



Overcoming Boundaries

Devotional booklet
of the Evangelical Lutheran Mission
in Lower Saxony (ELM)



ELM Hermannsburg
Partner in Mission

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Foreword - Overcoming Boundaries

This Worship Material is the result of intense days at the International Gender Summer Academy “Overcoming boundaries”, held in Hermannsburg and Hanover from August 19 to 26, 2019. Women from Brazil, Central African Republic, Germany, India, Peru and South Africa talked about boundaries in personal life and society.

Based on biblical impulses they reflected on their own situation as a woman and the general situation of women in their countries. Experiencing solidarity amongst each other and understanding, these women talked freely about gender issues in their own countries and thought of ways overcoming the boundaries/the obstacles on their ways.

One of the things they talked about was the fact that in many countries women have no voice. They are responsible for bringing up children and running the household, but are not considered capable of getting involved in politics, business or the church. Women have to fight hard to achieve leadership roles. Pastor Dr. Antoinette Beanzoui, for example, was one of only two women in the Central African Republic who had studied theology and the only one who achieved a PhD and worked as a professor at the university. She had to defend herself against many hostilities from the men, but also from other women.

The women with one voice said: „We are often overheard and overlooked. In conversations the men

talk to each other. Our opinion is not noticed and not taken into account. We have to speak out very aggressively in order to make our ideas heard“.

During these days all women were invited to write “Her-Story” to give an example of a life as woman in each society. All sharing, thinking and discussing concluded in texts that became the basis for these devotions at hand. In solidarity they laid their lives with all pain and healing before God and worshiped him. They praised God, knowing that it is him giving them the strength to endure and maybe overcome their own boundaries.

Strengthened by one another and by God with a sense of unity, these women went back to their own countries and will hopefully be powerful voices within their societies, will not be overlooked, but be seen as women who have a lot to say and to give to their societies.

Pastor Indra Grasekamp
ELM-Secretary “Global Spirituality”



Voice of a Participant

International Gender Summer Academy- I'm in!



Pastor Sybil Chetty

Ecumenical
co-worker at the ELM

It felt so good and right for me to have been part of this Summer Academy and to get into conversation with women from other countries. It is an increase of benefit when people from different cultural backgrounds come together and share their different perspectives on different topics. It opens a new horizon that people from the same cultural background would not see. The Summer Academy was a good opportunity to get to know each other, learn from one another and understand God's word together.

The fact alone that we came from different countries introduced us to the topic "overcoming boundaries" as we all had to cross borders right from the start. The conference was held in English, so we could not exchange our ideas in our mother tongue. We had to overcome the language barrier to get to know each other. For some this was more difficult than for others.

It was nice to see that each woman contributed, based on her own experiences and cultural background. In this cultural diversity we celebrated devotions, sang songs, prayed with and for each other and talked about biblical texts.

The very personal "Her-Stories" that we shared, connected us deeply. Knowing that we are united in Christ, we cried and laughed and comforted one another. By sharing we also got a glimpse into each others lives, homes and circumstances. Partly even a sense for the boundaries that need to be overcome.

It was very important for me to be part of this Summer Academy since I experienced all these boundaries in my own life and ministry for 20 years. The conversations with other ladies increased my awareness for such issues in my own environment and will help me to deal with it more efficiently. Women in South Africa can benefit from my experience since I can support them to be more aware of such boundaries in their own lives.

Regardless of country or state, women worldwide experience boundaries, whether in terms of gender, structure, language or culture. It is in sharing our stories that we are encouraged and are encouraging one another. It is in sharing that we learn best from one another. And it is in sharing our stories that we overcome these boundaries and we accept and embrace each other.

In this devotional booklet, women tell stories from their lives openly and deeply from their hearts; hereby they are contributing to overcoming boundaries. Therefore it is a valuable resource.





Yours **Pastor Indra Grasekamp**
ELM-Secretary „Global Spirituality“

How to Use this Booklet

This is a devotional booklet based on very personal stories of women from all over the world. Some of them are examples of what we have heard about, or what we have experienced ourselves, and others are completely unfamiliar to us.

Celebrating devotion, using stories from completely different contexts and women we do not know can be a great starting point for a discussion about the challenges of our own society and in our own everyday life on one side and on the other broaden our view of the fates of women in other countries.

The devotions can be celebrated exactly as they are printed, but they can also be adapted according to your own needs.

Greetings and liturgical parts are matched with the women's stories and frame the experiences, but may need to be changed for the use in your own congregational contexts.

It may even be contributing/ interesting/ attractive to complement the devotions with personal stories from your own context.

The language in the booklet is deliberately not gender neutral, because the Her-Stories originate from a Gender Summer Academy where women talked to each other among women.

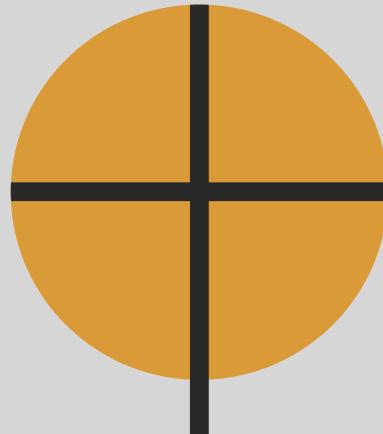
The devotions, however, want to appeal to us all. I therefore invite men and women equally, to celebrate devotions with these materials and to reflect together on the situation of women here in Germany and all over the world.

