

**Prayer Service to mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence  
Ecumenical Centre, Geneva, November 2018**

**Setting the Tone** Ps 13:1-4

How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
2 How long must I wrestle with my thoughts  
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?  
How long will my enemy triumph over me?  
  
3 Look on me and answer, Lord my God.  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,  
4 and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"  
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

**Hymn** 'Lift every voice' v 2

Stony the road we trod,  
Bitter the chast'ning rod,  
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
Yet with a steady beat,  
Have not our weary feet  
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?  
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered.  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
Out from the gloomy past,  
Till now we stand at last  
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

*James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)*

**Scripture** Genesis 16:1-10

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian slave named Hagar; so she said to Abram,

**ALL** *The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; perhaps I can build a family through her.*

Abram agreed to what Sarai said. So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian slave Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. Then Sarai said to Abram,

**ALL** *You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my slave in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the Lord judge between you and me.*

**(Males)** "Your slave is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best."

Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her. The angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. And he said, "Hagar, slave of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

**(Females)** "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered. Then the angel of the Lord told her,

**ALL** *"Go back to your mistress and submit to her."*

The angel added, "I will increase your descendants so much that they will be too numerous to count."

**Prayer of Lament** – Lord's prayer Spiritual version

**Poem** (see overleaf)

***Silence***

**Prayers of intercession**

Naming -

Invitation to name

- Sin of complicity, silence, violence against the vulnerable
- Survivors
- Persons still trapped in systems of abuse and victimisation

Scripture – Mark 5:41

Holding her hand, he said to her,

***"Talitha kum,"***

which means "Little girl, get up!"

Mutual prayers (we invite you to pray with/for each other in pairs)

Benediction

Did you know my name  
when you agreed to sleep with me  
for the sake of  
perpetuating your progeny?

Did you care who I am  
beyond the sturdiness of my limbs  
and the potential genes  
that the perfect prize stallion I could yield?

And when urged to  
'*get rid of that uppity woman who doesn't know  
her place*';  
did you remember that I was forced by your  
wife, my owner, into your space  
despite the incongruity of my race?

Did either of you know me,  
acknowledge my existence,  
care that I too have feelings  
Yearn for another way of being - of living?

Do you truly know my name,  
can you count the times  
you birthed my shame,  
resurrected the pain of being less than  
– while bearing the fruit of your outrageous  
plan?

And as you send me forth now and for all  
times,  
do you dare say MY name?  
Do you even remember HIS name –

For my name consummates the fullness  
Through time of woman used, abused,  
abandoned  
Left to die in the wilderness,  
broken, hungry, bereft  
Do either of you say my name  
since I so hastily left?

Stripped of all rights  
like a thief in the night?  
Did you? Can you?

Say my name; admit your complicity  
**Say my name – restore my dignity**  
Say my name, acknowledge your son  
**Say my name now and right the wrong!**

But God knows my name,  
El Rohi, the ever seeing One  
hid my shame – rescued our son  
Making streams in dry places  
healing my brokenness, ending my distress

God calls my name,  
and I am ever grateful,  
God gives a new lease on life,  
established us as a nation.

Now my God,  
the Eternal, ever present One  
keeps me going  
even when you think you've won.

Say my name – give voice to loneliness  
**Say my name – restore us to wholeness**  
Say my name - exchange power for weakness  
Say my name – eradicate now the bitterness  
**Say my name - acknowledge our  
brokenness**  
Say my name – comfort me in my fearfulness  
Even as a whisper; perhaps as a prayer Say  
my name!

Poem by Rev. Nicole Ashwood (2018)