

CELEBRATE!

50th BIRTHDAY SERVICE

For all that has been - Thanks!
To all that shall be - Yes!

Dag Hammarskjold

PREPARATION 50 years is also an opportunity to prepare something special to commemorate the occasion and use the gifts of the women in your group or area to create a banner, collage, or tablecloth which can then be used in the worship. It is important that it is your worship so adapt as required to fit the local situation.

Many countries, now part of the fellowship, have a history of women's work which goes back much further than 50 years and the service is flexible to enable inclusion of these leaders and local leaders where appropriate.

The thanksgiving prayer in the service can be used as a simple prayer with appropriate names being mentioned, or used with any collage or banner which has been produced. The prayer can be used as a single item or used in sections with greetings and information about some of the people being mentioned added at the appropriate points. A wealth of material and comments can be gleaned from back copies of WORLD CWF News. It is impossible to repeat them all here.

A world map placed on the floor or a table can provide a focus for candles, symbols or pictures. Alternatively a globe can be used or a map placed on a wall or display board.

The style of the worship should make it easy to add or amend to include people relevant to the local situation. Include the names of young women and girls in the congregation or in members' families or any groups such as Guides or Girls' Brigade in those who will continue the journey. Names or pictures can be displayed and individual members commit themselves to pray regularly for specific individuals either in this part of the worship or the second part.

Make this a real time of fellowship and celebration, share food from around the world as a reminder of our global fellowship. Plan for a longer time together if your regular meetings are quite short.

HYMNS Four hymn suggestions are made but they may not be known by most places, so it will be necessary to find hymns known locally and for which words and music are available.

An opening hymn such as 'Lord for the years your love has kept and guided'.

A hymn which recognises the global nature of Christianity or a hymn from another part of the world.

A hymn about serving others such as 'Brother, sister let me serve you' or working together such as 'Weave, weave, weave us together'.

A hymn which challenges us to continue on our journey with each other and with Jesus Christ such as 'One more step along the world I go'.

INTRODUCTION The quotation from Dag Hammarskjold, a former Secretary General of the United Nations, sums up our aim in celebrating 50 years of being part of a global fellowship. This fellowship known from the beginning as the World Christian Women's Fellowship and linked to the World Convention of Churches of Christ, came about mainly through the vision, determination and enthusiasm of Jesse Trout.

This introduction can be used at the beginning of the service or on a service sheet if produced.

Include something about Jesse Trout here or as part of the Thanksgiving or Memories. There may be an older member who has a personal memory that can be included.

CALL TO WORSHIP Come let us celebrate and praise our loving God
in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For all that has been – Thanks!

HYMN 'Lord for the years' or similar

LEADER: In the beginning, there were women, women created in God's image.
And in the fullness of time there were women in every land on the earth.
And God gave them gifts, gifts of caring and creating, of sharing and serving.
Gifts of sensitivity, of a sense of justice, of peacemaking and of leadership.
Gifts to use for the sake of the kingdom.
And the women used their gifts, in their homes and families
in their churches with children, the sick and the elderly,
in their neighbourhoods and cities with the poor and the lonely,
And discovered that working together across many boundaries,
they became stronger and their gifts more effective.
Today we remember, we celebrate and we give thanks.

ALL: We believe in God who crafted creation.
We believe in God who cares for all people.
We believe in God who shows love through weakness.
We believe in God who sides with the poor.
We believe in God who entered our story.
We believe in God who was born among us.
We believe in God whose Spirit is with us.
We celebrate God's gifts of time and talents.
We celebrate God's gift of Jesus Christ.
We celebrate God's gift of peace.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

God, our Source and our Goal, we thank you for making us in your image, women and men created to care for your world.

We thank you for all that Christian women's fellowship groups have done throughout the years to create and nurture, to invent and to establish, to save and to encourage, to seek justice and to make peace, to help and to heal, to envision and to release.

We give thanks, O God, for the inspiration given to those who have opened up the way for us,
We think especially of _____

We thank you for travelling companions journeying with us today. We give thanks for the faith and courage with which many of our sisters face war and oppression. We give thanks for our local leaders, and for those with national and international responsibilities, naming _____

We give thanks for those who will continue the journey in the future, praying for wisdom to guide them in the ways of Jesus so that they too may find their joy in serving you. Be with _____ as they mature and grow.

We give thanks for the increasing opportunities for us to learn from our sisters around the world, for those who have been partners with us in meeting the needs of others and in particular we give thanks for all who have been involved in serving others through local and World CWF projects remembering _____ . In the name of Jesus, Thank you. AMEN.

MEMORIES If not included with the prayer of thanksgiving use some of the material in the Newsletter or local information at this point.

HYMN One which represents the global nature of Christianity or a hymn from another part of the world.

READING: 1 Peter 2: 4 - 10

LEADER The Jewish Scriptures tell of a pilgrim people always called by God to move on and, to learn from the experiences of their journeying, that God was always with them. We have enjoyed looking back and seeing how women of faith have journeyed over the last 50 years (*this may be more if local history has been used*); becoming part of a much wider fellowships than the local group. In our reading we are reminded of our responsibility as living stones to build a spiritual house. As God's chosen people it is our challenge to follow where Jesus is leading and to continually share the message of his love. We must build our lives and our church on Jesus, ever ready to follow him and accept the challenge of looking at things in a new way.

As a start we have a new name. Women in many parts of our global family are already using names which reflect more accurately the role they are undertaking, with such names as women's ministries. At the Retreat and Executive meeting at World Convention in Brighton in 2004 it was agreed to change our name to Global Women Connecting, our aim to be connected through prayer, study and service and to share the gospel to the ends of the earth.

HYMN / CHORUS about service or unity

LEADER On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the World CWF, Jesse Trout wrote these words for the special service. "Let's work and pray that ere our Golden Anniversary arrives we'll have a lovely world. A world of love! A warless world of peace! A world of oneness! One in the spirit of the living God and his son, Jesus Christ. Oh! the wonder! The thanksgiving! The joy! That women in every church in every land still hear Him speak those precious words 'Go quickly and tell'"

Jesse's dream is still a long way off but modern technology brings greater knowledge and awareness allowing more sharing and participation. Women are growing more confident and discovering increased freedom, their united voices are being heard, their courage achieving the seemingly impossible, their ability to love bringing reconciliation. The prayers and support of our sisters around the world can lead us all to greater acts of service and witness. May we say a resounding 'Yes!' when Jesus calls us to love and serve.

PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

ALL Ever listening God; Forgive us for actions which disregard their impact on others far and near.
Forgive us when thoughtless words devalued a sister or brother.
Forgive us when we fail to give a word of praise or encouragement.
Help us now and every moment to try to live as Jesus lived, as individuals and as a world fellowship.
We pray that our life of faith through prayer, study and service will show others your great love for them. For your forgiving grace and love, we thank you precious God, and accept the gift with gratefulness. AMEN.

OFFERTORY If possible use hats instead of collection bags or plates. The offering could be for 'Global Women Connecting' Funds or for the new service project, details of which could be included at this point.

OFFERTORY PRAYER Loving God, you are more generous to us than we can grasp because you breathe new life into us. You sent Jesus to show us how to live it to the full. This offering is one way we can thank you; help us to use it wisely so that others may have a better life. AMEN.

HYMN "One more step along the world I go" or similar

BLESSING written by Jesse Trout for the 25th Birthday Celebration

Thank you God for bringing us together today.

Fill our hearts with thanks for the past, joy for the present and anticipation for the future. AMEN

Go forth in joy and peace to love and serve the world in the name of Jesus Christ. AMEN