

Celebrating Women Leaders in Early Christianity
Communal Prayer Service for the celebration of the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala 2010
presider's copy

Before the Service: *Set three candles on a table in the front of the gathering space. As people enter have a greeter welcome them and assist them with putting on nametags. If you have access to a projector and laptop, you may want to project images from Women Leaders in Early Christianity CD and Presenter's Guide from FutureChurch.*

Welcome by Event Organizer: Hi, my name is _____. I would like to welcome you and thank you for joining us today/this evening. Would you all please take a moment to introduce yourselves to one another? (*pause*)

Opening Song: *Gather Us In* (Marty Haugen, c. 1982, GIA Publications, Inc.)

Opening Prayer Option I: (*Please stand*)

Presider: Living God,
loving God,
we thank You
and we praise You
for the power of Your presence
deep in our hearts,
the vitality of Your presence
here in our midst,
for this opportunity
to come together
to affirm our identity
and to celebrate our common hope.
We thank You
for the quality of the achievement
that is represented here,
for the many and diverse efforts
that continue to contribute
toward the building of a better world.
Pour Your Spirit upon us.
Confirm and strengthen our vision.
Be the Hope that sustains us
and strengthens us
in these changing times,
challenging times.
God of our ancestors
our God forever,
Glory and praise!
(Winter, Miriam Therese.
WomanPrayer, WomanSong: Resources for Ritual.
c. Medical Mission Sisters, 1987)
All: *Amen*

Opening Prayer Option II: (*Please stand*)

Presider: Let us begin. In the name of Yahweh, El Shaddai, God, creator of all being; Jesus Christ, born of woman, Word made flesh, our Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, bearer of wisdom who dwells among us and within us.

All: *Amen.*

Presider: For the women of the Hebrew Scriptures, the women of the Christian Scriptures, for martyrs, mystics and saints, leaders and theologians, workers and ministers, for our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, children and friends, for all the holy women and men who have gone before us.

All: *Thanks be to God.*

Presider: For all those women and men who have taught us and called us to strength and faith.

All: *Thanks be to God.*

Presider: For the holy women and men gathered here today.

All: *Thanks be to God.*

Presider: Let us join together to learn from and to celebrate women – especially Mary of Magdala, the Apostle to the Apostles, and the holy women leaders of Early Christianity. May they give us wisdom and courage to be who God calls us to be.

ALL: *Jesus, may your Spirit, present in the lives of these women leaders of early Christianity, enlighten us today.*

Presider (*lights the first candle*): Holy Spirit, shine your light upon. Let the women of the past enlighten us. Show us how they served God and neighbor and how we can too.

Lector: A reading from the gospel of Luke (Luke 24:1-12) (*from the Bible translation of your choice*)

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.* (Words adapted from “Hail Mary: Gentle Woman” Text and music c. 1975, 1978 Carey Landry. Published by OCP.)

Stories of (some) Women Leaders in Early Christianity

Reader 1: In 1903, on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, a fourth century tombstone was found which reads: “*Here lies the minister and bride of Christ, Sophia the deacon, a second Phoebe. She fell asleep in peace on the 21st of the month of March*” (WOEC, slide 12, presenter’s notes). What does it mean to refer to a woman in the fourth century as “a second Phoebe?” Fourth century Christians in Jerusalem must have seen Sophia’s ministry as “part of the three hundred-year-old tradition dating back to that of Phoebe” in the first century (WOEC, slide 12, presenter’s notes). Phoebe, a sister in Christ, deacon, benefactor, missionary, and evangelist of whom St Paul wrote: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the Church of Cenchreae” (Romans 16:1). Cenchreae was an Eastern seaport in Corinth where Phoebe was likely the leader of a house church. Here the apostle Paul is asking the Christian community in Rome to welcome her and give her any help she may need.

“For both Phoebe and Sofia, the Greek word *diakonos* is used, [with] a masculine ending” (WOEC, slide 12, presenter’s notes). The feminine office of “deaconess” did not exist until the third century in Syrian churches. “*Diakonos* is the same word Paul used to describe his own ministry” (WOEC, slide 12, presenter’s notes). The title had various meanings: minister, servant, helper, or deacon. Certain early Church documents describe the female deacon “as a type of Holy Spirit” (Madigan and Osiek, 107), but in this case it probably meant that the person was “an official representative of the Church” (WOEC, slide 12, presenter’s notes). There is considerable evidence that “female deacons ministered from the first to the sixth centuries in Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Rome, and France” (WOEC, slide 12, presenter’s notes).

