



eNewsletter of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual

23 October 2012

## November Liturgy: Harvesting Justice By Diann L. Neu and Cheryl Nichols



*The Apple Paring* by Clementine Hunter, ca. 1945

*This liturgy was created for SAS, a women-church community in the Washington, DC area. Gather a candle, bread, wine and juice, and video clip cited below.*

### Call to Gather

Autumn is the season of harvest, of gathering in the fruits and vegetables of our summer's farms and gardens. For us in the United States, it is also the time of choosing government leaders on local and national levels; a time for assessing policies for our nation that we want to reflect our values of justice and equality.

We have worked tirelessly on behalf of the poor and the underserved, especially on behalf of women and children, many of whom suffer from hunger and homelessness in this, the

most affluent country. The divisions in our country are not just economic and political, but also philosophical: a vision of rugged individualism in which each person uses opportunities for advancement and success for themselves versus a vision of communal accountability and caring for the “least among us.”

Yet our society doesn't need to be “either/or.” We need not be “all or nothing.” Rather, let us pray for the wisdom and grace to glean from debates, discussions, prayers, readings, and reflections, the attitudes and values that are healing, compassionate, uniting, and just.

Let us “Harvest Justice.”

### Candle Lighting

As our candle is lit, let us call upon Divine Wisdom Sophia to be present with us:

All: Blessed are you, Ever-Present Wisdom, for you stir within us the desire to harvest justice.

To insure that the light remains a part of our journey long after the candle burns away, cup your hands toward these flames and gesture them to your eyes and body three times as a blessing. (*Blessing*)

**First Reading:** “Would You Harbor Me?” by Dr. Ysaye M. Barnwell, singer and composer, Sweet Honey in the Rock, © 1994 Barnwell Notes (BMI)

Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?  
Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?

Would you harbor a Christian, a Muslim, a Jew,  
A heretic, convict, or spy?  
Would you harbor a runaway woman or child,  
A poet, a prophet, a king?  
Would you harbor an exile or a refugee,  
A person living with AIDS?  
Would you harbor a Tubman, a Garret, a Truth,  
A fugitive or a slave?  
Would you harbor a Haitian, Korean, or Czech,  
A lesbian or a gay?

Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?  
Would you harbor me? Would I harbor you?

**Second Reading:** Interview with Simone Campbell by Bill Moyers via video clip. [Click here to watch the video.](#)

**Reflection:** “Who Is a Women of Justice?” by Diann L. Neu  
(*Three women proclaim alternately.*)

1. Who is a woman of justice?  
A woman of justice is  
a living reminder of the compassionate heart of America.
  2. A woman of justice is  
an advocate for poor and disadvantaged children and young adults.
  3. A woman of justice is  
a prayerful prophet, a fire of love, a force to be reckoned with.
- 
1. She feels safe enough to be vulnerable and powerful.
  2. She walks her talk with ease and integrity.
  3. She speaks, acts, and lives in solidarity with the poor.
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1. She lives out justice in her daily interactions with people.
  2. The purpose of her life is not only to be happy, but to make a difference.
  3. Her life's work gives witness to the title – woman of justice.

**Third Reading:** from the Gospel of Luke 4:14-19, a call to harvest justice

Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

When Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. Jesus unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of God is upon me,  
who has anointed me  
to bring good news to those who are poor,  
who has sent me to proclaim release to those who are captive

and recovery of sight to those who are blind,  
to let those who are oppressed go free,  
to proclaim the year of God's favor."

**Song:** "You Have Struck a Rock," by Carolyn McDade, from *Rain Upon Dry Land*, © 1981

This song was inspired by South African women resisting the pass system of the apartheid government. Their motto was, "You have touched a woman, you have struck a rock." Feel the rhythm and clap your hands, or tap your leg or arm with your hand to keep the beat.

You have touched a woman, oh...You have struck a rock.  
You have touched a woman you've struck a rock, oh...  
You have touched a woman, you have struck a rock.  
Touch a woman you strike a rock.

