

LITURGY FOR THE DAY OF PRAYER

2017

“CELEBRATING OUR WALK TOGETHER”

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR THIS CELEBRATION

- ❖ To unite in global prayer with our sisters from Asia and Africa and the Americas as part of the formation of a Global Network of Anabaptist Women.
- ❖ To celebrate with joy and gratitude the history of liberation/salvation that Jesus has brought us.
- ❖ To remember, within the framework of the 500-year-celebration of the Reformation, the impact women made during the Protestant Reformation as well as the Radical Reformation (the Anabaptist movement). We recognize that God used such diverse gifts in order to transform their contexts.

PREPARATIONS

- ❖ Prepare simple, creative and informative posters/bulletins, and a world map which shows all the continents, and in particular the countries of Kenya, Uruguay, Venezuela, the United States, and India
- ❖ Assign four persons from the community to take note of the contributions from each continent and summarize them for the day of the celebration
- ❖ Begin to practice the song written by Marisol Arriaga for MTAL: “Mujeres Adelante” (Women Onward). Two versions: [Video Mujeres Adelante pequeño grupo](#) and [Video Mujeres Adelante Centroamérica](#)
- ❖ Also the song “Bendita serás al entrar, bendita serás al salir” (“Blessed be your entrance, blessed be your going”) by Nilcéia Prótazio from Brazil. [Video Bendito Serás](#)
- ❖ Additional suggestions: “Nuestras manos hoy se elevan” (Today we lift our hands to you) and “Dame una fe sencilla” (Give me simple faith) [Video Dame una fe sencilla](#)

SUGGESTED TEXTS

- ❖ John 8.12. “I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” **(JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD)**
- ❖ John 13.12-16. “Do you understand what I have done for you? You call me Master and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. So, if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash each other’s feet. Because I have given you an example so that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, the servant is not greater than his/her master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent her/him.” **SERVE**
- ❖ John 20. 15, 18. Jesus asked her, “Woman, why are you crying? Who are you looking for?”.... Then Mary Magdalene went to give the news to the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had told her these things. **(COMMITTED LOVE)**



PREPARE THE SPACE

- ❖ A table in the center and front of the meeting room, adorned with a tablecloth from your context
- ❖ An arrangement of colorful candles (if possible) in pyramid form, with a thicker white candle in the center. The center of the table will be left empty in order to later place a candle, cross, basin, towel, and additional candle.
- ❖ A flier or bulletin, preferably one for each participant, with a biography of some of the women of the Radical Reformation. Include the Spanish reference links and the title of the book by C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert, *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*, 1996.
See: http://protestantedigital.com/l/magacin/449/kairos_y_cronos;
http://protestantedigital.com/l/magacin/449/kairos_y_cronos/1

In order to remember their courageous action, the testimonies of three Anabaptist women martyrs will be portrayed; they are the same ones highlighted below.

- ❖ Three women who will walk a path, and a narrator with the passages to be read. Together with the women, another three young women or girls could walk carrying a plant. While the women wash their sisters' feet, the young women or girls water the plant to symbolize the legacy of the women to the young women and girls. This is also a way to include the girls and young women
- ❖ Choose a woman from the community, preferably an older woman, who for her life of witness and service in the community, can be "honored" with footwashing
- ❖ Have a jar of warm water, towel, bucket and chair ready

DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITURGY

On the center table there is only the arrangement of unlit candles.

It should be indicated previously to the women who are walking that each one will have a symbol: a cross, basin, or a lit candle; they will wait at the entrance to the sanctuary.

1. OPENING

- ❖ Welcome everyone to this convocation of love and unity for this year, 2017, made possible through the reflections for prayer coming from each continent and in memory of thousands of women who maintained loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- ❖ Explain the specific objectives of the meeting and give a brief introduction with the help of the bulletin/brochure to the activities of the liturgy.
- ❖ Refer to the informational posters that have been prepared in the previous weeks that refer to the countries we will focus on, and the intercession we will make for them.

2. MUSIC

It would be excellent to introduce here the song "Mujeres Adelante" written for MTAL by Marisol Arriaga of Mexico, or other music chosen by the group. (See Preparations, page 1)

3. PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING TO THE LORD

For example: Lord and God, we give you thanks for this gathering that gives us the opportunity to unite ourselves together with India, Kenya, United States, Uruguay and Venezuela, and we also give thanks for your love and your care during all of this year. We are grateful too for the lives of many women who, throughout history, have been called by You to be agents of change, and that today are examples for all of us.

