# Oaks of Righteousness

# An International Women’s Day Service

*(Prior to the service, find a large bare branch that can be placed in a weighted vase or container so that it resembles a small tree. Cut “leaves” from green paper, punching holes in one end and threading a circle of yarn through the hole. Have markers or pens available for the community to use to write on the leaves with.)*

## Call to Worship

**Voice 1:** We celebrate women’s voices, proclaiming wisdom.

**Voice 2:** We honour women’s lives, forging new paths.

**Voice 1:** We remember women’s faith, strong amid challenge.

**Voice 2:** We anticipate women’s vision, calling us into the future.

**All: Past, present, and future, our lives join with women everywhere.**

## Song

## Reading

**Isaiah 61:1–3 (NRSV)**

**The spirit of…God is upon me, because [God] has anointed me [to] bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners…[and] to comfort all who mourn; …to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of God.**

*(Members of the community are invited to take a leaf, and write names/descriptions of women who are in circumstances needing solidarity and support.)*

## Response

There are women yearning for good news.

**All: We will speak out.**

There are women whose hearts are broken.

**All: We will reach out.**

There are women who have lost their freedom.

**All: We will seek justice.**

There are women who mourn.

**All: We will stand with them.**

*(All are invited to tie their leaves on the branch, naming the women they have written down.)*

They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of God.

**All: They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of God.**

## Song

## Reading

**Proverbs 3:13, 17–18**

**Happy are those who find wisdom…for…her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.** *(Members of the community are invited to take a leaf, and write names/descriptions of women who have inspired or supported them.)*

## Prayer

Holy One,

Each life has been shaped and touched by women.

Women’s stories may have been ignored or forgotten,

but, today, we claim their worth.

We give thanks for all women who have been

part of your holy story,

all women who form a tree of life.

For leaders and liberators like Miriam, Deborah, and Esther,

for poets and prophets like Huldah, Anna, Mary, and Hannah,

for apostles and activists like Mary Magdalene, Lydia, and Priscilla,

for the named and the nameless, all vital to the story.

For women whose gifts of

strength, imagination,

wisdom and compassion

have been a tree a life for us,

we offer our thanks and name them now:

*(All are invited to place their leaves on the branch, naming the women they have written down.)*

We are witnesses to the many ways that women’s lives

contribute to the ongoing story of God’s eternal love.

May this wisdom continue to take root and grow. Amen.

## Song

## Blessing

**May we find our roots in God’s steady grace.**

**May nourishment flow from sweet waters of compassion.**

**May we stand tall with strength and perseverance.**

**May the green gift of hope be our instinct and proclamation.**

**May we bless and be blessed in each season of this life. Amen.**

*Prepared by* ***Keri Wehlander****. Keri is an author, hymn lyricist, spiritual director and retreat leader. Her first two books are well utilized worship resources in congregations, church camps, retreat settings and by individuals desiring to deepen their prayer life. Most recently, she compiled and edited a book called* Creating Change: The Arts as Catalyst for Spiritual Transformation, *which includes writings by Diana Butler Bass, Henri Nouwen, Barbara Brown Taylor, Thomas Merton and others.  Keri is passionate about exploring ways that encounters with the Holy can deepen and hold us.*