

International Women's Day of Prayer



PROGRAM PACKET FOR MARCH 1, 2003

FIRST PERSON SINGULAR
BY CÉLESTE PERRINO WALKER



**FOR THE GENERAL CONFERENCE
DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S MINISTRIES**

Dear Women's Ministries Leaders:

The International Women's Day of Prayer is growing in influence, coverage in the world, and impact in people's lives. When women pray it does make a difference. And when women pray and get men and children to pray with them, great things will happen.

I hope that you will plan a special program for your church for March 1, 2003 (or which ever Sabbath your church chooses if there is a date conflict). It is such an opportunity for women and for spiritual growth! If you find the material in this packet useful, please use it. If you do not find that it fits the needs of your church, use something else, preferably something you develop yourself. But please do *something*! Time is short, Jesus is coming, and we need to get the entire church unified and involved.

Women's Ministries has a manual, *Leaders' Manual for the International Women's Day of Prayer* if you would like more ideas of things you can do for this special day both during the church service or at other times and places. Check with your Conference, Union or Division leadership to get a copy. If it is not available there, let us know and we can send it to you. It is \$2.00 plus shipping.

The purpose of this day is to be a blessing so if you feel the need to change or modify the materials, please feel free to do so.

May God bless you and the members in your congregation as you lead out in Women's Ministries. You have a challenge and a privilege. Please remember, *Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves but our competence comes from God.* 2 Cor. 3:5.

In His love,

Ardis Stenbakken
Director

Emphasis for this year:

In an effort to make our prayers more specific, we have designated certain divisions and prayer needs for each year. We hope that you will work these into your program. If you have women in your congregation, or who can visit your church, from these designated divisions, it will add to the enjoyment and education of your day.

World-wide prayer concern:

We would like to ask that you remember especially those who are illiterate. They cannot read the Bible, a story to their children, apply for work or other benefits, or messages important to their health and safety. There are about 1 billion adults who can not read and the majority of these are women.

Divisions to be remembered in prayer:

- ★ *Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Akissi Priscille Metonou, Women's Ministries director.*
This division covers 32 countries of West Africa and the French speaking islands off the east coast of Africa. The primary languages are English and French. The *2001 Yearbook* lists 5113 churches and a membership of 1,454,927 in a population of about 350 million.

This area has seen a great deal of war and unrest in recent years and the people, especially the women and children, have suffered as a result. In addition to the challenges of war, they face poverty, sickness and famine. But the women have been pro-active in ministry, carrying on literacy, health and AIDS education, small enterprise development, leadership training, and public as well as one-to-one evangelism. They ask for your prayers for the women in leadership and for the girl child who does not receive first preference for education. One of the great challenges of this division is the Muslim population.

- ★ *Eastern Africa Division, Priscilla Handia Ben, Women's Ministries director.*
The 11 countries lying on the east side of Africa from Botswana to Ethiopia make up this division. The primary languages are Swahili and English. In a population of almost 200 million, there were 1,960,156 church members in 7,465 churches.

Many of the women in this division need to be nurtured and encouraged to be involved in ministry for Jesus Christ. But their workloads are a real challenge as many women are expected to work both at home and in their respective places of labor. Abuse and poverty are also big challenges but abuse is not yet talked about. They need people who will speak up for them and the women need courage to speak out so that both the abuser and abused can be helped. From June 2008, 2003 the women of this division are planning a division wide Women's Ministries Congress and ask for your prayers. "Finally we need prayers so that God can increase our faith."

- ★ *North American Division, Mary Maxson, Women's Ministries director.*
This division is made up of the United States, Canada, Bermuda, the French possession of Saint Pierre et Miquelon off the coast of Newfoundland, and some Pacific islands, primarily Midway Islands and Johnston Island. The primary language is English although almost every major language of the world is used in this division. There are 4775 churches with 922,917 members in a population of just over 306 million.