Presider: We learn with gratitude of the work of Phoebe, Sofia and all women deacons in the church.

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.*

Reader 2: In Rome, in the catacombs of Domitilla - one of many female patrons who donated ancestral lands for the burial of Christians who could not otherwise afford it, there is a fresco commemorating *Veneranda*, “she who is venerated” (WOEC slide 19, presenter’s notes). Judging from the elaborate detail of the memorial, Veneranda must have been a woman of considerable wealth. She is pictured with another woman dressed in clothing from an earlier historical period. Both women were probably leaders as “next to them are signs of their ministry, a codex and a basket with a lid and shoulder strap, called a ‘capsa’ containing scrolls” (WOEC slide 19, presenter’s notes). The other woman is *Petronella, martyr* likely “an early woman leader martyred between the late first and early third centuries” before Christianity was legalized in 313 CE (WOEC slide 19, presenter’s notes). Although she is not named specifically in any Church records as an “official” martyr, “The painting tells us that women of the fourth century both remembered and honored the earlier ministry of Petronella, along with her martyrdom for the faith” (WOEC slide 19, presenter’s notes).

In the catacombs of Priscilla who was also believed to be an early Christian martyr, there are more frescos of women dressed in clothing or in physical postures suggesting that they too were preachers or deacons or presiders at Eucharist. “Specialists in early Christian images tell us to pay special attention to the facial expressions and relational dynamics between the figures portrayed in ancient art” (WOEC slide 32, presenter’s notes). Here there are several frescos where Jesus seems to be listening or speaking to women who are proclaiming his word. Could the tomb art be telling us that “Christ became present through [the] ministry [of these women] as [they] imaged His saving power” (WOEC slide 32, presenter’s notes)?

Presider: We give thanks to you, Domitilla, Venerada and all other wealthy Christian women who preceded us. You reached out from beyond the grave to show us women leaders of other eras, and martyrs like Petronella, of whom we never would have known if not for your generosity.

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.*

Reader 3: Perhaps one of the greatest attestations to the leadership roles women assumed in the early Church is in a letter from Pope Gelasius I to the bishops of southern Italy and Sicily, written in the year 494 CE which states: “Nevertheless we have heard to our annoyance that divine affairs have come to such a low state that women are encouraged to officiate at the sacred altars, and to take part in all matters imputed to the offices of the male sex, to which they do not belong” (WOEC slide 25, presenter’s notes).

In Tropea in the south of Italy there is a tombstone of a woman which reads: “*Sacred to her good memory Leta the Presbyter lived 40 years, 8 months, 9 days, for whom her husband set up this tomb. She preceded him in peace on the day before the Ides of May.*” And another tombstone in Sicily that reads: “*Here lies Kale presbyter, who lived fifty years blamelessly. She died on the nineteenth kallends of October*” (WOEC slide 25, presenter’s notes). And there is a document in Croatia that describes one Flavia Vitalia as a “*matrona*” (matron) and “*presbytera sancta*” (holy presbyter) (WOEC slide 25, presenter’s notes).

Of course we do not know if “*presbyter/a*” meant “priest” as we think of the office today, but we do know that it was an official title held by both men and women. There is also epigraphical evidence, albeit less, of women being called “*episcopa*” or bishop. From both the literary and epigraphical evidence we can assume that women held positions in the Church as deacons, priests and bishops, and that they preached and even presided over the Eucharist.

Presider: We are grateful for these records which point to women as Church leaders. We pray that once again women’s gifts will be recognized and more fully utilized in our church today.

