

## 50 Years of Women's Priesthood in the Episcopal Church Resources for Celebrating in Local Congregations

### PRAYERS

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Written for the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood*

*by the Rev. Lindsay Hardin Freeman*

*Concluding collect from Prayers for an Inclusive Church by Steven Shakespeare*

Leader: Bright dancing angels, saints, and souls at rest, protect and guide us as we follow in your footsteps, singing God's praises with joy.

**All: Be present with us now, Lord, as you have been since the moment of creation.**

Leader: On this day of celebration and remembrance, we recall all the women whose caring, compassionate, and faithful lives continue to shape us.

**All: Set your same passion afire in our hearts, Lord, and fill us with courage and faith to do the work you have given us to do.**

Leader: We give thanks for ancestral foremothers of every race and culture, and for the gifts of the Native American community in Minnesota, especially healing, wisdom and persistence.

**All: Bless our ancestors, and help us to model for future generations the gifts of the Spirit.**

Leader: We pray for girls and women who lack access to education and health care; for those who experience sexual assault and domestic violence; and for all who weep silently, yearning for freedom.

**All: Free people everywhere from all bonds of oppression.**

Leader: Dear Lord, born into a holy and conflicted land, we pray for this country and all countries struggling with violence, discord, war, and its aftermath. We pray for all who are poor, homeless, and strangers in a strange land. May your Holy Spirit bring peace and a hopeful future.

**All: May we may be instruments of your life-giving Peace.**



Leader: Rahab, Tamar, Ruth and Bathsheba were outsiders to the faith, yet your Spirit stirred deep within, teaching us that there are no limits for your love.

**All: Renew your Spirit within us to welcome each other across lines of difference.**

Leader: We thank you for growing ministries in our midst: for the Liberian, Hmong, Karen and Hispanic communities of faith; for Good Courage Farm and other New Christian Communities, for neighborhood Bible studies, study groups and for our children at camp.

**All: Open our minds and hearts to widening expressions of your faith and grace.**

Leader: As the Northern Lights dance and as summer transforms the world around us, inspire in us your sacred gifts of care and healing.

**All: We pray that you would heal our brokenness and sorrow, freeing us to live for others.**

Leader: Born of a woman, you welcomed a woman from the shadows as she was there for you that first Easter morning.

**All: Help us to be worthy of your trust.**

Presider: Lord of the dawn, whose risen life began deep in the freshening earth; you called Mary Magdalene to see what men could not, to be the first witness whose love was stronger than fear; speak our name and open our hands to let your Spirit flow into all the lightening world: through Jesus Christ the Tree of Life. Amen.

## **A Litany of Remembrance of Faithful Women**

*by the Rev. Ruth A. Meyers*

*Published in Women's Uncommon Prayers: Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated, 2000:*

*Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg*

*Adapted for use in Minnesota*

Let us remember and give thanks for faithful women of God,  
that their lives may inspire ours.

For Miriam, prophet who led the women of Israel  
in rejoicing at their deliverance from Egypt;

For the unnamed woman who acted as prophet  
and anointed Jesus before his burial:

God of abundant life,

*We give you thanks.*

That we may claim our gifts of leadership  
and have courage to announce your truth by our words and actions;  
God of graceful power:  
*We offer our prayer.*

For Joanna and Susanna, disciples who followed Jesus  
and supported him in his ministry;  
For Mary Magdalene, disciple and first witness to the Resurrection,  
who proclaimed the Good News;  
For women leaders in the early Church: for Phoebe, Prisca, and Junia:  
God of abundant life,  
*We give you thanks.*

That we and all your Church may follow Christ faithfully  
and bear witness to the good news of God in Christ Jesus:  
God of graceful power:  
*We offer our prayer.*

For the woman who had hemorrhaged for twelve years  
and dared to touch the hem of your garment;  
For the woman who had been bent over for eighteen years  
and came to you for healing:  
God of abundant life,  
*We give you thanks.*

That we may recognize your healing grace  
and be healed from all that weakens or handicaps us;  
That your healing grace may be with any who are sick or suffering:  
God of graceful power:  
*We offer our prayer.*

For women mystics of the Middle Ages:  
For Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, and Julian of Norwich,  
who used many names and images to praise you  
and tell of your goodness and love:  
God of abundant life,  
*We give you thanks.*

That we may know you ever more deeply  
and praise you as the one God with many names:  
God of graceful power:  
*We offer our prayer.*

