



*London District Women's Network Sunday*  
*07 March 2010*

*Theme: Equality, Equal Opportunities, Progress for All*

**Worship Resource**

**Call to Worship**

"In the last days," God says,

"I will pour out my spirit on every kind of people: Your sons and your daughters will prophesy....."

When the time comes, I will pour my spirit on those who serve me, both men and women".

*The Message Acts 2v17&21*

Come let us worship God in Spirit and in truth

**Hymn based on the theme**

**O Loving God, Co-equal three**

Tune: Duke Street. HP 807

O Loving God, Co-equal three;  
Parent, Spirit and Son yet one.  
Real unity in you we see,  
Our model Lord for moving on.

Redeemer Jesus, by your cross  
Divisions, barriers did defeat.  
In you, female and male are one  
Race, creed and gender gladly meet.

Life-giving Spirit teach us still  
The art of working all as one;  
Your model of equality,  
Our world a better place become.

Our Parent God, Redeemer, Breath  
For those denied their genuine place;  
Justice for these we humbly claim,  
Progress for all through God's good grace.

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## **Other suggested hymns**

HP 401 Almighty God who for us thy son didst give  
HP 402 For the healing of the nations  
HP 758 In Christ there is no east or west (To be adapted)  
HP 806 What shall our greeting be?

SOF 111 For I'm building a people of power  
SOF 329 Let there be love Shared among us (neighbourly in place of brotherly)

## **Suggested Bible Readings**

Numbers 27:1-9  
Judges 4:1-10  
Galatians 3:23-29  
Luke 1:26-38  
John 20:1-18

## **Prayers**

### **Remembering the Women**

God who shows us a father's and a mother's love,  
we give thanks for the women who have shown your love.

We remember and name them before you now:

those women who, in their stories and prayers,  
have nurtured our faith....

those women who offer simple hospitality  
and welcome to the stranger....

those women who work to build bridges in communities....

those women who, at risk to themselves,  
live out their faith in the hard places of this world....

We celebrate these grandmothers, mothers and sisters in Christ,  
in whose lives your love is revealed.  
May their labours not be in vain,  
and may we be counted in their number –  
faithful followers of Christ,  
building community,  
working for the Kingdom.

*Written by Alison Adam from 'Acorns and Archangels' Ed. Ruth Burgess  
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*Note: Names may be spoken into the silences and then 'gathered up' in a chant such as 'Lord, draw near',  
or 'Ubi caritas'.*

### **The Women of the Exodus**

(Exodus 1:8-2; 2:16-22; 15:20-21)

For women working within the system,  
ingenuously subverting the establishment,

refusing the tyranny of oppression  
with the smiles of feigned innocence:  
**for those who are the midwives of the future  
we praise the God of our liberation.**

For women who keep the tradition alive,  
telling their stories and singing their songs,  
cradling the future with wisdom  
and singing lullabies of hope:  
**for those who nurture dreams of freedom  
we praise the God of our liberation.**

For women exercising leadership and authority,  
balancing the ambiguities of status,  
risking their hard-won privilege  
in alliance with the oppressed:  
**for those who sustain power with wisdom  
we praise the God of our liberation.**

For women welcoming the stranger,  
offering refuge from violence,  
providing home and safety  
and a place to gather strength:  
**For those who shelter the survivors  
we praise the God of our liberation.**

For women who are bold in action,  
leading others to new pathways,  
taking initiative and disregarding risk  
to celebrate the dignity of freedom:  
**for those who lead out the captives  
we praise the God of our liberation.**

*Written by Jan Berry from 'Acorns and Archangels' Ed. Ruth Burgess  
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## **Prayer for Women's Network**

Bidding: Holy Spirit: enable, encourage, equip and empower us:  
Response: **As we continue on the journey of faith with you.**

Creator God, Giver of life: as we journey on, seeking to discover what your will is for the future of Women's Network, we pray that you will pour your blessing on and give wisdom to our Connexional President and her team as they lead the entire movement in discerning God's will. Surprise us with a movement that will do a new thing in this nation.

Holy Spirit: enable, encourage, equip and empower us:  
**As we continue on the journey of faith with you.**

Holy God our Redeemer and Friend: we hold before your awesome presence all District Committees, Circuit and Church groups. May we not be satisfied with things as they have always been! Give us a fresh vision we pray of what we can become. Prepare us we pray to become incarnate in the communities in which we live and serve. Open our eyes to see where we are needed most particularly in this difficult economic climate.