Yours Pastor Indra Grasekamp
ELM-Secretary “Global Spirituality”

If not marked otherwise biblical passages are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

You are unique

**Devotion on Psalm 23 including Anointing on the occasion
of the International Gender Summer Academy**



Greeting

Good morning,

I'm glad you all arrived safely in Hermannsburg. Welcome to all of you! Let us begin our days of the Summer Academy with a devotion. So let us calm ourselves, feel our breath and take time for God. We want to listen to his word and be guided by him. Let us celebrate in the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Song: Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Music and text available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wutmEjdbedE>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=open+the+eyes+of+my+heart+lord&ie=&oe=>

Psalm 23

¹The Lord is my shepherd,
I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

³he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;

for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.



You are Unique

This Psalm that we have just prayed together is probably one of the most well-known and popular Psalms ever. It is spoken a million times, because the words give strength and comfort. Our parents and grandparents and many generations before them have already learned these words by heart.

With the prayer from the Psalm we also speak words that can give support in grief and pain. Words that give strength and power. We speak of a God on whom we can rely, who guides us through life, no matter what we do and where we are.

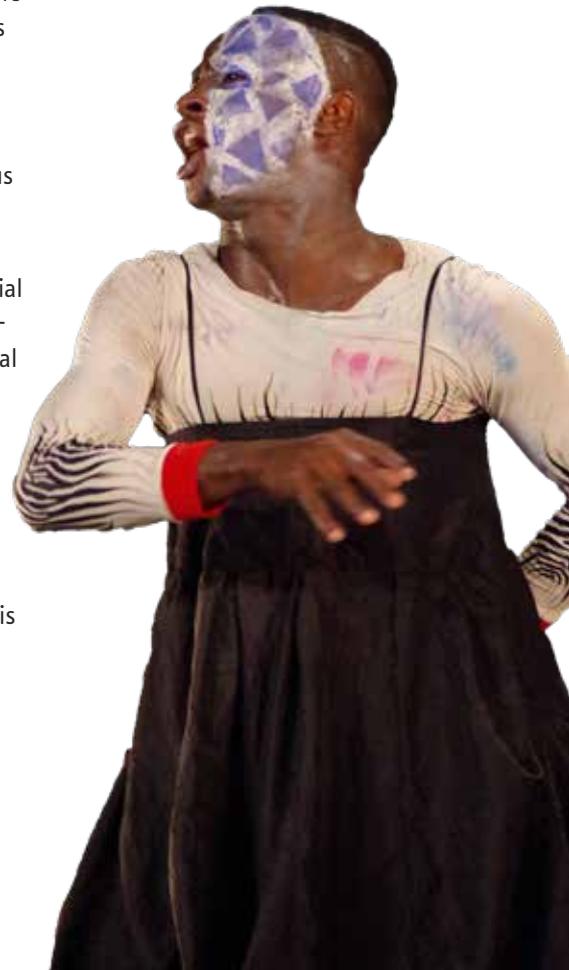
Today we are gathered here from different parts of the world. So we are sitting here bringing our own traditions and different ways of worshipping together. And also the challenges we face in our lives and in our countries are very different. But in all this diversity we know that we are united by and in God.

I don't know if these words from Psalm 23 are spoken as often in your countries as they are here in Germany, but I am sure that the promise of these words comforts us people worldwide.

Much confidence speaks from these verses and we hear that we are treated very special by God. „You anoint my head with oil,“ says the Psalm. Only emperors, kings and prophets were anointed in those days. It was a great privilege with which only very special people were honored and makes it clear that God considers us to be something very special.

Jesus Christ himself was called the Anointed One. As Christians we belong to him.

Today I want to anoint you. With oil I want to draw a cross on your forehead or hand. This should be a sign that we belong to Christ, the Anointed One. This anointing also reminds us that we are precious in the eyes of God and that our life is unique.



Prayer¹

Gracious God,

In our baptism you have given us dignity.

You have called us by our name and promised us hereby your friendship.

May we experience your healing care by this anointment and celebrate live within the body of Christ.

Amen.

Oil is cleansing and healing, it protects and preserves. It is food for life. Like the oil penetrates our body, may the Holy Spirit fill us.

Ritual of Anointing

Between the following petitions I invite you to sing: Ubi caritas et amor. Ubi caritas deus ibi est. This song is taken from the tradition in Taizé. The text means: where you find charity and love there is God.

Song: Ubi caritas et amor
ubi caritas deus ibi est.

Be praised, God, Holy Spirit,
through you we have been cleansed in body and soul.
You take away our fear and burden,
harm and ruin.
You give purity and healing.

Song: Ubi caritas et amor
ubi caritas deus ibi est.
Be praised, God, Holy Spirit,
you sent us your breath of life.

In weakness and hardship you give us strength
and you uplift us.

¹Texts in the context of the anointing are taken in abstracts from the material booklet for the Kirchentag Sunday 2018, p.21ff.

Song: Ubi caritas et amor
ubi caritas deus ibi est.

Be praised, God, Holy Spirit,
in our baptism you have made us your children,
you have called and elected us to follow you.
You give life and let us feel salvation.
Therefore we praise and worship you
now and forever.
Amen.

You have anointed me,
you have called me by my name,
you have told me: you are my precious child.

Sometimes it is good to hear this promise of God not only in words, but to feel it in
body and soul.

I now invite you, everyone who likes, to come forward to be anointed. If you like to
receive the cross on the inside of your hand, please reach me with a receiving hand.
Otherwise I will give you the sign on your forehead.

(A cross is drawn on the hand or forehead with the anointing oil.
By doing so the promise is said: „You are anointed by God, you
are his beloved child“).

Anointing

“You are anointed by God, you are my beloved child.”

