guardian of all who suffer from abuse and violence.

Comfort them and send healing for their wounds of body, soul and spirit.

Rescue them from bitterness and shame

and refresh them with your love.

Heal the brokenness in all victims of abuse

and revive the spirits of all who lament this sin.

Help us to follow Jesus in drawing good from evil, life from death.

Make us one with you in your love for justice

as we deepen our respect for the dignity of every human life.

Giver of peace, make us one in celebrating your praise,
both now and for ever. Amen.

+ John F. Kinney, Bishop of Saint Cloud, MN

<http://waterloocatholics.org/prayers-for-healing>

Renew Prayer for Healing

Loving God and Father,
in the light of so much suffering
we come before you as your hurting people
in need of healing.
Knowing we are a Church of saints and sinners,
we acknowledge our own sinfulness
and ask forgiveness for the times we have injured or neglected others.
Knowing we are called to holiness,
we trust you to lead us on our journey to be a renewed Church,
for which you all things are possible.
Christ Jesus, walk among us.
Embrace us with your healing. Grace us to seek reconciliation.
Empower us to love as you love,
because healing, reconciliation and love
are beyond our human capacity alone.
Spirit of God, seize our hearts.
Awaken us to gratitude and newness of life. Amen.

Renew International

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A Prayer of Healing
God of endless love,
ever caring, ever strong,
always present, always just:
You gave your only Son
to save us by the blood of his cross.

Gentle Jesus, shepherd of peace,
join to your own suffering
the pain of all who have been hurt
in body, mind, and spirit
by those who betrayed the trust placed in them.

Hear our cries as we agonize
over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
Breathe wisdom into our prayers,

soothe restless hearts with hope,
steady shaken spirits with faith:
Show us the way to justice and wholeness,
enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Holy Spirit, comforter of hearts,
heal your people's wounds
and transform our brokenness.
Grant us courage and wisdom, humility and grace,
so that we may act with justice
and find peace in you.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

United States Conference of Bishops

At some point...way down the road... it may be important for the victims to experience some sort of tangible liturgical ritual to reaffirm their relationship with Christ and his body, the church. I think this could be done as a worship service (public) but also as a private (family/supporters) service. Here is one service that uses the anointing with oil:
http://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/worship-ideas_abuse.pdf

Helpful Reflections

From the Catholic Church

Effects on Faith and Spirituality

We are concerned about the effects of sexual abuse on the overall development of abused children and adult survivors; as pastors, we are particularly concerned about spiritual development and religious practice. Children, for instance, usually base their image of God—who God is and how God acts—on the adults they meet in their families and parishes. When the person who abuses them sexually is also their parent or another trusted adult, children may find it difficult to imagine, much less develop, a relationship with a loving God. This difficulty may be intensified if the abuser is perceived as active in the Church. Children may feel angry at God and act with hostility toward those who are God's ministers. Some may be terrified of God, because of distorted images of God embedded in their early experiences. Many are unable to pray, and they reject their religious faith.

Survivors of sexual abuse may find that feelings of rage, betrayal, and guilt make spiritual growth difficult. Survivors may find themselves prone to self-hate and self-destructiveness. Since they do not love themselves, they cannot believe that anyone else, including God, can love them. They may ask angrily: "Where was God in all this? Why didn't God help me?"

Healing, Forgiveness, and Repentance

Scripture reminds us that Jesus extends his healing power in the most desperate circumstances. Recall, for example, the story of Jairus's daughter, whom Jesus restored to life (Lk 8:41-56).

In that seemingly hopeless situation, Jesus reached out to the girl, enkindled that spark of life, and returned her to the community. His solicitude was very human. Give her something to eat, he told the onlookers, when she began to walk about the room.

Survivors of sexual abuse call out for healing. They long to be free from the heavy burden carried within them. Abusers, too, seek healing, after they come to acknowledge and grieve the terrible pain they have inflicted.

Healing for Those Who Have Been Abused

Today, Jesus continues to restore the human spirit through the prayer and sacramental life of the Church. The eucharist, a sign of God's love for us, is a celebration of ongoing healing and reconciliation. Many people have received peace and strength from healing services or from praying with a group for "healing of memories." In addition, the sacrament of reconciliation provides an opportunity to turn people and past events over to God, realizing that his love can bring good out of evil. As the Letter to the Romans assures us, "We know that all things work for good for those who love God" (8:28).

As part of the healing process, we realize that forgiveness is one of the biggest issues that survivors struggle with. Forgiveness is rarely easy, but for survivors of sexual abuse it can seem impossible.

Forgiveness is both a gift and a process—a gift from God and a process that involves the work of human minds and hearts. The process, often a long one, begins with a survivor acknowledging the abuse, dealing with feelings that may have been long suppressed, and developing a positive self-identity. We caution against rushing the process. We cannot push the survivor to forgive just because we, the Christian community, feel uncomfortable dealing with the issue. Rather, we need to stand with the survivor, to show the same gentle, loving, patient concern that Jesus showed to those who were hurting.

