



FEDERACIÓN
LUTERANA MUNDIAL
AMÉRICA LATINA Y EL CARIBE

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Suggested Order for a Reformation Service

October 2014

“Lives Shaped in Communion”

Required items: Small pottery bowls to be given out to the congregation as they enter. The bowls can contain a bible verse related to the worship theme, or Martin Luther’s prayer of confession.

Preparation of the worship space: In front of the altar pottery vases and bowls of various shapes and sizes.

Opening Liturgy

Musical prelude

Welcome

Leader. Good morning/afternoon/evening!

In this worship service we are celebrating the history of the Lutheran Church, which originated in the Reformation movement in the sixteenth century. Many have contributed to the reformation of the Christian Church so that it can be constantly guided by the Word of God, which frees us to love and to serve.

On the basis of the Reformation, we can state that, ‘We can buy nothing from God. Everything is given. So that, as a token of our thanksgiving, we can joyfully serve God.’ In that way, Martin Luther, Katharina von Bora and countless others have served God throughout the history of Christianity.

We are persons who are daily being shaped by God, the great Potter, so that we may live in fellowship, with lives promoting peace, justice, civilization and respect, where we live. We thus joyfully celebrate this act of worship, thanking God for the lives shaped by God before, during and after the Reformation of the Church. We give thanks for our lives, for they are being shaped to live in fellowship, in the service of the Triune God, both outside the Church and within it.

Greeting (all standing)

Leader. May the grace and love of God, who is life; the strength and courage of the Spirit of Wisdom; and the peace and mercy of the Risen Christ be with us. Amen.

Song/Hymn

Prayer of confession

(During the prayer, all hold their bowl in their hands)

Congregation. Look upon me, Lord. I am a bowl that needs filling. Lord, fill that bowl, for my faith is weak. Strengthen me, for I am a cold and loveless person. Inspire me so that my love will overflow to my neighbour. I do not have a firm strong faith, for I am full of doubts and thus do not wholly put my trust in you.

Lord, help me. Increase my faith and trust in you. All that I have comes from you. I am poor: you are rich, and you came mercifully to receive those who are poor. I am sinful: you are just. I have the disease of sin: in you is the fullness of justice. So I long to be with you. I do not need to give you anything. It is you who gives to me. Amen (Martin Luther).

Leader. We surrender to you, O God, all that weighs heavily on us, all that separates us from you, and harms those around us. We place our sins and weaknesses into your hands, so that your love and your grace may break our prejudice, our pride, our independence, our arrogance, our misdeeds and our violent acts. We know that it is all an offence to you and causes coldness and indifference in human relationships. Break us, change our lives, O God, so that we may always joyfully serve you in peace and fellowship.

So we sing...

Song. Do what you will, O Lord, with me. You are the potter. I am the clay.

I long to be meek and humble. May your will always be done in me.

Do what you will, O Lord, with me. Look on me and try my heart.

Wash and cleanse me from all evil, so that I can be with you.

Absolution

Leader. As persons loved and forgiven by God, who accepts us by grace and faith, who inspires us to go and sin no more, and leads us on to sanctification, we are forgiven, for it is written, '... O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be angry beyond measure, O Lord; do not remember our sins for ever. Oh, look upon us, we pray, for we are all your people' (Isaiah 64: 8-9).

Song. Do what you will, O Lord, with me. Banish my sorrow and pain.

You, O Christ, have all power. Hold out your hand and I shall be healed.

Do what you will, O Lord, with me. Be master of my whole being.

Anoint me with your Spirit, so the world can see Christ in me.

Leader. We praise God, who hears our prayer, accepts our plea for forgiveness, and guides us day by day into a life of holiness. In the words of the Reformer, Martin Luther, we recall that:

'The Christian life does not consist in being pious persons, but in becoming pious persons. It does not consist in being capable of being healed, but in being healed persons. What is important is not what we are, but what we are becoming. The Christian life is not rest, but constant activity. We are not yet what we should be, but we shall be changed persons. Not everything has yet happened, not everything has yet been done,

but it is on the way. The Christian life is not the destination but the way. Not everything is yet gleaming and shining, but everything is getting better' (Martin Luther).