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.*

Options for Reflection:

Option 1: Listening Session in Preparation for the American Catholic Council (*resources and further information available at www.futurechurch.org*)

Option 2: Presider: “Throughout history and at present there have been and are many valiant women, generous, gifted, who have given of themselves for the benefit of many with little or no recompense. Reflect on your own experience. Do you feel that the contributions of women have been duly recognized and affirmed by the Church or in society? Do you feel that your own gifts and contributions have been recognized and affirmed? Give an example, recall an incident from your experience, to illustrate your response.” (Winter, Miriam Therese. *WomanPrayer, WomanSong: Resources for Ritual*. c. Medical Mission Sisters, 1987)

Or give an example of how women could be recognized in the Church today. (20 minutes)

Presider (lights second candle): As this candle is lit let us remember the names of the women leaders of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and the women leaders of Early Christianity portrayed on sarcophagi, memorial frescos and named on tombstones, who are too often forgotten.

Litany of Holy Women (*If you have a cantor this can be sung in plainsong/chant. If not it can be read.*)

Cantor: Image of God, Eve	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Ancestor in faith, Sarah	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Courageous maidservant, Hagar	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Valiant immigrant, Ruth	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Ever faithful, Hannah	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Trusting in God, Susanna	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Mother of God, Mary	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Apostle to the Apostles, Mary Magdalene	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Evangelizing Samaritan woman	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Prominent among the apostles, Junia	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Leaders of house churches: Lydia, Nympha, Prisca	All: <i>Pray for us</i>

Cantor: Deacons, Phoebe, Sophia, Olympias	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Martyr, Petronella	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Preacher, Veneranda	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Good News proclaimer, Bitalia	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Kale, Leta and Flavia Vitalia: Presbyters	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Theodora Episcopa	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Women of Saint Praxedis	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: All you Holy Women Leaders	All: <i>Pray for us</i>

Presider (*lights the third candle*): We light this final candle and ask the intercession of all those Holy Women to guide us with their wisdom. Light our way as we struggle to imagine a church where once again women are valued and recognized as leaders alongside their brothers.

Reflection on Action Resolutions: As we call upon these women to guide us, let us take some time in silent reflection to determine what next step or action you can take to bring forth a Church that values the leadership of women. (*Hand out commitment form. Allow ample time- at least 5 minutes. A reflection piece of music may be added.*)

Ritual of being called by name and blessing each other:

Presider: We have heard the stories of women leaders we never knew existed and heard the stories of those gathered here today. Please come forward and bless one another (with water or oil) and pray: “N, you are called by name. Go forth and proclaim, “I have seen the Lord.””

Closing Prayer: Gracious and ever loving God, we thank you for being with us and guiding our celebration today. “May the fire of the Holy Spirit build equality and respect in your Church and in our world. We trust that your resurrection Love, first proclaimed by Mary of Magdala, is able to do more than we ask or imagine” (2008 MM celebration). We ask this through Jesus Christ our redeemer and savior. **All:** *Amen.*

Closing Song: *We Are Many Parts* (Marty Haugen, text and music c. 1980, 1986, GIA Publications, Inc) or *We Are Called* (David Haas, c. 1988, GIA Publications, Inc.) or *other song of your choosing.*

Quotes throughout this service are taken from Women Leaders in Early Christianity CD and Presenter's Guide by Sr. Christine Schenk csj available at <http://www.futurechurch.org>. It includes 43 images from catacomb frescos, newly available sarcophagi friezes, original art, paintings and mosaics of early Christian women leaders from the first to the 9th centuries. A sixteen-page presenter's guide includes carefully researched summaries of what experts can tell us about these artifacts. It is ideal for personal or group study as well as high school or college religious studies courses. CD includes Powerpoint and Pdf formats.

Prayer service created by Robin Senior. Robin has been married for 32 years and is the mother of four daughters. She received her Master of Arts degree in Theology in 2006 and now teaches various courses in adult formation. She presents her thesis "An Exploration of the Roles of Women in the Early Church" when the opportunity arises. She received her master's degree from the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, NY and is presently serving on their re-accreditation committee and the board of their graduate association. She is an active member of her parish community, a member of VOTF and FutureChurch.

