Some people present at the 2015 Exec Commission expressed the need for a liturgy for the service of repentance and confession called for during the month of August.

Here is a suggested order of service which can be used for this purpose. It is only intended to be a starting point from which ministers and elders or lay preachers can develop their order of service for the day.

It may be useful to remember "Repentance is not the punitive practice of penance but the transforming practice of facing the truth and turning away from sin."
-- [Brian Zahnd](http://brianzahnd.com/), \**UNconditional?*\*, p.123

A very useful link for planning any service of repentance and confession can be found at:

<http://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/a-service-of-confession-and-renewal/>

**Call to Worship**

Mark 1: 15“The time has come,” Jesus said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

OR

Psalm 984 -
Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth,
    burst into jubilant song with music;
**5**make music to the Lord with the harp,
    with the harp and the sound of singing,
**6**with trumpets and the blast of the ram’s horn—
    shout for joy before the Lord, the King.

**7**Let the sea resound, and everything in it,
    the world, and all who live in it.
**8**Let the rivers clap their hands,
    let the mountains sing together for joy;
**9**let them sing before the Lord,
    for he comes to judge the earth.
He will judge the world in righteousness
    and the peoples with equity.

**Prayer(s) of approach and general confession.**

God of grace,

You have called all creation into being

And have declared it good,

We worship you as we come together as your people today.

You have revealed yourself to people

And through men and women over the span of many years.

Your nurturing presence has cradled us, your children.

You have encouraged us to grow in grace,

And have provided all that we need to flourish.

We praise you for your patient love

Made known to us as we read the Scriptures,

And hear how you guided your people through the wilderness.

We thank you that your wisdom beckons to us alluringly,

Inviting us to know you and to walk in your ways.

Truth and beauty shine from your throne as glorious light,

Breaking into our darkness, and removing the scales from our eyes.

Lord, we are awed by your holy presence,

We are both amazed and startled by what we see.

We are amazed by your splendour, your majesty and your power.

Your rule extends beyond space, into infinity;

Beyond time, into eternity.

You are the King of Kings,

yet we have refused your rule in our lives.

We are appalled at our sinfulness,

the damage we have caused to other people,

to ourselves and to all of creation.

We dare to approach you for forgiveness and for help

Only because you have shown us your compassion,

We know that your mercies are new every morning

Your faithfulness never ends.

Through Jesus we know the cost and the extent of your love for us.

We are humbled now, as we remember Him

And we ask You to forgive us,

To renew us and to restore us.

Lord, as your children, we put our trust in you.

We long to be cradled again in your arms

And to hear your gentle voice,

speaking the words of life to us as we abandon ourselves to your love.

Thank you, Loving God, that we can find our rest in you

Through Christ our Lord

Amen.

Hymn suggestions:

# You Made Us In Your Image

AURELIA  7.6.7.6 D ("The Church's One Foundation")

You made us in your image, O God of love and grace;
You treasure every person in every time and place.
You call your world to follow—to see in every one
A person loved and cherished, your daughter or your son.

Your will is for your people to live in safety here,
With dignity and justice, and free from want or fear.
In families and nations, may all know freedom’s song;
May all enjoy the blessing to choose where they belong.

You warn against enslavement and things that would oppress.
You call for living wages, for times of welcome rest.
You call for education for all—not just a few;
You teach us: Welcome strangers, for so we welcome you.

You made us to be equal; you made us to be free—
To speak the truth with courage, to change society,
To follow our own conscience, to choose the words we pray.
O God, may all your children enjoy these gifts each day.

**Biblical References:** Genesis 1-2; Exodus 5:1-20; Nehemiah 5:1-13; Psalm 82:1-4; Proverbs 4:1-27; Isaiah 58:1-12; 65:17-25; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 4:1-5; 6:6-8; Matthew 25:31-46; Mark 12:28-34; John 3:16-17; Acts 10:34-36; Galatians 3:26-29; Hebrews 13:1-9a.
**Tune:** Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864.
**Text:** Copyright © 2012 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette.  All rights reserved.
**Email:** bcgillette@comcast.net

**Hymn Use Permission:** Churches that support Church World Service have copyright permission to use “You Made Us in Your Image” in their local church. This hymn was written at the request of the PCUSA United Nations Office and is also available with the music on the [United Methodist Worship Office web site](http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.3891263/k.A631/Music_Downloads.htm?quicksearch=true&searchkeywords=You%20Made%20Us%20in%20Your%20Image) as free download file.