Song: Ubi caritas et amor
ubi caritas deus ibi est.



To thank God for his presence, we pray as his children, with the words he has given to us, each of us in her own language.

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

Let us go forth into this day with the blessing of our Lord. We want to receive the blessing and pass it on. I ask you to follow my gesture. Please stretch out your right hand palm up to the front to receive the blessing:

Lord,

we receive your blessing for our live with open hands.

Over and over again we need your goodness and mercy for us.

Give us your goodness and mercy, that we can see ourselves in that light and feel safe.

Please put your left hand on your neighbour's shoulder to pass the blessing on.

Lord,

Your blessing shall not just be on us, but it shall reach our neighbour in this devotion, but also touch the whole world.

Goodness and mercy shall not just be given to us, but follow all people like a path of blessing throughout the world.

So bless us and keep us; God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Song: Light of the world

Text and music available at:

<https://tangledblue.bandcamp.com/track/light-of-the-world>

Devotion

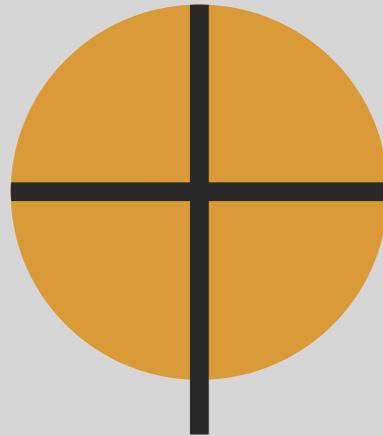
Pastor Indra Grasekamp (Germany, ELM)



Longing for Change

Devotion with international Her-Stories

written by Antoinette Beanzoui (Central African Republic) & Rathna Kumari Karam (India)





Antoinette Beanzoui

Central African Republic



Rathna Kumari Karam

India

¹ In the Central African Republic it is unusual for women to receive education and to study. When Pastor Antoinette Beanzoui writes that her daughter goes to university, she also writes about the hope she had placed in her daughter. It becomes clear why the loss weighs double. The daughter is taken and the hope for a generation of women who are free and educated also.

Greeting

Welcome to all of you sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this devotion we will hear the Her-Stories of two of our sisters Antoinette and Rathna. They share with us what moves them. Together we will bring their stories before God.

It is a time to acknowledge, to praise and give thanks to God for giving us this opportunity to hear one another's stories and to learn from each other.

Let us begin by singing the song "We bless your name".

Song: We bless your name (South Africa, Xhosa)

Music and text available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDPL5b0AqjI>

<http://www.songlyrics.com/obert-mazivisa/we-bow-before-your-throne-lyrics/>

Her-Story (Central African Republic)

I am a woman who has lost many strong members of my family. Most of them were men. But the loss of my daughter is the reason for my worries, is the reason for my desperation. I am so confused by this loss and devastated.

My daughter was a medical student¹. She was at the end of her studies and died tragically.

Every day I pray to God and ask, „What can I do?“ I didn't get a response.

But I keep on hoping.

I am sure that when I read the Bible, God will open a door or show me a way.

It is so hard for me to go on, to keep on hoping and believing. I am wounded. How can I be healed?



Psalm 34,4-8 (read by all participants)

⁴ I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
he delivered me from all my fears.

⁵ Those who look to him are radiant;
their faces are never covered with shame.

⁶ This poor man called, and the Lord heard him;
he saved him out of all his troubles.

⁷ The angel of the Lord encamps around those
who fear him, and he delivers them.

⁸ Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.

(NIV Bible)

Song: Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom (Taizé)

Reading: Isaiah 40:31

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

They will run and not grow weary,

They will walk and not be faint.

(NIV Bible)



Her-Story (India)

In my family I am the oldest child. I have one brother who is younger than me and is studying. My father is a farmer and my mother helps him with the work on the farm. My parents have always worked hard to provide for the family and to give us children an education. Nevertheless there was often too little.

I would like to support my parents and take care of them because I have had a good education, unlike many women in India. But although I am well-educated and have a degree, I cannot find work. Because of that I am heavily dependent on my family. If I would finally find a paid job I could support my family. But I am unemployed and depend on my parents.

This is not good for me.

I pray to God that I will get a good job soon.

Alternating-Reading: Isaiah 40:31

(The verse is divided into individual lines and will be read line by line by different participants, and will be repeated several times. So we will hear the words taken from Isaiah 40:31 several times in a row.)

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.

They will soar on wings like eagles;

They will run and not grow weary,

They will walk and not be faint.

(NIV Bible)

Community in Faith gives Strength

We have heard the stories of two women. In both we hear the longing for change. Both women are longing to get out of their boundaries and overcome their obstacles with the help of God.

Therefore what is needed is the belief in God and the love for him and one another. And we have this love, this strength and power in us through God. He pours out his love and we are filled with it; so filled that this love can overflow.

But sometimes we get into situations in which we cannot feel anything of God's love in our lives anymore. These are especially those moments when sadness and anger have gained the upper hand, when we are overwhelmed by pain and fear. Then it is difficult for us to remember and have confidence in God's love.