<p>FutureChurch • 17307 Madison Ave. • Lakewood, OH 44107 • 216-228-0869 info@futurechurch.org • www.futurechurch.org</p>
--

Celebrating Women Leaders in Early Christianity
Prayer Service with Guided Imagery for the celebration of the Feast of St. Mary of Magdala 2010
presider's copy

Before the Service: *Set three candles on a table in the front of the gathering space. As people enter have a greeter welcome them and assist them with putting on nametags. If you have access to a projector and lap top, you may want to project images from Women Leaders in Early Christianity CD and Presenter's Guide from FutureChurch.*

Welcome by Event Organizer: Hi, my name is _____. I would like to welcome you and thank you for joining us today/this evening. Would you all please take a moment to introduce yourselves to one another? (*pause*)
Guided imagery is woven throughout this prayer service. For those of you not familiar with guided imagery, it is a style of prayer that involves using your imagination and mental images to help you enter into the experience. Periodically throughout the service you will be asked to close your eyes and the presider will lead you in a series of these guided meditations. When you open your eyes it may be helpful to softly focus them on a point in front of you.

Background Music: *Canticle* (Liam Lawton: "Beyond Words") and/or *Eternity* (Rohani Shardad: "When It's Time for Letting Go").
Or other music you select.

Presider: Let us take a moment to center ourselves. Close your eyes... breathe. Breathe in the Holy Spirit, the breath of life. Breathe out any thoughts of the world, any preoccupations. Let them float away. Focus on your breath... (*sit quietly for several minutes*).

Opening Prayer Option I: (*Please stand*)

Presider: Living God,
loving God,
we thank You
and we praise You
for the power of Your presence
deep in our hearts,
the vitality of Your presence
here in our midst,
for this opportunity
to come together
to affirm our identity
and to celebrate our common hope.
We thank You
for the quality of the achievement
that is represented here,
for the many and diverse efforts
that continue to contribute
toward the building of a better world.
Pour Your Spirit upon us.
Confirm and strengthen our vision.
Be the Hope that sustains us
and strengthens us
in these changing times,
challenging times.
God of our ancestors
our God forever,
Glory and praise!
(Winter, Miriam Therese, *Woman Prayer, Woman Song*, p. 116)
All: *Amen*

Opening Prayer Option II: (*Please stand*)

Presider: Let us begin. In the name of Yahweh, El Shaddai, God, creator of all being; Jesus Christ, born of woman, Word made flesh, our Redeemer; and the Holy Spirit, bearer of wisdom who dwells among us and within us.
All: *Amen.*
Presider: For the women of the Hebrew Scriptures, the women of the Christian Scriptures, for martyrs, mystics and saints, leaders and theologians, workers and ministers, for our grandmothers, mothers, sisters, children and friends, for all the holy women and men who have gone before us.
All: *Thanks be to God.*
Presider: For all those women and men who have taught us and called us to strength and faith.
All: *Thanks be to God.*
Presider: For the holy women and men gathered here today.
All: *Thanks be to God.*

Presider: Let us join together to learn from and to celebrate women – especially Mary of Magdala, the Apostle to the Apostles, and the holy women leaders of Early Christianity. May they give us wisdom and courage to be who God calls us to be. **ALL:** *Jesus, may your Spirit, present in the lives of these women of early Christianity, enlighten us today.*

Presider: Please be seated. **Background Music:** *Aramaic Sound Pilgrimage - Holy Wanderings In The Ecstatic* Jahanara Laura Mangus © Copyright-Jahanara Laura Mangus (837101335638) Record Label: Jahanara Laura Mangus (available online at <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/jlmangus>) (or other Aramaic music of your choice)

Presider (*lights the first candle*): Holy Spirit, shine your light upon us as we travel back to another place and time. Let the women of the past enlighten us. Show us how they served God and neighbor and how we can too.

Presider: Close your eyes and imagine yourself in first century Cenchreae, the eastern port of Corinth. Imagine the sights and sounds, the smell of the port, the sound of the gulls (*pause*). The sun is warm yet there is a cool breeze. How does it feel on your skin? (*pause*) Look at the people around you. Most of the women have their heads covered with a veil and fabric is draped about them (*pause*). Feel the dust on your feet and between your toes (*pause*).

