

Order of Worship for the International Women's Day, March 8th 2021

National Council of Churches in India

Invites you all for Celebrating Womanhood.

Theme: I am Strong, Because I am Divinely Designed: Choose to Challenge.

Call to Worship:

Leader: Dear sisters and brothers,

The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims God's handiwork. Praise God, Sun and Moon, all you shining stars! Praise God, you highest heavens, waters above the heavens and on the earth! Praise God, the earth, mountains, hills, plants, trees, animals, birds, cattle, and all that is in the earth, praise God for creating women and men! As we come into God's Presence today, especially to observe and celebrate International Women's Day, let us worship our creator who created women in God's powerful image, let us thank God for the wisdom that has been bestowed upon women! Let us celebrate this day! Friends, as we come before God let us understand that we are the extension of God's being and are living with God's breath. Let us give thanks for the call to be like Christ to share life so that everyone will have life in abundance irrespective of their gender!

Opening Song : For the beauty of the earth.

Leader: Let us give thanks and express our gratitude to God!

Leader: As the world is celebrating the International Women's Day today, we celebrate the strength, vulnerability, power, powerlessness, passion, compassion, beauty, courage, commitment, faith, tears and smile of women across the world. Let us be grateful to God for creating women to make lives more meaningful.

All: We are grateful to you oh God of Life for creating women in your image. We are grateful for blessing our lives by your grace.

Leader: Let us be grateful for the wisdom and the leadership of women.

All: We are grateful to you oh God for the wisdom you have granted to women. We are grateful to you for the national and international women leaders. We are grateful and celebrate the leadership of women bishops, women pastors, women theological educators, women heads of the institutions, women leaders of different countries and women who give leadership in different fields. We thank you God of wisdom for all the gifts that our women are gifted with.

Leader: Let us be grateful to God for our families, churches, and our institutions!

All: We are grateful to you Oh God for our foremothers, our families, churches and our institutions! We are grateful for their sacrifices and the challenges overcome by them, which stand out as examples for our families, churches and our institutions. We thank you for all blessings we receive from you through them!

Special song: One day at a time

Prayer of Confession

Leader: Let us repent and confess before God, As we celebrate the International Women's Day, as we express our Gratitude to God and to our women, let us also confess that very often we have made women and girl children suffocate and breathless in our country, in our churches and in our families. Let us all repent before God and before the gathering!

All: Dear God our Mother & Father, who is full of love and compassion, you formed us from the dust of the earth and breathed your image in us and you placed us in the garden of this world to live in harmony and bring peace into the world. But we failed and often we become the cause of conflicts and quarrels. Our God of compassion, we confess that we really did not celebrate the life of women number of times. We, very often have caused damage to the lives of our women and girl children. Very often we are silent when our women face violence. Very often we succumb to the abusive culture of the society which is contradictory to the teaching of Jesus for Justice and wholeness for all. We confess our sins before you Oh Lord our God of Compassion. Forgive us Lord!

Men: Mother God, we confess that we too often create labels for women such as inferior, weak and impure instead of seeing your powerful and lovable image in them as they are created in your image.

Women: Sustaining Life Energy, we confess that we believed the labels such as inferior, weak and impure were ordained and given by God, which is not true. Forgive us for believing and accepting stories of untruth.

Men: God the Creator who created women and men equally! We confess that we have created a world that denies women's rights and degrades their being. Forgive us Lord.

Women: God the Creator who created us in your image, We confess we have failed to speak up for our rights and the rights of our sisters. Forgive us for not being instrumental in transforming the world into a place of equality, justice and peace. Forgive us for our silence.

Men: Our God above everyone! We confess today on this special day as we are celebrating the International Women's Day that we have assumed that we are the standard and we have ignored the power that women have been bestowed upon . Forgive us for we are blind in our thinking, assumptions and action.

Women: Our dear God the source of life, We confess that we often assumed that we are only emotional beings and are powerless . We have accepted silently all that has been imposed on us without questioning the oppressive systems within our families, churches and society. Forgive us for being part of the oppressive systems that subjugate women and marginalize them.

All: Keeper and Companion of us all, forgive us for not being co-creators of a new world of equality; we have forgotten to travel with our sisters to help them dance like Miriam for the freedom; we apologize for compromising our positions in not accepting women as Deborahs to judge our world, to make decisions and offer counsel. Forgive us for not appreciating the partnership in recognizing our gifts and responsibilities in creating a new community and a new world.

Absolution

Leader: Let us remember that we are spiritual beings having human experience! Therefore as spiritual beings, let us be reconciled to God and to people around us and experience the assurance of forgiveness. The power of the Spirit of God, would cleans us and empower us to be the partners and co-creators with God! May God inspire us to be like Christ to give life in abundance to the people around us! Amen

Scripture Readings:

Is. 58:6-9

Galations:3:26-28

Luke 1: 46-55

**Faith Affirmation to take us forward: (women of the Presbyterian Church in Colombia)
(Adapted)**

All: We believe in the goodness and value of women,
in our strength and health,
in our capacity to cry,
in our capacity to sustain each other instead of being rivals,
in our capacity to respond to the demands of children
and carry the weight of daily life,

in our openness and desire to continue working,
in our spiritual and earthly being,
full of life – birth, death and resurrection.

We affirm the history of women
as the history of humanity.
We are gatherers of fruits,
peasants, farmers, sewers, workers,
mothers, scientists, doctors, housewives and economists.