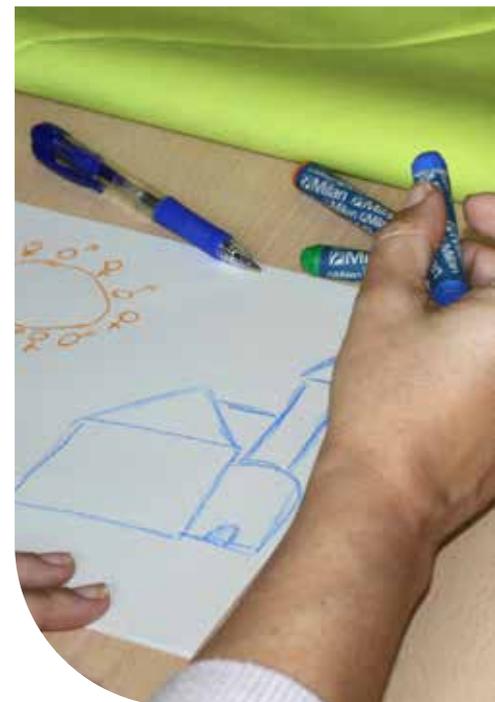
These are the moments in which it is important to assure ourselves of this love and energy. We must remember: God is always with us, supports us, guides us, protects and loves us. He gives us his love and fills us with it.

Especially then it is important to understand ourselves as a community of believers and to unite as sisters in Christ. For it is good to know that we are not alone in our fears and worries, with our pain and our boundaries in life. In Christ we are united with one another.

God does not want to harm us when he brings us into these dark situations of fear and sorrow. He wants to teach us to be strong. Often we do not understand this reason when we are in the dark. Faith alone can help us then. We must believe in God. In a God of love and peace, in a God who connects us and promises us strength and freedom, and who helps us to overcome our boundaries.

May we all be united in the love of God.

Amen.



Song: May God always bless you

Cláudio Kupka (Brasil)

Deus te a - ben - ço - e; guar - de teu an - dar. Mos-tre, a ca - da
 Gott se - gne dich, führt dich auf dem Weg. Zeigt dir je - den
 May God al - ways bless you, make you feel al - right. Con - fi - dent in

pas - so co - mo ca - mi nhar. Quan - do vier a noi - te, não pu - de - res
 Schritt, dass du si - cher gehst. Wenn die dun - kle Nacht kommt, kannst du gar nichts
 wal - king when the day is bright. If the sky gets dar - ker, you can't see the

ver, se - ja Deus a luz pa - ra te gui - ar.
 seh'n. Dann sei Gott dein Licht, führt dich im - mer recht.
 way, God will be with you, He will be your light.



Prayer

May I ask you to please hold hands as a symbol of love, care and support. For we are there for one another, as sisters in faith, bound together by the love of Christ. In this union, let us pray with and for one another:

Gracious God,

We give you thank for creating an opportunity that women can freely talk about their boundaries. We thank you for the openness of our sisters in talking about their burdens and sharing their stories. Stories of pain and of hope.

All: Thank you God that you listen to us!

We ask you Lord,

To come to every woman and meet her in her need. Come to the Central African Republic, to South Africa, to India, to Peru, to Europe and to every other part on earth. You know the pain suffered and the burdens carried. Be with us, gracious God, and hold us in your love.

All: Thank you God that you listen to us!

Good God,

Guide us and be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

Hear us, Lord Jesus, as we pray, what you have taught us, each one in our own language:

Lord's Prayer

Blessing



Her-Stories

Pastor Antoinette Beanzoui
(Central African Republic)
Rathna Kumari Karam (India)

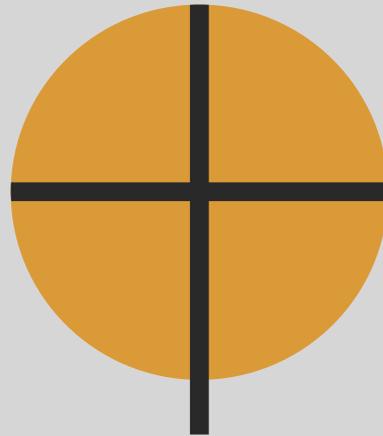
Devotion Leaders

Dr. Ziyanda Mgugudo-Sello (South Africa)
Diana Aguilar Mattias (Peru)
Pastor Indra Grasekamp (Germany, ELM)

Education and Community as Salvation

Devotion with an international Her-Story

written by Carmen Siegle (Brazil)





Carmen Siegle

Brazil

Greeting

Good morning and welcome to the devotion we celebrate in the name of God, the Father of the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Today we turn our attention to the people in Brazil. Land of samba and carnival; summer, sun, beach and I don't know what else comes to your mind when you think of Brazil.

But it is also a country with challenges and limitations, especially for women. In the story of Pastor Carmen Siegle, which is the basis of our devotion today, we hear something about the obstacles that she had to overcome as a woman in her country, and we also hear about her trust in God.

So let us begin with the call to prayer and speak responsively.

Call to prayer

A: I did not want to spend my life making shoes.

B: „Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine.“ (Isa 43:1)

A: I wanted more. I knew I could do more.

B: „For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.“ (Rom 8:14)

A: I resisted and insisted on going back to school.

B: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.” (Rom 8:28)

Song: Freitöne No. 1 Du bist ein Gott, der mich anschaut

Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7

¹But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.

³When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

³For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

⁴Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

⁵Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; ⁶I will say to the north, „Give them up,“ and to the south, „Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth – ⁷everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made.“

Song: In the Lord I'll be thankful (Taizé)

Text available at:

<http://www.meetmax.de/taize/kirche/lieder.htm>

Education and Community were My Salvation

Her-Story (Brazil)

My name is Carmen Michel Siegle. My name is very important to me. It's important for everyone to have a name. God says: „I have called you by your name; you are mine!“ He recognizes me.

I spent my whole childhood and youth in the city where I was born. Novo Hamburgo in the southern part of Brazil, is an industrial city, characterized by tanneries and shoe factories. Like many, my parents worked in a shoe factory all their lives. While my father and mother were working, my brothers and I went to primary school in the morning and in the afternoon we had to look after the house. We spent the weekends in the church and took advantage of the various community activities.



