



ECHOES, WHISPERS, and SHOUTS

An Installation Program

Carol Q. Cosby

SCRIPTURE: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The Word was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through the Word, and without the Word not one thing came into being. What has come into being in the Word was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the deepest night, and the night did not overcome it. (John 1: 1-5 from The New Testament and Psalms, an inclusive version, Oxford University Press, 1995)

PURPOSE:

Commit ourselves anew to listening for and answering God's call as it comes to us from the past, presents itself now, and comes to be in the future

SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LEADER:

1. This service of installation includes worship; you will want to work with the worship director, planning together.
2. Publicize ahead of time that participants are invited to bring an item from home that was passed down from someone and has special meaning as a result.
3. On worship table arrange a Bible open to John 1, three candles (*with no scent or mild vanilla in recognition of those people with allergies*) on top of a brightly colored cloth, perhaps one with special meaning. Leave lots of room for items brought to be added to the table.
4. Decide with others about how you will honor those completing their terms of service. You may give them a flower or simple gift as an expression of appreciation.
5. Read through the entire service and decide how many leaders you will want. You could easily use three "voices" and three "leaders." Ask a variety of ages. Meet with them for a few minutes ahead of time, so that everyone feels comfortable with what they are going to do. Supply matches or a lighter for those lighting the candles.



PROGRAM:

(Before opening, invite everyone who has brought some item from the past to place it on the worship center, giving one short sentence of explanation about its significance. Add something of symbolic value from the group's life together, an item that represents your past, recent or long ago and say a short sentence about it.)



Voice One: (*lighting the first candle*)

Remembering the past with respect, I light this candle symbolizing what God has taught us.

Leader: Let's stand and join in singing the hymn.

Hymn: "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" pg. 190 CH

(Discussion about the past: Leader may choose to use her own examples rather than those printed here.)

Leader One: We learn from others who have come before us, who pass on their wisdom, learned from their experience. In two's or three's, let's remember some words of wisdom your "mama always said," understanding that your "mama" may be any older woman who cared about you and imparted her wisdom. For instance, my "mama" always told me (*as did Thumper's mother*) "If you can't say something nice about somebody, don't say anything at all."

(After allowing about 3 minutes for this, invite 3-4 women to share their responses with the entire group.)

Many of us learned early lessons about our faith through "mama's" teaching. Share now with each other how an important woman influenced your faith when you were still a child. For instance, my mother taught me by example to help people when they needed it. This helped me understand that being a disciple of Christ meant doing what Jesus did, not just stating a belief in him.

(After allowing about 3 minutes for this, invite 3-4 women to share their responses with the entire group.)

During this past year, we've learned some things from and with each other as we've met for study, worship, and action. Share now with each other something that you've learned this past year. For instance, I learned that people sometimes surprise you with giving gifts you didn't know they had, such as when Bonnie led our music for the first time.

(After allowing about 3 minutes for this, invite 3-4 women to share their responses with the entire group.)

Prayer: God, the giver of learning and wisdom, we celebrate how we have learned from women in our past. We thank you for those who have led us this past year and we honor and respect all who have shared their faith, helping us to strengthen our understanding. For the blessing of the past, we are truly thankful.



(At this point you could honor those who have served in the past year, giving them words and tokens of thanks as you have chosen.)

Voice Two: *(lighting the second candle)*

Honoring the present, I light this candle symbolizing this particular moment in our group's life together.



Leader Two: Will those who are being installed to serve in the year ahead, please come forward as your name is called. *(Leader will name each woman indicating the leadership role or office she will have.)*

Words of installation: Just as women in the past have done, you have said yes to a call to leadership within this group of Disciples Women. You are asked to remember and respect the past, to face the present ministry you've accepted with hope and joy, and to live into the future with the expectation and assurance that it is God's future.

Hear these words from the scriptures, words that give us the confidence to say "yes." *(Read the John 1: 1-5 scripture as printed above.)* These words are about beginnings and life and light and our faith. They are the words from the past that we need for the present and to take into our future.

Much like the words that we remember from our mothers, the foremothers who taught us so much, words of scripture come to us as a whisper, an echo from the past. Hearing these echoes, listening for these whispers, enables us to affirm our present and enter our future with a shout of thanksgiving and hope.

I ask you to believe that words of wisdom from our faith and from past leaders will give you tracks to follow. I ask you to believe that you will be making tracks of your own so that past tracks do not become ruts. I ask you to make a commitment to the future by affirming the present. If you will agree to these things and if you will agree to faithfully and responsibly fulfill the duties of the leadership position you are assuming, please say in unison, "I shout 'yes' with confidence and joy."

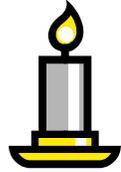
(To those others gathered) You have heard the shout of commitment made by your chosen leaders. Without your positive words and actions their work will be impossible. If you will accept these women as leaders for the coming year and will support them with your words and deeds, please say in unison, "I shout 'yes' with confidence and joy."

We will sing a hymn while our installed leaders return to their seats. Earlier we sang "Tell Me the Stories of Jesus" indicating that we want to learn much about our faith from the past. As we sing, "I Love to Tell the Story" we realize that it is now our ministry to tell others what we have learned from the past.

Hymn: "I Love To Tell the Story" 480 CH

Voice Three: (*lighting the third candle*)

Celebrating the future, I light this candle symbolizing where God will lead us in the coming year.



Leader Three: It has been said that yesterday is history, tomorrow is mystery, and today is a gift. As thankful recipients of the gift of today, let us offer our gifts of money. As we place our currency, checks, and envelopes into the offering basket, let us remember that these are not mere pieces of paper. Rather, they symbolize what we have been given and one way to live out the shout of yes to the future. We often look quite somber when we give our gifts. Let's present our offering today with a smile of joy, showing that we celebrate the future.

(Offering is taken or brought forward.)

Leader: Let's stand and sing that grand old hymn of certainty in the God of past, present, and future.

Hymn: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" 67 CH

Leader: Will you join me in prayer: We are so grateful, holy one, for the wisdom we've learned from the past. We are so hopeful about the future you have planned. And we are so excited to be your people today. Use these gifts of the present moment, both the gift of our money and the gift of our lives. Lead us through those who have accepted calls to leadership. And hear these words of benediction which we've heard echoed from the past and now pray together into the future,

(To the participants): Now join with me, saying, "God, be merciful unto us and bless us and cause your face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon the earth, your saving health among all nations, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.