For the women of this country who fought against slavery and worked for justice for all people:  
For Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rosa Parks;  
For the women who struggled for women's rights;



for Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony:  
God of abundant life,  
*We give you thanks.*

That we may be empowered to strive for justice and peace  
among all people:  
God of graceful power:  
*We offer our prayer.*

For the first women ordained in the Episcopal Church fifty years ago:  
Merrill, Alla-, Alison, Emily, Carter, Suzanne, Marie, Jeanette, Betty, Katrina, and Nancy;  
For the bishops who ordained them: Daniel, Robert, and Edward;  
For Mary, first woman ordained in the diocese of Minnesota;  
For all the women of Minnesota who have answered your call to ordained ministry:  
God of abundant life,  
*We give you thanks.*

That we may be faithful to the ministries to which you call us:  
God of graceful power:  
*We offer our prayer.*

Life-giving God, you have healed and empowered women throughout all ages.  
Grant that we may follow their examples  
and live faithfully as your people in the world.  
*In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

## **Litany of Thanksgiving**

*by the Rev. Linda D. Anderson-Little (ELCA)*

*Published in Women's Uncommon Prayers: Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated. 2000:  
Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg*

*The Leader and the People pray responsively*

We rejoice in the perseverance of women who, with Sarah, trust in God's power to bring new life.

*Truly I tell you, wherever the Good News is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*

We rejoice in the prophetic words of women who, with Anna, announce the Christ-child to all who are looking for the redemption of the world.

*Truly I tell you, wherever the Good News is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*

We rejoice in the faithfulness of women who, with Hannah, pray fervently, exulting in the One who raises up the poor from the dust.

*Truly I tell you, wherever the Good News is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*

We rejoice in the strength and gifts of women who, with Prisca, lead the church in service to Christ Jesus.

*Truly I tell you, wherever the Good News is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*

We rejoice in the commitment of women who, with Ruth, devote themselves to relationships that bring wholeness and fulfillment.

*Truly I tell you, wherever the Good News is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*

We rejoice in the bold witness of women who, with the woman at Bethany, break open precious jars to bring glory to Jesus Christ.

*Truly I tell you, wherever the Good News is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.*

## **A Prayer for Leaders**

*by Dr. Pamela P. Chinnis*

*Published in Women's Uncommon Prayers: Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated. 2000:  
Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg*

Almighty God, you have given us responsibility for the leadership of the Church for a season. Grant us patience, courage, and wisdom to discern your will amidst the many competing claims and conflicts of this present time. Give us an appreciative memory for all who have gone before, and a strong, clear vision of the Church of the future. Let us exercise our stewardship with energy and enthusiasm, so that, when the time comes, we may joyfully relinquish our tasks to those who will come after. We ask this in the name of our redeemer, Jesus Christ, who calls us into fellowship and sends the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire us, generation after generation, that we may do all to your greater glory. *Amen.*

## **CANTICLES**

*A sampling of what is found in Enriching Our Worship I, pages 25-41*

### **Canticle C**

#### **The Song of Hannah**

*1 Samuel 2:1-8*

My heart exults in you, O God; \*  
    my triumph song is lifted in you.  
My mouth derides my enemies, \*  
    for I rejoice in your salvation.  
There is none holy like you, \*

nor any rock to be compared to you, our God.  
Do not heap up prideful words or speak in arrogance; \*  
Only God is knowing and weighs all actions.  
The bows of the mighty are broken, \*  
but the weak are clothed in strength.  
Those once full now labor for bread, \*  
those who hungered now are well fed.  
The childless woman has borne sevenfold, \*  
while the mother of many is forlorn.  
God destroys and brings to life, casts down and raises up; \*  
gives wealth or takes it away, humbles and dignifies.  
God raises the poor from the dust; \*  
and lifts the needy from the ash heap  
To make them sit with the rulers \*  
and inherit a place of honor.  
For the pillars of the earth are God's \*  
on which the whole earth is founded.

**Canticle J**  
**A Song of Judith**

*Judith 16:13-16*

I will sing a new song to my God, \*  
for you are great and glorious, wonderful in strength, invincible.  
Let the whole creation serve you, \*  
for you spoke and all things came into being.  
You sent your breath and it formed them, \*  
no one is able to resist your voice.  
Mountains and seas are stirred to their depths, \*  
rocks melt like wax at your presence.  
But to those who fear you, \*  
you continue to show mercy.  
No sacrifice, however fragrant, can please you, \*  
but whoever fears the Lord shall stand in your sight for ever.

