



## Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality.

**Dear Fellow Pilgrims of Justice and Peace,**

Warm greetings from All India Council of Christian Women- Women's Wing of National Council of Churches in India.

March is a very special month for women around the world. Throughout the month of March 'World Day of Prayer' is observed, 'International Women's Day' is commemorated. During this period churches, women's fellowship and organization in India like every year engage in various advocacy activities to promote Women's 'Human Rights', end gender based violence, and celebrate the power of women as agents of transformation. IWD helps us to recognize the role of women as salt and leaven and weave justice and peace.

AICCW and NCCI gave a clarion call to reflect faith in action on 14th February on 'Valentine's Day' to join the ONE BILLION RISING REVOLUTION against gender based violence. Every February through March 8th, thousands of 'Risings' take place in hundreds of countries across the world and within local communities to show the world what one billion looks like and shine a light on the rampant impunity and injustice that survivors of various forms of gender based violence face. People around the world rise through dance to express rage against injustice, and the power of global solidarity and collective action to engage in activities, heal one another and wounded communities. They dance to express joy and community and celebrate the fact that together, violence can be defeated. They rise to show a determination to create a new kind of consciousness one where violence will be resisted until it is unthinkable.

IWD is also the time to celebrate courage and determination of women to build inclusive communities of justice and peace.

The UN declared 'International Women's Day' as a time to reflect on progress made, to call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played an extraordinary role in the history of their countries and communities. The 2016 theme for International Women's Day is "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step It Up for Gender Equality."

We invite your church, women's fellowship, organizations and even in your own families to commemorate 'Women's Day'. Various prayers, liturgies are found in different websites. We are also sharing with you an intercessory prayer and women's creed and some reflections.

Please share with us the stories of women weaving justice and peace in your communities and churches. We encourage stories of survivors of gender based violence and how they are overcoming violence and act as wounded healers to transform society. We invite you to join us in our Campaign '**365 Days of Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence: Make it Happen Now!!!**'

Wishing you all God's richest blessings .  
Shanti! Shalom! Salam !

**Moumita Biswas**

Executive Secretary  
All India Council of Christian Women  
Women's Wing of  
National Council of Churches in India





## **“Planet 50-50 By 2030: Step it up for Gender Equality”.**

### **Some key targets of the 2030 Agenda**

- ♦ By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes.
- ♦ By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and preprimary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- ♦ End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.
- ♦ Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- ♦ Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

## **Intercessory Prayer for International Women's Day**

( Pray together and chant or sing the lines)

### **Lord, make me an channel of peace**

Bless all women who daily strive to bring peace to their communities, their homes and their hearts. Give them strength to continue to turn swords into plowshares.

### **Where there is hatred, let me sow love**

We pray for all women who face prejudice, inequality and gender disparities. Help us see and to face the discrimination against women in all the many forms it may take.

### **Where there is injury, pardon:**

Comfort all women who suffer from the pain of war, violence, and abuse. Help them to become instruments of their own reconciliation and peace.

### **Where there is division, unity:**

Forgive all women and men who let differences breed hate and discrimination. Let your example of valuing all of creation help us to see that we are equal partners in the stewardship of your world.

**Where there is darkness, light; where there is untruth, truth:**

Comfort all women who struggle in the darkness of abuse, poverty, and loneliness. May we stand with them in light to acknowledge their suffering and strive to remove the burdens of shame or embarrassment.

### **Where there is doubt, true faith:**

We pray for all women who live in fear of their husbands, fathers, and forces that control their lives. Help them to be empowered to be their true selves through your everlasting love and faith.

### **Where there is despair, hope:**

We pray for all women who live in the despair of poverty, violence, trafficking, slavery, and abuse. May the light of your love bring them hope.

### **Where there is sadness, new joy:**

Help us to see the strength and goodness in all women and men.

Transform our hearts to celebrate the love and grace of all people.