Gloria

Leader. God hears us. God reaches out daily with God's love, forgiveness and care. Let us sing praises to God, who leads us in the Christian life, to thoughts and actions of peace, love and fellowship.

Congregation (sings). May your name be glorified. Alleluia to Jesus!

Prayer of the day

Leader. We praise you, God of life. Throughout history, you have been shaping men and women to serve you. We pray you to shape, to mould us today and always, so that your Word will awaken us to actions for peace, inclusiveness and respect towards all the creatures that have emerged from your hands. May our lives, like clay bowls, receive your grace and your forgiveness, so that they overflow in fellowship and justice towards all who are one in faith, in hope and in love. We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

(The idea is that extracts from the play 'Memories of Katharina'¹ should be read out during the worship, after the bible reading, and during and after the sermon, as a way of emphasizing the commitment and service to God of people whose lives God has shaped.)

Leader. We stand for the acclamation of the Gospel, and sing 'Alleluia', a hymn of praise to God that means 'May you be praised.'

Congregation: Alleluia. (twice)

Bible reading: John 8: 31-36

Hymn

Sermon

(The extracts from the play can be read by different women in the character of Katharina. The scene can include: a table with books, a garden, a small kitchen with large earthenware jars or pots. The passages can be interspersed with verses of the hymn 'A safe stronghold...', or others.)

Comment from the play 'Memories of Katharina'.

Martin Luther used to say that 'A Christian is the free lord over all things and is subject to nobody. A Christian is the servant of all things, and subject to all.' Martin Luther lived as a free person in Christ and he thus changed his surname from 'Ludher' (with 'dh'), meaning 'wanderer', to Luther (with 'th') meaning 'liberated'. He served God because he

¹ The play 'Memórias de Katharina' was written (in Portuguese) by Rev. Scheila dos Santos Dreher and is available at Portal Luteranos at http://www.luteranos.com.br/conteudo_organizacao/confessionalidade-luteranos-em-contexto/memorias-de-katharina. Used by permission.

felt free. He translated the Bible into the German language and stressed that worship should be in our own language, so that worshippers could understand what was being preached, and not be led astray by voices that were not consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Luther also encouraged the princes to establish schools in their territories and provide instruction in reading and writing for all children. He criticized people who were over-ambitious in their business dealings, and all dishonesty and injustice in relations between employers and their workers. He wrote a great deal, and helped people to come to a knowledge of the God who loves us and frees us from the power of sin and death, by faith and without any merit of their own.

Katharina. What happened was incredible! Who would have said that Dr Martin Luther's writings would find their way into the Marienthron Convent and that reading them would be the cause of this whole movement? In fact, after reading that you do not have to be in a convent in order to serve God, but that God calls each one of us to serve him daily by working or studying, we saw that it no longer made sense to remain confined to the convent! Monks and nuns elsewhere were thinking the same, and they also left the monastic life. On Easter Day, the day we escaped, we reached the town of Torgau and stayed there until Tuesday. Three of us found lodging with their families in that town. Although we had been made welcome, even welcomed by cheers by some of the town's inhabitants, they did not wish us to remain in Torgau, because, in that principality, it was punishable by death to be discovered helping a nun. So we went on our way to Wittenberg.

Leader. From these extracts from the play 'Memories of Katharina' and from the Gospel, we can see that God changes us into persons free to love and serve, wherever we may be. The motive for this life of service is fellowship, and the just equal relationship between people who let God shape their lives, in the home, at work, in the Church, in society in general.

The thirteen nuns of the Marienthron convent acted in the sure knowledge that they were granted the freedom to serve God in a different way from that being taught in the 16th century. Motivated by the Word of God and the teachings of Martin Luther, they acted boldly together to serve God also outside the convent walls in the sure knowledge that their lives were being shaped and cared for by God.

