

“Hearing the Voices” Worship Service **From Carrie Eikler, Morgantown CoB pastor**

The theme for these resources is “Hearing the voices.” This calls us to recognize that we are called not only to be a “voice for the voiceless” but first must recognize and **hear** the voices that have been silenced throughout time—through gendered, economic, and racial oppression, as well as the suppression of Biblical stories highlight the strength of women, as well suppressing the critical analysis of biblical stories that speak of violence towards women.

Women around the world, and women within scripture, open up new insights to God and Christ’s message as lived out in a gospel of universal accessibility.

1. Invocation

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.

2. Call to Worship

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

People: We come to our God with praise

One: 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.

One: Come, with the word of God on your lips, like Sister Sarah Righter Major, who did not fear preaching to the early Brethren

People: We come to our God with proclamation

One: Come and proclaim justice, like Sister Stella of Uganda with a passion for all people and an 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!

3. Prayer of Confession

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

4. Assurance of Pardon

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.

5. Children's Story

Talk with children about the difference between talking and listening. What happens when people don't listen to you? How does it feel when people talk over you? Consider doing an activity that demonstrates how frustrating it is when someone interrupts, or let one child begin a story and pretend to ignore it. Discuss how that feels.

Emphasize that Jesus calls us not just to speak about how much Jesus loves the world, but to listen to other people, and how they understand Jesus. Talking and listening are both important ways of sharing God's love.

6. Offertory Thought (Consider giving a part of your congregation's offering to Global Women's Project, or another organization that supports the empowerment of women internationally. This may be an opportune time to introduce your congregation to the GWP Lenten Devotional Calendar if you have not already done so).

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 to the lives of others.

7. Prayer of Dedication

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.

8. Scripture options – forgotten/nameless women

Exodus 1:1-22 (Shiphrah and Puah)

Gen 30:21; 34; 46:15 (Dinah)
Judges 19-20 (Concubine/Second Wife of a Levite)
Judges 11:34-40 (Jephthah's daughter) -
Matthew 1:1-17 (Jesus' geneology – 4 women, all outcasts!)
Acts 16:11-15 (Lydia)
Healing stories of Jesus

9. Sermon Seeds

Perhaps you or those in your congregation have never heard of the story of Shiphrah and Puah. Or felt the pain and disgust that arises out of the story of the the concubine. Or known that in Jesus' geneology listed in Matthew there are four women named, all who in their own ways are outsiders. Consider telling one of these unknown stories, asking why we don't talk about these stories in church. Ponder what these strange and distant situations that can teach us about listening to the voices of women around the world—voices we ignore, situations we overpower with our own solutions.

Consider how Jesus listened to those he healed. At times he knew the ailment before hearing it from the mouth of the one who needed healing, but most often he listened to the need. Do we listen before we suggest healing/quick fixes/charitable actions, or do we assume we know what is needed? What is a Christ-like approach to healing a broken world?

Share stories of women from around the world. How do others experience Christ's love through worship/expression/relationships that may seem different from our own cultural context.

11. 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

12. Hymn Suggestions

HWB 20 Come and See

Supp. 1046 Gathered here in the mystery of this hour

HWB 307 Will you let me be your servant

HWB 142 Brothers and sisters of mine