Education

My father and mother did not have the opportunity to study. They, simple and smart as they were, always told us that we had to study to have a better life - especially in times when we were really struggling economically.

Life as a shoemaker was and is not easy: you work all day long for very low wages. And on the weekends you have to take care of the household. There is little time for leisure.

When I was 14, I had to earn money to supplement the household income. So I started studying at night instead of continuing to go to school in the morning. From Monday to Friday I worked from 7 am to 6 pm and went to evening school from 7 pm to 10.30 pm. There, after nine years of primary school, I was able to complete a secondary school leaving certificate while working. It was an exhausting time but I was happy to learn and be financially independent. After one year my plan to finish night school almost failed. To get to school, my brother and I had to walk three kilometers by foot. When my brother stopped going to night school, my father was worried: „The night is dangerous for women travelling alone”, he said. “You better not be going to school, either.”

I didn't want to spend my life making shoes. I wanted more. I knew I could do more. That is why I resisted and insisted on going on to school. I asked my classmates if we could walk home from school together. Without the support of my friends and my financial independence I would not have been able to continue attending school.

During the week I worked and studied and on the weekends I refueled spiritually in the youth group of the church. I have always felt good, happy, welcomed and strengthened by these meetings. From this experience came the motivation to study theology. The pastor of my church encouraged me to do so. And through the financial support I received through my church, the hoped-for became possible.

I am grateful to God because I could feel his presence in every moment of my life. I felt him through people who supported me during my school and university ye-

ars and through the faith community that helped me discover the gift of ministry. Through the pastor, who encouraged me to study theology, and through friendly people who questioned me at the right time and took me in their arms. And not at last I felt God's presence through my family, which is an important constant in my life. Amen.

Song: Cantai ao Senhor/ Oh, sing to the Lord

Text and music available at:

<https://www.luteranos.com.br/conteudo/oh-sing-to-the-lord>

Prayer

L: Dear God, we do not want to spend our lives walking on well-trodden paths. Let's try out new things and break new ground.

C: *„Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine“.*

L: Lord, we know that you have planned something for us. We know that you are behind us and that you will accompany us on our journey. Give us the courage and strength to enter even the difficult paths, the paths where obstacles lie ahead.

C: *„Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine“.*

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal

Lord, we are so grateful to you because we can feel your presence in so many moments of our lives. You give us courage and strength. You show us the new ways and accompany us especially on the ways that have obstacles. We thank you, Lord, and praise you forever and ever.

We stand before you, receiving your blessing to move onwards, strengthened by your power to overcome our own obstacles.



Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine up on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Amen.

Her-Story

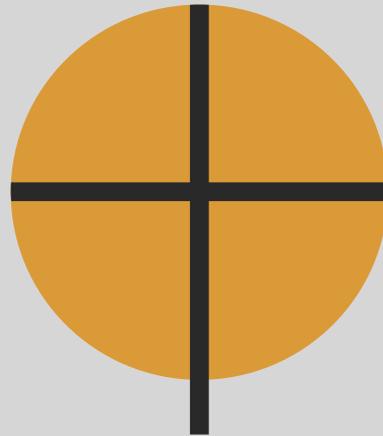
Pastor Carmen Siegle (Brazil),
edited by Anette Makus (Germany, ELM)

Liturgy

Pastor Indra Grasekamp (Germany, ELM)

Shaped by the Behaviour of the Parents and yet quite unique

Devotion with an international Her-Story
written by Dr. Christy Ponni (India)



Shaped by the Behaviour of the Parents and yet quite unique



Dr. Christy Ponni
(India)

Greeting

„Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine!“ (Is 43:1)

With these words from the Book of Isaiah, I welcome you to this devotion that we celebrate in the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

„Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are mine!“ (Is 43:1)

Listening to these words we know, that we are singled out to be unique. Each and every one of us is called by his or her name. Not as a group but very individually. God knows that everyone of us has strength and weaknesses and is gifted with different talents. These are gifts that we have received by birth, habits that we have learned from our parents and attitudes that we have gained in school. All three together shape who we are.

To live out each and every one of these three sides of ourselves seems to be very normal for us, who have lived our life in a society that is based on values of freedom, equality and democracy. But not every human being is that fortunate, as we have several countries on this planet that restrict the freedom of their people. If a woman in India, for example, feels that she is talented in leading, that does not mean she will take on a position living up to this talent. It can easily be overstepping the boundaries of the society if a woman fulfills a leadership role, because certain roles are attributed to men in this society and women are not supposed to take on these positions.

When we hear the Her-Story of Dr. Christy Ponni we should keep in mind that in Indian society it is not self-evident that a woman fulfills a leading position. It is not natural for her to take over skills she has learned from her father, and it also is quite extraordinary that it is her who breaks new ground.

Song: Bless the Lord, o my soul

Music and text available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSxocnlaNoA>

<https://www.lyrics.com/track/23889502/Matt+Redman/10%2C000+Reasons+%28Bless+the+Lord%29>

Reading: Matthew 10:5-10 The Mission of the Twelve

⁵ These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans,

⁶ but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

⁷ As you go, proclaim the good news, ‘The kingdom of heaven has come near.’

⁸ Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment.

