

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY CELEBRATION

Sunday, 6 March 2016

WORDS TO PONDER

"Women are leaders everywhere you look—from the CEO who runs a Fortune 500 company to the housewife who raises her children and heads her household. Our country was built by strong women, and we will continue to break down walls and defy stereotypes."

- Nancy Pelosi

PROCESSIONAL (All women will process, male pastors and male worship leaders will already be at the chancel and will not join the processional. Women can wear international clothes/costumes/dress.)

OPENING SENTENCES

Leader: Come, like Sister Miriam, leading the Hebrew people out of bondage with tambourines and dance!

People: We come to our God with praise!

Leader: Come, like Sister Martha, running through the dark with courage, proclaiming that Jesus is God!

People: We come to our God with our doubt and our faith!

Leader: Come, with the word of God on your lips, like our Sisters who did not fear preaching the word of God.

People: We come to our God with proclamation!

Leader: Come and proclaim the women who, with great passion, did not stop their unquenchable search for justice.

People: We come to our God with hope!

One: Come sisters and brothers, as *you* are, and join in the worship of the One who unites all women, all men, all children.

All: Here we are! We raise our voices in unity and celebration! Praise to the one who unites us all!

INVOCATION (Unison)

Mothering God—whose wisdom created us, whose strength sustains us, whose compassion guides us—crack us open this day. Crack open our ears so we may hear the words of our sisters from across space and across time. Crack open our eyes so we may see the places our lives connect. Crack open our hearts so the redeeming power of Christ may renew our relationships with those we may never meet. Crack open our lives, so you may infuse us fully with your passion and grace. In Christ's name, AMEN.

OPENING HYMN

"God, We Praise You for the Women"

Lyrics: Dan Damon

(Tune: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing)

Sarah laughed to hear the promise—God would bless her with a son;
Sarah laughed and Sarah doubted, till she saw what God had done. (*Refrain*)

Refrain:

God, we praise you for the women, who have taught us to be strong,

Who have held us, who have raised us, with a prayer and with a song.

Pharaoh's daughter, like a mother, lifted Moses from a pool,
Brought him safely to the palace where a slave would go to school. *(Refrain)*

Mary watched the killing madness as her son died on the cross;
She who knew the joy of childbirth now was torn by bitter loss. *(Refrain)*

As her life drew on toward evening, after she had raised her own,
Lois held her baby grandson, told him of God's love made known. *(Refrain)*

CALL TO CONFESSION (Leader)

If we claim that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness *(1 John: 8, 9)*.
Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (Unison)

Mother God, who gave birth to us through the molding and forming of the earth, you breathed life into our lungs and called us good. You made us a people to dwell together. But we confess, something happened. We have distanced ourselves from your love. We have built walls between each other. What we don't see we don't love and what we don't love we are fearful of. In your generous diversity, loving God, we have formed division: divisions made deeper by money, opportunity, violence, and arrogance. We don't want to hear the stories of those less fortunate than us because it hurts. We don't want to see the faces of our sisters and brothers who are hurting because we will feel responsible. We don't want to feel responsibility because we will feel the need to change. We don't want to change.

(Silence)

But you call for us to be transformed. You call for us to open our eyes and see ourselves in each living breathing being on earth. We know we can't change the entire world in our lifetime. But help us see how we can transform ourselves so the world might come one small step closer to realizing your love. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON (Minister)

God hears our cries and longs to help us in our struggle. God hears our confessions and forgives us. May we take God's desire for transformation seriously, and find ways to respond to God's forgiveness with acts of love and faith.

SHARING OF GOD'S PEACE AND FORGIVENESS

COMMUNITY CONCERNS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

INTERCESSORY PRAYERS (By women; pray for the following concerns, you can still add)

Families, sick people

Response: Kumbayah, my Lord, kumbayah (3x), oh Lord, kumbayah!

Violence against women

Response: Someone's crying Lord, kumbayah (3x), oh Lord, kumbayah!

Lumad, OFWs

Response: Someone's struggling Lord, kumbayah (3x), oh Lord, kumbayah!

Mother Earth

Response: Someone's groaning Lord, kumbayah (3x), oh Lord, kumbayah!

Concerns for peace and justice

Response: Someone's praying Lord, Kumbayah, kumbayah (3x), oh Lord, kumbayah!

The Pastor will pray for the celebration itself, for the concerns announced during the community concerns, and for women around the world.

Response (unison): We praise you God for this wonderful time to celebrate our women around the world. Amen.