( Intercessory Prayer written by Deborah Hirt, Intern at Franciscans International based on prayer of Francis of Assisi )





## Women's Creed

(To be read in unison.)

I BELIEVE IN GOD  
who created woman and man in God's  
own image  
who created the world  
and gave both sexes  
the care of the earth.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
child of God  
chosen of God  
born of the woman Mary  
who listened to women and liked them  
who stayed in their homes  
who discussed justice with them  
who was followed and financed  
by woman disciples.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
who discussed theology with a woman  
at a well  
and first confided in her  
his messiahship  
who motivated her to go and tell  
her great news to the city.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
who received anointing from a woman  
who rebuked the men guests who scorned her  
I believe in Jesus  
who said this woman will be remembered  
for what she did  
minister of Jesus.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
who healed a woman on the Sabbath  
and made her whole  
because she was

a human being.  
I believe in Jesus  
who spoke of God  
as a woman seeking the lost coin  
as a woman who swept  
seeking the lost.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
who thought of pregnancy and birth  
with reverence  
not as punishment  
but as wrenching event  
a metaphor for transformation  
born again  
anguish-into-joy.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
who spoke of himself  
as a mother hen  
who would gather her chicks  
under her wing.

I BELIEVE IN JESUS  
who appeared first to Mary Magdalene  
who sent her with the bursting  
message GO AND TELL.

I BELIEVE IN THE WHOLENESS  
OF THE SAVIOR  
in whom there is neither  
Jew nor Greek  
slave nor free  
male nor female  
for we are all one  
in salvation.

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT  
as she moves over the waters  
of creation  
and over the earth.

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT  
the woman spirit of God  
who like a hen  
created us  
and gave us birth  
and covers us  
with her wings. Amen.

(BY Rachel C. Wahlberg, from Prayers & Poems, Songs & Stories  
: Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity With Women.  
Source: [www.ecumenicalwomen.org](http://www.ecumenicalwomen.org), assessed on 20 February  
2016.)

## When Women Dance .... Celebrating the Power of Women

When women dance God sings  
When women dance mountains move  
When women dance bees kiss the flowers  
When women dance they break the silence  
When women dance proud waves rise and dance  
When women dance they beat drums of Justice  
When women dance they sow seeds of Peace  
When women dance winds carry the rhythms and the message  
the fields, homes, communities, villages, cities, churches, parliaments  
When women dance they purge society choked by polluted patriarchal breath  
When women dance rhythms of their bodies' shares stories  
When women dance broken bodies heal communities  
When women dance there is rainbow of hope in the sky  
When women rise and dance our brother joins in to sing the song of liberation  
Dance! Women Dance!

By Moumita Biswas



## This IWD let us Congratulate Women of Maharashtra State in India for their First All Women 'Panchayat'\*

For 26-year-old Sonali Shahpure, juggling household work with politics does not come naturally. She comes from a family of political non-starters. The political novice borrowed Rs. 50,000 from the local bank to pool money into the village development fund set up by the eleven elected members of the Bubnal gram panchayat in Shirol Taluka, southern Maharashtra. All members who chipped in with their share had one thing in common they were all women with no political background.

"In the morning, I take care of my family and children and step out later in the day to take care of the roads and drains in my village. Both are my priority now," said Ms. Shahpure. The village has taken a lead in women's political participation by becoming first in the State to adopt 100% political representation for women at the gram panchayat level. Elders of the village, who had decided six months ago to elect these women unopposed to the panchayat feel the group has brought in more transparency and accountability.

The members have pooled Rs. 5.5 lakh as development fund and are now petitioning the State government to sanction an additional special fund of Rs. 25,00,000 lakh for future development works. "We were fed up of the caste politics and the destruction seasoned politicians caused at the cost of development. So we decided to give all posts, including that of the *sarpanch*, (The Chief) to women. Each member will become *sarpanch* on a rotation basis," said Ulfatbai Afsar.

She said her nine-member council had just begun work on improving health and sanitation and water supply of the village.