There are three primary prayer requests from this division:

- For continued recovery from the affects of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; The terrorist attacks affected over 6500 NAD church members in 21 congregations.
- For the many who are suffering from domestic violence, even in the church; among Adventist church members statistics show that 1:4 girls and 1:6 boys will be sexually abused before the age of 16 and 4 million American women are physically abused by their husbands or live-in partners each year.
- And for the *Heart Call Ministry*. This is a ministry of women reaching women who are taking a break from church, inviting them to come back, to make Jesus Christ their personal Savior and allow Him to guide them in their lives.

Author of the program material:

Céleste Perrino Walker is a professional writer and editor. In addition to the many articles she has written, she is well known for writing the following books: *Eleventh Hour* (with Eric Stoffle) *Guardians*; *I Call Him Abba*; *Making Sabbath Special*; *Midnight Hour*; *More Power to Ya*; *Prayer Warriors*; and *Sunny Side Up* (with Eric D. Stoffle).

Céleste lives in Rutland, Vermont, USA, with her husband, Rob, and children, Joshua and Rachel. She taught her son a bilingual kindergarten program and piano. She enjoys reading to her children, painting, photography, canoe camping, and portraying an eighteenth-century French woman at historical reenactments. And it is obvious that she has given prayer a great deal of thought

Introduction to the materials:

The enclosed materials were created with the following options in mind. For those who would like something a little different, choose from the sections marked **Alternative**. For those who prefer a more traditional approach, choose from the sections marked **Traditional**. And for those who want to do their own thing, mix and match, as you wish.

If your church normally has a one-hour service you may need to eliminate some of the activities. It would be wise to time the program and plan accordingly.

Suggested Order of Service

WORSHIP IN REVERENCE

Musical Prelude

Hymn Sing

Welcome/Personal Ministries/Announcements

Call to Worship: Philippians 4:6,7

Music Meditation –

Traditional: *SDA Hymnal*, #478 “Sweet Hour of Prayer”

Alternative: *He Is Our Song*, #147 “In Moments Like These”

WORSHIP IN PRAISE

Invocation

Hymn of Praise

Traditional: *SDA Hymnal*, #33 “Sing a New Song to the Lord”

Alternative: *He Is Our Song*, #67 “Majesty”

WORSHIP IN STEWARDSHIP

Offertory

Offertory Response

WORSHIP IN MEDITATION

Children’s Story: “Boxes From Heaven” [Supplied]

Scripture: Psalm 96

Prayer of Worship

Ministry in Music

Musical Meditation

WORSHIP IN INSTRUCTION

(Optional) Responsive Reading: [Supplied]

SDA Hymnal # 700, “Oh Sing to the Lord and New Song!”

Sermon: “First Person Singular” [Supplied]

Hymn of Consecration

Benediction (Scriptural) [Supplied]

Congregational Response

Traditional: *SDA Hymnal*, #113 “As Pants the Hart”

Alternative: *He Is Our Song*, #41 “Our God Reigns”

Musical Postlude

BULLETIN IDEAS

Prayer Request Slip:

To coordinate with the theme, plan to dedicate some space in the bulletin for people to write in their prayers of praise and their prayer needs. You can put this at the bottom of a page of the bulletin so it can be detached easily. If you want to get really creative with it, you could design small boxes, that look like pretty packages, for the prayers to be written in. You might want to dedicate the entire back page of the bulletin for this purpose.

Quotes:

“If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you always got.”

Magnify the Lord: “When praying don’t start out with a problem. By the time you get done describing the problem to God it will look twice as big and God will look small in comparison. Praise God first. Then He will look big and the problem will look small in comparison.” - Vilmantas Kirsnys

AFTERNOON PROGRAM IDEAS

Prayer Walk: The idea here is to cover ground with Scripture. The Lord says, “As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:10,11. Gather teams together and walk down neighborhood streets, city blocks, along country roads, anywhere you can walk, “laying” down Scripture as you go. Pray scripture, pray for the people who live in the houses you pass, pray for the people driving by you in their cars. Cover the area with prayer.

