

**Celebrating the Gifts of Women  
Thankoffering Service  
2024**

*Created by the Campus Clergy and Students  
at Gustavus Adolphus College for Women of the ELCA*

*A service will be held on November 10 at 6:30pm at Christ Chapel on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College. All are welcome. This service will be recorded for viewing on November 17th on the Women of the ELCA website.*

*Please note that ELW refers to the Evangelical Lutheran Worship book. ACS refers to All Creation Sings, a supplement to the ELW.*

**Welcome**

**Opening Song:** *Rescue* by Lauren Daigle  
Alternatively, groups may choose *Gather Us In* (ELW 532)  
or *Jesus is a Rock in a Weary Land* (ELW 333)

**Welcome Litany:**

As we continue our worship, please join me in our welcoming litany. Please respond with the parts in bold.

Let everyone who has ever felt cast aside, hurt, or lonely say, **“I am welcome here.”**

Let everyone who has experienced joy and beauty say, **“I am welcome here.”**

Let everyone who desires to find the goodness of God say, **“I am welcome here.”**

Come just as you are. **Jesus promises to meet us here.**

**Greeting**

May the amazing grace of Jesus, the extravagant love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**Prayer**

God of Heaven and Earth,

We are gathered here today to celebrate your abundance. We pray that you pour out on us your Holy Spirit, and your grace, love, mercy, and compassion to share with all of your people. Forgive us for the times we have failed to do so. Lord, bring healing into the lives of those seeking your comfort, bring peace to those who know conflict, and bring strength to those everywhere who are working to bring about your kingdom here on Earth. Today we ask that you bring stillness to our hearts and minds as we reflect on the women of the Bible and their leadership, courage, and faithfulness; those whose names we know, and those who still are unknown to us.

In your holy name we pray,

**Amen**

## **Readings**

*Today we are celebrating women of faith. We look to women in the bible as mentors and role models. These rich stories show us women who are mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends. We also hear of these early women serving as leaders, disciples, and in business. Between each reading, we will sing, "For Such a Time as This." (ACS 1003)*

### **Sarah (wife and mother). Genesis 18:9-14**

*Our first reading is from Genesis. Sarah and Abraham had been desiring to have a child for many, many years. God had promised Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars, yet they remained childless. Now in their old age, they receive news of an upcoming baby. Three visitors come to the tent where Abraham and Sarah are staying. We read from the book of Genesis, chapter 18, verses 9 to 14.*

<sup>9</sup>The visitors said to Abraham, "Where is your wife Sarah?" And he said, "There, in the tent."

<sup>10</sup>Then one said, "I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son."

And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. <sup>11</sup>Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. <sup>12</sup>So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?" <sup>13</sup>The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?'" <sup>14</sup>Is anything too wonderful for the LORD?"

*"For Such a Time as This." (ACS 1003)*

### **Naomi and Ruth (outsider). Ruth 1:7-16**

*Two books of the Bible are named for women. In the book of Ruth, Ruth is an outsider from the country of Moab. She and her mother-in-law Naomi are both widowed and travel to Naomi's*

*hometown of Bethlehem. Ruth becomes the great grandmother of David, and an ancestor of Jesus. We read from Ruth chapter 1, verses 7 to 16.*

<sup>7</sup>So Naomi set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. <sup>8</sup>But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. <sup>9</sup>The LORD grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. <sup>10</sup>They said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." <sup>11</sup>But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me?...No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me." <sup>14</sup>Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

<sup>15</sup>So Naomi said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." <sup>16</sup>But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you  
or to turn back from following you!  
Where you go, I will go;  
where you lodge, I will lodge,  
your people shall be my people,  
and your God my God.

*"For Such a Time as This." (ACS 1003)*

### **Esther (leader and advocate)**

*Esther is the other book of the bible named for a woman. Esther is the story of an unlikely young woman becoming the queen and leading the people. She has hidden the fact that she is Jewish from her husband the king and problems arose for the Jewish people. This story is the basis for the Jewish holiday of Purim. We read from Esther 2:15-18, 4:13-14.*

When the turn came for Esther daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had adopted her as his own daughter, to go in to the king, she asked for nothing except what Hegai the king's eunuch, who had charge of the women, advised. Now Esther was admired by all who saw her... [and] the king loved Esther more than all the other women; of all the virgins she won his favor and devotion, so that he set the royal crown on her head and made her queen instead of Vashti. <sup>18</sup>Then the king gave a great banquet to all his officials and ministers — "Esther's banquet." He also granted a holiday to the provinces, and gave gifts with royal liberality...