**Canticle Q**  
**A Song of Christ's Goodness**

*Anselm of Canterbury*

Jesus, as a mother you gather your people to you; \*  
you are gentle with us as a mother with her children.  
Often you weep over our sins and our pride, \*  
tenderly you draw us from hatred and judgment.  
You comfort us in sorrow and bind up our wounds, \*

in sickness you nurse us and with pure milk you feed us.  
Jesus, by your dying, we are born to new life; \*  
by your anguish and labor we come forth in joy.  
Despair turns to hope through your sweet goodness; \*  
through your gentleness, we find comfort in fear.  
Your warmth gives life to the dead, \*  
your touch makes sinners righteous.  
Lord Jesus, in your mercy, heal us; \*  
in your love and tenderness, remake us.  
In your compassion, bring grace and forgiveness, \*  
for the beauty of heaven, may your love prepare us.

**Canticle R**  
**A Song of True Motherhood**

*Julian of Norwich*

God chose to be our mother in all things \*  
and so made the foundation of his work,  
most humbly and most pure, in the Virgin's womb.  
God, the perfect wisdom of all, \*  
arrayed himself in this humble place.  
Christ came in our poor flesh \*  
to share a mother's care.  
Our mothers bear us for pain and for death; \*  
our true mother, Jesus, bears us for joy and endless life.  
Christ carried us within him in love and travail, \*  
until the full time of his passion.  
And when all was completed and he had carried us so for joy, \*  
still all this could not satisfy the power of his wonderful love.  
All that we owe is redeemed in truly loving God, \*  
for the love of Christ works in us;  
Christ is the one whom we love.

**Canticle S**  
**A Song of Our True Nature**

*Julian of Norwich*

Christ revealed our frailty and our falling, \*  
our trespasses and our humiliations.  
Christ also revealed his blessed power, \*  
his blessed wisdom and love.  
He protects us as tenderly and as sweetly when we are in greatest need; \*  
he raises us in spirit  
and turns everything to glory and joy without ending.  
God is the ground and the substance, the very essence of nature; \*  
God is the true father and mother of natures.

We are all bound to God by nature, \*  
and we are all bound to God by grace.  
And this grace is for all the world, \*  
because it is our precious mother, Christ.  
For this fair nature was prepared by Christ  
for the honor and nobility of all, \*  
and for the joy and bliss of salvation.

## **HYMNS & SONGS**

*A sampling of hymns by, for, and about women that you might be able to use as you observe the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women.*

*Not an exhaustive list by any means! Just some ideas to get you started.*

*Enjoy paging through our hymnals to discover the richness of women's contributions.*

*The hymnals cited are all authorized by General Convention for use in Episcopal Church worship. There is an additional resource, *Resounding Voices*, recently published online by The Hymn Society, which is a sort of sequel to *Voices Found*. Check it out! <https://thehymnsociety.org/resources/resounding-voices/>*

### **From The Hymnal 1982**

190 Lift your voice rejoicing, Mary  
437 / 438 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!  
482 Lord of all hopefulness  
488 Be thou my vision  
490 I want to walk as a child of the light  
541 Come, labor on (Sung as the processional at the ordination of the Philadelphia II in 1974)  
673 The first one ever, oh, ever to know  
707 Take my life

### **From Lift Every Voice and Sing II**

48 Blessed Monica  
54 Nearer, my God, to Thee  
108 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus  
120 There's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place  
129 I am thine, O Lord  
146 Break Thou the bread of life  
184 Blessed assurance  
194 Lead me, guide me along the way  
218 Jesus loves me, this I know

### **From Voices Found (a hymnal of hymns by, for, and about women)**

12 Litany for Sisters of the Christ  
13 Apostle of the Word  
14 Delivered from shame  
16 With Miriam we will dance



18 Rejoice for women brave  
21 God of the women  
60 Come and seek the ways of Wisdom  
71 / 72 Mothering God, you gave me birth  
96 Healing river of the Spirit  
109 People of God  
132 133 Take my life

**From Wonder, Love, and Praise**

748 From the dawning of creation  
752 There's a sweet, sweet Spirit in this place  
756 Lead me, guide me, along the way  
761 All who hunger gather gladly  
775 Give thanks for life

**From My Heart Sings Out**

60 My heart sings out with joyful praise  
86 In the bulb there is a flower  
141 Mother hen  
142 Mothering God

**POETRY**

**God's Word is in all creation**

*Hildegard of Bingen, from Teachings of the Christian Mystics, Andrew Harvey and Eryk Hanut, eds.*

No creature has meaning  
without the Word of God.  
God's Word is in all creation, visible and invisible.  
The Word is living, being,  
spirit, all verdant  
all creativity.  
This Word flashes out in  
every creature.  
This is how the spirit is in  
the flesh – the Word is indivisible from God.