Old-fashioned Prayer and Praise Meeting Have an old-fashioned good time. Sing the old pioneer songs if you can find one of the old hymnals or just ask for favorites. Sing a hymn and then ask for pray for requests or offer prayers of praise. Repeat as long as you want.

Prayer Scavenger Hunt: Send people out on a scavenger hunt to find items that represent the answer to prayers. Alternately you can send people out with a list of scavenger items representing Bible stories. Choose a time to gather and discuss the things you found.

Answer Prayers: Take a group out to answer prayers—someone else’s prayers. See how many things you can find to do to help others and “answer” their prayers. Make a difference in your community.

Children's Story:

Boxes From Heaven

(To story teller: Feel free to give the girl a name in the local culture so the children will identify with her better.)

Jolene lived in a small town. It wasn't much of a town really. Most of the houses were small and flimsy. In fact, you couldn't really call them houses. They were more like shacks. Right through the middle of town was a railroad track. No one in town knew where the train came from or where it was going. No one ever asked and the train never stopped.

Every day Jolene went to school. It wasn't much of a school really. It was made out of brick and the brick was old and crumbling. The playground was scratched out of a rocky spot on the ground. There wasn't anything to play on, just the hard ground. Sometimes the children played marbles. Most of the time they just kicked at the stones and walked around with gloomy faces.

Jolene grew up in this town until she graduated from high school. The next day she said good-bye to her parents and jumped on the train. She really had to jump because the train didn't stop. Let me tell you, the conductor was some surprised. In fact, he didn't even know there *was* a town there. Jolene paid her fare and sat down for a long ride. She was going to ride just as far as she could go.

After awhile Jolene got sleepy and she laid her head against the window of the train, even though it was very hard and she didn't have anything to make a pillow from, and fell asleep. The train rocked on, clickety-clack, clickety-clack. Jolene began to dream.

In her dream, the train tracks became a ladder. The ladder stretched all the way up to heaven. Along the ladder she saw angels. But, the angels weren't just standing on the ladder. They were moving – and they could really move – up and down the ladder, between heaven and earth. Jolene could see they were holding something in their hands.

One of the angels saw Jolene watching them and he came over to Jolene, holding out the box in his hands. "Do you have something you wish to give to the Lord?" he asked.

Jolene looked down at her empty hands. She looked at the shabby bag of belongings on the seat beside her. "I don't have anything worthy enough to give to the Lord," she said sadly.

"Oh, but you do," the angel protested. "'Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.'" Again he offered the pretty box in his hands to Jolene.

Slowly Jolene reached out and accepted the box. In her whole life she couldn't remember anyone in her town doing good and sharing with others. Every person she knew seemed to believe that life was hopeless. They just got through it as best they could, each one in her own little world. Jolene was ashamed to realize that she had never even thought of doing something nice for someone else. She was just about to hand the box back to the angel empty, when she thought of something. Praise was the other gift that pleased God.

Carefully, so she wouldn't spill any of it, Jolene poured out her praise into the box. Then she wrapped it with a ribbon the angel pulled out of a pocket. Shyly she gave the box to the

angel. Just that fast, the angel was speeding back up the ladder. Before Jolene could even blink the angel was back. He held a beautiful package out and nodded for Jolene to take it.

With trembling fingers, Jolene untied the pretty ribbon and looked with wonder inside the box. Wrapped up in some tissue paper was a smile. The biggest, most charming smile she had ever seen. She took it out and put it on. It was the first smile she had ever worn. Quickly she filled the box with praise, this time even more than before. The box was so full that she had to really push hard on the flaps to make it close. Again the angel took the box and vanished up the ladder. Again he came back, this time with an even bigger, prettier box than before.

