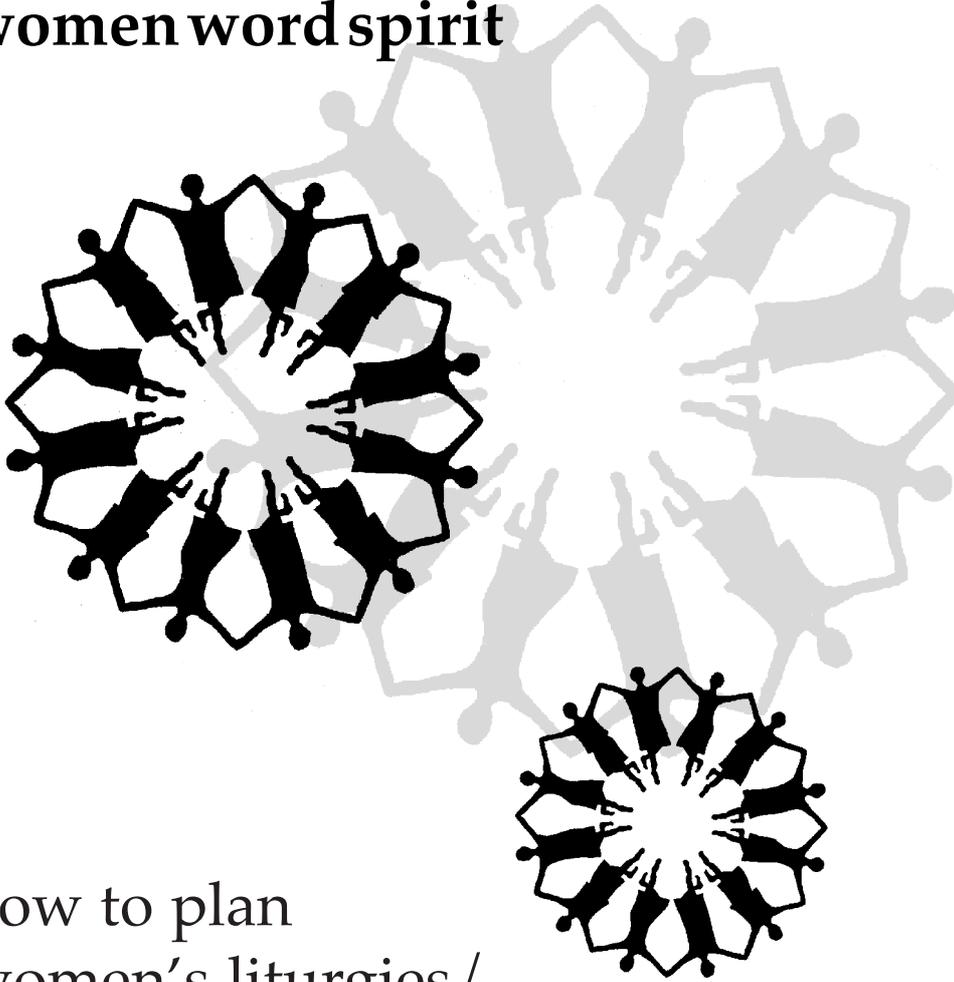


women word spirit



how to plan women's liturgies/ rituals

These notes try to cover a range of situations where a women's liturgy might be taking place:

- *as an activity on its own*
- *as part of a day event with a particular theme*
- *as part of a longer event such as a women's weekend*

Principles of planning

1. The planners are always participants, not just leaders
2. We suggest where possible two people plan together to model shared responsibility/leadership.
3. Include opportunities for participation and contributions from the group, e.g.
 - individual reflections on a reading
 - small group response to theme of the day
 - lighting candles for special intentions.
4. Include non-verbal elements, e.g. communal action/ movement, periods of quiet, drawing or painting.
5. Give clear instructions and timings, e.g. beginning and ending of period of silence, how long a response should be, e.g. one word or one sentence.
6. It can be helpful for planners to demonstrate any action or speak first.
7. Sometimes it is helpful to write up or give prepared leaflets indicating the sequence of the process.
8. Make it clear that no one has to participate if they do not wish.
9. Teach a song or dance in advance – do not assume people know them.
10. Allow time for silence and reflection – judge the pace.
11. Emphasise that sharing is about individual personal experience not an intellectual discussion – comments should be from “I” not ‘they’ or ‘it’.

Keep it simple.

Theme/Focus

The theme may be set by the context, e.g. a day's event. Themes can also be drawn from current concerns, world events, or the time of the liturgical or natural year. Other themes might be a special anniversary or celebration, justice and peace issues, the interests of a visitor to the group, someone facing change or going on a journey. Alternatively, a poem, a work of art, a special food or any of the listed resources might provide the focus/theme.

Suggested basic process *(may include some or all of the following)*

Welcome and Gathering

Naming of each person *(either in turn or to your neighbours)*

Introduction to theme

Reading/story/poem

Shared reflection/response in small groups or individually
and reflection in whole circle

Special intentions/bringing concerns for
ourselves/others/the world

Sharing of food/drink – perhaps including
poem/reading/song

Thanksgiving

Blessing/Sending Out

Practicalities

Think carefully about the venue, its feel, association etc, and arrangement of the room.

Arrange the group/chairs in a circle to begin and end
– as a symbol of connectedness.

A centrepiece is a helpful focus e.g. coloured cloth,
candle(s), flowers, stones. Keep it simple – too many
items/symbols can be a distraction.

Keep expenses to a minimum;
ensure that no-one is out of pocket.

Suggested Resources

scripture (christian, other), other readings, poems, songs,
dance/movement, pictures/photos/diagrams, natural objects,
candles, food, drink, water, ribbons, coloured cloths,
seeds/bulbs to plant.

The main and best resource lies in the participants themselves.

Recommended Reading

Making Liturgy: Creating Rituals for Worship and Life, Norwich Canterbury Press
(eds) Dorothea McEwan, Pat Pinsent, Ianthe Pratt, Veronica Seddon

*"I am a woman wanting to grow
and mature in spirituality.
I come to women's liturgy
to hear and be with women
and to share their insights
about life, the world, God;
what moves and motivates them.
The whole is always much more than the sum of the individual parts."
Anon*

compiled by Gillian Limb, Veronica Seddon and Máirín Valdez
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