Today, what, or who, is it that inspires us to serve?

Other moments in the life of Katharina von Bora remind us of how much she let her life be shaped in the service of the God of life. Let us see...

Katharina. I made my vows as a nun at the age of sixteen and that was when I received my habit. We used to work hard in the convent, particularly in the vegetable garden and the barn. I learned there to care for the sick and use teas and medicinal herbs. I learned to read and write and began to learn Latin. We also sang and prayed a lot. According to him, Martin Luther, we came to the right understanding that everybody is called to serve God in the occupation that they have, day by day. So, it is not necessary for people to live confined in convents, isolated from the world, in order to please God.

Hymn

Katharina. Well, he even says that, in fact, through much study of the Bible, he came to see that God saves us, because in his mercy he loves us. Nothing, but nothing that we may do will win God's forgiveness. God forgives us by grace through faith. That is what is written in the letter of the Apostle Paul to the Romans!

Martin Luther then chose a pastor to be my husband, but I did not love him. I sent a message, by a friend of Dr Martin Luther, telling him that in no way would I marry that pastor, but, if Luther wished to get married to me, I would not refuse.

Despite Dr Martin Luther's fear of getting married, since he suspected that at any time he could be assassinated, something did happen! He had already declared his respect for marriage, saying that it is a privileged space in which a man and a woman could serve God. We were married on the evening of 13 June 1525. Martin was 42 years old and I was 26!

Hymn

Katharina. We had a joyful married life in the Schwarzes Kloster, a former monastery that the university gave Martin to live in. In the following years, the house was full of life. We had three girls and three boys. We were also home to many nephews and nieces. Martin was frequently away from home, and often for a long time, dealing with Reformation matters. But he did not forget to write to the children whenever he could. He would bring them back souvenirs from the places where he had been. Our great sorrow was the loss, when a baby, of our second daughter, Elizabeth. It was really difficult to get over it. But God gave us much happiness with our sons and daughters. I look back with nostalgia to our family Christmases when our sons and daughters were still children.

The knowledge of the properties of medicinal herbs, which I had gained while living in the convent, came in useful on many occasions. People from the town even used to come to our house asking for advice about illnesses.

When Martin was away travelling, he used to write me letters on various subjects. He kept me informed of what was going on politically in connection with the Reformation, he kept me up-to-date on the theological debates, asked for my opinion on some matters, or would ask me to supervise the publication of another of his writings.

He always began his letters to me in a sympathetic and loving way. For example, on 7 February 1546, he wrote: (Katharina reads) 'My beloved mistress of the house, Katharina Luther, learned friend, pig-dealer in Wittenberg, my delightful wife, from top to toe...' Some days later, on 10 February 1546, he wrote again, 'To my holy busy wife, Frau Katharina Luther, learned woman of Zülsdorf (the town where we had bought land belonging to my family), my gracious, beloved mistress of the house...' He ended many of his letters with the words, 'Martin Luther, your darling husband.'

I remember that I was not always able to attend the services led by my dear Luther, because I was often busy visiting the elderly, the sick and the bereaved, when I also used my knowledge of medicinal herbs – teas, ointments for wounds and rheumatic pains, and massaging.²

Hymn

Confession of faith (a suggested form)

'We believe in one God' (sung or said)

We believe in one God, Maker of heaven and earth.

As a Father, he hears our voice, gives us life, light and consolation.

² From the book (in Portuguese) by Heloisa Gralow Dalferth, *Katharina von Bora – uma biografia*, published by Editora Otto Kuhr, 2014, pp.43-44.

He provides us with sustenance, land, home and food.
He cares for us, body and soul, in our afflictions and sorrows.
In his goodness he faithfully protects us, freeing us from evil.
We believe in Christ Emmanuel, only begotten of the Father.
For us, he was born of a virgin mother.
Begotten of the Most High, he was born of Mary.
He did no evil, his cross has redeemed us.
By his triumphal resurrection, he offers us eternal salvation.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the divine instructor.
He leads us to the Savior, guiding us in his ways.
He enlightens our souls, inspires genuine faith.
He forgives all transgressions and crowns us with his gifts.
He keeps us Christians faithful, and gives us heaven for an inheritance.