When Jolene opened this box she found it was full of flowers. They were beautiful, colorful splotches of red, orange, blue, purple, and yellow. They were so cheerful that they made her smile. Before she knew it, a laugh – the first laugh she ever had – burst out of her mouth. She laughed so loud that she woke herself up.

Jolene looked around the train, scarcely believing that everything had been a dream. Or had it? On the seat next to her were the flowers God had given her. Jolene considered this as she stared out of the window. She was surprised to see her house fly past, and then some other buildings on the outer edges of her town.

“Stop the train!” Jolene cried. “I want to get off.”

And so the train made it’s first unscheduled stop at Jolene’s town. Jolene had ridden full-circle. As she walked down the street in the center of town Jolene saw the whole place with different eyes. People stared at her curiously as she smiled at them and began to pass out the flowers in her arms.

First one and then another smiled at her, and then at each other. Eagerly she told them the story about the boxes. Before she headed home she watched as they began to fill their own boxes with praise and send them to God. She didn’t need anyone to tell her that the town was changing. The smiles decorating the faces of the people told the whole story.

(Note to story teller: It would be helpful to have a box decorated as described—or make a box and change the description to match).

Imagine that you hold in your hands a box. It’s a beautiful box wrapped in silver paper. It has blue ribbon around it, tied in a fancy bow. What are you going to put in your box? Do you have a need so personal and so deep that only God can fill it? Put it in the box. Did something happen to you this week that is too joyous for words? Fill your box with praise. Every day angels come down to earth; they’re here right now, waiting to take our troubles and our praise to God. Don’t let them leave empty handed. Fill your box up full to overflowing and that’s how it will come back.

Sermon:

First Person Singular

[Note: For **Traditional** simply read/speak the entire sermon, omitting the creative pronunciation for the voice suggestions. For **Alternative** assign parts for the various women. Another option is for the speaker to do all parts, in different voices, maybe wearing hats for each character.]

(Moderator)

Prayer. There are songs about it, support groups for it, and classes on it. We have e-mail prayer chains, prayer phone trees, and prayer partners. We pray in groups, alone, jogging and just before a test. Just what it is about prayer that makes it so popular? What does prayer do for us? Why is prayer vital to our Christian walk? Several women would like to answer that question for us today from their experiences.

(**Martha** – voice suggestion, Southern America) **Note to translator:** This section may be a bit difficult to translate because it is written as an uneducated person might speak. Pick and use appropriate expressions to convey that idea).

I've always been a do-it-yourselfer, I guess. It's hard to rely on other people. They never do things to suit me. They're either too slow, too sloppy or the job's just plain all wrong. Maybe you know what I mean. If you want something done right you gotta do it yourself, that's what I always say.

Just the other day I was telling Mary—Mary is my sister; now she's one I never give a job too if I want it done right—I was telling Mary, “Mary,” I says, “what do you suppose God gave us our two hands for and our quick minds and our sturdy legs if not to do what we can for other folks?” Mary laughed. She's given to fits of silliness, poor thing. She laughed and she said, “Now Martha, God don't expect us to do, do, do all the time. He wants us to enjoy life and people part of the time. Besides, if we spend all our time doing for God, how is He ever going to do anything for us?”

I admit that set me back a spell. I reckon she had something there after all. The pot really came to a boil the day we had that big dinner party for Jesus. Our brother, Lazarus, asked if we'd mind if he had a couple friends over for a bit of a shindig. When I found out Jesus was going to be one of the guests I says to Lazarus, “Land's sakes, boy, you know Jesus is always welcome in this house. I'll make Him a feast that'll set His mouth to watering, yes sir I will.” Little did I realize I'd be doing the whole thing with my own two hands and not much else.

Don't you know that the minute Jesus stepped foot into the house there was Mary, a settin'¹ at His feet with her mouth hanging open like she was catching flies, listening to every

¹Sitting

word came out! And you-know-who was stuck in the kitchen. I fumigated² in there for a spell, but then I just couldn't take it no more. I declare! Who does she think she is that she can set there like the Queen of the Nile or something while I slave in the kitchen?