Forgiveness is not forgetting, nor does forgiveness consist in excusing the abuse or in absolving the abuser, which only God can do. We again stress that the abuse is not the survivor's fault, but we realize that some survivors struggle with having done things that were perhaps painful and destructive but which were a means of coping with the abuse. We encourage survivors to be gentle with themselves in letting go of inappropriate self-blame for the abuse.

Part III: Responding

In the Gospels we see that Jesus healed in different ways. He offered physical healing as well as a deeper, spiritual healing. His words, spoken in truth and love, also brought healing, even when they made his listeners uncomfortable. He responded to those who sought healing for themselves, as well as those who interceded for others.

Like Jesus, the Church reaches out to offer healing and reconciliation to people who seem to be without hope. Desiring to restore wholeness to the victims/survivors of sexual abuse and to their families, and wanting to break the cycle of abuse, we seek to:

- Offer physical safety and help for sexual abuse victims/survivors;
- Bring about spiritual and emotional healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation for victims/survivors and their families, recognizing that it is not always possible to keep the family together;

- Raise awareness about the issue by our preaching and teaching;
- Offer help and support for abusers while holding them accountable for their actions;
- Promote the education of pastors and church workers about the issue and encourage them to provide appropriate assistance.

We do not minimize the complicated nature of sexual abuse or the task involved in prevention, intervention, and support of people seeking to surmount the past. We believe, however, that parishes can play a crucial role in this process through the liturgy and sacraments, education, and support of empathetic and knowledgeable parishioners. A survivor attests to this, writing that she found God revealed in the liturgies of her parish community. She says:

"As I walked the dirt roads of Calvary . . . I knew that Jesus, like me, experienced all of the same brutal pain I was experiencing. I knew this Jesus the church elevated during the Eucharist was indeed a human Jesus . . . and in the midst of the assembly I experienced his healing and compassionate love."¹¹

What Can We Do Together?

As a community of Christians we have the means to shatter the walls of loneliness, shame, and fear that isolate those who are sexually abused and those who have survived abuse. They need us, and we need to hear their stories of pain, endurance, and courage. We also need to let abusers know that while we hold them accountable for their behavior, they can be forgiven.

Some practical suggestions for developing simple action plans at the local level:

For parishes (many of these suggestions can be adapted for use by dioceses)

- Create an atmosphere of welcome, trust, and safety in your parish that encourages people to come forward: the abused, abusers, and all those affected by abuse, such as mothers who suspect that a friend or family member is abusing their child, as well as family members who may be in a position to offer support and security to the abused person.
- Establish a procedure to respond when someone approaches a staff member about sexual abuse. Have available a list of referral agencies and resources to give to people who request help. Become familiar with state reporting requirements as well as diocesan policies concerning sexual abuse.
- Develop a network of people with expertise in dealing with sexual abuse. Regularly publish a contact's name and phone number in your Sunday bulletin.
- Mention of sexual abuse within a homily, when appropriate, lets people know that the preacher is aware of the issue. This sometimes opens the door for people to seek assistance.
- Many abused persons and abusers turn to their parishes to find healing and reconciliation. Abused persons need justice and compassion; abusers need accountability, repentance, and support. A prayer service or special liturgical ceremony can help people as they set out on renewed lives.
- Develop programs to teach people about sexual abuse issues. For children, programs should discuss appropriate and inappropriate behavior and include suggestions on where to go if they think they are being abused. Programs for parents should help them to talk with their children about their bodies and the right to privacy, as well as about personal safety and self-protective strategies.

- Raise the questions of violence and the roles of men and women within the family as part of marriage preparation. Delicately introduce questions about how each prospective spouse was treated growing up, how their parents treated each other, and how they expect to act toward their spouse and their children.
- Promote the use of language in parish programs and materials that reflects the equal dignity of women.
- Share information and resources with other parishes and dioceses that are also trying to address sexual abuse issues.

For those who are, or have been, sexually abused and their families

- Look on your parish as a source of support, strength, and assistance. In particular, locate one adult within the parish with whom you can talk about your experiences.
- Realize that you are not alone; many others, men and women, have also experienced abuse. If possible, find a parish or community support group for those who have been abused. Such groups can help survivors of sexual abuse learn how to find healing and courage to build a new, hope-filled life.
- Once the healing process is underway join in parish and/or community activities to combat sexual abuse. Reaching out to others can help the healing process.

A Word to Children

Although we have not addressed this statement to children, our hearts go out to them. Perhaps an adult in their lives who truly cares for them could share the following words with them:

Dear children, when Jesus walked on the earth he loved little children. Our Holy Father has said "How important children are in the eyes of Jesus!" Jesus treated children with kindness and respect. He understood when they were hurting. Like Jesus, we care when you hurt, especially when a grown-up has caused your hurt. We know that you are God's very special gift. God loves you, and we love you. You are our hope for the future.

WEBSITES TO BE AWARE OF

- <https://network.crcna.org/safe-church/child-abuse-awareness-helpful-books-articles-documents>
- <http://www.mennonitebrethren.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/understandingsexualabusebyachurchleader.pdf>
- <https://rainn.org/>