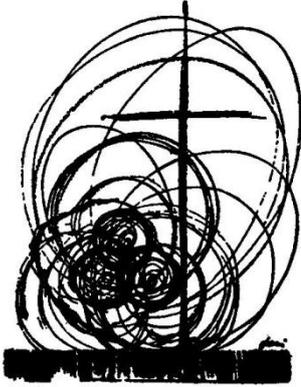


FELLOWSHIP DAY 1966



Australian
Church
Women

ORDER OF SERVICE

This is the year of the Church and Life Movement. It aims to equip people for their life in the community. Its leader is Edwin Robertson, who is director of the World Association of Christian Broadcasting, and is a Baptist minister. Australian Church Women invited him to arrange an order of service for Fellowship Day 1966.

The service has some unusual features. Mr. Robertson spent a lot of time in Germany following the Second World War, and has since become an important translator and editor of the works of a German pastor who was hanged by the Gestapo shortly before the war ended. That man was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Bonhoeffer's thinking is now challenging the Christian mind — in a variety of ways. In this service you may find yourself challenged.

You will be surprised to discover that it was in the uncomfortable surroundings of prison that Bonhoeffer gained his insights. Yet this may be more relevant to us than at first is thought. For there are many prisons, and some not made of stone. Just as there can be many deaths. As we move through this service from prison — through death — to freedom, let our minds slip the chains of hard fact and wander a little to think of the prisons of pride, self-will, denominationalism, bigotry — of many deaths — of greater freedoms.

ORDER OF SERVICE

NEW HORIZONS

LEADER: Let us worship.

'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills' (Psalm 121 v. 1)

Whit Sunday 1944, during a heavy air raid on Berlin, Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote from prison, 'Gradually one acquires an inner detachment from the dangers that beset us . . . we assimilate these dangers into the wholeness of our life.

I have repeatedly observed here (in prison) how few there are who can make room for conflicting emotions. When the bombers come they are all fear; when there is something good to eat, they are all greed; when they are disappointed, they are all despair; when they are successful, they can think of nothing else. They miss the fulness of life and the wholeness of an independent existence. Life dissolves into fragments for them. By contrast, Christianity plunges us into many different dimensions of life, simultaneously. We can make room in our hearts, to some extent at least, for God and the whole world. We weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice. We are afraid for our life, but at the same time we can think of things more important than life itself. '

(Letters and Papers from Prison p. 103.)

Yet, I will lift up my eyes unto the hills.

LEADER: Let us pray together; (unison)

Lift up our eyes, O Lord, above all earthly things and help us to see our lives in that wider dimension which allows us to help others from resources beyond ourselves. Give to us compassion, not only for those who deserve it, but also for those suffering because of wrong they have done. Help us to help the undeserving poor, in all areas of our national life. Teach us to love the unlovely and to see in men and women, cut off from society and despised by the world, far more than they themselves see. Make clear our vision that we may lead others to a clearer vision of Thyself and a better understanding of their own true humanity. This we ask in the name of Christ who for our sakes became man. AMEN.

HYMN: "Where cross the crowded ways of life" (Baptist Church Hymnal Revised No. 380) (Metre: LM)

Where cross the crowded ways of life,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,
Above the noise of selfish strife,
We hear Thy voice, O Son of Man.

The cup of water given for Thee
Still holds the freshness of Thy grace;
Yet long these multitudes to see
The sweet compassion of Thy face.

Till sons of men shall learn Thy love,
And follow where Thy feet have trod;
Till glorious from Thy heaven above,
Shall come the City of our God.

LEADER: The Old Testament is a foreign world to us in many ways: just as, the prison in which Bonhoeffer spent his time must be to us a foreign world. Yet there seems to be a sense in which the man of God should be able to cope with such a world. Not because he overcomes but because he is able to open the eyes of those who cannot see. As we read this story from the book of Kings about the man of God, Elisha, let us think of Bonhoeffer as he looked for support in a hard and hurting world — not that the Syrian hordes might be struck down, but that they might see.

SCRIPTURE READING: II Kings 6: 8—23

LEADER: Let us make confession of our blindness before God:
We seek forgiveness, O Lord, for our failure to be true even to our own accepted standards,
for our self deception in face of temptation,
for choosing the worse, when we knew the better,

RESPONSE: In all this, O Lord, forgive and restore.

LEADER: We seek forgiveness, because of
our failure to apply to ourselves the standards we demand of others,
our blindness to the suffering of others and our failure to be taught
by our own,
our complacency towards those wrongs that do not affect us and
our sensitivity to those that do,
our slowness to see the good in our fellows or to see the evil in
ourselves.

RESPONSE: In all this, O Lord, forgive and restore us.

LEADER: Let us hear the words of forgiveness, spoken by God to his ancient people.

¶ An individual or a small group might read the following
¶ three passages unannounced.

Isaiah 1: 16—18

LEADER: Now, let us hear the strengthening words of Jesus Christ.

John 8: 2—11

LEADER: Let us hear too the warning of the Lord against an unforgiving heart:

Matthew 18: 21—35.