I decided to tell Jesus. She'd listen to Him. I says to Him, I says, "Lord, don't you care that my lazy-bones sister left me to do all the work myself? I'm plumb wore out!³ Tell her to help me, would you?" I thought that would fix her wagon,⁴ but good. Sure was some shock to me what Jesus said.

He says, "Martha, Martha." (I love it when He says my name.) Then He says, "You got a lot of worries, woman, and you get upset over the littlest things; there ain't⁵ but one thing you need to be thinking on. That's the one Mary picked and I ain't about to take it away from her."

Hrmph. Don't know why Mary should be right. Though I am so dog-tired doing all this work, it would be a mercy to set down and rest a spell⁶ and talk to Jesus. Sure would, at that. Maybe the food would burn, but I guess we could eat it anyway. Maybe them dishes would set in the sink, but I think I could stand it. Guess if I was a'dying this very minute I wouldn't care so much about the housework and the dishes as I would about getting to have Jesus' ear for a bit before I closed my eyes to the world.

I 'spect,⁷ really, though I never give it much thought before, there ain't much could be more important in this life than settin' down a spell with Jesus. Kind of makes the rest of life worth living, if you know what I mean. Funny it took a lay-about like Mary to show me that. The girl can't cook a biscuit to save herself, but after all she knows a thing or two about life. Fancy that.

(Sick Woman – voice suggestion Aristocratic voice and pronunciation): [Defensively]

Do you know what it's like to be sick? I apologize. It was wrong of me to ask that way. I'm sure you do. Each of us suffers from time to time. I didn't mean to come across so defensively. But, you see, I was sick for so long, suffered for so long, that it's hard for me to compare anyone's suffering with my own. My suffering was my life. I could not see, experience,

² Fussed, complained

³ Tired

⁴ Tell her what is wrong

⁵ Isn't

⁶ Awhile

⁷ Expect

or even at times, think of anything outside my own private world of pain.

For twelve long years I was afflicted with a bleeding; I won't get into the specifics. The details are quite private. It was a woman's condition. My female complaints would have been enough to bear, in themselves, but added to it were the horrors to which my doctors subjected me. I can't even bring myself to speak of the medicines and the "treatments." There is a saying that the cure is worse than the ailment and I can say that was certainly true in my case. I spent all the money I could scrape together on those vile remedies, but instead of becoming well I grew ever worse.

As hard as it was for me to live under these distressing conditions, there were more still. My very illness made me an outcast among people. I was shunned. Having contact with me would have rendered them ceremonially unclean. My fate was little better than the poor lepers I saw wandering in the outskirts of society.

I prayed, oh, how I prayed, that God would heal me of my infirmities. Do you know, through the endless periods of suffering, He never left me. Even when His answer was no, I still dwelt in His presence. In fact, He was the only One who did not abandon me to my suffering. He was the only Friend who neither shut me out nor ridiculed me. He wrapped me in understanding and soothed my soul with His love. Because of my distress I relied on Him only and I never found Him wanting. For that reason alone I can be grateful to have suffered. It is a badge I wear proudly. The rabbis tell us to walk with God, but I lived with Him by my side, closer than any brother.

I think, eventually, I reached a point where it was enough for me that He was there. But, physically I was so weak, I desperately desired healing. I never stopped asking the Lord for it. I was so sure that was His plan for my life. Then one day I heard that Jesus was going to be near my home. My home!

I'd heard about Him, of course. Who hadn't? Oh, I'd heard all sorts of things. Some said He was God's Son, the Anointed One, the Messiah. Others scoffed and said He was nothing but a poor carpenter born to a trollop and therefore an absolute fraud. No one spoke to me directly, naturally, but I kept my eyes and ears open and in my heart I knew. He was the Messiah.