Holy Spirit: enable, encourage, equip and empower us:  
**As we continue on the journey of faith with you.**

Loving God our father and our mother: in a world where many suffer, many are oppressed, many are marginalised, disease and poverty are rife, the planet is under threat, you call us as the whole people of God to be your hands, and your voices, to be like Christ, proactively responding to these situations. Thank you that we are not alone for you have promised to accompany us to our journey's end.

Holy Spirit: enable, encourage, equip and empower us:

**As we continue on the journey of faith with you.**

## **INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY – March 8 is International Women's Day**

**Gathering Call**      Adaptation of Miriam Therese Winter's "Valiant Women"  
by Cathy O'Keefe, a graduate of Mercy High School in Baltimore, Maryland.

**Leader:**                **Who shall find a valiant woman?**

**All repeat:**         **Who shall find a valiant woman?**

Reader 1:              Look! We are all around you:  
in the work rooms of industry,  
and of every functioning enterprise,  
unheralded, invisible,  
some say nonexistent,  
but we know otherwise.

**All:**                    **Who shall find a valiant woman?**

Reader 2:              Look! We are all around you:  
contributing, setting standards,  
changing the course of history,  
preparing, supporting,  
challenging those resentful of our collegial claims and capabilities.

**All:**                    **Who shall find a valiant woman?**

Reader 3:              Look! We are all around you:  
Woman of courage, compassionate, patient.  
Our number is legion, our gifts diverse,  
our goal one and the same:  
that history hear, that history is cognizant of,  
that history will one day recall our names.

Reader 1:              We honour the women of the Hebrew scriptures,  
especially Mary, the Mother of Jesus,  
whose courage, persistence, love, and fidelity  
kept the lineage of faith alive.

Reader 2:              We honour the women of Jesus' time  
  
Who cared for the community of believers;  
Who followed Jesus to Calvary;  
Who buried Him;  
Who proclaimed Jesus' resurrection  
Who passed the Gospel to their families, friends and strangers;

Reader 3:              We honour the valiant women of our own time

Who nudge us back on track;  
Who remind us of the promises of Christ'  
Who claim the Gospel for women, too;  
Who preach the reality of wholeness;  
Who strain against a patriarchal church  
Who challenge us to grow!

**Leader:** Living God, Today we gather in and among Your Presence.  
Valiant women throughout the world,  
and all gathered here, raise our voices in global petition  
for your promise of wholeness --fullness of life--  
to be realized in our entire world, in our nations and in our lives.  
This we pray in Your Name. AMEN.

### **Petitions**

**Leader:** Loving God, be with us as we gather together, one in heart and spirit.  
We pray for all those in need of your mercy.

**All:** **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For all world leaders, that they may be moved to work for peace and justice by  
ratifying the United Nations Convention, to eliminate all forms of  
Discrimination against Women, and carry out its terms we pray.

**All:** **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For those most vulnerable to oppression or neglect, especially women and  
children, we pray.

**All:** **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For women who bring forth their children in uncertainty - for refugees and for  
victims of war, we pray.

**All:** **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For all those who go hungry while others feast in plenty, and for those who  
struggle to support families in the midst of economic injustice, we pray.

**All:** **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

**Leader:** For all who struggle for the basic necessities of life - nourishing food, pure  
water, fresh air, and adequate housing, we pray.

**Leader:** (Invite additional petitions.)

**Leader:** Loving God, you have heard the cries of your suffering people. Open our eyes  
to see the immensity of your love for us and the wonder of what you have  
done for us. Give us the courage to be your hands and heart for those who  
are in pain. Give us the wisdom to speak out for justice and righteousness.  
May your will be done in us today and always. AMEN.

**Closing Prayer**    Adaptation of "Valiant Women" by Cathy O'Keefe

Readers:            We are those valiant women,  
                         giving leadership in our homes,  
                         contributing to our community,  
                         working for change at all levels of society,  
                         crying for justice and mercy,  
                         living the Gospel,  
                         understanding theology,  
                         practicing our faith,  
                         remaining true to the Word

**Sending forth**

**Leader:**            Let us go forth then, O Living and Loving God,  
                         Let us go forth in the power of Your Presence deep in our hearts,  
                         and the power of your presence overflowing in our communities,  
                         Let us go forth confirmed and strengthened in our vision  
                         Let us go forth named in Hope and Love, and sustained in these challenging  
                         times.  
                         Let us go forth as valiant women of justice and peace.