You are about to enter the house church of Phoebe, a sister in Christ, deacon, benefactor, missionary, and evangelist of whom St Paul wrote: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the Church of Cenchreae” (Romans 16:1). As you enter the house notice the people around you. How does the house smell? Is that a touch of frankincense? (*pause*) The ceiling is low and the room small. Is it crowded? Are people brushing against you? (*pause*) A Sabbath day celebration of the Eucharist has begun. Open your eyes, (*stand?*) and listen as the Gospel is proclaimed. (*music fades*)

Lector: A reading from the gospel of Luke (Luke 24:1-12) (*from the Bible translation of your choice*)

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.* (Words adapted from “Hail Mary: Gentle Woman” Text and music c. 1975, 1978 Carey Landry. Published by OCP.) **Silent Reflection**

Presider: Phoebe is preaching, but we must move on. (*Same background music*) Close your eyes. Imagine you have traveled forward from the first century to fourth century Jerusalem where you find yourself on the Mount of Olives, the warm sun on your skin, a gentle breeze rustling the branches of the olive trees (*pause*). Before you is a tombstone which reads “*Here lies the minister and bride of Christ, Sophia the deacon, a second Phoebe. She fell asleep in peace on the 21st of the month of March.*”

Open your eyes if you wish... (*Music fades*)

Surely the Jerusalem community understands “Sophia’s ministry to be part of the three hundred-year-old tradition dating back to the Phoebe of Roman’s 16” whose house church we just visited.

Lector: “For both Phoebe and Sofia, the Greek word *diakonos* is used, [with] a masculine ending.” The feminine office of “deaconess” did not exist until the third century in Syrian churches. “*Diakonos* is the same word Paul used to describe his own ministry.” The title had various meanings: “minister,” “servant,” helper,” or “deacon.” Certain early Church documents describe the female deacon “as a type of Holy Spirit” (Madigan and Osiek, 107), but in this case it probably meant that the person was “an official representative of the Church.” There is considerable evidence that “female deacons ministered from the first to the sixth centuries in Palestine, Asia Minor, Greece, Macedonia, Rome, and France.”

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.*

Background music: Gregorian chant of your choosing (*available at www.amazon.com and elsewhere*)

Presider: Close your eyes... Leaving Sophia’s tomb you find yourself in the fifth century in the catacombs of Domitilla in Rome. “Domitilla was one of many female patrons who donated ancestral lands for the burial of Christians who could not otherwise afford it.” Breathe in the musty smell of damp earth and wrap your mantle more closely about you to keep out the chill air. (*pause*) You may open your eyes. (*music fades*)

Lector: We stand before a memorial of a woman of considerable wealth given the elaborate detail of the fresco – *Veneranda*, “she who is venerated.” Venerada is pictured with another woman dressed in clothing from an earlier historical period. Both women were probably leaders as “next to them are signs of their ministry, a codex and a basket

with a lid and shoulder strap, called a ‘capsa’ containing scrolls.” The other woman is **Petronella, martyr** likely “an early woman leader martyred between the late first and early third centuries” before Christianity was legalized in 313 CE. Although she is not named specifically in any Church records as an “official” martyr, “The painting tells us that women of the fourth century both remembered and honored the earlier ministry of Petronella, along with her martyrdom for the faith.”

As we move along to the catacombs of Priscilla we see more frescos of women dressed in clothing or in physical postures suggesting that they too were preachers or deacons or presiders at Eucharist. “Specialists in early Christian images tell us to pay special attention to the facial expressions and relational dynamics between the figures portrayed in ancient art.” We see several where Jesus seems to be listening or speaking to women who are proclaiming his word. Could the tomb art be telling us that “Christ became present through [the] ministry [of these women] as [they] imaged His saving power’?

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.*

(Gregorian chant music comes up) **Presider:** Close your eyes, we have one more stop on our journey. Still in Rome, in the year 494 CE you are standing outside a window of the Lateran Palace where Pope Gelasius I resides. You overhear the Pope dictating to his scribe, a letter meant for the bishops in southern Italy and Sicily. *(music fades)*

Reader 1: “...Nevertheless we have heard to our annoyance that divine affairs have come to such a low state that women are encouraged to officiate at the sacred altars, and to take part in all matters imputed to the offices of the male sex, to which they do not belong.”