LEADER: And let us say the prayer Jesus taught us to say:

Our Father ... AMEN.

HYMN: Metre 8.7.8.7.

Was there ever kindest shepherd
Half so gentle, half so sweet,
As the Saviour who would have us
Come and gather round His feet?

There's a wideness in God's mercy
Like a wideness of the sea;
There's a kindness in His justice
Which is more than liberty.

There is welcome for the sinner,
And more graces for the good;
There is mercy with the Saviour;
There is healing in His blood.

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind,
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more simple,
We should take Him at His word,
And our lives would be all sunshine
In the sweetness of our Lord.

SCRIPTURE READING to be read unannounced: Romans 12

LEADER: Let us make intercession together.

{ Each petition to be followed by a time of silence, and the prayer
} at the end said by all together.

Let us pray for:

the hungry and the oppressed
the suffering and those afflicted by the evils of war
the hopeless and those whose minds have been unbalanced by the
pressures of life
the faithless and those who have found all human and divine relation-
ships inadequate
the arrogant and those who have been destroyed by the very power they
possess
the angry and those who find the government of man and God wholly
unjust.

RESPONSE: 'Lord, hear our prayer — and let our cry come unto Thee'.

LEADER: Let us pray together (unison):

'Loving Father, looking always with compassion on the afflicted, strengthen their
minds and wills, helping them to know that, with Thee, they can overcome any weak-
ness or sin. Show us new ways of helping men and women whose temptations we may
never have known.' AMEN.

LEADER: When Moses spoke to the people of Israel about the freedom which God
in his mercy would provide, they did not hear him, 'because of their broken spirit and
cruel bondage' (Exodus 6: 9)

Let us trace with Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the steps that lead to perfect freedom:

{ A Way to Freedom: (taken from Bonhoeffer's Ethics, p. xv)
} — each meditation might be led by a different member of the
} group from where they are in the congregation.

First, Self-discipline:

If you set out to seek freedom, you must learn before all things Mastery over sense and
soul, lest your wayward desirings, lest your undisciplined members lead you now this

way, now that way. Chaste be your mind and your body, and subject to you and obedient, serving solely to seek their appointed goal and objective. None learns the secret of freedom save only by way of control.

But discipline is for action,

do and dare what is right, not swayed by the whim of the moment. Bravely take hold of the real, not dallying now with what might be. Not in the flight of ideas but only in action is freedom. Make up your mind and come out into the tempest of living. God's command is enough, and your faith in him, to sustain you. Then at last, freedom will welcome your spirit amid great rejoicing.

But freedom is sought earnestly by those no longer able to take effective action in the world, the suffering and the aged;

See what a transformation! These hands so active and powerful now tied, and alone and fainting, you see where your work ends. Yet you are confident still, and gladly commit what is rightful. Into a stronger hand, and say that you are contented. You were free for a moment of bliss, then you yielded your freedom into the hand of God, that he might perfect it in glory.

Finally, it is in death, faced and accepted that the pilgrimage to freedom is seen to be complete.

Come now, highest of feasts on the way to freedom eternal, death, strike off the fetters, break down the walls that oppress us, our bedazzled soul and our ephemeral body, that we may see at last the sight which here was not vouchsafed us. Freedom, we sought you long in discipline, action, suffering. Now as we die we see you and know you at last face to face.' (Ethics p. xv)

Life knows no limit, even in death, to the widening horizons of freedom.

SCRIPTURE READING: John 8: 31—36

ADDRESS IF DESIRED.

LEADER: Let us pray together (unison)

'O God, who art the author of peace and lover of concord, in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life, whose service is perfect freedom; defend us, thy humble servants in all assaults of our enemies; that we surely trusting in thy defence, may not fear the power of any adversaries; through the might of Jesus Christ our Lord.' AMEN.

HYMN: 'Love divine, all loves excelling' (Metre 8.7.8.7.D.)

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven, to earth come down;
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown:
Jesu, Thou art all compassion,
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave:
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee, without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation,
Perfectly restored in Thee;
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place,
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

OFFERING:

Prayer in unison: 'Now to the One who can keep you from falling and set you in the presence of his Glory, jubilant and above reproach, to the only God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, might and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all time, now, and for evermore.' AMEN.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR STUDY GROUPS

This service has made use of some thoughts and reflections of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Today some issues he raised have become matters of serious theological discussion. But other things may have a more practical impact on our lives. If there is time for some discussion, these questions may bring up interesting problems.

- 1) What gives most anxiety to you, in your community?
- 2) Does religion give you much help in your situation?
- 3) In the service it was suggested that a whole range of things, which may be precious to us, must pass away: can death mean more than dying?
Look at 2 Cor. 5: 17
 | "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the
 | old has passed away, behold, the new has come."
- 4) What might resurrection mean to you right now?
- 5) How meaningful did you feel the service was?

The offering taken at this service will be used for the work of Australian Church Women and in particular the Winifred Kiek Scholarship.

Produced by Australian Church Women
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