



CELEBRATE THE GIFTS OF WOMEN

by Kathryn Schneider

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Let's Think Peace by Huong www.peacemural.org

WOMEN KEEPING THE MESSAGE ALIVE

God's message lives, and women participate in keeping the message alive. To celebrate the gifts of women is to celebrate the gift of the message God shares with and through them.

Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday

honors women who contribute their gifts to the church and community, and lifts up issues of women's rights. March 7, 2010, is Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday, the day before International Women's Day on March 8. Your congregation or women's groups may, however, use this resource on any date that you choose to celebrate women. From Eve, the mother of all living, through the tears of Esther, through an angel to Mary, through Mary and Martha at their brother's death, through the women who came to the tomb, through Priscilla during the time of Pentecost, through women in the church today, God's word is kept alive. From sermons preached to lessons taught, from emails sent to text messages received, from inscriptions on papyrus to internet blogs, the message is still being sent and received by women. We rejoice in and celebrate God's message to women, along with the way women continue to keep God's word alive.

A SERVICE IN THE WORSHIP OF GOD

Call to Worship and Invocation

Based on *Luke 10:38-42*

Leader: A woman named Martha
welcomed Jesus into her home.

**Gathered: Her sister named Mary
sat at his feet and listened.**

Leader: There is only need of one thing;

Gathered: Mary has chosen the better part.

**Host of the Hostess,
welcome us in
to this, your home.
Help us to sit at your feet and listen.
Help us in need
to choose the better part.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Based on *Genesis 1:27; 1:31*

Women: Created in your image,
in the image of you,
you created them.

Men: Forgotten your image,
the image of you,
too often we have forgotten them.

Women: Too often we have forgotten ourselves.

**All: God saw everything that God
had made,
and, indeed, it was very good.
God help us to see everything that
you have made,
and, indeed, know it is very good.**

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND SHARING OF THE PEACE OF CHRIST

Leader: To God above, all praise
from upon this earth below,
from where we are called good.

To God above, all praise
from upon this earth below,
from where your Child once walked.

To God above, and God's Child above,
from upon this earth below,
from where your Child did rise,
taking away our sin.

In the name of God, who forgave us,
clothing us after creation,
and God's Child in whom,
through resurrection, we are forgiven,
and God's Spirit,
who allows us to forgive,
may the Peace of Christ be with you.

Gathered: And also with you.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Esther 8:1-17

Psalms 148

Philippians 4:1-9

John 11:17-27



SERMON AND WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS

- Depending on which scripture you select as your focal text, approach the sermon by sharing the point of view of the woman in the story. Consider these questions: What kind of faith does she show? How do her actions help complete the story? How does the message of Christ show through her, and how is it passed on to others? Are there women today who have this kind of courage or faith? Are these women in your church, in your community, in the world? Weave the biblical text with contemporary stories as you share the gifts of women with your congregation.
- Read the book of *Esther*—it's a quick read—and have members of the church act out the various scenes: the banquet and death of the first queen; Esther becoming queen; Mordecai discovering a plot; Esther agreeing to help her people; Haman planning to kill the Jews; Mordecai and Esther saving their people. Let these scenes show the role Esther played. Women from the congregation may use their gifts to share the message by playing the different roles or directing the scenes.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God of the Urgent Message,
God of Esther and God of Mary;
women in the company of kings,
saving a people
with a signet ring, with an alabaster jar of nard;
women, knowing what they must do,
and knowing God is with them;

God of the Urgent Message,
God of you and God of me,
help us to accompany Christ, the King,
to save a people
with spiritual gifts and a well-placed prayer.

Help us to know what we must do,
and let us know you are with us.

God of the Faithful Believer,
God of the sisters of Lazarus, God of Martha,
a woman knowing her brother would rise,
and would not have died,
a woman who named the Messiah, the Son of God,
and the One coming into the world;

God of the Faithful Believer,
God of sisters in Christ, God of all God's children,
help us to know Christ who rose
and defeated death.

Help us to name the Messiah, the Son of God,
and the One coming into the world.

God of the Creation,
God of the Spirit Wind, and God of Christ
who walks on water,
God who watches natural disaster,
and creates anew;

God of the Creation,
God of woman, and God of man,
God who watches our sinful nature,
and forgives us again;

God of the People Israel,
God of the leader and God of the oppressed,
God who works through both,
and promises justice;

God of Jesus Christ,
God of the lost sheep and God of the healer,
God who finds us where we are,
and provides the comfort we need;

God of the present,
God of yesterday and God of tomorrow,
God who will not leave us,
and God whom we worship,
bless us this day.

Amen.

SUGGESTED HYMNS

“God, You Spin the Whirling Planets”

PH #285

“Lord, Speak To Me, That I May Speak”

PH #426

“Canto de Esperanza” (“Song of Hope”)

PH #432

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

In every province and in every city,
in every state and in every town,
wherever the king commands and his edict comes,
wherever Christ our King commands
and his word comes,
there was gladness and joy,
and there will be gladness and joy.
So, go out, and spread the message,
just as the women before you,
and celebrate with gladness the message
of our God.

PROGRAM SUGGESTIONS

- Create a blog with your Bible study group. A “blog,” short for “web log,” is a web page that includes a series of thoughts or commentary called “posts” on a particular subject. Select one of the scripture verses from the Celebrate the Gifts of Women liturgy to study together. When you reflect on the scripture, share your

RESOURCES

Anna Carter Florence, *Preaching as Testimony*, (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2007).

Jane Dempsey Douglass, “Hearing a Different Message: Reforming Women Interpret the Bible,” in *Women, Gender and Christian Community*, edited by Jane Dempsey Douglass and James F. Kay (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997): 55-64.

Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, “Women’s Ways of Communicating: A New Blessing for Preaching,” in *Women, Gender and Christian Community*, edited by Jane Dempsey Douglass and James F. Kay (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1997): 104-115.

Order additional copies of this resource through Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612, or download from www.pcusa.org/allwomen.

thoughts via the blog. Do this not only as an encouragement to your group, but also as a way to spread the message to all Christ’s disciples.

- In your adult or youth Christian education classes, offer a lesson on women’s service in the church. Invite a woman elder, a pastor, and/or a Christian educator to come speak about their calls and share Christ’s message.
- Encourage women to visit www.pcusa.org/allwomen, a new web site created by the Racial Ethnic and Women’s Ministries/Presbyterian Women ministry area of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It is designed to uplift women by connecting them socially and offering them devotions and other church resources. On the site, you can connect with other women of faith, and see how they spread the message of Christ. Share your own voice and hear someone else’s story. Then, return to your church or Bible study group and discuss what you experienced.

*PH – *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1990)

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