Presider: “How can this be?” you whisper to your friend who is standing beside you. Your friend replies...

Lector: Yes, there was a woman from Tropea in the south of Italy whose tombstone reads:

“Sacred to her good memory Leta the Presbyter lived 40 years, 8 months, 9 days, for whom her husband set up this tomb. She preceded him in peace on the day before the Ides of May.”

And there is also a tombstone in Sicily that reads:

“Here lies Kale presbyter, who lived fifty years blamelessly. She died on the nineteenth kallends of October” – that’s September 14. And there is a document in Croatia that describes one Flavia Vitalia as a “*matrona*” (matron) and “*presbytera sancta*” (holy presbyter).

Presider: You may open your eyes...

Of course we do not know if “*presbyter/a*” meant “priest” as we think of the office today, but we do know that it was an official title held by both men and women. There is also epigraphical evidence, albeit less, of women being called “*episcopa*” or bishop. From both the literary and epigraphical evidence we can assume that women held positions in the Church as deacons, priests and bishops, and that they preached and even presided over the Eucharist.

All (sing): *Gentle women, quiet lights, as morning star, so strong and bright. Gentle women, peaceful doves, teach us wisdom, teach us love.*

Options for Reflection:

Option 1: Listening Session in Preparation for the American Catholic Council (*see further information at www.futurechurch.org*)

Option 2: Presider: “Throughout history and at present there have been and are many valiant women, generous, gifted, who have given of themselves for the benefit of many with little or no recompense. Reflect on your own experience. Do you feel that the contributions of women have been duly recognized and affirmed by the Church or in society? Do you feel that your own gifts and contributions have been recognized and affirmed? Give an example, recall an incident from your experience, to illustrate your response” (Winter, Miriam Therese, *Woman Prayer, Woman Song*, p. 117). Or give an example of how women could be recognized in the Church today. *(20 minutes)*

Presider (*lights second candle*): As this candle is lit let us remember the names of the women leaders of the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures and the women leaders of Early Christianity portrayed on sarcophagi, memorial frescos and named on tombstones, who are too often forgotten.

Litany of Holy Women (*If you have a cantor this can be sung in plainsong/chant. If not it can be read.*)

Cantor: Image of God, Eve	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Leaders of house churches:	
Cantor: Ancestor in faith, Sarah	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Lydia, Nympha, Prisca	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Courageous maidservant, Hagar	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Deacons, Phoebe, Sophia, Olympias	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Valiant immigrant, Ruth	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Martyr, Petronella	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Ever faithful, Hannah	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Preacher, Veneranda	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Trusting in God, Susanna	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Good News proclaimer, Bitalia	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Mother of God, Mary	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Kale, Leta and Flavia Vitalia:	
Cantor: Apostle to the Apostles, Mary Magdalene	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Presbyters	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Evangelizing Samaritan woman	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Theodora Episcopa	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
Cantor: Prominent among the apostles, Junia	All: <i>Pray for us</i>	Cantor: Women of Saint Praxedis	All: <i>Pray for us</i>
		Cantor: All you Holy Women Leaders	All: <i>Pray for us</i>

Presider (*lights the third candle*): We light this final candle and ask the intercession of all those Holy Women to guide us with their wisdom. Light our way as we struggle to imagine a church where once again women are valued and recognized as leaders alongside their brothers.

Reflection on Action Resolutions: As we call upon these women to guide us, let us take some time in silent reflection to determine what next step or action you can take to bring forth a Church that values the leadership of women. (*Hand out commitment form. Allow ample time- at least 5 minutes. A reflection piece of music may be added.*)

Ritual of being called by name and blessing each other: (*If your group does the commitment forms, they could bring them forward and place them in a basket before they are blessed.*)

Presider: We have heard the stories of women leaders we never knew existed and heard the stories of those gathered here today. Please come forward and bless one another (with water or oil) and pray: “N, you are called by name. Go forth and proclaim, “I have seen the Lord.””

