

Dancing Circles of Compassion — Women's Stories

ENVIRONMENT When possible, chairs in a circle. Round table in center with colorful cloth, candle, and world globe.

Opening

Invitation to Prayer

Leader Let us begin our celebration together by worshipping God, Our Mother and Father, the Ground of our being, the Source of our life, The Spirit who sets us free.

All In memory of all the women who have sung praise to God before we were born and in union with all women living today, we join to praise the Spirit of God in our midst.

Leader To worship is to open our beings to the power of God's truth and love. To worship is to heighten our awareness of the core of our existence, the meaning of life.



All Let us celebrate with joy in the hope that our awareness and openness will bear the fruit of increased union with God's Spirit in each of us.

Leader Today we listen to women's stories in the Scriptures and recall those women today who are experi-

encing with these women the need for compassion.

Reflections on Women's Lives

→ WOMAN WITH NEW LIFE GROWING WITHIN

Reader Luke 1:29

Mary was greatly troubled at what the angel said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

Both the Christian Bible and the Muslim Qu'ran have a story of the angel announcing new life to Mary. She is surprised and frightened.

Leader We remember women today who have new life growing within: Surprised, hopeful, fearful, grateful, confused, joyful, uncertain...

Pause for naming women

Song *Dancing Circles of Compassion* (Traditional melody Greensleeves)

Chorus

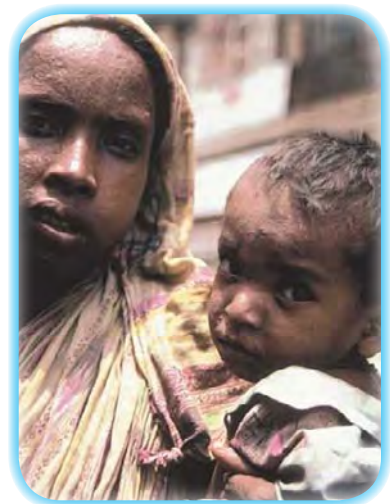
*These, these are family,
Who struggle, seek,
laugh, and weep.*

*We, we shall dance with them
In circles of compassion.*

→ WOMAN FLEEING

Reader Matt 2:13-14

When the Magi had departed, behold the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is go-



ing to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt.

When Herod, a jealous ruler, wanted to destroy others who threatened his power, Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fled to safety in Egypt. Millions of persons are fleeing in the contemporary world. Some because of natural disasters and political difficulties. Many because of economic difficulties created by globalization.

Leader We remember women today fleeing with their children for safety.

*Pause for naming places where
women are being forced to flee*

Song *Dancing Circles of Compassion*

Chorus

*These, these are family,
Who struggle, seek,
laugh, and weep.*

*We, we shall dance with them
In circles of compassion.*

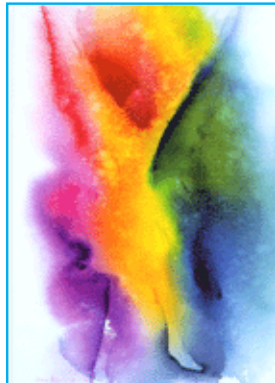
Reader Mark 10: 13-16

And people were bringing children to Jesus that he might touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this he became indignant and said to them, "Let the

children come to me; do not prevent them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. "Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it." Then he embraced them and blessed them, placing his hands on them.

Women brought their children to Jesus. The disciples did not think that child care was appropriate or of significant value for men. Jesus made the challenging remark that children are the most important, the reign of God belongs to them. In the contemporary world, United Nations studies of budget priorities in many countries of the world reveal that money allocated for the welfare of children is very small in relation to that for armaments.

Leader Let us remember women around the world who hold out their children needing to be touched with compassion and their dignity upheld.



Pause for naming women and children

Song *Dancing Circles of Compassion*

Chorus

*These, these are family,
Who struggle, seek,
laugh, and weep.
We, we shall dance with them
In circles of compassion.*

➔ **WOMEN FACING REALITIES OF PAIN**

Reader John 19:25-27

Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary

of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he love, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home.

In John's gospel women have central roles from the first miracle to the death of Jesus. Women faithfully stay with Jesus who is suffering. At the Last Supper, Jesus used the image of labor pains which bring new life. Contemporary theological discourse will be stillborn if women's voices are not a part of it.

Leader Let us remember women who face the realities of pain and those who need to be heard.

Pause for naming women

Song *Dancing Circles of Compassion*

Chorus

*These, these are family,
Who struggle, seek,
laugh, and weep.
We, we shall dance
with them
In circles of compassion.*

Closing

Prayer (All) God of Compassion, we are in need of your mercy. We ask your blessing on women and children everywhere who are in danger today. Bless all who suffer from injustice. Shelter them in the warmth of your love and safeguard them from the evil that rages around them. Turn our eyes and hearts to their needs and give us courage to act for their good. We ask this, relying on your compassion and confident of your love. Amen.



*(All stand and join hands
in a circle of dance)*

Song *Dancing Circles of Compassion*

Chorus

*These, these are family,
Who struggle, seek,
laugh, and weep.
We, we shall dance with them
In circles of compassion.*

1) O woman holding life anew,
With joy, fear, now new hope,
You are not alone in this,
May we all help with new life.
(Chorus)

2) O woman fleeing from
your home,
With few things to call your own,
Poverty, danger, fear, no hope,
May we make room for the stranger.
(Chorus)

3) O women caring for little ones,
Do not deny that they are great,
Speak loud and clear of
children's needs,
May we put children first.
(Chorus)

4) O women facing many pains
Do not deny realities.
Comfort some, challenge others,
Remember pains of birthing.
(Chorus)

(Lyrics by Sister Martha Ann Kirk, CCVI)

Acknowledgments

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Reflections and Song from CCVI gathering, May 19, 2006; used with permission.
Ritual designed by Hill Connections (<http://hillconnections.org>), a web site linking Contemplation and Social Justice.