**Passover Remembered**

*by the Rev. Dr. Alla Renee Bozarth-Campbell*

*Read at the 25th Anniversary Celebration of the Ordination of Women, 1999*

*Published in Women's Uncommon Prayers: Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated, 2000:*

*Morehouse Publishing, Harrisburg*



Pack nothing.  
Bring only  
your determination  
to serve and  
your willingness  
to be free.

Don't wait for the bread to rise.  
Take nourishment for the journey,  
but eat standing, be ready  
to move at a moment's notice.

Do not hesitate to leave  
your old ways behind —  
fear, silence, submission.

Only surrender to the need  
of the time — to love  
justice and walk humbly  
with your God.

Do not take time  
to explain to the neighbors.  
Tell only a few trusted  
friends and family members.

Then begin quickly,  
before you have time  
to sink back into  
the old slavery.

Set out in the dark.  
I will send fire  
to warm and encourage you.  
I will be with you in the fire  
and I will be with you in the cloud.

You will learn to eat new food  
and find refuge in new places.  
I will give you dreams in the desert  
to guide you safely home to that place  
you have not yet seen.  
The stories you tell  
one another around your fires  
in the dark will make you  
strong and wise.



Outsiders will attack you,  
and some who follow you,  
and at times you will weary  
and turn on each other  
from fear and fatigue and  
blind forgetfulness.

You have been preparing  
for this for hundreds of years.  
I am sending you into the wilderness  
to make a way and learn my ways  
more deeply.

Those who fight you will teach you.  
Those who fear you will strengthen you.  
Those who follow you may forget you.  
Only be faithful.  
This alone matters.

Some of you will die in the desert,  
for the way is longer than anyone imagined.  
Some of you will give birth.

Some will join other tribes  
along the way, and some  
will simply stop and create  
new families in a welcoming oasis.

Some of you will be so changed  
by weather and wanderings  
that even your closest friends  
will have to learn your features  
as though for the first time.  
Some of you will not change at all.

Some will be abandoned  
by your dearest loves  
and misunderstood by those  
who have known you since birth  
and feel abandoned by you.

Some will find new friendship  
in unlikely faces, and old friends  
as faithful and true  
as the pillar of God's flame.

Wear protection.



Your flesh will be torn  
as you make a path  
with your bodies  
through sharp tangles.  
Wear protection.

Others who follow may deride  
or forget the fools who first bled  
where thorns once were, carrying them  
away in their own flesh.

Such urgency as you now bear  
may embarrass your children  
who will know little of these times.

Sing songs as you go,  
and hold close together.  
You may at times grow  
confused and lose your way.

Continue to call each other  
by the names I've given you,  
to help remember who you are.  
You will get where you are going  
by remembering who you are.

Touch each other and keep telling  
the stories  
of old bondage and of how  
I delivered you.

Tell your children lest they forget  
and fall into danger — remind them  
even they were not born in freedom,  
but under a bondage which they no  
longer remember, which is still  
with them, if unseen.

Or they were born  
in the open desert  
where no signposts are.

Make maps as you go,  
remembering the way back  
from before you were born.

So long ago you fell

into slavery, slipped  
into it unaware,  
out of hunger and need.

You left your famished country  
for freedom and food in a new land,  
but you fell unconscious and passive,  
and slavery overtook you as you fell  
asleep in the ease of your life.

You no longer told stories  
of home to remember  
who you were.

Do not let your children sleep  
through the journey's hardship.  
Keep them awake and walking  
on their own feet so that you both  
remain strong and on course.

So you will be only  
the first of many waves  
of deliverance on these  
desert seas.

It is the first of many  
beginnings —your Paschaltide.

Remain true to this mystery.

Pass on the whole story.  
I spared you all  
by calling you forth  
from your chains.

Do not go back.

I am with you now  
and I am waiting for you.