

Light the Way for Justice, Light the Way for Love

A Thankoffering Service for Women of the ELCA 2020–2021

GATHERING

Entrance Song

Christ, Be Our Light (*ELW* 715)

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God,
the fountain of living water,
the rock who gave us birth,
our light and our salvation.

Amen.

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism,
we are clothed with God's mercy and forgiveness.
Let us give thanks for the gracious gift of baptism.

Blessed are you, O God, maker and ruler of all things.
Your voice thundered over the waters at creation.
You water the mountains and send springs
into the valleys
to refresh and satisfy all living things.

Through the waters of the flood
you carried those in the ark to safety.
Through the sea you led your people Israel
from slavery to freedom.
In the wilderness you nourished them
with water from the rock,
and you brought them across the river Jordan
to the promised land.

By the baptism of his death and resurrection,
your Son Jesus has carried us to safety and freedom.
The floods shall not overwhelm us,
and the deep shall not swallow us up,
for Christ has brought us over to the land of promise.
He sends us to make disciples,
baptizing in the name of the Father,
and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Pour out your Holy Spirit;
wash away sin in this cleansing water;
clothe the baptized with Christ;
and claim your daughters and sons,
no longer slave and free,
no longer male and female,
but one with all the baptized in Christ Jesus,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Sprinkling Song

Heaven Is Singing for Joy/El cielo canta alegría (*ELW* 664)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God of justice and love,
you light our way through life
with the words of your Son.
Give us the light we need,
and awaken us to the needs of others,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Looking for an alternative to a full worship service? Consider using a Thankoffering devotion during your circle meeting or other gathering where you collect the Thankoffering. Include prayers from this service or use "All About Thankofferings," a free online resource about the history of Thankofferings.

*WORD

First Reading

Micah 6:1-8

The offering of justice, kindness, humility

Psalm

Psalm 15

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Christ crucified, the wisdom and power of God

Gospel

Matthew 5:1-12

The teaching of Christ: Beatitudes

Hymn of the Day

When the Poor Ones/Cuando el pobre (ELW 725)

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Prayers are crafted locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted as appropriate.

Called together in the Spirit's embrace, let us pray for the renewal of the church, for those in need, and for all of God's creation.

We pray, holy God, for the unity of the church universal: Draw your people together into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ to carry out his holy mission, together sharing the good news of your justice and love wherever we are sent.

Christ, be our light.

(sing) Shine in your church gathered today.

We pray, omnipotent God, for the well-being of creation: We give you thanks for transforming the chaotic waters of creation into the saving waters that nourish and sustain all the earth. Renew us every day by your water and your word.

Christ, be our light.

(sing) Shine in your church gathered today.

We pray, righteous God, for peace and justice in the world: Lead the nations of the world away from the stony wilderness of sin, and toward the holy light of love, justice, and peace.

Christ, be our light.

(sing) Shine in your church gathered today.

We pray, compassionate God, for all in need: For those who hunger and thirst for peace, for belonging, for love, for righteousness, shine your light of justice. For those who mourn or suffer in any way, shine your light of comfort.

Christ, be our light.

(sing) Shine in your church gathered today.

We pray, faithful God, for the renewal of all life: Refresh us with your living water and anoint us with your Holy Spirit. Embolden us with your promise and your presence.

Christ, be our light.

(sing) Shine in your church gathered today.

Receive our thanksgiving, eternal God, for all who have died in the faith. May we know the fullness of the new life that you prepare for us in your kingdom.

Christ, be our light.

(sing) Shine in your church gathered today.

All these things, and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your care through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SHARING OF THE PEACE

THANKOFFERING

You may introduce the offering with these words: As we make our Thankofferings today, we share in a tradition that goes back to the 1800s or even earlier. Then, when it seemed that there was not enough money to carry out the work of the church, the women would act together as “cent” or “mite” societies. Each woman would set aside offerings at home throughout the year in thanksgiving for blessings received. And on occasion, the women would come together as we do today, joining their offerings together to support ministry of many kinds.

When Women of the ELCA was formed in 1987, we committed to continue this tradition of giving in gratitude for blessings. Each year, in thousands of congregations, Thankofferings are given to support the life-changing ministries of Women of the ELCA. Together, we do more than we could ever do apart. In gratitude for all God has given to us, and with hope for all that is to come, let us now give our thankoffering.

Offering Song

To God Our Thanks We Give/Reamo leboga (ELW 682)

OFFERING PRAYER

God of grace, you have showered us with gifts of grace and abundance, entrusting to us the ministries of Women of the ELCA. Help us to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world. Accept these gifts and our prayer that, nurtured by your Word, filled with your Spirit, and fed at your table, we may share with gladness all that you have shared with us, until all creation is satisfied.
Amen.

**GREAT THANKSGIVING

THE LORD’S PRAYER

**COMMUNION

Communion Songs

Let Justice Flow like Streams (ELW 717)
Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love (ELW 708)

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We thank you, gracious God, for loving all your family with a mother’s care, and feeding us in a way our hearts and souls can understand, with the saving body and blood of Jesus Christ. Renew and enliven us by your presence in this meal, that we may be your presence in the world, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

Our God calls us to do justice. May you find strength in God’s grace.

