

House Cleansing on Occasion of Sexual Assault

First Mennonite Church, Denver, Colorado

Vern Rempel, Pastor

(this ritual could easily be modified for any sort of breach of home – e.g., robbery)

Gathering

This ritual we will call a house cleansing. The occasion is the sexual assault and robbery of _____ in the home of _____ *(list household)*. May God grant them safety and heal them of these wounds.

In this ritual we intend to symbolize and therefore to strengthen the reinstatement of boundaries, the cleansing of these physical spaces, and the affirmation that we are a community that gathers in joy and sorrow.

Prayer

Spirit of Christ, turn our actions this evening into holy acts of healing and affirmation. Grant to us a sense of strength and connection. We ask for and acknowledge your presence as we face these wounds and fears. Amen

Naming

Let us begin with a brief time of naming what we bring to this moment: our hopes, fears, strength and injury. You may do this silently or audibly.

Oil for the passages

We now recognize the passageways in this space. I invite the gathered community to smear a small quantity of oil on the lintels or door frames of the passageways here in the living room, dining room, and kitchen where the assault took place. With the action, these words will be spoken: *With this oil we pray for safety.*

Water for the places of struggle

We now recognize the places of struggle during the assault on our sister/brother _____ in this home. I invite the gathered community to sprinkle a small quantity of water on the places of struggle with these words: *With this water we pray for cleansing.*

(Following the cleansing) _____, we present you with this vessel as a reminder of our prayers and a sign of this community's ongoing presence with you. *(present water vessel to household)*

Community Prayers

Let us now enter into a time of prayer for _____, and for all that we are and bring to this moment. You may pray silently or audibly.

Hymn *Hymnal: A Worship Book* 377 “Healer of our every ill”

Communion

As a concluding act of affirmation, let us share together in the sign of communion, a sign that what is broken becomes a new creation, a sign that we are not alone but rather live in community, a sign that the Spirit of Christ overflows with love for us (*juice and bread are set on a table*). You may offer bread to each other as many times as you like, and dip it in the juice as seems appropriate.

Litany

See affirmation of faith, p. 161, in *Sexual Abuse in Christian Homes and Churches*, by Carolyn Holderread Heggen (Herald Press, 1993).