\*(The Panchayat raj is a South Asian political system found mainly in the nations of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. It is the oldest system of local government in the Indian subcontinent. The word raj means "rule" and panchayat means "assembly" (ayat) of five (panch). Traditionally panchayats consisted of wise and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there were varying forms of such assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and between villages. Mahatma Gandhi advocated panchayat raj as the foundation of India's political system. It would have been a decentralised form of government where each village would be responsible for its own affairs.)

(Source: Article by Sharad Vyas, 'The Hindu', [www.hindu.com](http://www.hindu.com))



## Why I Wear Black on Thursdays



I am Achsah Joseph, working as an intern in All India Council of Christian Women. After I completed my graduation in engineering I joined AICCW to know about its work in enabling the Church Women to come forward and use their talents and gift in the expansion of reign of God.

It was during worship in NCCI chapel one thursday morning conducted by Moumita, (Executive Secretary, AICCW) I became aware about 'Thursdays in Black Campaign'. This campaign was started by the World Council of Churches in the 1980s as a form of peaceful protest against rape and violence especially taking place during wars and conflicts.

This Campaign has its roots in groups such as Mothers of the disappeared in Argentina, Black Sash in South Africa and the Women in Black movements in Bosnia and Israel.

The campaign focuses on ways that individuals can challenge attitudes that cause rape and violence. This campaign, which was launched in South Africa by the Diakonia Council of Churches during the 16 Days of Activism Campaign at the end of 2008, is an ongoing drive to raise awareness and encourage people to work towards a world without rape and violence against women and children.

In India also this campaign is practiced by many women. However we need to introduce it to local churches and communities also. I have started sharing about this campaign to my mother. Where ever we are we can share the information.

I have committed myself to observe 'Thursdays in Black Campaign' and break the silence to raise my voice against all the injustice and violence that happens to me or any woman, girl or child. Every Thursday we wear black as it reminds us of our commitment to reflect faith in action and build a world free of rape and violence. This campaign is very relevant for Indian context as India is the fourth dangerous country for a woman to live in and a girl child to be born. Rape has become a common culture in our country. Every 20 minutes a girl or a woman or

a child is raped in India. Marital rape is not even considered as crime. Many of you must have heard about the Nirbhaya case, where a young girl like me was brutally gang raped by young men in a bus. This is just one story there are many unheard stories.

This campaign is relevant for me, because I want safe and well lit roads, so that, women like me reach home safely after our work and tuition classes. I want protected public spaces be it in taxis, buses, market areas, workplace, schools/colleges and even safe homes. We do not feel safe in our own land and homes. And all of this just because I am a GIRL!

Just because I am a girl I am expected to be delicate and less accomplished than my opposite sex. I demand equality and freedom for every girl like me! I demand my right to feel safe and secure!

I have watched the video of Dr. Fulato Moyo, WCC Programme Executive sharing about this campaign. And further looked into its Facebook page where I too was inspired to do something for this campaign. I am now helping AICCW/NCCI to make a video as an advocacy tool to promote "Thursdays in Black Campaign" and it will be a part of "365 Days of Zero Tolerance to Gender Based Violence: Make It Happen Now" campaign. My male colleagues in NCCI like



Jeswin and Sathia are supporting and helping me in it. This video will be my contribution to promote this campaign in churches, women's fellowship and youth groups. Let us together build "Planet 50- 50 by 2030: Step it Up for Gender Equality"

I invite you all to join me in this campaign "Thursdays' in Black". Let us together build a world free of rape and gender based violence and "Planet 50- 50 by 2030: Step it Up for Gender Equality." Happy International Women's Day to all my sisters and mothers.

**For more information please check:**

[www.oikoumene.org/en/presscentre/news/thursdays-in-black-zero-tolerance-for-violence-against-women](http://www.oikoumene.org/en/presscentre/news/thursdays-in-black-zero-tolerance-for-violence-against-women)

**Facebook:** Thursdays in Black

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