POEM (Can be read by one woman or all women while soft music is played or this can be interpreted through dance or creative movement by women)

The Empowered Woman

by Sonny Carroll

The Empowered Woman, she moves through the world
with a sense of confidence and grace.
Her once reckless spirit now tempered by wisdom.
Quietly, yet firmly, she speaks her truth without doubt or hesitation
and the life she leads is of her own creation.

She now understands what it means to live and let live.
How much to ask for herself and how much to give.
She has a strong, yet generous heart
and the inner beauty she emanates truly sets her apart.
Like the mythical Phoenix,
she has risen from the ashes and soared to a new plane of existence,
unfettered by the things that once posed such resistance.

Her senses now heightened, she sees everything so clearly.
She hears the wind rustling through the trees;
beckoning her to live the dreams she holds so dearly.
She feels the softness of her hands
and muses at the strength that they possess.
Her needs and desires she has learned to express.
She has tasted the bitter and savored the sweet fruits of life,
overcame adversity and pushed past heartache and strife.

And the one thing she never understood,
she now knows to be true,
it all begins and ends with you.

GIVING TOKENS/FLOWERS/CARDS TO ALL WOMEN FROM THE CHURCH**SONG*****God, You Wrap Your Love Around Us***

(Tune: What a Friend We Have in Jesus)

God, you wrap your love around us, like a blanket, soft and warm.
You give rest when we are weary, You protect us from the storm.
May each person who finds shelter in this sanctuary we share
Also feel the joy and comfort of your love's protecting care.

Jesus, you were once a baby, Sought by those who would destroy.
Into Egypt you were carried — Far from home, a little boy.
Were you wrapped up warm to travel, safe from terror, free from harm?
Did you feel God's strong protection, snuggled there in Mary's arms?

May the women, men and children fleeing danger every day
Know, through us, your living presence; You walk with them on their way.
Spirit, as you give them comfort, teach us here to freely give;
May we blanket this world over with your love, so all may live.

SCRIPTURE READINGS (Suggestions)

Exodus 1:1-22 (Shiphrah and Puah)

Gen 30:21; 34:1-31; 46:15 (Dinah)

Judges 19-20 (Concubine/Second Wife of a Levite)

Judges 11:29-40 (Jephthah's daughter)

Matthew 1:1-17 (Jesus' genealogy – 4 women, all outcasts!)

Acts 16:11-15 (Lydia)

Song of Solomon 4:1

Proverbs 31:20-21

Proverbs 31:26

ANTHEM (Women's Choir)

MESSAGE

CALL TO OFFERING (Leader)

We know that money does not buy love. We know that money does not purchase peace. No matter how much money we save, or give, or spend, there will still be voices who cry out in need. What can we offer, in addition to money, that can take these voices of pain and transform them into shouts of joy? We must give more of ourselves than our pocketbooks allow. We must give of our humility, our hearts, our humanity. As you give your monetary gifts this morning, consider how you can give of yourself for the lives of others.

OFFERTORY MUSIC (Women)

OFFERTORY PRAYER (Unison)

God of all things, we give this money as a token of what is important to us. May this money go to do good. May this money go to do justice. But also, may the giving of this money help guide us into the path of awareness, recognizing that what this world needs is not more money, but more good... more justice... more of each of us loving one another. Amen.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY COMMUNION (celebrated by a woman pastors if there is any)

CLOSING HYMN

God of the Women

(Tune: Be Thou My Vision)

God of the women who answered your call, trusting your promises, giving their all,
Women like Sarah and Hannah and Ruth — Give us their courage to live in your truth.

God of the women who walked Jesus' Way, giving their resources, learning to pray,
Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and more — May we give freely as they did before.

God of the women long put to the test, left out of stories, forgotten, oppressed,
Quietly asking: "Who smiled at my birth?" — In Jesus' dying you show us our worth.

God of the women who ran from the tomb, prayed with the others in that upper room,
Then felt your Spirit on Pentecost Day — may we so gladly proclaim you today.

O God of Phoebe and ministers all, may we be joyful in answer'ing your call.
Give us the strength of your Spirit so near that we may share in your ministry here.




CLOSING PRAYER (A Woman Leader)

BENEDICTION

Go now with your ears open. Go to listen and learn the ways that God speaks through others, without regard for time or space, color or creed. Go now in peace. Amen.

RECESSIONAL

Resources:

-  *Women and Liturgy*
-  *ATESEA Booklet*
-  *PCUSA-Celebrate the Gifts of Women Worship Guide*