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on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in The United Methodist Church

GATHERING

PROCESSION – The Cherokee Morning Song (GS #3)  
We n’ de ya ho, We n’ de ya ho.  
We n’ de ya, We n’ de ya Ho, ho, ho, ho.  
He ya ho, He ya ho, Ya, ya, ya.

*CALL TO WORSHIP  
One: Do not give easy or unthinking response to this day’s call to worship. For today we ask God’s spirit to fill us that we may prophesy to the four winds, dream dreams, and see visions. The call to worship today is a summons to be touched by holy fire.

Many: Even now the flames are dancing above our heads.

One: God has called us from the farthest places of the earth.

Many: From east and west, north and south, we have gathered.

One: God has called those who are nameless, those without sight, those who are outcasts. God has called pregnant women, and those with nursing infants.

Many: From all ways of life and every experience we have come.
One: We come, like Sarah and Miriam, Abraham and John…
   people with vision.
Many: We come, like the Samaritan woman, and the Syro-Phoenician woman, like Thomas and Job, people with questions.
One: We come, like Mary and Ruth, Jeremiah and Moses, people with self-doubt.
Many: We come, like Rebekah, Martha and Priscilla, like Samuel, John Mark and David, people with a part to play in the story of faith.
One: Prophets, visionaries, dreamers, and warriors! We come with courage, faith and hope!
All: God of the present, past, and future, guide us now to your new age of promise!

*HYMN – We Are Called (TFWS 2172)

INVOCATION
Holy Spirit, Comforter, Mediator, Advocate,
we pray that you would open the heavens and rain down on us!
We celebrate your liberating presence found only in our teacher, Savior, and deliverer, Jesus the Christ.
We know that you move when and how and where you will, so rush into this place today.
Breathe on us! Refresh us! Restore us! Revive us!
Reconcile us! Purify us! Expose us! Convict us!
Sustain us! Nourish us! Challenge us! Empower us!
Send us to the north, the south, the east and the west.
We say “Yes!” In the name of the One, true and living God; God in three persons. Amen.

GREETING/INTRODUCTIONS
(consider showing GCSRW 49th anniversary video, 8 min.)

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE
Old Testament Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1-13 (NRSV)
Psalter Reading: Psalm 147 (UMH 859-860 – NRSV)

MINISTRY OF MUSIC
I Was There to Hear Your Borning Cry (TFWS #2051)
A TIME OF WITNESS (Sermon)

Left: Mary Magdalene who wept at the tomb until the risen Christ appeared, we walk in your footsteps.
Right: Phoebe, deacon of the church at Cenchrae, we walk in your footsteps.
Left: Perpetua, martyr of the church in North Africa, we walk in your footsteps.
Right: Miriam, who saved your brother Moses and started him on his way, we walk in your footsteps.
Left: Harriet Tubman, savior and escort for God’s children, we walk in your footsteps.
Right: Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, saints of holy indignation, we walk in your footsteps.
Left: Olga, of Kiev, evangelist to Russia, we walk in your footsteps.
Right: Margaret of Cortona, prophet to the Bishops, we walk in your footsteps.
Left: Mother Cabrini, servant of immigrants, we walk in your footsteps.
Right: Leontyne T.C. Kelly, twentieth and twenty-first century Episcopal leader, we walk in your footsteps.
Left: Women whose names have been lost and forgotten, and whose names we call out loud in this place today (you are invited to say the names aloud) we walk in your footsteps.
All: We walk in the company of Mothers of the faith, learning from them to resist evil with boldness, to lead with wisdom, and to heal with compassion, to carry the Good News of the Gospel! Thanks Be To God!!!

*SONG OF SENDING - Rule of Life (ZSS #95)

*The congregation may rise.

Hymnal abbreviations:
COC – Circles of Care: Hymns and Songs (The Pilgrim Press)
GS – For Everyone Born: Global Songs for an Emerging Church GBGMusik (GBGM)
TFWS – The Faith We Sing (Abingdon Press)
UMH – United Methodist Hymnal (United Methodist Publishing House)
WE – Worshipping Ecumenically (WCC Publications Geneva)
ZSS – Zion Still Sings: For Every Generation (Abingdon Press)
*BREAKING OF THE BREAD*

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. The bread which we break is a sharing in the body of Christ. The cup over which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

COMMUNION MUSIC

- Let Us Be Bread (TFWS 2260)
- A Perfect Sacrifice (ZSS 200)
- For Everyone Born (GS 2)

*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING*

God of justice, hope and freedom, we give you thanks for your Son, our brother, Jesus who has made provision for all of your daughters and sons to walk in liberty. Thank you for the privilege of dining at this, your table of eternal redemption through the sacrificial body and blood of Christ. We are mindful of those who have not yet tasted of your grace here. As we turn our faces back to the east, west, north and south, disturb us, convict us, and afflict us with an urgency to demonstrate your liberating presence in the world. Prepare us for the time when all will feast at your table of love through the risen Christ. AMEN.

