

## **Worship - Ecumenical Liturgy: Laying Down Our Stones**

*This liturgy has been adapted from the 2010 Lenten study compiled by the World Council of Churches, the World YMCA, and WSCF. It was used at the SBS! seminar in Minsk.*

### **Song**

Outcast God,  
Born into poverty in an occupied land,  
Driven from your land as your family fled violence,  
Living alongside the marginalised and the oppressed.  
Dying between criminals to the jeers of the crowd,  
Open our eyes, that we who seek to follow you may recognise your face in the faces  
of those who are enslaved.  
Open our ears, that we who seek to hear your word may recognise your love in the  
stories which are often drowned out.  
Open our hearts, that we who seek your way of life may be bold in witnessing to your  
longing for justice and peace.

**Amen**

### **Song**

#### **Lighting the candle**

God bringing light and banishing fear, we light this candle as a sign of our willingness to be your light in the world. We remember before you our own communities, the places where we live and work, the people whose lives are connected to ours. We bring before you all the people whose stories we have witnessed yesterday and will witness today, and all those whose stories have shaped our lives. In Jesus, you show us how to confront violence and how to transform it into peace and justice. Fill us with your peace, that we may be peacemakers. Fill us with your truth, that we may speak truth to power. Fill us with your courage, that we may bring hope to those who live in fear. Fill us with joy, that we may be your beacons in the world. We ask it in the name of Jesus, our brother and our friend, Amen.

**Invite participants to take a stone from the basket to hold as the Gospel is read.**

#### **Reading John 8; 2-10**

Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They said this to test

him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

### **Prayer of confession and laying down of stones**

*After each prayer a stone is laid down, at the end of the formal confession everyone is invited to come forward and lay down a stone in a communal act of confession.*

God of heaven and earth before you we confess our sin

#### **All: God of transformation hear our prayer**

We confess the terrible physical and sexual violence that so many women and girls across the globe are subjected to.

#### **All: God of transformation hear our prayer**

We confess how, even into our own time, scripture has been used to justify violence against women and their exclusion from a full role in society.

#### **All: God of transformation hear our prayer**

We confess a violent culture which turns women's bodies into sexualised commodities and sees women as part of the spoils of war and commerce.

#### **All: God of transformation hear our prayer**

We confess the structural violence of our institutions, including the Church, which too often exclude women from decision-making, power, or authority.

#### **All: God of transformation hear our prayer**

*Please move forward to lay down remaining stones. You may pray aloud or silently while placing your stone.*

### **Assurance of forgiveness and transformation**

There appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God (Luke 13; 11-13).

Let us stand to listen to words we can trust, words which help us and our societies to stand up straight, be transformed, and walk humbly in God's paths. *(please rise)*

Behold, says God, I am making all things new. I will wipe every tear from their eyes (Rev. 21; 5, 4)

For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you (Isaiah 54; 10). In the name of Christ we are forgiven.

**All: Alleluia, amen!**

***Song***