We give You thanks because their lives inspire us to have a spirit of faithfulness to You.

4. FIRST READING

The first text is read: John 8.12. The sister with the lit candle begins to walk the path (this can be at the beginning of the center entrance, or as needed according to the space). As she finishes her journey the following historical segment is read:

THE WOMEN OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION AND THEIR IMPACT (SIXTEENTH CENTURY)

Various women, together with Luther and Calvin and other Protestant reformers, played a determining role in the whole process of the Protestant Reformation. These women were of different geographic places, and cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as distinct social contexts.

The leadership role of each one was unique; nevertheless most of them left writings or a tangible legacy. Katharina von Bora (wife of Martin Luther), Elisabeth von Brandenburg and her daughter Elisabeth von Braunschweig, Argula von Grumbach, Marie Dentière, Katharina Schütz Zell, Ursula Jost, Marguerite de Navarre, Jeanne d'Albret, Renée of France and Olympia Morata were "outstanding and exemplary matriarchs of the Reformation who, in their own way, responded to the Protestant teachings, exercised religious leadership, lived according to their religious convictions, and had a significant effect on the individuals and communities around them."¹

While walking, background music can be played, such as "Dame una fe sencilla" ("Give me a simple faith"), or another piece known in your region and that relates to the theme of commitment and faithfulness to God....

When the sister reaches the center of the room, she lights the unlit candles and places her own in the center, saying: "Our God and Creator, we thank you that you have guided us with your light and that you send us to be light to the nations. With your light the darkness that produces violence, wars, discrimination, and the differences between race, culture and gender are dissipated. We are grateful for the lives of all these women who have embraced your light and walked in it. We thank you for the invitation you made to these women and to all of us so that together and in community we can walk in your light. At the close, all say: "Amen Lord Jesus."

¹ Read

more [http://protestantedigital.com/magacin/40572/El rostro femenino de la Reforma Protestante I](http://protestantedigital.com/magacin/40572/El_rostro_femenino_de_la_Reforma_Protestante_I)

You can sing: “Caminemos a la luz de Dios”/“Walking in the light of God.” [Caminando en la luz de Dios/Walking in the light of God](#)

5. MOMENT OF PRAYER:

We invite you to read in a prayerful spirit the experiences of sisters in the Anabaptist churches around the world, recognizing that this represents only part of the reality of women in the churches.

Do women have the space to serve with all their ministerial gifts and are they recognized in their roles? Please explain.

Africa:

Kenya: That women have gifts by which they serve in the community of faith is apparent and the church in Africa acknowledges that....Whether women should fully be incorporated into the pastoral service remains an issue as such services evolve around ordination. The dispensation of ordinances therefore remains a preserve of the male domain in most conferences or national churches. Faith without works or vice versa (James 2) does not accommodate fully, holistic ministry which is of paramount importance for the church in Africa today.

It is important to point out the different uses or reference to ‘ordination’ and ‘pastor’ to the male and female gender. The words can be used in reference to a woman who is actively involved in church activities without laying of hands; that is, not making it an official entity. It locks the women out of a very significant organ of the church in terms of ‘ordained ministers’ decision making....If by constitution (the legal framework of the church), the highest position must be held by a bishop, yet the same constitution does not permit a woman bishop, then the women are denied such positions *de jure* (by law) even when they qualify.

Latin America:

Uruguay: I believe that spaces are still needed where women can be useful with all the gifts that God has given them; however it is good to recognize that we have made much progress in this regard.

Venezuela: Yes, there are spaces to serve, but women cannot serve fully with all their gifts due to a lack of preparation, lack of resources, and the need to fulfill other responsibilities (family, employment, etc.). There isn’t always recognition of the multiple roles of women in the community. In today’s Venezuelan context, it is more difficult for women to participate because they are the ones who most care for the children, the responsibilities of the home, the search for food or medicines in endless queues, and / or because of being abandoned by their partners.