⁹ Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts,

¹⁰ no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food

Song: Blest Are They, Verse 1-2 (Beatitudes)

Text and music are available at:

<https://www.musixmatch.com/de/songtext/David-Haas/Blest-Are-They>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chqY9S1Lm2w>

Influenced by the behaviour of the parents and yet quite unique

Her-Story (India)

When my siblings and I were kids, it was my mother who looked after us. Today I think that must have been quite exhausting for her, because she also was the head-mistress of a primary school.

My father was often on the road for the church (Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church - TELC). He had taken on a leading role to unite the divided church. He was a very loving man, but because he had other duties, he could not take care of us. Therefore we often were alone with our mother. For my mother this was double the load, because she had to work out both: raising her children and her job. It was a challenge that she gladly accepted and with her love and care brought my siblings and me to where we are now.

Anyway I learned a lot from both of my parents. From my mother I inherited what love means, what compassion and what simplicity. I also adopted from her my mind-

You received without payment; give without payment.

unique

fulness to the Christian faith, in which she raised us with much love. From my father, I think, I have taken on the qualities of leadership. I know that this combination of skills helped me a lot to fulfil my position as professor of zoology at the university. If I look at how I deal with my children and my students, I notice that I do a lot of things the way I was taught by my mother. When it comes to research, leading and managing staff or organising meetings and conferences, I have inherited much of my father's leadership qualities.

Song: Blest Are They, Verse 3 (Beatitudes)

I would like to tell you about two examples where I realize that the upbringing of my parents has shaped me, but that I still go my way independently and self-confidently.

I work at a university in a rural area in India. Most of my students are poor. They are children of farm workers who only get something to eat once a day and only at night, because their parents are in the fields during the day.

I've often seen students fainting in the classroom. When we asked them if they had eaten enough, some admitted that they rarely get anything to eat and often just one meal a day. After we found out the reason for the frequent dizziness and powerlessness we reacted.

We, the female teachers, have started to organize some food for the students. Later we also included the male colleagues. Together we started the MANNA program, in which we make it possible for the young people to have more than just one meal at home. Everyone should have the opportunity to eat something during their time at university. All teachers made a monthly financial contribution to make this program possible.

Every year we provide food to approximately 200 of our students, depending on how much money we have available. The young people get either breakfast or dinner. With God's help we are now in our eleventh year with our program.

Song: Blest Are They, Verse 4 (Beatitudes)

I guess I also inherited from my mother the empathy to be an advisor to people who are entrusted to me. A student in my class was very arrogant and no one liked him. Every day there was trouble with him.

Let me tell you how it happened, that he opened up to me:

At our university it is common to go on an excursion during the semester. This student also took part in one of these day trips. At one stop all students went shopping. Only the young man and I stayed behind in the bus.

He had become quiet and made a depressed impression on me. Probably because about an hour before I had pointed out his bad behaviour in a friendly but firm manner. Now I felt sorry for him. Therefore I went to him, sat down next to him and talked to him.

„Excuse me, Aloysius”, I said: “Why do you behave like this?”. Apparently something was bothering him and this was the right question to ask, because he began to talk to me: „I am an only child and have a lot of money”, he said, “but nobody cares about me, nobody takes notice of me.

When I remember my childhood and youth, my father was always away on business and my mother accompanied him. They left me alone with the household staff. During this time I often cried because of this, but my parents did not listen to me.

Later I went out with friends, started smoking, drinking alcohol and adopted many bad habits.

Actually, I have been longing for someone who loves me, who takes me into his arms and tells me that I am special. Instead, I’m always alone. That’s how I became who I am now. You’re the only person who talks to me. You asked me why I am the way I am.“

The story of this young man touched me so much that I took care of him. I showed him what it means to live a life where alcohol and swear words have no place. Very slowly, through my company and many conversations, he changed himself and by that obtained the chance of a normal life. With my support he also passed his exams, later he got a master’s degree and is now a professor at the university. In the meantime he got married and has a little daughter whom he now cares for.



Shaped by the Behaviour of the Parents and yet quite unique

There are so many stories to tell about this young man alone, who still comes to me for advice and with whom I am connected in friendship today.

Song: Blest Are They, Verse 5(Beatitudes)

My empathy for my students and the intuition to talk to them and realize when they are in need, I most certainly inherited from my mother.

My job as a professor is not only to take care of the students and support them, to teach them something for their education and life, but also to be a good leader. I learned this ability from my father. I can prove it when organizing conferences and other events.

Sometimes I have to take a strict tone in this role and sometimes I am very polite and kind. To react adequately to a situation has to be balanced over and over.

Sometimes I have to take very brave steps and sometimes it is needed to remain on familiar paths. It doesn't matter what is laid before me, I do not give up easily. Even the hard times I managed well, because I have a talent in structuring me and my work.

I inherited valuable skills from my mother as well as my father, which I use in my family and professional life. The combination of both and my own fine feeling for the people who surround me make me unique.

Song: Shine Jesus shine

Music and text available at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wAFcwns4uHc>

<https://www.songtexte.com/songtext/cliff-richard/shine-jesus-shine-335af001.html>

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

We hear your words, telling us: „You received without payment; give without payment“.

These words are meant to call upon us to act according to your will. Like the 12 apostles you have send out into the world to proclaim your word, to heal the sick and strengthen the weak, you send us to do likewise.

You have given us your trust and confidence for free. There was no payment necessary.

And so we ask you:

Give us strength and courage, gracious God, to move on into the unknown and to proclaim your word. Help us open our eyes to look at the situations where everyone else turns away, and let us get into action where we can make a difference.

Today we especially hold in prayer our brothers and sisters in India: Strengthen the people who need your strength and support, and give courage especially to those who dwell in hopelessness.