Amen.

Christ Jesus calls us to love kindness. May you find comfort in Christ’s gentleness.

Amen.

The Holy Spirit calls us to walk humbly with our triune God. May you always find joy in God’s love and justice.

Amen.

Holy Trinity + One God, bless you now and forever.

Amen.

Sending Song

To Be Your Presence (ELW 546)

Rejoice and be glad in the light of God’s love!
Let us go forth in peace to share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

* Scripture readings may be selected from the Revised Common Lectionary for the day of the Thankoffering service.

** Omit if Thankoffering service does not include communion.

Tips for planning your Thankoffering service

Planning and carrying out your Thankoffering service might look different this year, depending on local circumstances. But with flexibility and creativity, even a completely online Thankoffering service can be as satisfying as any in-person service.

Form a planning team

Invite women who are regular participants in Women of the ELCA activities and women who are less involved. Invite women and girls of all ages, including young adults, teens and children. Work with the leaders of your congregation, including your pastor, audiovisual team and music director.

Choose a date, time, and place

The service can be held any time of year. Some congregations and women's units work together and hold the Thankoffering service during Sunday worship. Some host the service at another time. And you can have more than one Thankoffering service per year. Consider online alternatives to accommodate those who will be participating at home or elsewhere. Your congregation's audiovisual team — whether staff or volunteer — will be very helpful with the technicalities.

Plan the service

The Thankoffering order of service printed here is entirely optional. You may use all or part of it. For Scripture readings, planners may choose to create a Thankoffering service using the Revised Common Lectionary (the weekly cycle of texts commended for use in the ELCA) or may choose other Bible texts that evoke discipleship or stewardship. Lectionary citations can be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (pp. 18–63) or on the ELCA website, www.elca.org/lectionary. Decide together with your congregation's pastor whether to include communion.

Choose a preacher

Consider inviting a woman, lay or ordained, to preach.

Invite participation by all

It is appropriate to invite the entire congregation to participate in this service. You might invite the youth group to serve as ushers or tech support. Through their involvement, they will learn more about Women of the ELCA. Consider inviting women from other ELCA congregations, too.

Use our special envelopes and bulletin covers

Thankoffering envelopes are available in packets of 100 for just the cost of shipping. Packets of 50 bulletin covers are \$4.95 plus shipping. Both (and much more) may be ordered online at welca.org/shop or by phone at 800-638-3522.

Celebrate Women of the ELCA

The Thankoffering service is a perfect time to celebrate Women of the ELCA and tell about your commitment to the churchwide women's organization. You might display mementos and photos of women's ministries, or add personal testimonies to the sermon. During the weeks leading up to the service, invite women to speak about Women of the ELCA during worship or at an adult forum. Display *Gather* magazine, program resources, and other items that exemplify the many ministries of Women of the ELCA.

Make Thankoffering containers

Traditionally, women set aside their offerings throughout the year, using containers dedicated to Thankofferings. Encourage women to gather supplies (empty jars, boxes, envelopes, labels, decorations) to make home Thankoffering containers before or after the service.

Tips for planning your Thankoffering service

Plan how to receive the offering

Think creatively about how to receive the offering. For instance, if you are gathering in person, you might invite people to place their Thankoffering envelopes or containers on the altar. This visually highlights an important part of the Thankoffering tradition—the daily practice of giving in gratitude for blessings and bringing those gifts together for the Thankoffering service. Or, if you are gathering online, you might display the Women of the ELCA website, including the Thankoffering page at welca.org/thankofferings and the online giving page at welca.org/give.

Provide food and fellowship

If gathering in person, you might host breakfast before worship or a special coffee hour after. You might include a table for making Thankoffering containers and a display area for photos and other materials about Women of the ELCA. If you are gathering online, you might consider a virtual coffee hour — your audiovisual team will be helpful with that. What other ways can you offer hospitality and companionship?

Promote the service thoroughly

Write a bulletin insert or an article for the church's newsletter telling about Thankofferings and how they support women's ministry today. Send invitations and make announcements starting a few weeks in advance. Make sure to promote the service online and through social media, too.

Wrapping up

Afterward, use the same channels to thank everyone and tell them how well your Thankoffering service went. Write an article telling about how you planned and carried out your successful Thankoffering service and send it to your church newsletter, to your synodical women's organization, and to the churchwide women's organization. Other women will want to know all about how you did it!

Sending in your Thankofferings

Many people will make their Thankofferings online at welca.org/give, but others will also give by check or cash during the service. Ask your treasurer to deposit all the Thankoffering checks or cash into the congregational unit's bank account and then write one check for the total amount to Women of the ELCA. (This is so that the churchwide organization can report out how many congregational and special units sent in Thankofferings.)

Write "Thankoffering" on the memo line and mail it to the address below. (Mailing it to any other address, even one you've used before, will delay your Thankoffering.)

**Women of the ELCA
c/o ELCA Gift Processing
P.O. Box 1809
Merrifield VA 22116**

And then congratulate yourself! It feels good to act on gratitude, doesn't it? Thank you for all you do for Women of the ELCA. You really do make a difference in people's lives.