Strength, Soul, and Spark: Celebrating the Gifts of Women
Thankoffering Service
2025

Created by students and staff of the Office of Spiritual Life and Campus Ministry at Wartburg College for Women of the ELCA

A service will be held on November 9 at 6:30pm at the Wartburg Chapel on the campus of Wartburg College. All are welcome. The service will be livestreamed via KnightVision.

Please note that ELW refers to the Evangelical Lutheran Worship book. ACS refers to All Creation Sings, a supplement to the ELW.

Welcome

Thanksgiving for Baptism
We gather in the name of our creator, redeemer +, and sustainer.
Amen.

Joined to Christ and named as God's beloved, we give thanks for the gift of baptism that roots us in life, renews us in strength, and frees us to be bold.

We give you thanks, O God,
For at the beginning of time, your creative spirit moved over the waters, your Word brought new life, and you called it good.

We give you thanks, O God, for waters that sustain and heal.
You revealed a spring of water to Hagar, saving her and her son Ishmael.
You brought your people out of the waters of the Exodus, leading Miriam to shout out in song.
You held Moses in the River Nile, where Pharaoh's daughter would find him and care for him as her own.
You kept the party going when, at Mary's request, Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding.
You led a Samaritan woman to a well, where she would be met by Jesus' grace and given living water that lasts.

Even today, you shower us with life, and we praise you. With your living water, sustain our souls, show us empathy and welcome, give us strength, and lead us by your divine spark to lives of compassion and mercy.
Amen.

Women of the ELCA

Opening Song: *All Creatures Worship God Most High* (ELW 835)
Alternatively, groups may consider *For all the Faithful Women* (ELW 419)

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Hymn of Praise: *ACS Setting 12* (ACS pg 31)
Alternatively, groups may consider *Praise by Elevation Worship*

Prayer *(written by Zarah Van Dyk '26)*

God of Glory, we are gathered today in your presence to celebrate and give thanks for all of the gifts and talents given to women. While we recognize the abundance we have, we also recognize the struggles of women in our own country and around the world. Sometimes these struggles are voiced or are internal conflicts that only You know about. Lord, bring peace and joy to our hearts today. Allow us to fully absorb the presence of you and of the community of strong women surrounding us. **Amen.**

Readings

Naomi and Ruth (soul). Ruth 1:7-16

Ruth is a story of deep faithfulness, empathy, and compassion amid adversity. The story's soul demonstrates the power of love to triumph over hopelessness and to bridge great differences. For women like Ruth and Noami, whose empathy heals generational wounds, we give thanks.

7 So Naomi set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in- law,
and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. 8 But Naomi said to her two
daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with
you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. 9 The LORD grant that you may find security,
each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. 10 They
said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my
daughters, why will you go with me?...No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than
for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me." 14 Then they wept aloud again.
Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.
15 So Naomi said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return
after your sister-in-law." 16 But Ruth said,

"Do not press me to leave you
or to turn back from following you!
Where you go, I will go;
where you lodge, I will lodge,
your people shall be my people,
and your God my God.

After the reading is shared:

Holy Wisdom, Living Word.
Thanks be to God.

God's compassionate creativity (spark) Psalm 139:1-14

The spark of the divine dwells within each of us. For the cosmic creativity of God, whose presence accompanies and inspires all, we give thanks.

O LORD, you have searched me and known me.
2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
3 You search out my path and my lying down
and are acquainted with all my ways.
4 Even before a word is on my tongue,
O LORD, you know it completely.
5 You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

7 Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?
8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.
9 If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
10 even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
11 If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,
and night wraps itself around me,"[a]
12 even the darkness is not dark to you;
the night is as bright as the day,
for darkness is as light to you.

13 For it was you who formed my inward parts;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.
Wonderful are your works;
that I know very well.

The women who bled for twelve years (strength). Matthew 9:18-25

Through a bold woman, Jesus demonstrates God's mercy and power by accepting the unacceptable and curing the incurable. Even the dead receive new life. For unnamed women who fight to be seen and heard, we give thanks.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the ninth chapter.
Glory to you, O Lord.

18 While [Jesus] was saying these things to them, suddenly a leader came in and knelt before him, saying, "My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live." 19 And Jesus got up and followed him, with his disciples. 20 Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from a flow of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak, 21 for she was saying to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." 22 Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, "Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that moment. 23 When Jesus came to the leader's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, 24 he said, "Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him. 25 But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl got up.

After the Gospel is shared:

The Gospel, the Good News made real for you.
Praise to you, O Christ!

Message:

Time for reflection:
Consider offering a silent time of reflection after the message. Alternatively, congregations could use this time for special, reflective music.

Hymn: *Canticle of the Turning* (ELW 723)
Alternatively, groups may consider *Great is Thy Faithfulness* (ELW 733),
Mothering God, You Gave Me Birth (ELW 735), or

Goodness of God by Jenn Johnson

Creed

Prayers of the People

In solidarity with your people from every nation and knit together with all of creation, we boldly pray for the church, our world, and all those in need.

Inspire your church, like Ruth and Naomi, to extend arms of compassion and empathy in times of challenge. Equip communities to be welcoming, to show mercy, and to lean into relationships so that all people may know your care. God our soul,
Hear our prayer.

Guide leaders to reflect the spark of your divine wisdom. Open eyes to see the goodness of your created world and encourage the tender care of those cast aside. Reveal yourself in unexpected places and in the leadership of those called to help. God our Spark,
Hear our prayer.

Bring healing, like the woman who bled for twelve years, to all who are suffering. Give strength to the weary, uplift the lowly, and amplify the voices of those quieted. Breathe new life into forgotten places, end wars, rejuvenate lands, and uplift spirits. God our Strength,
Hear our prayer.

Trusting in your love for us, we offer these prayers and whatever else weighs heavy upon us to you, in the name of Jesus**. Amen.**

Peace

***Thankoffering** - Taken at this time.

Offering Prayer
God of Abundance,
You create goodness in everything we offer. Use these gifts to bless the world. Strengthen ministries, empower leaders, and inspire generosity so that all may know your love. Reveal this love to us once again as we gather at your table that we might embody your compassionate care in all we do. Amen.

Words of Institution

Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
And the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.

Lamb of God: *This is Christ's Body* (ACS 967)

Distribution
I Come with Joy (ELW 482)
Groups may also consider highlighting the musical gifts of a woman/women in their congregation.

Post Communion Blessing and Prayer
May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you and keep you in his grace.
Amen.

Generous God,
We give thanks!
You've gathered us together across generations and created a place at the table for each of us.
We give thanks!
Strengthen us with this meal of your love poured out, fill us with compassion, and nourish us until we meet again.
We give thanks!
In the name of Jesus Christ,
Amen.

Blessing *(written by Carter Horman'28)*

Receive the blessing of God who breathes creativity into every soul and lights up every vision with purpose.
Bless the women of the world with the strength that they need, with empathy that brings us together, and with gratitude that moves us all forward.
May your love be our guide, and your justice our song that we sing and live out each day.
Amen.

Sending Song: *Sing a New World into Being (Nettleton)* lyrics by Mary Louise Bringle
Alternatively, groups may consider *Now Thank We All Our God* (ELW 840) or
Praise to the Lord, the Almighty (ELW 859)

Sending
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord!
All: Thanks be to God!

Liturgists:
Rev. Maggie Falenschek, Dean of Spiritual Life, Moehlmann Chaplaincy Chair
Karen Black, Cantor and Rudi Inselmann Endowed Professor of Organ and Professor of Music
Zarah Van Dyk ‘26
Carter Horman ‘28