**All:**                    **Amen.**

**Prayer for International Women's Day**

Women are a reflection of the glory of God. Today we honour the women of all times and all places:

Women of courage.  
Women of hope.  
Women suffering  
Women mourning.  
Women living fully.  
Women experiencing joy.  
Women delighting in life.

Women knowing the interconnectedness of the human family.  
Women honouring the sacredness of the relational, the affective.

Women quietly tending the garden of human flourishing.  
Women boldly leading the transformation of unjust global structures.

Women seeking Wisdom.  
Women sharing Wisdom.

Women receiving Love.  
Women giving Love.

Women: life-giving.  
Women: the image of God.

Loving God, we celebrate your faithfulness and love. On this day we commit ourselves to the promotion of the full humanity of all women everywhere. We know that whatever denies, diminishes, or distorts the full humanity of women is not of God.

Help us to be faithful to your call to love.  
Amen.

### **Story sent in by Blossom Jackson**

Florence Thamotheram

Florence Thiviamalar Thamotheram (Thiviamalar means "dear flower") was born on 4 January 1920 in north Sri Lanka, an area today which has recently seen a very violent civil war.

When any one meets Florence, they are faced with a lady of quiet dignity and beauty that belies her advanced years. That she has served her family, church and her community well as a woman, there can be no doubt. Together with her husband she has promoted equal opportunity and progress for a host of Tamil speaking people in the UK.

She was born into a practicing Methodist Family. Her father, Reverend N K Nalliah, a prominent minister, preached at the Royal Albert Hall in the 1930s, as the representative of the Ceylon Methodist Church. Rev Nalliah was looked upon as a leader and guide by the Ceylon Church. Consequently, his wise counsel was always accepted, and his extensive experience and faith enabled the Ceylon Church to grapple with ongoing issues that arose from time to time.

Florence's early life was marked by the premature death of her mother when she was only seven years old and her strongest memory is watching her mother playing a small piano and singing hymns.

These influences - Methodism and love of the piano, have been central to Florence's life.

She did well at school but the salary of a minister didn't allow her to proceed to further studies. Instead, she became a teacher at the age of eighteen years, a practice that was not uncommon for bright children, in many countries in the British Empire (now commonwealth) at that time. Her piano playing flourished, she obtained a teacher's diploma (ACTL) and played for the school assembly and the church organ, at the church where her father preached, something he was very proud of.

Florence married Charles (known to his Tamil friends as Jeyam) who was also a teacher and a Methodist. In fact, Charles' grandfather was also a Methodist minister, Reverend D V Niles. She emigrated to England bringing their six children with her in 1962. Her husband had come a year earlier to get a job and set up home.

They were one of the first to leave Sri Lanka because of the race riots at that time. Today, they may be called economic migrants and might not be allowed into the UK, easily.

Their first home was in Luton. Subsequently, they moved to London, choosing their home partly because of its proximity to Kingsdown Methodist Church in Ealing Circuit. Bringing up six children, was Florence's primary responsibility, not least, because Jeyam was very involved in cultural activities and extensive work with the Tamil community in Greater London

Every woman plays different roles in a lifetime and in Florence's case, she has been, wife, mother, sister and a support to her husband as a key worker with the Tamil community. Florence has, maintained her love of the piano and faith in Methodism and all the while she enabled and inspired her children so that they could take their rightful place in the world.

Her children have all attended Kingsdown, progressing through Junior Church to full membership and the boys were members of the Boys Brigade. Three of her children were married at Kingsdown and Shantani her daughter and carer, still worship there. Florence still attends services when she is able.

Thirty six years ago, Florence (as the organist) started the first Christian (Methodist) Tamil church group in Putney and the group still worship at Hammersmith Methodist Church. What does Methodism mean to Florence? "When I left Ceylon my father said to me, keep in touch with Methodist people – they are friendly people!"

As requested by Florence for her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday party which was attended by family and friends from all walks of life, it had a strongly religious flavor, with prayers and hymns. In fact, Florence played one of her favorites "*What a Friend we have in Jesus*" and in her speech, she said 'If you follow God wherever you may be, He will take care of you'.

For Florence, her Christian belief and Methodism particularly, both have been and continues to be, a guiding light and way of daily life. Florence's life has been truly remarkable, as a good mother and support to family members. She has been a sound Methodist for all those years, active member in her community and a good wife. In fact, she has been 'the wind beneath her husband's sail.'

*Materials sourced by Mrs Blossom Jackson, Revd Eleanor Jackson and Revd 'Femi Cole-Njie*

*Produced by Mrs Pam Michaelis*