Accompany all who cannot take their role in life because social boundaries are too dominant. Be with those who are oppressed and broken; with the women and children who do not know how to go on with their lives.

Come Lord Jesus, with your spirit of freedom and life. Come and open our hearts and minds and make us free to overcome the boundaries in our lives.

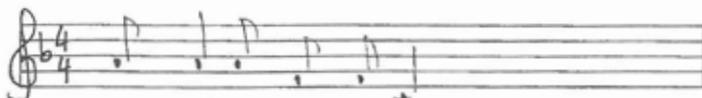
United we pray...

Lord's Prayer



Shaped by the Behaviour of the Parents and yet quite unique

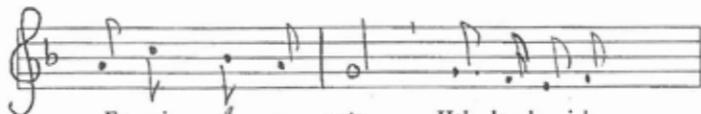
Geborgen in Gottes Liebe



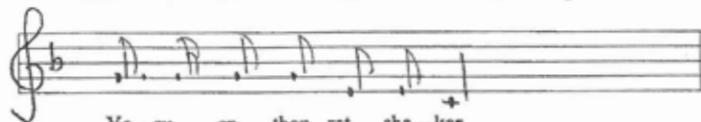
San - to sham pon gu te
1. Freu - de, die ü - ber - fließt,
2. Stimmt in den Ju - bel ein!



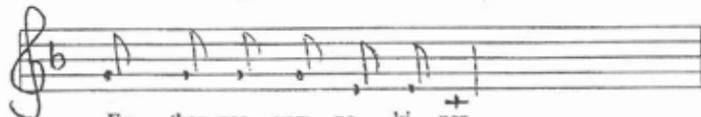
San - to sham pon gu te san - to sham
1. Freu - de, die ü - ber - fließt, Freu - de, die
2. Stimmt in den Ju - bel ein! Stimmt in den



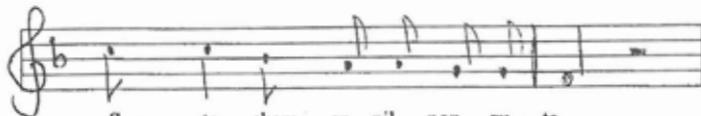
En - ni - e pon - gute Hal - le - lu - ja!
1. ü - ber ü - ber - fließt. Hal - le - lu - ja!
2. Ju - bel mit uns ein Hal - le - lu - ja!



Ye - su en than rat sha - kar
1. Je - sus löst die Fes - seln auf,
2. Je - sus trägt für al - le Zeit



En than paa - vam po - ki nar
1. nimmt die Last der Sün - de weg,
2. un - sre Last und un - ser Leid.



San - to sham en - nil pon - gu - te
1. Freu - de, die ü - ber ü - ber - fließt.
2. Stimmt in den Ju - bel mit uns ein!

Blessing

Bless and keep us, God protector and liberator; God Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Song: Santo Shampongute/ Joy That Overflows

Her Story

Dr. Christy Ponni (India)

Liturgy

Pastor Indra Grasekamp (Germany, ELM)

The Women behind the Stories!



The Women behind the Stories!

Diana Aguilar

Diana Aguilar was born in 1988 in the city of Trujillo in northern Peru. Since her childhood she was taught Christianity and the love and respect for God. During her teenage years, she volunteered at church as an assistant to the Sunday school teacher. She also went to youth groups, camps and bible studies in the church and was part of a music group that played the zampoña, a typical instrument of Peruvian folklore. At the age of 18 she started her professional career as an English teacher. In 2015 she changed her career and went to Argentina for education. There she obtained a degree in gastronomy. Since her return to Peru, she has been working in the family business and belongs to the Lutheran community she was part of as a youth.



Dr. Antoinette Beanzoui

Pastor Dr. Antoinette Beanzoui was one of the first two students at the Pastors' School in the Central African Republic, which was a major topic of discussion at that time. From childhood on, she was supported by her father, who literally forced her to get a good education.

After her ordination as pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Central African Republic (EELRCA), she was the first woman in her country to receive her doctorate at the Theological College in Yaoundé (Cameroon). To this day she is the only woman who achieved a PhD in theology in her country.

Pastor Dr. Beanzoui considered it to be her responsibility to support women, in the same way she received it, therefore she especially encouraged and supported the women in the Central African Church. So it is due to her effort that in the last semester three women started studying at the Pastors' School, of whom one is still there today. It was a great loss to her family and the Central African Church when Pastor Dr. Beanzoui tragically died in a traffic accident on her way back from the Summer Academy to her home country.





Sybil Chetty

Sybil Chetty, born in South Africa, is a Pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. She was ordained in 1998 and has been working as a parish pastor in Durban County for the past 22 years; namely in the Evangelical Lutheran Emmanuel Church as well as in the central parish of Durban.

Today she works as an ecumenical exchange pastor in Germany. With one part of her position she is pastor of the Südstadtkirchengemeinde in Osnabrück and with the other she supports the ELM as ecumenical co-worker.

Pastor Chetty is married and has two children. She is already looking forward to being with her family again soon when her time here in Germany comes to its end in 2021.



Gabriele De Bona

Gabriele De Bona came up with the idea of the 1st International Gender Summer Academy and is responsible for the content conception of the event. In particular she has developed the concept and the method of „Her-Stories“.

She is an Africanist and a theologian. At the Evangelical Lutheran Mission in Hermannsburg in the department of International Church Cooperation she is responsible for the field of Gender International and for Ecumenical Cooperation in Ethiopia.