I made my plans, but when I think back on how I had the courage to carry them out I still shiver with surprise at my boldness. I believe that without the faith I had in God from walking so close to Him I would not have had the strength to reach out and be healed.

Before any of the crowds arrived that day I made my way to where I knew He would pass. I hid myself and waited, speaking to no one so that I would not be found out. I was light-headed and weak by the time He finally arrived. There were so many people! I could scarcely believe my eyes. I made my way through the crowd and it was like trying to climb up a mountain. The heat and the press of the bodies around me...oh, I can't bear to remember.

Finally I saw Him and I thought, “If I can just touch His clothes, I will be healed.” I reached out and took hold of the fabric, rough stuff it was, homespun. Immediately I felt healing sweep through my body like a powerful current washing over me. I was healed!

Jesus turned round straightaway and I heard Him ask, “Who touched my clothes?” Well, in that crowd it could have been anybody. He was fortunate He wasn’t trampled, if you ask me. But, I alone knew what He meant. He knew His power had healed me.

I think the joy of finally being whole gave me the strength, for I certainly would not have possessed it otherwise, though I trembled with fear. What if He should take my health back? I fell at His feet and poured out the whole story. Do you know, He could not have been nicer. He pulled me to my feet and said, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.” He called me “daughter”! I will never forget it.

My days are full now. I have my life back. But, even though it is hard to find time to do all that I want, I still spend time with God. He was my strength when I was ill and He continues to be my strength. I have found that it does not matter if we are sick, well, or somewhere in between, we all have our good days and our bad days. No matter what, we need God to help us through. And the time we spend with Him is what gets us through *all* our days.

(Dorcās – voice suggestion Parisian French. In English, pronounce “th” as “z.” The=Zee. This/these=Zees, etc. In other languages, speak as a French speaker would speaking your local language, or choose any foreigner speaking your language.):

This morning when I woke up, I remember thinking, what a beautiful day it was. The sun was shining, The birds were singing, The sky was blue and the clouds looked like little [leettle] lambs chasing each other around the sky. Alors! What glorious beauty. I stood at my window and talked with my Father as I do every morning. For me, the day cannot begin without first I should talk with my Father about it. This I do every morning.

This morning, as I spoke with my Father He told me about a poor woman, a widow, who lives on the edge of the town. This poor woman has a son who is very ill and she has nothing to feed him to keep up his strength and she can afford no medicines to help him get well. Before I eat my breakfast I will make haste to where my Father has directed me to give aid to this poor woman and her son.

I will bring them one of the robes I finished making yesterday. It is so beautiful! To look at it will make this young man feel well again, I am sure. It has the colors of the rainbow in it. I will bring some clothing for the mother as well. My Father has said she does not have much. It is a good thing I baked bread yesterday. A few loaves of that will just fit in my basket with the lentil soup, clothes, and a bundle of herbs for the sick boy.

Many of my friends are widows. They understand what it is like to follow the Father, to rely on Him for everything. But, some others, they ask me, “Dorcās—Dorcās is my name—

Dorcas, why do you put yourself out so much for others? Look at all the clothes you make. Look at all the food you cook. What makes you do it?" They ask me as if it is something special that I do! But, I tell you, it is not.

Before you will understand this, I must tell you a story. One day, not too long ago, I was going about my business, making clothes and robes for the poor people my Father sends to me. I noticed that I did not feel well. They tell me I died, but to me, it was like a deep sleep. When I woke up and realized that I had been dead and the Father had sent His disciple Peter to wake me from the dead, well, I can tell you I was very grateful!

But, it is not that which makes me to care so for others. No, I cared for them before I died and I care for them now. It is just that now I know how short life can be. We only have a short time here to do the Father's work. I enjoy what I do, or I would not do it. The work I do for my Father is not like work. It is a joy because I do it for Him. I am the one who is blessed.

