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Worship Resources for

Assembly Sunday 2009

Living Inside Out (Colossians 3:12-17)

Assembly Sunday: June 7, 2009

This worship resource has been developed by the worship team of this year's assembly to link our Canada-wide church in worship on the theme of "Living Inside Out". They are Jerry Buhler, Area Church Minister for MC Sask.; Ben Pauls, Pastor of the Carrot River Mennonite Church (Sask.), Karen Martens Zimmerly, Denominational Minister for Mennonite Church Canada; and Emily Toews, Pastor of the North Star Mennonite Church, Drake (Sask.). Additionally, the children's feature was provided by Elsie Rempel, Director of Christian Nurture for Mennonite Church Canada, and the commissioning prayer for Youth Assembly was written by Wendy Harder, who is part of the MC Canada Youth Assembly Planning Committee. This resource can be used for worship on June 7th or for reporting back to our congregations about this year's Assembly at a later date.

Introduction:

From June 5-7, 2009, individuals from Mennonite congregations across Canada will gather to worship and work together as Mennonite Church Canada. The theme for this year, inspired by Colossians 3:12-17, is "Living Inside Out". In accordance with a 2006 Assembly resolution about core scripture texts, this text will provide us with spiritual guidance for the next two years. We hope and pray it will help us grow in our identity in Christ, especially when the going gets tough, and help us live into our God-given unity, which can transform us as we claim it and engage the world with the reconciling gospel of Jesus Christ.

WE GATHER

Gathering Hymn: HWB 22 *Lord Jesus Christ, be present now*, HWB 6 *Here in this place*, or HWB 13 *Blessed Jesus, at your word*.

Call to Worship: This morning, we worship in unity with congregations from the many corners of Mennonite Church Canada. We gather as God's people: chosen, holy and beloved. Just as the chime of inviting church bells reaches every ear, God chooses us with a sweeping embrace. God offers to clothe us as God's people; adorning us with compassion, bathing us in kindness, wrapping us in humility, dressing us in meekness, and draping us in patience. With the peace of Christ and songs of gratitude in our hearts, we gather in celebratory worship. We gather to praise our God, whose love washes over us, weaves us together, fills and infuses us, swells and surges, from inside out. AMEN.

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11

Hymn of Praise: HWB 306 *In Christ there is no East or West* or HWB 452 *Ubi caritas et amor*.

Prayer of Confession:

As God has instructed us and because we do not live in full obedience, let us confess our sins to God, trusting Christ as the source of our unity.

Forgiving Lord

When it is not clear where the peace of Christ rules

Forgive us

When there is little outside evidence that you dwell in us

Forgive us

When harmony is hard, our shared song is strained, our communal music falters, and our collective voice fades

Forgive us

When we do not bear with each other or bear each other's burdens

Forgive us

When we do not wear compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience

Forgive us, and unite us as your body. AMEN.

Be assured that Christ, who is our unity and our peace, forgives us and makes us one.

Thanks be to God.

Hymns of confession: HWB 137 *Forgive our sins as we forgive*, HWB 363 *Renew your church*, or STJ 52 *Jesus, help us live in peace*.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Scripture Litany: You are God's chosen ones

L1: "As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience." What does this look like – this outfit, this uniform we are invited to wear? Let's see:

L1: You are God's chosen ones;

L2: holy and beloved.

L1 and L2: Brothers and sisters beloved by God

L1: Get rid of all that binds you.

L2: Instead, clothe yourselves

Men: Clothe yourself with compassion (*L1 drapes turquoise coloured scarf around shoulder*)

Women: Clothe yourself with kindness (*L2 drapes pink around shoulder*)

All: Clothe yourself with humility (*L1 drapes earth tones scarf on other shoulder*)

Men: Meekness (*L2 drapes green scarf on other shoulder*)

Women: Patience (*L1 drapes blue through outstretched hand*)

L1: You are God's chosen ones, (*L1 and L2 with arms outstretched*)

L2: holy and beloved,

All: Brothers and sisters beloved by God. Thanks be to God.

Sermon Starters

Our identity in Christ

Verse 12 – We are chosen. In our culture this sounds exclusive. In Jesus Christ we discover a servant leader who empowered others. As our identity in Christ grows we will be shaped by the attributes demonstrated in his life. Our call goes beyond putting off the old ways (Colossians 2:11; 3:5-9) but includes putting on Christ. This becomes visible through the attributes of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. These attributes are nothing less than the warp and woof of the working clothes Christians are to wear as they relate to one another and the world. Reflect on how these working clothes have become evident in the challenges your congregation has faced and how they can equip you for current challenges.

When the going gets tough

Verses 13 and 14 – While all of us are growing into the identity given to us by Christ, no one of us carries that identity in its fullness. Therefore, the writer of this text assumes these garments of our identity will fray and tear in the course of relating to one another. The way that Christ provides for us to live with our brokenness is the way of forbearance and forgiveness. We are to bear with one another, to practice loving and forgiving one another. While these qualities are part of the identity, or clothing, that Christ offers us, these garments may “hang in the closet” because they are not so comfortable. Yet, uncomfortable as they are, their strong threads have the capacity to bind the brokenness in our communities so that harmony is restored. Share a story where forgiveness has been received or extended. Ask the seniors about stories of forgiveness that have shaped the congregation and invite them to tell that story.