Prayer for the Church

Leader: We give you thanks, eternal God, that you mould and shape the lives of so many people, call them, guide them, lead them to serve by loving and working for peace in the world. We give you thanks for the lives of men and women whom you have inspired by your Holy Spirit to bear witness to the truth contained in the Word that frees us to love and to serve.

We pray for your Church, that it may always be reformed and shaped by you, becoming a place for fellowship, welcome, rest and consolation in the difficult moments of life. We pray for church leaders that they may be shaped to reflect goodness, mercy and compassion in their actions and decisions.

We pray that all may be treated with respect and dignity in your Church and in society, so that there may be signs of your Kingdom among us – signs of civilization, justice and respect for all creatures in your vast and varied creation.

Shape us, mould us, O God, that we may send out signs of love, hope and service into the world. Shape us, mould us, so that we can draw near to those who suffer, the sick, bereaved, despised, lonely, and victims of injustice and oppression. Shape us, mould us, that we may be always channels of peace, love and respect, spreading life and fellowship around us.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, your beloved Son. Amen.

[If for any reason the Lord's Supper is not being celebrated, this prayer concludes with the Lord's Prayer.]

Hymn

Liturgy of the Lord's Supper

The preparation of the table

Leader. Our offerings are a token of our gratitude to God and of our solidarity with others. In our offering we are placing ourselves like clay in the hands of the Potter and we are declaring our commitment to service and fellowship with God and with our neighbors. The offering in this service is for...

As we sing hymn... the offerings will be taken up and the elements for communion will be brought to the altar.

Hymn

Leader. We praise you, God of all goodness, for the love that you have shown us in our lives. We praise you for the gifts of your creation, for the offerings presented here, for the bread and the fruit of the vine on this table. We praise you for your love, which shapes us and equips us for your service. May this supper that we are about to celebrate be a true sign of the salvation offered us by your Son, Jesus Christ. In it may we find strength to witness to our fellowship with you.

Congregation. Amen.

Leader. The Lord be with you.

Congregation. And also with you.

Leader. Lift up your hearts.

Congregation. We lift them to the Lord.

Leader. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Congregation. It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Eucharistic Prayer

Leader. O God, you shape us and you transform us. We give you thanks and praise for your loving, welcoming way of acting. We praise you for calling men and women and entrusting them with your mission of proclaiming and spreading your Kingdom of love, goodness, justice, respect and care. Throughout history, you have been writing the law of love in human hearts, and have inspired your people to serve you and be faithful to you and your will. And so we exalt your name as we sing...

Congregation (singing). Holy, holy, holy.

With joy my heart adores you!

My heart cries out to worship you:

Holy are you, Lord!

Leader. Praised be you, O God of love, for your Son, Jesus Christ, who was faithful to your call, died and rose again for us and for love of the world. He came to save us, and to inspire us to act with signs of service and justice and bring harmony to our relations with our brothers and sisters.

Leader. Jesus Christ, your Son, served you to the end. In the night in which he was betrayed, he gathered with his companions on the way. He took the bread, gave you thanks and gave it to them saying, 'This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper, he took the cup and said, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.'

Leader. O God of life, pour out your Spirit of equality, strength and creativity upon us, as you sent your Spirit to your disciples, to the men and women of the Reformation of the Church, and to all those whom you have called and shaped throughout history. Send your Spirit of love and transform us to live in fellowship with one another.

Congregation (singing). Envía tu Espíritu, Señor, y renueva la faz de la tierra.

Leader. We remember, God of love, those who have served you in your Church in past generations in all ages, leaving among us their marks of renewal and witness to love. Reunite us with them in the joyful feast in the Kingdom full of peace and justice.