She is married and has three adult children, two sons and one daughter.



Indra Grasekamp

Indra Grasekamp is a pastor of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Hanover and has worked as a pastor in training in East Frisia after her graduation from university in 2010. Before she was ordained as parish pastor in Aurich, she completed a special pastor in training time in a bilingual congregation (German and English) in Canada. This interest for lived faith in an international context brought her to the ELM in

The Women behind the Stories!

2018. Here she is responsible for the field of „Global Spirituality“. In this function she makes experiences with lived faith in the partner churches of the ELM and transports them e.g. in church services, lectures and church materials to the German churches. This devotional booklet is an example for her work.



Rathna Kumari Karam

Rathna Kumari Karam is a young woman at the age of 30 years, who was born in Telanga, a state in the south of India. As of today she lives with her brother and her parents on their farm.

Her professional career started with a teacher training for school education, which she completed with a bachelor's degree. After that she completed a master's degree in the field of commerce.

Since she has not yet found a job in her actual field of study, she works as a lay secretary in a women's wing in the church. This involvement does not result in an income, but from time to time she receives a financial compensation.



Dr. Ziyanda Mgugudo-Sello

Dr. Ziyanda Mgugudo-Sello was born in a small town of Mount Ayliff in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. She is married to Dr. Sello Rasello and they reside in Cape Town, South Africa.

Her education began during the apartheid era in the 80s, known as Bantu Education. At the age of 11 years, she moved to Zimbabwe to live with her aunt who had married a Zimbabwean. It is here that she learnt English and received good education. Dr. Mgugudo-Sello returned to South Africa in 1995 after spending 5 years and during that time she could attend a previously 'whites only' high school and later the University of Cape Town. She qualified with a degree in Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) and further specialised in Public Health Medicine.

Dr. Mgugudo-Sello attends church at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Strand Street, Cape Town. As a lay member of the church, she found an opportunity to serve in the church by leading the women's ministry. Her role consists of coordinating and encouraging women to keep connected, praying together often, weekly fasting, sha-

ring words of encouragement & wisdom and sharing daily devotionals.

She is a passionate and enthusiastic member of the congregation who simply loves the Lord and wants to serve in God's house.

Dr. A. Christy Ponni



Dr. A. Christy Ponni hails from Mayiladuthurai, a small town in the province of Tamil Nadu in Southern India. During her youth she lived in this region with her parents. Her father was secretary of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC). Dr. Christy Ponni is now General Secretary of the women fellowship in TELC and works as an associate professor at the university in Porayar. She completed her studies in the field of zoology at Bharathidasan University in Trichy (Tamil Nadu) and graduated with a doctorate. She has been gaining experience in this profession for 34 years and is now an associate professor and head of department in her field. Her husband Dr. J. G. Jacob Sundarsingh is the pastor of the TELC Arulnathar Church in Chennai. Together they have two children.

Since 2016 Dr. Christy Ponni is serving in the women fellowship. She firmly believes that the dream of women's emancipation can only become reality if each and every woman is able to break the stigmas and taboos that surround her through courage and education.

Carmen Michel Siegle



Carmen Michel Siegle is pastor of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IECLB). She completed her bachelor's degree in theology in 1998. After that she served as a pastor for eleven years in Lutheran congregations in southern Brazil. Since 2012 she has worked at the IECLB General Secretariat. In the first four years she was responsible for coordinating Christian education and today she is coordinator of gender, generations and ethnicities. In this area she is responsible for ensuring the mainstreaming of gender justice in the church and gender balance in leadership positions. To this end she creates spaces for dialogue and meetings between the different groups of women and men. She gathers and makes available

The Women behind the Stories!

study and reflection material for the communities and promotes training and advice on the themes of gender justice and overcoming violence against women. She is also committed to ensuring that women in leadership positions are taken seriously in society and in the church.

Pastor Siegle is married and has one son.



To the Background



A Start has been made

The idea for an International Gender Summer Academy started in 2017. The idea was to create a meeting place with open and safe spaces where people could exchange ideas about what it means to live together as men and women and strive for a good life together.

In the following year, a small international team of women from the partner churches and ELM prepared the contents of the 2019 Gender Summer Academy and decided on the theme „Overcoming Boundaries“. In addition, at the special request of the women from the partner churches, it was decided that it should be an event for women. In this way the team wanted to ensure a safe space for women that would encourage them and facilitate exchange among them.

The intensive time in Hermannsburg and Hanover at the Gender Summer Academy in August 2019 was a first highlight. In the Her-Stories the women discovered their own story as part of the „big“ story, learned to appreciate it and shared it with the other women. From these moving snapshots, thoughts and inspirations have flowed into the devotions and thus into this booklet.

Much trust was necessary for this work. Attentive cooperation and a solid foundation of a shared faith formed the pillars for a common roof of trust. This has sustained and further promoted the hopes and visions.

But what Happens next?

In their feedback the participants clearly expressed their support for a continuation of the Gender Summer Academy. Gender equality and gender differences are topics that are perceived by all as being very present. They are at the top of the list of priorities.

At the same time, at the end of the meeting, the majority of women agreed that they could only solve problems together with men and wanted a gender-mixed format for a continuation.

So we wish and hope for 2022.

We want to work together with men and women from the churches in the global ecumenism and locally on issues that move us. We want to move something and let ourselves be moved for a good life for all in peace and justice.

May the gentle breeze of the Holy Spirit accompany and touch us!

Gabriele De Bona, ELM Secretary for Ethiopia
and Gender International



ELM Hermannsburg
Partner in Mission

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