My Father and I, we have a good partnership. We talk always and He tells me about the people I can help. Without Him I would not know. Someone could live next door to me in great want and I might never know. Because of my Father I know the needs of the people He wants me to help. They say, "But, Dorcas, how did you know I was sick? I told no one!" And I tell them, "Nothing, not even the falling of a sparrow, misses the attention of my Father. It was He who told me you were sick." You see how much He cares for each of us? Who knows our wants and needs better than He? And so, who better to ask what I can do for the people around me? Through His eyes I see things my own eyes would surely miss. Why would I want to go through life half blind when with my Father's help I can see so clearly? No, my Father and I we will go through life together, side by side. That is how it was meant to be.

Mary (voice suggestion: Valley Girl; **(Translator and presenter:** translate and speak to sound like a teen age girl, using local expressions teens might use):

I know some people who think it's really great to be a "do-it-yourself," but, I just don't. I mean, there are just some things you can't do all by your self, that is for sure! For example there was the time when my brother, Lazarus died. Can you even believe it? I mean, it was awful! He was dead for four days and well, you know what happens when people have been dead a long time. He sure couldn't do anything about it himself. And my sister, Martha, she is very particular and gets uptight when the closet hasn't been aired for a day; imagine how she was! It was not a pretty picture! So, there we were, just the three of us. Lazarus dead and Martha and I bawling our eyes out.

But, then our Friend, Jesus, came and that was totally awesome! I mean, here we were, two women, alone in the world with no man to rely on, because, well, as I said, he died, and we didn't know what we were going to do. I mean, what *could* we do? Without Lazarus we didn't even know where our next meal was going to come from. That's how bad it was! So, here was Jesus I thought, He'll help us, right? I mean, He's our Friend. That's obvious. But, I didn't even imagine what He was going to do to help us or how He would help. It was so miraculous it was beyond imagining. It was so totally spectacular. Isn't it incredible how you can get so narrow-

minded about life? Martha and I were wondering if we'd get kicked out of our house or if we'd ever eat again and how we would get by. I even thought of asking Jesus, maybe, for some food, but He didn't give us food. He gave us Lazarus—back from the dead, which was so incredible it was beyond words.

I listen to Jesus every chance I get. Martha would be the first one to tell you that of course! But, even I was surprised by how much I limited Jesus by what I *thought* He would do. I'm the kind of girl who likes to color outside the lines—do things differently, but I never thought about it that way before. I can ask Jesus for anything! Nothing is too big or too small for Him. I think that is so totally amazing, don't you? So, now, when I need something, I just remember Lazarus and I ask God for the moon [**Translator:** this expression means something beyond hope or imagination]. I know He's big enough to give it to me, if it's what I really need. And for all I know He's got something even bigger in mind. With such a totally awe-inspiring God you never know! That I have found out for sure.

(Moderator)

If there were arteries and veins in our Christianity, prayers would course along them like blood, bringing essential nutrients to our soul and taking our depleted resources back to God to be strengthened and renewed. A Christian without prayer is like a body without a beating heart. Everything vital would stagnate. If there is one thought I would like to leave you with today it is this:

Pray.
Pray every day in every way.
Pray.

Benediction:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. —Romans 15:13, N.I.V.

Optional Responsive Reading

Oh, Sing to the Lord a New Song!

Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, bless His name;

**Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.**

For the Lord is great and greatly to be praised;
He is to be feared above all gods.
For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the Lord made the heavens.

**Honor and majesty are before Him;
Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary.**

Give to the Lord, O kindreds of the peoples,
Give to the Lord glory and strength.

**Give to the Lord the glory due His name;
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.
Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth.**

Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns;
The world also is firmly established,
It shall not be moved;
He shall judge the peoples righteously.”

**Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
Let the field be joyful, and all that is in it.
Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice before the Lord.**

For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth.

——From Psalm 96, N.K.J.V.