North America:

United States: I believe that in the United States there continues to be a deep longing on behalf of women to be truly embraced and celebrated as church leaders. Many women, because of education or context have been called to be pastors and administrators and professors, but not all women have these prospects. Some women in more theologically conservative areas do not yet have the

opportunity to vote in decision making and certainly would not be blessed as credentialed pastors. So we must continue to proclaim that indeed in Christ there is no male nor female, no east or west. We must remain steadfast in promoting the prophetic voice that indeed empowers women to claim their place at the table, in leadership and in shaping Christian discipleship here and now.

Asia:

India: There are several issues at play in Anabaptist Churches in India. The hierarchical power structures are both an opportunity and a liability. To bring a change, one needs to convince just one person, i.e. the person at the top. On the other hand the power distance is very high, i.e. the distance between the highest and lowest in the line of authority (with women at the bottom end). This hampers free flow of ideas and thoughts. And for a change to happen, one has to struggle communicating the idea to the top authority.

As a youth in MCI, I admired women preaching from the pulpit on Sundays, and women being given ordination for ministerial roles....While in MBCI, until 10 years ago, women were not given ordination. Now, even though women are being ordained as Reverends, there are limitations in their ministerial roles. As I ponder more on these issues, I see a stark contrast with our Anabaptist historical beliefs in "Priesthood of all believers" and "Servant leadership".

6. SECOND READING

The second text is read: John 13.12-17

A sister enters with a basin and towel on one arm, with the same background music as she walks. At the same time, the sister whose feet will be washed comes to a chair near the central table; when the other woman arrives, she bends over to wash her feet, and the following historical recounting of the women in the Anabaptist Movement is given:

THE WOMEN OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY ANABAPTIST MOVEMENT (RADICAL REFORMATION)²

The Radical Reformation (or Anabaptist movement) was born alongside the Protestant Reformation. In the gestation and growth of sixteenth century Anabaptism, women had an essential role.

Anabaptism was a popular movement of the people, and consequently the participation of women was broader than in any other form of religious reform unleashed in Europe as a result of the Protestant rebellion headed by Martin Luther. In the different expressions of Anabaptism, the action of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the believer – in men and women alike – was given importance. Consequently, they endorsed the teaching that the Spirit was poured out, crossing all barriers of class, education, ages, and gender. Women, from the understanding the Anabaptists had of the Bible, were also subject to the action of the Holy Spirit and an active part of the communities of believers. Anabaptism emphasized personal conversion, baptism as a public expression of the commitment to follow Jesus, and the reality of the church made up of believers. Women who adopted these teachings found that these same teachings gave them the freedom to voluntarily exercise their beliefs, rather than those imposed by the official state-church symbiosis and/or family clan.

As members of a movement born from the underbelly of society, Anabaptist women suffered a triple marginalization, the first being that they were mostly poor. Secondly, they were women in a society

dominated by patriarchy, and third, they were identified as being part of a "pernicious sect," demonized as such by the religious and political authorities. What we know of the sixteenth century Anabaptist women comes mainly from the records of the trials they had to face. Rarely did they leave testimonies written by themselves, since the majority did not know how to express themselves in writing or did so in a very rudimentary way. The records of these trials reveal the character, beliefs, and relational networks of these women. But they also denote the stigmatization, reductionism and ridicule of those who tried and sentenced them to exile, pay fines or death.

Anabaptist women memorized many verses from the Bible. In the court records, the women's answers remain and bear evidence as to why they rejected infant baptism; how, in house meetings, they practiced the Lord's Supper in two ways, with bread and wine; and with what they responded when asked about their disobedience to the authorities and their ordinances. They simply quoted, above all, sections of the New Testament to affirm that they owed their obedience to Jesus and his teachings. More than the men, the Anabaptist women – because most lacked literacy and writing skills – were effective oral transmitters of the nucleus of beliefs that characterized the movement. Literacy was exercised by a small sector of the population, mostly men, but many women strengthened their reading abilities when they converted. For those who could do this, literacy increased their independence from the centers that regulated and administered the beliefs of the population in a given territory. As individuals in a mainstream corporate society, Anabaptist women were called to exercise conscious faith and develop personal discipleship. They, and not their fathers, husbands or guardians, had to respond personally. In choosing a community of faith for themselves, they were rejecting the ecclesiological and political principles that governed the sixteenth century – that the religion of the king is the religion of the people. In Anabaptism no one could impose faith on another.