We give our life, we are hidden workers,
without wages at home and breadwinners in society.
We recognise this diversity and versatility.
We rejoice in our intuition and our thinking.
We confess our faults and fragility,
because we have accepted violence and injustice
in relationships between men and women.

We expect a future of faith and hope,
working for the day to come in which we and all our sisters
will no longer have to adapt to a stereotype
because we will be free
to express ourselves as we are
and we will be free
to share in all the benefits of human life and work.

We hope for a time of peace,
when violence will disappear
and men and women can love and be loved,
and the work and riches of our world can be justly shared.

Offertory Hymn: Help Us Accept each other.

Intercessory Prayers: Franciscan Prayer for International Women's Day (Adapted)

Leader: Lord, make me an instrument 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.

Leader: Where there is hatred, let me sow love:

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

Leader: 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.

Leader: 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.

Leader: 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.

Leader: 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.

Leader: 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.

Leader: 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.

Leader: Let us all sum up our prayers in the model of Jesus' prayer

Our Mother and Father in Heaven and on earth!

Blessed be your name!

Let your earth turn into new heaven where women and men and all live in peace!

Your wish for giving life in abundance to women be done on earth as it is in heaven

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive our gender based sins and give us the courage to forgive others!

Lead us not into temptation of ignoring the strength of women but deliver us from our ego-centric nature that destroys the lives of women.

For yours is the heaven and the earth, and glory forever and ever. Amen

Leader: Benediction

God our Mother and our Father bless us to be a blessing, provide us to be a provider!

God our Mother and our Father make your face shine upon us so that we bring shine on others' face and be gracious unto us to be graceful!

God our Mother and our Father give us peace so that we will be peace makers!

16. Leader: Blessing

Go in Peace to Love, Serve and do Justice to all.

All: In the name of Christ!

Closing Hymn: Faith Of Our Mothers.

Song No 1. For the beauty of the earth

1. For the beauty of the earth,
for the glory of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies;
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

2. For the beauty of each hour
of the day and of the night,
hill and vale, and tree and flower,
sun and moon, and stars of light;
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

3. For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony,
linking sense to sound and sight;
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

4. For the joy of human love,
brother, sister, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
for all gentle thoughts and mild;
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

5. For thy church, that evermore
lifteth holy hands above,
offering up on every shore
her pure sacrifice of love;
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise.

6. For thyself, best Gift Divine,
to the world so freely given,
for that great, great love of thine,
peace on earth, and joy in heaven:
Lord of all, to thee we raise
this our hymn of grateful praise

Song No 2. Faith of our mothers

1. Faith of our mothers, living still
In cradle song and bedtime prayer;
In nursery lore and fireside love,
Thy presence still pervades the air:
Faith of our mothers, living faith!
We will be true to thee to death.

2. Faith of our mothers, loving faith,
Fount of our childhood's trust and grace,
Oh, may thy consecration prove
Source of a finer, nobler race:
Faith of our mothers, loving faith,
We will be true to thee till death.

3. Faith of our mothers, guiding faith,
For youthful longing, youthful doubt,
How blurred our vision, blind our way,
Thy providential care without:
Faith of our mothers, guiding faith,
We will be true to thee till death.

4. Faith of our mothers, Christian faith,
Is truth beyond our stumbling creeds,
Still serve the home and save the Church,
And breathe thy spirit through our deeds:
Faith of our mothers, Christian faith!

We will be true to thee till death.

Song No 3.Help Us Accept Each Other

(Sung to the tune of "The Church's one foundation)

1. Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us, and bring us to believe
We are ourselves accepted and meant to love and live.

2. Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life
We struggle to be human and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some,
To love them as we find them, or as they may become.

3. Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved
in living situations to do the truth in love,
to practice your acceptance, until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness and laughter's healing art.

4. Lord, for today's encounters with all who are in need,
Who hunger for acceptance, for righteousness and bread
We need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on;
Renew us with your Spirit, Lord, free us, make us one!

5. God of earth and altar, bow down and hear our cry,
Our earthly rulers falter, our people drift and die
The walls of gold entomb us, the swords of scorn divide
Take not thy thunder from us, but take away our pride.

Song No 4.In Christ there is no East or West

1. In Christ there is no East or West,
In Him no South or North;
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

2. In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find;

His service is the golden cord,
Close binding humankind.

3. Join hands, then, members of the faith,
Whatever your race may be!
Who serves my Father and mother as a child
Is surely kin to me.

4. In Christ now meet both East and West,
In Him meet North and South;
All Christly souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth.

Special Song :

I'm only human, I'm just a woman.
Help me believe in what I could be
And all that I am.
Show me the stairway, I have to climb.
Lord for my sake, teach me to take
One day at a time.
One day at a time sweet Jesus
That's all I'm asking from you.
Just give me the strength
To do everyday what I have to do.
Yesterday's gone sweet Jesus
And tomorrow may never be mine.
Lord help me today, show me the way
One day at a time.

Do you remember, when you walked among men?
Well Jesus you know if you're looking below
It's worse now, than then.
Cheating and stealing, violence and crime
So for my sake, teach me to take
One day at a time.

One day at a time sweet Jesus
That's all I'm asking from you.
Just give me the strength
To do everyday what I have to do.
Yesterday's gone sweet Jesus
And tomorrow may never be mine.
Lord help me today, show me the way
One day at a time.

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***For circulation/use of member churches of National Council of Churches in India.**