[In time, problems arose for the Jewish people. Esther's Uncle] <sup>13</sup>Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.

<sup>14</sup>For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from

another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this."

*"For Such a Time as This."* (ACS 1003)

### **Mary and Martha (sisters, disciples). John 12: 1-8**

*In today's Gospel reading, Jesus spends time with Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha. We read from John 6, verses 1 to 8.*

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup>There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. <sup>3</sup>Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. <sup>4</sup>But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, <sup>5</sup>Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor? <sup>6</sup>(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) <sup>7</sup>Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. <sup>8</sup>You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

*"For Such a Time as This."* (ACS 1003)

### **Lydia (business woman). Acts 16:11-15**

*Lydia is one of the women we encounter in the book of Acts. She is a business person selling purple cloth, which was a very expensive commodity in her time. We read from Acts chapter 16, verses 11 to 15.*

Paul and Silas set sail from Troas and [arrived at] Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. <sup>13</sup>On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup>A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. <sup>15</sup>When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home." And she prevailed upon us.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

*"For Such a Time as This."* (ACS 1003)

**Message: What can we learn from women in the Bible?  
What does it mean to answer the call with gratitude.**

**Hymn: ELW 419** *For All the Faithful Women* stanzas 1, 5, 7

**Opportunity to give thanks together:  
Small Group Discussion Time**

*Take a few minutes and turn to those seated around you. Introduce yourself if you do not know them and discuss the following questions:*

Has there been a mentor figure in your life who has been particularly influential in your faith journey? What characteristics did they have? Offer your thanks to God for them with the words, "I thank God for \_\_\_\_ and all that they have taught me."

Do you have unique gifts to serve others, both inside and outside of the church? Offer your thanks to God for them, with the words, "I thank God for the gift of \_\_\_\_ and offer it to the service of God's people."

**ELW 752** Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (sung twice)

**Thankoffering Prayers**

May communities of faith worldwide be places of welcoming, affirmation, safety.

**God of welcome, hear our prayer.**

May refugees of climate and social circumstances find homes filled with hope in unexpected places.

**God of welcome, hear our prayer.**

May those who suffer or feel castaway be guided toward open hearts and communities of love.

**God of welcome, hear our prayer.**

May our community feel loved, blessed, and embraced by the never ending love of God.

**God of welcome, hear our prayer.**

(Space for prayers, spoken and silent)

For prayers spoken, silent, or given to the care of our community...

**God of welcome, hear our prayer.**

May we give thanks for all those who provide nurturing in our lives, that we may all find ways to love one another and see our neighbors as beloved children of God.

**God of welcome, hear our prayer.**

We pray this in the name of God who loves us so extravagantly and abundantly. **Amen.**

**ELW 752** Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (sung twice)

**\*Thankoffering** - Taken at this time.

**Holy Communion**

*We share the gift of God's grace in Holy Communion. Please consider using a setting in ELW or ACS. If you do not offer Holy Communion please proceed to the Time of Gratitude.*

After the meal: Now may the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you always in his peace. Amen.

**Time of Gratitude:**

Let us end our service by sharing things we are grateful for from this past year. Each person is invited to share aloud something for which they are thankful.

*If not prayed earlier as part of the Great Thanksgiving, conclude with the Lord's Prayer*

**Our Father, who art in heaven  
Hallowed be thy name,  
Thy kingdom come,  
Thy will be done  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread;  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against**

**And lead us not into temptation,  
But deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
And the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.**

### **Blessing**

God has filled the hungry and thirsty with good things:

**"Let us give thanks to God, for God's mercy endures forever!"**

God has done wonderful works for all people:

**"Let us rejoice in God's steadfast love!"**

God has looked upon us with grace and favor:

**"Let us remember God's mercy!"**

God has put into our hearts a song of thanksgiving and freedom:

**"Let us join our voices in singing our praise!"**

The God of abundance,

Creator, + Redeemer, and Spirit,

bless you and keep you, now and forever.

**"Amen."**

***ELW 689 Praise and Thanksgiving***

***Or ELW 723 Canticle of the Turning***

### **Sending**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!

**All: Thanks be to God!**

**\*Sending in your Thankofferings:**

Many people will make their Thankofferings online at <https://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.) Download Form B (<https://bit.ly/3BP2NYw>), complete it, and send it with your check to:

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

It feels good to act on gratitude, doesn't it? You really do make a difference in people's lives.

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