In the sixteenth century in Western Europe, "2,000 to 3,000 [Anabaptists] were executed, thousands were tortured, imprisoned or obligated to flee their homes," and their properties were confiscated. Statistics show that in the century in question, of the total number of Anabaptists martyred, at least a third were women. In some regions of Europe when the persecution was most cruel, the figures rose to 40 percent. Strengthened in their faith, women chose torture and/or death rather than the option of retracting in trials and avoiding capital punishment.²

Prayer: Lord, we give you thanks for sister _____ whose life is also an example for us as to how those women of the Anabaptist movement gave their lives to follow You (if you wish, you can name two or three women martyrs of the Anabaptist movement).

² http://protestantedigital.com/magacin/39372/las_mujeres_en_el_movimiento_amabautista_1;

C. Arnold Snyder and Linda A. Huebert (Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers, 1996, p 12.

7. MOMENT OF PRAYER:

We invite you to read in a prayerful spirit the experiences of sisters in the Anabaptist churches around the world, recognizing that this represents only part of the reality of women in the churches.

What are the challenges that motivate women to action in these times?

Africa

Kenya: Knowledge, as that which is constructed within interactive relationships that cut across various people groups. Thus knowledge stems out of the norm that is, culture. With the multiplicity of cultures in Africa or a given national setting, there are multiple definitions of the woman's identity in the society. The woman minister is often entangled amongst the various identities especially in multi-cultural settings. The situation is often so complex and delicate that the woman minister makes progress by the grace of God....

The few women in the ministry sojourn on by confronting culture in context. Despite numerous challenges and obstacles, women act as agents of social transformation through social welfare, theological reflection of the Bible in the eyes of women; that is, a rereading of the Bible and reconstruction of culture....

Some structures often apply mechanisms of defense to keep women away from top leadership positions. This is a strong indicator not only that women have proved themselves and are willing to utilize their gifts at all levels, but also that the society is gradually recognizing and willing to absorb women in positions that have been culturally preserves for men.

Latin America:

Uruguay: Women are by nature more given to providing help and seeking the welfare of others, and perhaps we are especially dedicated to these areas in the ecclesial circle. A major challenge would be to find how the church in general and women in particular could contribute to a change in our wider society, at the same time attracting more people to become a part of our congregations.

Venezuela: To serve God in adverse conditions, to work for the development of God's sons and daughters, to teach that through the Spirit it is possible to live out the values of the Kingdom of God rather than to conform to the circumstances, to promote change in view of reality and painful situations, to act without fear and with determination.

North America:

United States: When women see active injustice, when women experience the sisterhood of the downtrodden, when women observe abuse and neglect, when women notice that their voice is not being heard, when women are tired of being dominated by male leadership, women will be motivated to action. If our hearts are not tuned to notice, observe, listen and see these things, sometimes we will simply carry on and not be moved to action.

Asia:

Since women are at the bottom of the line of hierarchy, we are easily suppressed and we find it difficult to voice our concerns. We continuously struggle to find ways to be heard and to be more actively involved in the ministry of the church.

MOMENT OF GRATITUDE:

For other women of the Anabaptist Radical Reformation: Anna Hendricks, Anneken Hans, Margaretha Sattler, Margret Hottinger of Zollikon. You can read a testimony about one of them if you would like from *Profiles of Anabaptist Women*. http://protestantedigital.com/l/magacin/449/kairos_y_cronos/1

8. THIRD READING

John 13: 12-17

(Same background music) A sister carrying the cross comes in. She sits at the table and the last reading is shared:

VIOLENCE, SUFFERINGS AND HOPES OF TODAY'S WOMEN

Around the world there is a concern about the aggravation of problems such as the violence against women, the suffering caused by this violence and forms of discrimination such as inequalities between men and women, with which governments, families and churches do not know how to deal. These phenomena, until recently considered private affairs and met with the silence and complicity of many sectors, have crossed the border of the private. Today it is recognized that there is a global crisis of mutual awareness. As for women, because they are women, they are being exterminated, as in the case of *femicide*.

In countries of the global south, news of the murder of women by their partners, husbands, boyfriends, and of children by their fathers, stepfathers, or close relatives, and of sexual abuses, are heard and reported.

Women, who are half the world's population, carry a very heavy cross and are very alone in this walk. The weeping of women is heard all over the world, tears that stir the conscience of the whole humanity.

Indifference, judgment, silence in their family circle or community make impunity much easier, as women are excluded in all contexts.

In our countries, and around the world, women have died and continue to die because of their faith and others are dying slowly due to religious and other institutional oppressions.