### Shared Reflection

How have women of justice both inspired me and challenged me?  
What have I done / what am I doing to harvest justice?

### A Blessing of Hands by Diann L. Neu

Our hands tell stories of how we harvest justice. They focus our pain, our passion, our promise, and our power. Let us reflect silently for a moment:

Who have my hands touched this week?  
What have my hands revealed to me about how I harvest justice?

Look at your hands. Notice their power and their gentleness. Let us bless these hands together.

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have touched life. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have held pain. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have embraced with passion. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have tended gardens. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have closed in anger. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have planted new seeds. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have harvested ripe fields. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have cleaned, washed, mopped, scrubbed. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that have become knotty with age. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that are wrinkled and scarred from doing justice. (*Echo*)

Blessed be these hands that hold the promise of the future. (*Echo*)

Please add others . . .

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One. (*Echo*)

## Blessing the Bread

*All bless together.*

Praise to you, Companion on the Road, Bread of life,

For you give us this bread to feed our hunger.

We take, bless, break, and eat it in memory of you,

And of all who work to harvest justice.

*All share bread.*

## Blessing the Fruit of the Vine

*All bless together.*

Praise to you, Companion on the Road, Joy of Life,

For you give us this drink to quench our thirst.

We take, bless, and drink it in memory of you,

And of all who work to harvest justice.

*All share wine and juice.*

## Sending Forth

Encouraged by this faith and hope,

We turn to you, Spirit of Justice.

We ask you to bless us, who,

in the cry of the people and in the word of the community,

have received the call to harvest justice.

Pour out your Spirit upon all of us,

That we may have the gifts of wisdom and understanding,

See visions, dream dreams, break bread, do justice.

Let us respond with the words:

Pour out your Spirit, Holy One of Justice.

**ALL: Pour out your Spirit, Holy One of Justice.**

Pour forth your Spirit, Holy One of Justice,

on your people with whom we work.

Pour forth your Spirit on our families, friends, and communities

That they may offer us loving care, understanding, and support.

**ALL: Pour out your Spirit, Holy One of Justice.**

Pour forth your Spirit, Holy One of Justice,  
on our conversations, our collaborations, and our work.

That we may listen openly to one another and celebrate the role of spirituality in  
sustaining commitment to social justice action.

**ALL: Pour out your Spirit, Holy One of Justice.**

**Closing Song:** "Crossing the Lines," by Marsie Silvestro, from *Crossing the Lines*, ©  
1987

We're crossing the lines for justice, crossing the lines for peace,  
Crossing the lines for liberation, crossing the lines for you.

*(speak)* Bread lines ... *(sing)* We're crossing the lines for justice,

*(speak)* Picket lines... *(sing)* crossing the lines for peace,

*(speak)* Border lines ... *(sing)* Crossing the lines for liberation,

*(speak)* Life lines ... *(sing)* crossing the lines for you.

**Greeting of Peace**

Let us share peace with one another as a symbol of our wish for justice for women, men,  
and children everywhere.

© Diann L. Neu, dneu@hers.com, cofounder and codirector of WATER,  
the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual, [www.waterwomensalliance.org](http://www.waterwomensalliance.org)

**Hildegard Ritual at WATER and Online**

Thursday, October 25, 2012

7:30 PM (EDT)

Join the WATER community for an in-office and phone-in celebration of Hildegard of  
Bingen, the newest Doctor of the Church and inspiration to many spiritual feminists.

RSVP by Tuesday, October 23, 2012 to [waterstaff@waterwomensalliance.org](mailto:waterstaff@waterwomensalliance.org)! To join in by  
phone, email the words "Register Me Hildegard," and you will receive dial-in information. All  
are welcome.

The WATER office will be open at 7 PM for a cup to tea, library browsing, and conversation. The ritual will conclude by 8:30 PM.



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