Living as one body

Verse 15 – Diversity abounds within our local congregations, Area Churches, and Mennonite Church Canada. Thankfully, being one body does not depend on our human identity and diversity, but on the head of this body, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:17-20). Christ brings peace where there is no peace and reconciles what is broken, including our frayed relationships with our Christian brothers and sisters. Difficult as it is to grasp, the peace of Christ can grow stronger in our faith communities, precisely in the messy work of relationships. We are led to greater Christ-likeness and maturity whenever we choose to live out the rich array of qualities that Christ provides (compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness, love). Share Biblical stories where people were reconciled by the peace of Christ. Reflect on situations in your congregation or local community where Christ is calling your congregation to “let the peace of Christ rule”.

Hymn of Proclamation: HWB 305 *Where charity and love prevail* or STJ 80 *Christ be near at either hand*

Children’s time: Wearing Christ?

Warmly welcome the children as they settle into comfortable places for children’s time, the part of worship where adults try to communicate the Gospel in ways that help children connect with its truth for their lives. Encourage them to imagine Jesus talking about the Bible passage with them right on his lap, and then tell them that you have prayed for wisdom to talk with them like that. Show them Colossians 3 in your Bible and read verse 12 to them. Wonder how Jesus might explain that to them and then begin.

* The colourful scarves for the litany could be used again by the children as cloaks.

Children's Sermon:

If I were Jesus, and you were on my lap asking me what that Bible verse was talking about, I might ask you to think about TV characters who get special powers when they wear special clothing. When I was little, there was a TV show called Superman, and when he changed into his Superman outfit he was able to jump over buildings and fly faster than a jet plane. He used his super powers to help people who were in trouble. Well, today's Bible verse doesn't talk about clothing that helps us jump over buildings or zoom around like a jet plane, but it does talk about clothing ourselves so we can help people.

I've got some Bible Hero clothes here and hope you will help me demonstrate this for God's children of all ages, because learning to wear and use this clothing is something we all need to practice. The first piece of clothing is the **Cloak of Compassion**. Compassion is when we notice someone is sad or sick and want to show them that we care. Superman used compassion because he always wanted to help people who were in trouble. Who will put on this first cloak? (*Recruit and dress 1st volunteer*) Now let's all think back to yesterday. Was there a time it would have been good for us to wear compassion? (*Pause*)

The next piece of clothing is the **Cloak of Kindness**. Kindness is when we actually do things to help others. _____ was kind to me when she helped me with this children's time by putting on the cloak of compassion. Is there someone else here who will be kind enough to wear the **Cloak of Kindness** and stand beside Compassion? (*Recruit and dress 2nd volunteer*) Superman used kindness when he helped people. Now, let's take a moment to think about when we wore kindness, or could have worn kindness yesterday.

The next piece of clothing is the **Cloak of Humility and Meekness**. This cloak helps us not to brag and not to show off, but to feel OK about helping without getting special thanks. Children are often better at wearing these clothes than grown ups. Is there a child who will wear these cloths to help us all think about this? Superman showed humility and meekness when he wasn't in his special superman clothes, but Jesus wants us to wear this as part of our clothing. Let's think about times when it was good to act with humility and meekness yesterday. (*Pause*)

The last piece of clothing our Bible verse mentions is the **Cloak of Patience**. Patience is when you are willing to wait for someone who is slower than you, or when you give others a chance to try doing things their way without getting angry. Children often show a lot of patience when they wait for their parents to finish talking after church. Is there a volunteer who is willing to wear the **Cloak of Patience** for us?

This clothing can help us be like Jesus. Jesus is full of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. When we join together as friends of Jesus in our church we try to treat each other like Jesus does. When we ask Jesus, Jesus helps us act like this, even when we don't have cloaks for others to see. It's like wearing invisible cloaks of goodness. Sometimes we lose these cloaks and need to say sorry and start over, but these invisible cloaks help our church family be a place of good news and love.

Prayer: Thank you, Jesus, for helping us with these invisible cloaks of goodness. Sometimes we don't use them and end up hurting people instead of helping them. We're sorry. Please forgive us and help us forgive each other and be helpful, kind and patient. Amen.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn of Response: STJ 81 *Take, O take me as I am* STS 31 *Jesus, be the center*, or STS 39 *Will you come and follow me*.

Pastoral Prayer: Lead your congregation with a prayer that is composed in awareness of its participation in Mennonite Church Canada and that responds to its particular pastoral needs.

Offering Hymn: HWB 307 *Will you let me be your servant*, or HWB 305 *Where charity and love prevail*

Commissioning Litany for Youth and Youth Sponsors for Youth Assembly – July 6-10, 2009

Use this litany to commission the youth and youth sponsors that are attending the Youth Assembly 2009 in Caronport. Invite the sponsors up to the front of the church or have them stand up in the pew as they are commissioned.

Congregation:

We call you forth to be God's people.
We send you out to be an example of Christ living in you.
You are God's chosen ones,
seeking what it means to be the church together.

Youth:

We go to Caronport with eager anticipation
of new friendships formed and old ones renewed.
A time to worship our awesome God with other youth
from across Canada
We thank you, for we can not do this without your support.

Youth sponsors:

You, as a congregation, have entrusted these # youth into our care.
We promise to do our best to create an environment
for the youth to grow in faith.
We pray for patience, wisdom and guidance for the adventures that will come our way.

Congregation:

Bear with one another after fun-filled days and short nights.
Practice love, forgiveness, humility,
remembering that the greatest of these is love.
May this youth assembly strengthen and encourage your
commitment to Christ and Christ's church.
May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.
Go with God.

Benediction Hymn: HWB 421 *Bless'd be the tie that binds*.

Sending: HWB 774

May the God of steadfastness and encouragement
grant you to live in harmony with one another,
in accordance with Christ Jesus,
so that together you may with one voice
glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.