

World Student Christian Federation
Liturgy for the International Women's Day
March 8, 2007

Theme: Transforming our witness for women emancipation

Background of the International Women's Day

International Women's Day (8th March) is an occasion marked by women's groups around the world. This is a day of hope, a day of courage, of celebration for women who fought for equality, justice, peace and development.

International Women's Day is the story of ordinary women as makers of history, it is rooted in the centuries –old struggle for women to participate in society on an equal footing with men calling for “**liberty, equality, fraternity**”.

March the 8th, 1857: That was the day when one of the first organized actions by working women anywhere in the world took place, where hundreds of women garment and textile workers went on strike in New York City protesting against low wages, long working hours and inhumane working conditions. The event ended in violent struggles with police.

1908: On 8 March, 15,000 women marched through New York city demanding shorter hours, better pay, voting rights and an end to child labour. They adopted the slogan “Bread and roses” with bread symbolizing economic security and roses a better quality of life.

1910: Clara Zetkin, a German Socialist, proposed that an International Women's Day be observed to mark the strike of garment workers in the USA. The proposal was accepted by the Women's Socialist International, but no specific day was fixed.

1911: on 25th March more than 140 working girls mostly Italian and Jewish immigrants died in the tragic Triangle fire, an event that had a far-reaching effect on labour legislation in the USA.

1917: Russian women called for a strike on 23 February for “bread and peace”, protesting against poor living conditions and food shortages. This date, the last Sunday of the month according to the Julian calendar then in use in Russia fell on 8 March on the Georgian calendar, widely used in most European countries.

1975: the United Nations began celebrating 8 March as International Women's Day. In adopting its resolution on the observance of Women's Day, the General Assembly of the United Nations cited two reasons:

- a. To recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedom require the active participation, equality and development of women.
- b. To acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security.

Today we are in the 21st century remembering the significant day of the struggle, which had erupted for a genuine cause. Unfortunately today we don't have much to celebrate with regard to gender equity. Rather we find ourselves very much part of the ongoing struggle fighting for women's emancipation. As we come as a student community, a faith based movement to show our solidarity to the women across the globe, lets reaffirm our faith to celebrate our achievements and lets be an agent to speak out for injustices happening towards the majority of women and restore gender equity. Let our collective prayers bring change.....

Call to worship

O God of Life,

Because you love, you inspire.

Because you create, you motivate

you call us to be the change makers and respond with greater commitment and affirmation for the women's emancipation

You have instilled new life, new hopes, and new vision in us.

We seek your presence with open hearts

Inspire us with the Holy Spirit

Come let us worship the redeemer God; for we are God's people called to be God's fellow workers for the redemption of the whole creation.

Songs/Hymns : *(please select songs/Hymns according to your choice)*

Scripture Reading

Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked

(Ps 82:3-4-RSV) (or any other relevant text can be chosen according to your own context)

Reflection:

Intercession *(The members of the worship team can light a candle for every intercession to dedicate the prayer for the women victims of Violence)*

Leader: God we pray and seek justice for the 60-70 percent of the world's poor – who are women - who live in the abject poverty and have become victims of the unequal distribution of resources. Women who experience unfair labour practices, victims of violence/injustices as and the victims of the Structural Adjustment Programmes of the Neo-liberal Economic policies.

Response: God of peace and justice, open our eyes to see, our ears to listen the cry of women, our mouth to speak out for justice

Leader: We uphold in our prayer the millions of women and girls who are trapped in the organised crime of trafficking and coerced into forced prostitution and other inhuman job. We pray for the victims of rape, incest, sexual abuse, domestic violence and the battered wives. We uphold in our prayers the mothers who have gone through selective abortions, who have lost their newborn baby girl through female infanticide. We uphold the survivors of the maltreated and sexually abused children, particularly girl children.

Response: God of peace and justice, open our eyes to see, our ears to listen the cry of women, our mouth to speak out for justice

Leader: We pray for those women who are affected by HIV/AIDS, victims of war/militarism, women migrant workers that they may lead a life with dignity. We pray for the Indigenous women/ Dalit women who face the violence three times more than other women, physically, socially and economically.

Response: *God of peace and justice, open our eyes to see, our ears to listen the cry of women, our mouth to speak out for justice*

Leader: We pray for women who experience the discrimination in the Church to play their role as the co-creator, the victims of sexual abuses in the Church, women from cultural minorities who suffer violence and injustice, violence against the sexual minorities and all those who experience Human Rights Violations

Response: *God of peace and justice, open our eyes to see, our ears to listen the cry of women, our mouth to speak out for justice*

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in our God

Who created woman and man in God's own image

To live in communion and harmony

With people, nature and God

We believe in Jesus Christ

The liberator of this world

Who broke the culture of silence

And affirmed and advocated for the status of women in the society

Who called us to follow His footsteps

To resist all the exploitative and oppressive systems

To build a human community

We believe in the Holy Spirit
That empowers us to stand firm
Who renews and restores the integrity of the creation
Helping all people to grow together towards wholeness of life - Amen.

Song *(please select a song according to your choice, preferably in line of the theme)*

Act of Commitment

The members can exchange a piece of white/ purple ribbon and tie the ribbon in each others' hands, as a symbol of commitment that we have seen, heard and experience the violence against women and no longer this would be a silence by their active participation to resist violence against women and restore peace and justice on this earth.

Closing Song(SCM solidarity song)

The song we sing not for ourselves
For those who are oppressed and
chained
Build up a new society;
Let's share and feel with them

*Come SCM's unite be one,
Pull out injustice from this world,
Live with people, build together,
One day we'll reach a new just world*

The way we work not for ourselves,
For those who are oppressed and poor,
Suffer with them and let us know;
That our struggle will win

The life we owe not for ourselves
Women and men work hand in hand
The unity will triumph;
We share the vision and hope

Lord's Prayer : (feminist version)

*Our Mother who is within us
We celebrate your many names
Your wisdom come
Your will be done
Unfolding from the depths within us
Each day you give us all that we need
You remind us of our limits
And we let go
You support us in our power
And we act with courage
For you are the dwelling place within us
The empowerment around us
And the celebration among us
Now and forever
Amen. (source: ELCA)*

Benediction:

May the Blessings of God of Sarah and Abraham, the blessings of the Son, born of mother Mary and the blessings of the holy spirit who broods over us, as mother over her children, be showered up us all and particularly on the women of the world, now and for ever more. Amen

(Sources: Transforming Attitudes Towards Sexuality—AWRC, Reflective Liturgy for SCM Women-WSCF-AP. 16 Day Prayer campaign for the elimination of all forms of violence against women-2004, DOV, WCC)