# O God, in Christ You Call Us

AURELIA 7.6.7.6 D (“The Church's One Foundation”)

    O God, in Christ you call us to witness to your grace--
    To share the life you give us in every time and place.
    So many things divide us-- yet we are not our own;
    For we belong to Jesus who prayed, "May they be one."

    In Christ is our salvation; in him you’ve set us free--
    We make this proclamation in bold humility.
    Your image is in others who follow different ways;
    Together, seeking justice, we offer you our praise.

    In Christ, we’re bound together; in him we find your peace.
    Yet even as we gather, the wounds of war increase.
    Where terror brings division, God, make us brave to say
    Our churches share a vision of Jesus’ peaceful way.

    In Christ, the poor and hungry are shown they matter, too--
    And where your church has plenty, you give us work to do.
    Now may we put in practice the faith that we declare,
    Seek economic justice, and find new ways to share.

    In Christ, you bless creation and show this planet’s worth;
    May every congregation find ways to tend the earth.
    Now fill us with your Spirit, that we, as one, may be
    A faithful, loving witness to all humanity.

**Biblical References:**  Luke 24:48; John 17:21; Luke 10:36-37; Matthew 5:9; Luke 4:16-19; and John 3:16 (see many other biblical references in the study papers for Centennial Ecumenical Gathering).
**Tune:** Samuel Sebastian Wesley, 1864.
**Alternate tune:** LLANGLOFFAN  7.6.7.6 D  (“O God of Earth and Altar”)
Welsh Folk Melody, Evans’ Hymnau a Thonau, 1865 as in English Hymnal, 1906.
**Text:** Copyright © 2010 by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. All rights reserved.
**Email:** bcgillette@comcast.net

**Hymn Use Permission:** Free use of this hymn is given to any congregation that supports the ecumenical work of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and/or Church World Service.

**Hymn Note on “O God, in Christ You Call Us”**

This hymn was originally written for the Centennial Ecumenical Gathering and General Assembly of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA and Church World Service meeting November 9-11, 2010 in New Orleans based on the theme of the assembly: “[Witnesses of These Things: Ecumenical Engagement in a New Era](http://www.ncccusa.org/witnesses2010/).”  In 1910, church representatives from churches around the world met in Edinburgh, Scotland, for the World Missionary Conference.   “The conference, which brought together missionary, faith and order, social activism and education streams of the churches, is considered the birth of the modern ecumenical movement” (from n[ews story by the National Council of Churches](http://www.ncccusa.org/witnesses2010/ga2010what.htm)).

**Hymn Tune:**  Margery N. Sly, Deputy Director of the Presbyterian Historical Society was very helpful in doing research on the original hymns sung at the 1910 World Missionary Conference.  Presbyterian Historical Society has the archives for the National Council of Churches and other ecumenical organizations.  The new hymn was written to the tune of AURELIA (“The Church’s One Foundation”) to show continuity with the original meeting.

**Biblical References in the Hymn:**  Scripture references include: Luke 24:48 (“You are witnesses of these things”); John 17:21 (Jesus prays that his followers may be one); Luke 10:36-37 (Jesus commends the “outsider” who cares for one in need); Matthew 5:9 (Jesus blesses the peacemakers); Luke 4:16-19 (Jesus proclaims his ministry, and ours,is with people who are poor); and John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world…”).

**Hymn Author:**  Carolyn Winfrey Gillette is the author of [Songs of Grace: New Hymns for God and Neighbor](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/088177569X?ie=UTF8&tag=limespresbchu-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=088177569X) (Discipleship Resources/Upper Room Books, 2009) and [Gifts of Love: New Hymns for Today's Worship](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0664501346?ie=UTF8&tag=limespresbchu-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0664501346) (Geneva Press, 2000); she and her husband Bruce serve as the co-pastors of [Limestone Presbyterian Church](http://www.limestonepresbyterian.org/) in Wilmington, Delaware after serving churches in NJ for twenty years. A complete list of the 200+ hymns by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, many with peace and justice themes, can be found at [www.carolynshymns.com](http://www.carolynshymns.com/).

OTHER HYMNS

Now thank we all our God, with hearts and hands and voices.

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord.

Make me a channel of your peace.

Brother, sister let me serve you.

**Possible Readings – choose from these**

 Bottom of Form

**Old Testament**

Genesis 1:27 – 31 Male and female created in God’s image and declared good.

Deut 29 – covenant with ALL the people.

Judges 4 – Deborah and Jael used to fulfil God’s plan

Psalm 68:11 The Lord gives the word and the women who proclaim it are a mighty throng

Proverbs 8 Wisdom’s call

Joel 2:12-17 and 28-32 Old and young, men and women all to be part of God’s Kingdom

**Gospel**

Matthew 23:33-39 Rejecting the messengers that God sends. A God who longs to gather her people as a hen gathers her chicks.

