

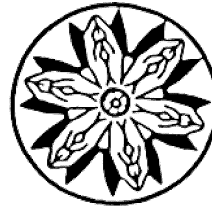
Song: **In a World Full of Sorrow** or other song to send the congregation out with a blessing.  
(Words and music by Judith Snowden in honour of WICC's 100th Anniversary. Contact WICC for sheet music, or see the hymn video at [wicc.org/all-together-now/](http://wicc.org/all-together-now/) )

*In a world full of sorrow with many a need,  
We are faced with injustice, and tempted by greed.  
In a world where the broken and wounded seek peace,  
We are called to act kindly and offer release.*

*May the words that we utter, and the works of our hands,  
Lead to justice for others and heal our land.*

*For the Spirit has called us to reach out with care,  
To bring comfort and nurture through action and prayer.  
Let us all work together united as one,  
To bring wholeness and goodness as shaped by God's love.*

*May the words that we utter, and the works of our hands,  
Lead to justice for others and heal our land.*



# **Stand Up for Human Dignity**

## **Fellowship of the Least Coin**

### **Ingathering Service 2018**

Luke 4.18-19; Micah 6.8 (NRSV)

#### **Opening Meditation**

The essence of our dignity comes from our being human – each of us created in God's image. Being human means treating all others with respect and dignity regardless of our many differences. Standing up for human dignity means treating ourselves with respect and dignity as women and all others with respect and dignity as God's Creation.

#### **Invitation**

We are invited to be still, and know that God is (Psalm 46.10a). So let us be still. Let us be fully aware that we are in the loving presence of God. Let us listen. Listen to our breathing, take in the breath of God, and breathe out love that is of God.

#### **Prayer**

God of Life, we praise you. We pray that we may feel your loving presence in this place. We pray for openness to hear and wisdom to discern how we can be more attuned to you today. Grant us humility and grace to see, hear, and know you more, through our worship today. Amen.

#### **Scripture Reading 1: Luke 4.18-19 (NRSV)**

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## Scripture Reading 2: Micah 6.8 (NRSV)

< *Moment of silence* >

### Song: Come to the Circle

*Come to the circle, and tell your story.*

*Listen, and share the world inside you.*

*Come to the circle, your friends are waiting,*

*To listen and share their stories, too.*

### Women's Stories

*(Can be presented creatively through role playing, skit, or creative reading)*

**Reader 1:** I am Isabis from Africa. At a young age, I was raped and became pregnant. As an orphan of parents who died of AIDS, there was no one to turn to. Finally, a women's centre took me in and helped me. I was able to go to school, learn to read, to write, and do math while my baby was cared for at the women's centre's nursery. The center cared for me and advocated for me to demand that my rapist acknowledge my child and give support. At the centre, I also learned how to bake bread which became something that I love doing. Now, I am out of the centre, I have a small bakery in the community, and I can take care of my child.

**All:** We hear you, Isabis. Thank you for your story of courage and perseverance. Praise God for the women at the centre who cared for you and helped you!

< *Moment of silence* >

## Sharing About the Fellowship of the Least Coin

### Offering Of Our Least Coins

#### Doxology

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Praise God, all creatures high and low. Praise God, in Jesus fully known: Creator, Word, and Spirit One. Amen.*

#### FLC Prayer

O loving Creator, we present ourselves in your divine presence to thank you for all of the beautiful gifts of life. We are especially grateful for the Fellowship of the Least Coin which binds us together in love and forgiveness around the world. Free us from all doubts and prejudices, we pray. Inspire us to love in solidarity with humankind that we may know the joy of giving and receiving. Accept our least coins, our tokens of prayer and love for one another. Make us mindful of the miracles of these coins. Let us honour all your Creation with love, as shown through the life and resurrection of your son, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

#### Closing Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

*(recited in the language of your choice)*

#### Sending and Blessing

**Worship Leader:** We are the salt of the earth!

**All:** We are the light of the world!

**Worship Leader:** Miracles happen when we share what we have.

**All:** Thanks be to God!

< *Moment of silence* >

**Worship Leader:** These are the life stories of our sisters standing up for human dignity – for themselves and for others. These life stories are gifts to us so that we can understand a little more what women all over the world face on a daily basis and so that we may discern what God wills for us to do in our lives. If you are so moved, you are invited to share your own story and all of us will listen once more to the women in our midst who stand up for human dignity.