Closing Prayer by Presider: Gracious and ever loving God, we thank you for being with us and guiding our celebration today. “May the fire of the Holy Spirit build equality and respect in your Church and in our world. We trust that your resurrection Love, first proclaimed by Mary of Magdala, is able to do more than we ask or imagine” (2008 MM celebration). We ask this through Jesus Christ our redeemer and savior. **All: Amen.**

Closing Song: *We Are Many Parts* (Marty Haugen, text and music c. 1980, 1986, GIA Publications, Inc) or *We Are Called* (David Haas, c. 1988, GIA Publications, Inc.) or other song of your choosing.

Quotes throughout this service are taken from Women Leaders in Early Christianity CD and Presenter's Guide available at <http://www.futurechurch.org>. It includes 43 images from catacomb frescos, newly available sarcophagi friezes, original art, paintings and mosaics of early Christian women leaders from the first to the 9th centuries. A sixteen-page presenter's guide includes carefully researched summaries of what experts can tell us about these artifacts. It is ideal for personal or group study as well as high school or college religious studies courses. CD includes Powerpoint and Pdf formats.

Prayer service created by Robin Senior. Robin has been married for 32 years and is the mother of four daughters. She received her Master of Arts degree in Theology in 2006 and now teaches various courses in adult formation. She presents her thesis "An Exploration of the Roles of Women in the Early Church" when the opportunity arises. She is also serving on the re-accreditation committee of the seminary in which she studied and is on the board of their graduate association. She is an active member of her parish community, a member of VOTF and FutureChurch.

FutureChurch • 17307 Madison Ave. • Lakewood, OH 44107 • 216-228-0869
info@futurechurch.org • www.futurechurch.org



**You are called by name.
Go forth and proclaim,
"I have seen the Lord."**

Inspired by the witness of St. Mary of Magdala and the women leaders of early Christianity, I resolve to advocate for women in the Church today by choosing to take some or all of the following actions:

- I will become a FutureChurch local contact to advance Women and the Word efforts in my parish and diocese. I understand that FutureChurch will help me and my friends work on this.
- I will spread the good news about Women Leaders in Early Christianity by hosting an educational program for my parish, small faith sharing community, etc.

I will obtain and reflect on the Million Voices packet which contains tools to resist unjust suppression by some officials of issues facing the Church. I will look for opportunities to use the tools to foster dialogue about women in the church.

I will request a meeting with our pastor/chair of adult ed/liturg commission and

- share a copy of the America article "It's Not All About Eve" and "Women in the Bible and Lectionary" article by Sr. Ruth Fox.
- ask the parish to sponsor an educational program addressing women in the scriptures and women leaders in church history

I will begin a Woman and the Word column in my parish bulletin to educate about women leaders in the past and present.

Other: _____

I make this resolution this _____ of _____, 2010.

Signed: _____

For support in carrying out your resolutions, free resources, additional materials, contact:

FutureChurch
17307 Madison Ave. - Lakewood, OH 44107
216-228-0869 X3 - magdala@futurechurch.org
www.futurechurch.org
YOUR COPY

**You are called by name.
Go forth and proclaim,
"I have seen the Lord."**

Inspired by the witness of St. Mary of Magdala and the women leaders of early Christianity, I resolve to advocate for women in the Church today by choosing to take some or all of the following actions:

I will become a FutureChurch local contact to advance Women and the Word efforts in my parish and diocese. I understand that FutureChurch will help me and my friends work on this.

I will spread the good news about Women Leaders in Early Christianity by hosting an educational program for my parish, small faith sharing community, etc.

I will obtain and reflect on the Million Voices packet which contains tools to resist unjust suppression by some officials of issues facing the Church. I will look for opportunities to use the tools to foster dialogue about women in the church.

I will request a meeting with our pastor/chair of adult ed/liturg commission and

- share a copy of the America article: "It's Not All About Eve" and article on "Women in the Bible and Lectionary" by Sr. Ruth Fox.
- ask the parish to sponsor an educational program addressing women in the scriptures and women leaders in church history

I will begin a Woman and the Word column in my parish bulletin to educate about women leaders in the past and present.

Other: _____

I make this resolution this _____ of _____, 2010.

Signed: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone: _____

Email (Most Important!) _____

Optional: Return to FutureChurch
17307 Madison Ave. - Lakewood, OH 44107
magdala@futurechurch.org
FUTURECHURCH COPY" (OPTIONAL)