Mark 16 – Women are the first witnesses of the resurrection. Others don’t want to believe them.

Luke 15 – The kingdom of God is like a woman who finds her lost coin

Luke 1:26-56 Elizabeth and Mary are the recipients and carriers of Good News.

**Epistle**

Acts 2 Even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy.

Romans 2:1-16 God does not show favouritism.

Galatians 3:26-29 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Phillipians 3:1-12 No confidence in the flesh

**Sermon**

**Call to repentance and confession**

We, the Women Ministers of the UPCSA, together with the Moderator of General Assembly and the General Secretary, call on all Ministers, Sessions and Congregations, as well as the Executive Commission which meets this year and all Church Associations, to hold a day of public repentance for our sexism, which is not just a cultural or historical problem, but a sin.

(Dates to be set so that there is an act of repentance as part of Exec Commission and for all congregations the Sunday before or after this.)

In particular, we call on the UPCSA to confess to, and repent of:

1. All preaching and teaching which has not challenged the historical and cultural bias of patriarchy which goes contrary to God’s purpose in creation (ie that both men and women are made in the image and likeness of God) Gen 1:27; and contrary to God’s attitude to women as revealed to us through Jesus’ dealings with women in His ministry.
2. Specific attitudes and actions of individuals, Sessions and Committees which have made it difficult for women to respond to God’s call as elders and ministers in the UPCSA. Such attitudes and actions must be recognised as being contrary to God’s purposes and out of order according to Manual of Faith and Order.

Examples of this are

a) congregations where women are never considered for eldership;

b) Ministry Committees (of Presbyteries) that discriminate against women during the processes of selection for ministry.

c) Questions to women in selection/calls to ministry that would be deemed totally inappropriately invasive if addressed to male counterparts.

d) the difficulty that women in Ordained Ministry have in being placed for probation and in being considered for call by some congregations;

d) the number of congregations that expect that when calling a woman as their minister, that they will be exempt from the minimum requirements in terms of stipend, housing and transport. Presbyteries have been remiss in not challenging these conditions when they are part of a call document.

1. Continued discrimination against women in the election of Committees and Office Bearers.

Often because of cultural bias or bad habit, women are not even considered.

The opposite of this is that unfair pressure is put on the small number of ordained women who are asked to join committees as “token women”, chosen not for their passion or competence, but for their gender. This is also degrading.

1. The persecution and abuse of women in leadership by both men and women in the Church.

This includes

1. sexual harassment; (see how Jesus deals with the woman caught in adultery)
2. plans to deliberately break women ministers or destroy their ministry and
3. the validation by some leaders of questions such as “What do you do if you are menstruating when the time comes to celebrate communion? ” in some communities.

(See how Jesus handled the woman who bled for 12 years)

1. Downgrading the value of all women members in the Church and failing to recognise the important role of women in the life and work and witness of the UPCSA. This includes unthinking attitudes which regard the roles of service and devotion that our members play as less important ministries than the ministries of leading, teaching and sacraments.

(There is neither male nor female – all are one in Christ Jesus)

1. Paternalistic attitudes and actions which have made it difficult for women to be recognised as competent to lead in worship, in preaching, in Bible Studies and on Session and other leadership structures in the Church.

(It is not our bodies but Christ in us who is the hope of glory. Joel and Acts show that God’s Spirit is poured out on all people.)

We recognise that this day of public repentance will only mark the beginning of a journey towards greater wholeness for us as a denomination. For this reason we encourage all ministers, Sessions and congregations to review their attitudes and actions regularly when it comes to sexism and to grow in the grace of our Lord.

**Response to God’s word**

*(Underlined to be read by a woman ;*

*Plain text to be read by a man;*

*Italics to be read/said by all)*

In response to God’s word

and to the often unheeded voices of our mothers and sisters

We confess our sins.

God created people in his own image, in the image of God he created them;

male and female he created them.

And God saw that it was very good.

We confess that we have failed to recognise the image of God in its feminine form.

We have regarded women as less worthy witnesses than men.

Our attitude and actions have declared that women are less valuable than men in God’s sight.

*As we turn from our sin,*

*As we turn to you*

*Lord have mercy.*

God made covenant with all the people of Israel, men and women and children, and commanded: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

We confess that we have excluded or sidelined people from God’s family on the basis of gender.

We have failed to honour the mothers amongst us.