Leader. As clay in your hands, we wish to do your will in the world, serving you with joy, courage, wisdom and faith, in sure knowledge that the law of love rules our minds, bodies and acts. Together now we pray in the words taught us by your Son, Jesus Christ...

(The following mediation on the Lord's Prayer, written by Katharina Zell³ in 1558, is given as a suggestion. It can be read together.)

Leader. Our Father in heaven

Congregation. He is not called lord or judge, but Father. And, since he sent us his Son and we have been born again, we should also call him grandfather. He should also be regarded as a mother, who has known the pains of childbirth and the pleasure of suckling her child.

Leader. Hallowed be your name.

Congregation. We should give God's name due respect, and not only in our behavior, for others have approached him with reverence.

Leader. Your kingdom come.

Congregation. May your reign in our hearts, souls, bodies and minds.

Leader. Your will be done.

Congregation. Deliver us from complaining about any cross that we bear.

Leader. Give us today our daily bread.

Congregation. Bless the work of our hands, that we may provide food for ourselves and also for others. Give us that bread and water each day, which, if anyone eats or drinks, they will never hunger or thirst again. As the grains of wheat become bread, may we be united with Christ, ready to face poverty, pain and shame with him.

Leader. Forgive us our sins.

Congregation. Deliver us from resentment when we are unjustly spoken against and despised, just as Christ, as a sheep before its shearers is silent, did not open his mouth.

Leader. Save us from the time of trial.

³ For more on Katharina Zell, cf. material on *O Movimento da Reforma e a Participação das Mulheres* (The Reformation Movement and Women's Involvement' in the blog <http://redemulheresluteranas.blogspot.com.br/p/estudo-biblico-teologico.html>

Congregation. Save us from believing that we have been truly forgiven while we are still harboring resentment, and from the temptation to despair of your mercy, forgetting that Peter and Mary Magdalene were forgiven.

Leader. Deliver us from evil.

Congregation. From hunger, from war, from hardship, and from trouble, even though it be your will.

Leader. For the kingdom is yours.

Congregation. Christ is to reign in heaven and on earth.

Leader. And the power.

Congregation. As you set Israel free, give us freedom.

Leader. And the glory.

Congregation. As you breathed your breath into every living creature, because your glory has no end.

All. For ever. Amen.

The greeting of peace

Leader. Let us wish one another the peace of Christ, which shapes our acting, thinking and speaking, as we embrace our brothers and sisters while we sing

Hymn

Leader. The cup of blessing for which we give thanks is a sharing in the blood of Christ. The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.

Congregation. Though we are many, we are one body.

Leader. Come, for all things are now ready. At this table let us joyfully share the fellowship that unites us and strengthens us in the mission of the Church.

Distribution of the bread and wine

Post-communion prayer

Leader. God of all goodness, we thank you for your grace and welcome at this your table. Renew our faith in hope and love, and grant that, as we depart, the body and blood of Jesus Christ may sustain us on our journey as the living Church celebrating our fellowship. Shape the lives of men and women to create a united, just and loving world. We ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, your beloved Son, our Savior.

Congregation. Amen.

Dismissal

Announcements

Closing hymn

Blessing

As clay in the hands of the Potter, may God bless you!

As clay shaped by the Potter, may God use you!

As a new vessel, may God give you renewed strength to love, to serve, and to be joyful!

As a clay vessel, may God constantly shape you for a life in fellowship!

May God bless you, the God who created you, shaped you, and sustains you, to be a new vessel, in your home, in the Church, in society, and wherever you may be.

Sending

May the eternal God, the creator, who shapes and moulds our lives, guide us to serve him with love and joy today and always. On this blessed day, go in the peace of the Risen Christ and in the power of the life-giving Spirit. Amen.

Musical postlude

Service prepared by Revd Cristina Scherer, São Francisco do Sul, Santa Catarina, Brazil.

An initiative by the Women's and Gender Justice Network of the Lutheran churches in Latin America and the Caribbean associated with the Lutheran World Federation.