

**A prayer by Judy Cooke for children who are victims of violence in our land. Child Protection
Sunday, 2nd June 2019.**

Forgive us Lord, for the failure of our good intentions and policies to protect children from violence in our land. Forgive us our grossly inadequate response to the reality that violence saturates the everyday life of children in our land; that one out of three children suffers from violence in some form; and that in a recent research study done over 20 years in Soweto, 40% of the children had multiple experiences of violence in their homes, in their schools, in their communities. It is a plague, Lord, underpinned by social norms that still condone violence, and by the ravage of poverty, alcohol and substance abuse. Hear our cry, Lord, our deep lament for our children and their vulnerability, and our inability to stop it, and listen to us as we call on You.

How can we bear it, when we know that in every second or third home in our land, a child will be in fear of what might happen to them that night, or what they might see - some already sick at heart at the terrible secret they carry hidden deep inside, inflicted by someone they trusted; some terrified at the thought of witnessing violence erupting yet again in their families – knowing as we now do from research, that witnessing violence is as damaging as experiencing it; and of being at risk in the long term of suffering from anxiety and depression, which makes them even more vulnerable to violence at school or in their communities. And then, of tragically handing on all this when they grow up, to become parents themselves, repeating the damage to the 3rd and 4th generation.

Take our cry, Lord, our shame and grief, and take our outrage at the impotence of our policies, and in all your **creative power**, use it to ignite genuine political will on the part of the state, as well as all of us, **to make violence against children a priority for our land**. Oh Lord, build a fortress round them through our prayers and actions, and be with every child now, who suffers and is in fear, or pain. Fill them with your undying love, your hope and your strength, to survive despite their circumstances. We ask this in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Refs:

SA Child Gauge 2017 – Children's Institute, UCT – Survive, Thrive, Transform.

SA Child Gauge 2018 – Children's Institute, UCT – Children, Families and the State.