Our attitudes and actions have been despicable in your sight, O Lord.

*As we turn from our sin,*

*As we turn to you*

*Lord have mercy.*

God called and used Miriam and Esther and Deborah and Rahab, as well as many other women, to lead and to save God’s people.

We confess that we have stubbornly refused to recognise God’s call to women for the purpose of leadership and ministry.

We have put stumbling blocks in God’s way.

We have even used God’s name to give credibility to our prejudice.

*As we turn from our sin,*

*As we turn to you*

*Lord have mercy.*

God promised Through the prophet Joel:

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

We confess that whilst God has kept this promise,

And God has poured out the Holy Spirit on all who believe

We have limited the work of the Spirit amongst us.

As a Church we have made the gender of people a more important requirement for entering the ministry than the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We have made our vision and our dreams more real than the vision that God has for us.

*As we turn from our sin,*

*As we turn to you,*

*Lord have mercy.*

Jesus encouraged Mary to sit at his feet and learn with the other disciples.

Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman about God’s living water.

Jesus challenged the men who brought the woman caught in adultery about their own sin.

Mary, Jesus’ mother was the first to hear the announcement of good news and another Mary was the first witness to the resurrection.

We confess that unlike Jesus, we have not encouraged the women amongst us to take their place in the Church.

We have discouraged many from learning and teaching.

We have often condemned our mothers and daughters for sins which we excuse in ourselves. We have harmed them by with-holding God’s forgiveness from them.

Even though Jesus showed us a different way, we have treated women as unclean and as unnecessary in God’s plan for salvation.

*As we turn from our sin,*

*Lord, let your light shine upon us.*

*Transform us to be the people that you have called us to be*

*And to see the image of God in every person amongst us today.*

*Amen*

*Or use some of the phrases from the prayer below but relate them more specifically to the discriminatory practices in the Church and make them corporate ie we instead of I:*

“Father, I confess as sin my living for self, loving self. I will put off shepherding myself and focus on shepherding others. I reject all the self sins: self-sufficiency, self-promotion, self-protection, selfishness, self-centeredness. I confess as sin my cruel, harsh, manipulative, demanding, shaming, blaming, maiming way of treating others. Most of all, I confess as sin how far I’ve moved from reflecting You and Your radically other-centered Trinitarian existence. I am putting off the flesh, the characteristic ways I used to relate and I’m putting on the Spirit, the new me created to relate like You.”

**A Prayer of Relational Repentance: My Social Relationships to Others from**

<http://www.rpmministries.org/2011/09/six-prayers-of-repentance/>

**Assurance of forgiveness:**

God assures us:

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” (Isaiah 49:15)

God who is rich in compassion, slow to anger and abounding in love, sends Jesus, so that all who believe in Him can hear the Good News: “Your sins are forgiven. Go in peace.”

**Offering of the peace:**

Members should be invited to share the peace of God with one another as a sign of the reconciliation which is possible when we repent of and confess our sins.

(Perhaps the minister and elders should begin by going to some of the women in the congregation, asking their forgiveness and offering them the peace.)

**Prayers of intercession**

These could include prayers for women ministers and elders;

The witness of the Church to God’s love which has no favourites.

Women who are devalued by society and by husbands and by children who are abusive.

The gender inequalities which still treat women as of less worth than men in the workplace and in civil leadership.

Girl children who need to grow up knowing that they are made in the image of God.

**Benediction**

**Alternate versions of the Lord’s Prayer which could be used:**

1. O Mothe-ring Fa-ther, God in heaven, all hal-lowed be The Name;
May Love's reign come, God's will be done, on earth ev-er the same;
O Ho-ly One give hu-man-kind in eve-ry place its bread;
It is from Life's boun-ty each day that all souls should be fed.
2. For-give our trans-gres-sions, and teach com-pas-sion so we know
that whole-ness comes for-giv-ing sins of each and eve-ry foe;
And lead us not in-to ev-il, and save us from all sin;
That glo-ry, reign and pow-er be, for end-less worlds; A-men

http://www.hos3.com/hos3/archives/2005/07/129s\_o\_motherin.html

*OR*

*O God, you love us like a good parent,*

*and are present in every aspect of our existence*

*May your nature become known and respected by all*

*May your joy, peace, wholeness and justice*

*be the reality for everyone*

*as we live by the Jesus Way*

*Give us all that we really need to live every day for you*

*And forgive us our failures as we forgive others for their failures*

*Keep us from doing those things which are not of you,*

*and cause us always to be centred on your love*

*For you are the true reality in this our now,*

*and in all our future.*

*In the Jesus Way we pray. (D Sorril)*

OR

O Birther!  Father-Mother of the Cosmos

you create all that moves in light.