*SONG OF VICTORY Go, Make of All Disciples (UMH #571)*

SENDING FORTH

One: You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in the North, the South, the East, and the West.

Many: And so we move out of this place and join the company of women who have gone before us, Mothers of the faith both named and unnamed, testifying with ferocity and faith to the Spirit of wisdom and healing. They are the judges, the prophets, the martyrs, the warriors, the poets, the lovers, and the saints who are near to us in the shadows of awareness in the crevices of memory, in the landscape of our dreams.

Right: Deborah, who judged the Israelites with authority and strength, we walk in your footsteps.

Left: Esther, who used your position as Queen to ensure the welfare of God’s people, we walk in your footsteps.

Right: Unnamed woman with the flow of blood, who audaciously sought your healing and release, we walk in your footsteps.

*HYMN OF RESPONSE  
Faithful God, You Have Been Our Guide (COC #29)*

INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Jesus said: If you are weary and heavy laden, come to me. I will give you rest. If you are hungry, come to me. I am the bread of life. If you are thirsty, believe in me, and you will never thirst again.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, we have gathered in this place at mid-day for the work of worship. But we know that in the true light of this day, our negligence and complacency have been unveiled. We confess that over these forty years, as “certain women” have reached under the table for mere crumbs, we have failed to offer them real food. As “certain women” have reached in to touch the hem of Christ’s garment, we have shoved them aside. As “certain women” stood alone at the well, seeking for living water, we have not acknowledged their presence. As “certain women” have come offering precious oils and beautiful cloth, we have rejected their gifts. O God, have mercy on us! Forgive us for our woeful complicity! Help us to walk humbly, and do justice according to your will and your ways, through Jesus Christ, our teacher, our example. AMEN.

RESPONSE TO PRAYER – Kyrie (WE #51)

PARDON – Hear this word of forgiveness and hope.

Even as we stand here on holy ground, the Holy Spirit pleads our case. Not by power, not by might, but by the Spirit, God has heard, God has answered, you are forgiven! God has heard, God has answered, you are forgiven!

Thanks be to God! Amen!

RESPONSE – Heleluyan (UMH 78)
THANKSGIVING AND HOLY COMMUNION

*GREAT THANKSGIVING
God be with you.
And also with you.
Lift up your hearts.
We lift them to God.
Let us give our thanks to God most high.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere
to give thanks to you:
God of earth and sea, God of love and life,
God of the past, the present and all eternity.

When nothing existed but chaos, your Spirit swept across the waters
and brought forth light and life.
When Hagar and Ishmael were dying of thirst,
you showed her the water which saved their lives.
When your servant, Rebekah gave a stranger a drink from her well,
you gave her a place among the mothers of Israel.
When you saw your children as slaves in Egypt,
you brought them to freedom through the sea,
and your daughter Miriam led them in singing your praise.
In the wilderness, when thirst began to overtake your children,
your servant Moses struck the rock with his staff,
and fresh water burst forth from your bounty.
Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels,
with prophets, apostles and martyrs and with faithful women and men
of every age who forever sing to the glory of your name:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of pow’r and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God.
Hosanna in the highest.

Hosanna and praise to you, O God, giver of every good gift.
In the fullness of time you sent your child Jesus to be born of our sister
Mary, and to live among us full of grace and truth.
As a first sign of his presence and power, he took water of purification
and transformed it into the wine of rejoicing.

At a well in Samaria, to a woman despised by all,
he first revealed himself to be the Christ.
He invited her to drink of his Spirit,
and to become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.
And so, remembering your gracious acts in Jesus Christ,
we take from your creation this bread and this wine
and joyfully celebrate the feast of resurrection as we await Christ’s return.
With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you
to be a living and holy sacrifice, dedicated to your service,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.
Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Eternal God, let your Holy Spirit move in power over us
and over these earthly gifts of bread and wine,
that they may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ
and that we may become one in him.
May Christ’s coming in glory find us ever watchful in prayer,
strong in truth and love, and faithful in the breaking of the bread.
Then, at last, all people will be free, all divisions healed,
all walls demolished, and with your whole creation, we will sing your
praise, through your son, Jesus Christ.
Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
the glory and honor are yours, almighty God forever and ever.

Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen.

*PRAYER OF JESUS
Eternal Spirit, Life-giver, Pain-Bearer, Love-maker,
Source of all that is and that shall be,
Mother and Father of us all, loving god in whom is heaven:
May the hallowing of your name echo through the universe.
The way of your justice be followed by the people of the world.
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings.
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope
and come on earth. With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In time of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.
Amen.