## Moment of Sharing

**Song:** Chorus of “Blessed Assurance”

*This is our story, this is our song; praising our Saviour  
all the day long!*

*This is our story, this is our song; praising our Saviour  
all the day long!*

## Our Challenge

**All:** The situations in the world today call on us to stand up for human dignity. Standing up means doing everything possible, with God’s help, to uphold, protect, and promote human dignity. We can do this through prayer, teaching, preaching, engaging leaders, showing love for all, and speaking out against acts of violence against women, men, children, seniors, and all vulnerable people. Whatever you and I do as individuals or as a group to stand up for human dignity will go round and round like all of our least coins, and it will bear much fruit for God’s glory. Let us do what we can, with what we have, right where we are.

**Reader 2:** I am Manale, a mother of three from Lebanon. I am a survivor of domestic abuse, and recently, I was accused of adultery. My family rejected me, and I was sent to a women’s prison for one-and-half years. I was totally destroyed, depressed, and sometimes hysterical. A social worker and a psychologist helped me share my story. A lawyer assisted me and helped to reduce my sentence. Then I joined a computer class and jewelry-making workshop. When I get released, I hope to find a safe place to stay, find a job, and possibly reunite with my family. I hope to embrace my children.

**All:** We hear you, Manale. Thank you for your story of resilience. Thank you God, for sending kind people to help her.

< *Moment of silence* >

**Reader 3:** I am Renema from India. My sister, Sentila, is a widow. She called me up one day saying that she was shocked and traumatized by some of her neighbours who were quarreling. She sounded different. She wanted me to come immediately. So, I took the overnight train. She was fearful, incoherent, illogical, and perhaps hallucinating. Not only was she entering menopause, she had also been living in poverty with her abusive and alcoholic husband for the past 19 years. She wanted me to stay near her. So I took her to a psychiatrist and then to another physician. Then we went to prayers and Bible study. We recollected fond memories and shared laughter with tears. My sister, Sentila, is healing.

**All:** We hear you, Renema. Thank you for being a compassionate sister to Sentila. Thank you for your compassionate heart.

< *Moment of silence* >

**Reader 4:** I am Marie from the United States. I grew up in the foster-care system. I was abandoned by my mother and went from one home to another where I was physically and sexually abused. Eventually I ran away and lived on the street. Turning to drugs and alcohol led me into a world of despair and addiction. I ended up in the Barnstable County Correctional Facility on Cape Cod where I experienced a Residents Encounter Christ (REC) weekend. The REC weekends began in 1991, and it was run by laymen and women from the Roman Catholic Diocese. Since then it's been a source of transformation for many of the residents. A team of men and women go in for three days and present a program of love and forgiveness where the sacrament of reconciliation is offered. The team does not judge but simply presents the message of God's unconditional love. Today I am living at St. Clare House, a transitional home for women coming out of prison. I thank God daily that I did encounter the risen Christ in the men and women who came to the jail to share their time, their faith, and their love with me and my fellow residents.

**All: We hear you, dear Marie. We admire your open heart. Thank you for your story.**

< *Moment of silence* >

**Reader 5:** I am Merinita from Albania. At a women's training workshop we read Bible stories, imagined what it would be like if Jesus visited us today, and learned about the World Day of Prayer and the Fellowship of the Least Coin. We also learned about body awareness, women's sexual health care, personal hygiene, HIV and sexually transmitted diseases,

nutrition, and how to care for babies. We shared our life stories and prayed together. In our culture, we don't openly talk about our bodies. Also, it was the first time that some of us got out of our homes, met other women, and talked to them, as our husbands and mothers-in-law don't usually allow women to socialize. I met new women friends with whom I was able to openly share my joys and sorrows. I received a hygiene kit and a food package. I am happy!

**All: We hear you, Merinita. We admire your courage to make new friends and learn from other women. Thank you for your story.**

< *Moment of silence* >

**Reader 6:** I am Elisabeth and I share with you a piece of many women's stories in Latin America: "The wise women were accompanied by young women, heirs of their struggles and beneficiaries of their revolution who explained that they have been struggling for so many years. We want to be like them, grow older, and reach their age, and know that we still are struggling. Each year that comes to an end, we hope to be able to say: "This has been a year of struggle!" It seems like we've taken another step towards a diverse feminist collective, challenging the foundation of patriarchal dominance. We struggle with and question the power relations in all spheres of life, public and private, to defend democracy. This is a very hopeful movement, things are moving.

**All: Thank you, Elisabeth, for sharing this very hopeful story of older and younger women struggling side by side to stand up for human dignity.**