(HERE YOU MAY REFER TO A PROBLEM PARTICULAR TO WOMEN ACCORDING TO EACH COUNTRY OR CONTINENT, SOMETHING THAT IS A CURRENT CONCERN.)

Today it is imperative to revise educational models in our families, schools, churches, which are conveyors of values and ethical models, where no one is considered the property of those who are violent. Every woman and man were born to be free and were created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1: 26, 27). Therefore, their life is sacred. Today it becomes urgent and necessary to speak about and to discern these human epidemics, from churches, pulpits, theological / biblical seminaries. To do it in religious contexts without fear, without trying to continue to cover the sun with one finger, because it is a reality.

Against this background, it is encouraging that women from churches and faith-based organizations have decided to contribute to strengthen their transforming role to reduce gender injustice. They are doing this by means of an inclusive, communicational and territorial pedagogy which seeks generate unity through the recognition of all actors and sectors both religious and governmental.

(Here you can include signs of hope from your country: Actions or decisions that are being implemented, or work or experiences of women who are contributing to change realities in order to build peace.)

9. MOMENT OF PRAYER:

We invite you to read in a prayerful spirit the experiences of sisters in the Anabaptist churches around the world, recognizing that this represents only part of the reality of women in the churches.

What are the dreams and the ideal future that women long for?

Africa:

Kenya: From my context that is Kenya and possibly across the African continent, women dream for a realization of a holistic approach to the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Church. Holistic ministry where peace prevails through dispensation of the love of God through the Holy Spirit where all are recognized as God's creation. All deserve to be embraced as part of the body of Christ. It does not necessarily imply uniformity just as parts of the body are not the same hence varied output as relayed in Matthew 13 and Mark 4.

In the wake of tribal wars (tribal economy), terrorism and poor governance, Africa decries realistic socio-political transformation. The church should be the epitome of such virtues for other social structures to follow. The women pray that the church may be a reflection of a community in communion, not for convenience but as an obligation even when it means self-denial. A community where one's gifts will not be evaluated in the eyes of another, but the Creator.

Latin America:

Uruguay: Perhaps a society with values, in which all that has been lost flourishes again: respect and love for the neighbor, and especially toward God; a more egalitarian society with opportunities for all. Without ceasing to always lift up the name of God, our Creator.

Venezuela: A future where the work of women is valued and recognized, the church grows and becomes the community that God wants us to be, that young people grow up, that there is no violence against women.

North America:

United States: For many of the women I know, their dreams are for happiness and fulfillment for themselves and their families. Because of their great capacity for love, nurture and compassion, women are usually the ones who carry the great longing and sometimes responsibility for peace in their families, cities and congregations. An ideal future would include personal peace as well as empowerment for themselves and their circle of influence.

Asia:

India: I desire for women to be viewed as equally important parts of the body of Christ; not as sisters, daughters, or wives who are meant to be ruled by either brothers, fathers or husbands. And, for all of us to come to an understanding where in the Church we will choose to mutually submit to each other.

10. CLOSING

- ❖ Moments of gratitude: Let the group remember and call out the name of a particular woman. Express gratitude washing her feet if she is present, or mention other women in the community who have walked faithfully in Jesus' path of Light.
- ❖ Invite the group to sing "Mujeres adelante" or another song that affirms the life of women.
- ❖ End up making a circle and singing: "Blessed be your entrance, blessed be your going" or another farewell song known in the context.

In some cases the information included is only part of what was sent from the different countries. MTAL hopes to share the rest in other ways.

In May, after the celebration of the liturgy, please send summaries and testimonies to Ester Bornes to be published in the blog so that we all may enrich our lives.

Email: esterbornes@hotmail.com

With thanks to:

- Liturgy: Alix Lozano and Ofelia García
- Contributions from Latin America: Sandra López (Uruguay); Groups of women with answers compiled by Erwin Mirabal (Venezuela)
- Contribution from North America: Marlene Bogard (United States)
- Contribution from Africa: Rebecca Osiro (Kenya)
- Contribution from Asia: Elisabeth Kunjam (India)
- (We anticipate a contribution from Europe next time.)
- Feedback on the Liturgy: Patricia Urueña, Milka Rindzinski, Linda Shelly
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- Integration of materials and coordination: Rebeca González Torres (Mexico)

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