Hear the one Sound that created all others,

in this way the Name is hallowed

in silence.

Your rule springs into existence

as our arms reach out to embrace all creation.

Let all wills move together

in your vortex, as stars and planets

swirl through the sky.

Grant what we need each day in bread and insight:

subsistence for the call of growing life.

Lighten our load of secret debts as

we relieve others of their

need to repay.

Keep us from hoarding false wealth,

and from the inner shame

of help not given in time. *(MFox/ormw)*

OR

Father and Mother of us all

(God our Creator, nurturer, provider, protector, shelter and guide)

We want to praise you and bring honour to your name.

We look forward to your presence filling the universe

And to your ruling over us and over all our circumstances

Till everything is subject to your ways.

We ask for your provision for each one according to our need

And for your forgiveness because we sin often

and your grace,

so that we will pass on the forgiveness that we have received from you

when others act against us.

Lead us so that we will not find ourselves in places where we will be tempted

And protect us from all that is evil, both in us and around us.

For we want your rule, your power, and your greatness to be visible.

Both now, in this time, and in the time to come. Amen (S van der Lingen)

Some reflections on parts of the Biblical understanding of women:

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (NIV, Genesis 2:18)

God created the woman as a "helper" for the man:

However, being a "helper" does not imply that the woman was inferior or subservient to the man; the same Hebrew word, *`ezer*, translated as "helper," is used to describe God, Himself, inPsalms 33:20, 70:5, 115:9-11. In fact, God created both men and women in His own image and made them equal custodians of all His creation:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (NRSV, Genesis 2:27-28)

When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them "man." (NIV, Genesis 5:1-2)

**Old Testament Era**

Compared to other cultures of the time, Jewish women enjoyed great liberty and esteem, and many women distinguished themselves as prophetesses and leaders in Jewish society. Women such as Deborah, Esther, Hannah, Huldah, Jochebed, Miriam, Noadiah, Rachel, Rebekah, Rahab, Ruth and Sarah played important and decisive roles in Israel's history.

As evidence of the equality of men and women, the Ten Commandments require children to honor both their father and mother:

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. (NAS, Exodus 20:12)

## New Testament

By the time of Jesus, women no longer had the freedoms and status they had enjoyed in the Old Testament era. Jewish society had become very much male-dominated. Women were considered to be inferior beings and were assigned almost the same status as slaves. They were not educated, not allowed to take any leadership roles, and confined to mostly domestic duties.

### Mary and Elizabeth

But two women of this time became models of faithfulness and virtue. Mary, the mother of Jesus, put aside her fears, doubts and shame to take on the role of mother of the Messiah. She simply placed her whole trust in God (Luke 1:26-38). Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, also put her faith in God (Luke 1:39-45).

### Jesus

Jesus' attitude toward women was radically different from what was customary at the time. Women normally stayed home and attended to domestic duties. But Jesus allowed women to travel with Him and His twelve disciples (Luke 8:1-3).

"Proper" Jews did not speak to Samaritans, and certainly not to Samaritan women. But Jesus had a long conversation with a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well that led to her conversion (John 4:4-30, 39-42).

Jewish women were generally not educated or allowed any active role in the affairs of religion. But Martha's sister, Mary, sat at Jesus' feet in the role of a disciple while Jesus taught her. Jesus suggested that Martha do the same (Luke 10:38-42).

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Salome, Joanna, Susanna and other women were prominent among Jesus' devoted followers. Some remained with Jesus to comfort Him at His crucifixion when all His apostles had fled in terror (Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41). Mary Magdalene and other women were privileged to be the first to discover that Jesus had risen from the dead (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-11).

It is frequently pointed out that Jesus appointed only men as His twelve apostles, and this is taken as a sign of women's secondary status. But Jesus sent His apostles out to spread the gospel to the world, seeking food and shelter where they could find it, facing great danger and ultimately martyrdom. That would not have been considered an appropriate role for a woman in Biblical times just as it would not be considered appropriate today.

### The Early Christian Church

The early churches apparently followed Jesus' example. Women were treated as at least near-equals and allowed to hold positions of responsibility. Many women, including Jesus' mother, Mary, as well as Dorcas, Julia, Lydia, Persis, Priscilla, Phoebe, Tryphena and Tryphosa were important in the early Christian Church (Acts 1:12-14, 9:36, 16:14, 18:24-26, 21:7-9, Romans 16:1-16).

<http://www.christianbiblereference.org/faq_womensrights.htm>