

November/December 2009, *Equipping #101*

## Church Education Sunday

February 7, 2010

Mennonite Church Canada Formation and Mennonite Schools in Manitoba

### Introduction

These worship resources are designed to assist you in your worship planning for Church Education Sunday. On this Sunday we give thanks, pray for and emphasize the educational ministry of the Mennonite Church's schools, from elementary through graduate levels. This resource signifies the growing partnership of Mennonite Church Canada and its network of schools. It reflects the work of Krista Neustaedter Barg (Westgate Mennonite Collegiate), Irma Fast Dueck (Canadian Mennonite University), Marilyn Houser Hamm (Mennonite Collegiate Institute), Sherisse Penner Langner and Janice Penner (Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle School), and Elsie Rempel (Mennonite Church Canada). Christian Education Sunday occurs on the first Sunday of each February. We encourage you to work this focus into your schedule of worship on the important ministry of Christian education in our schools.

This worship resource includes suggestions for hymns, a call to worship, invocation, a children's story, sermon starters, and a benediction.

### Texts and Theme:

This year's theme is "...which you in turn received," from 1 Cor.15:1, a text that highlights the significant rhythm of giving and receiving which is so integral to Christian Education and to a healthy relationship between our Mennonite schools and Mennonite Church Canada congregations.

The Scripture texts for Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> (Epiphany 5, Cycle C) are: Isaiah 6: 1-13, Psalm 138, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11 and Luke 5: 1-11.

### Suggested Hymns and instructions:

by Marilyn Houser Hamm

The call of praise in Psalm 138 and the order of worship in Isaiah 6 call us to teach and learn God's holiness, or otherness. As God's touch comes to us we respond to this holiness with confession and praise. Two hymns that stress the greatness, the "otherness" of God in the text and the musical language in *Hymnal Worship Book* are:

HWB 121 *Holy God, we praise thy name*

HWB 126 *How wondrous great*

HWB: Hymnal – A Worship Book

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

- Because HWB 126 is an American folk melody, its style is rhythmic and vibrant. The first chord is a 'gathering' chord of the voices, followed by rhythmic quarter notes. This melody lends itself to canon singing (women/men) or giving the male/female voices rhythmic patterns at the interval of a 5<sup>th</sup> on a phrase of that particular verse. For example, on verse 2, the men, on the upper pitch B and the lower pitch E, would sing "Our spir-its rise" throughout the verse in the rhythm of the first four notes of the hymn while the women sing the melody. On verse 3, the women could sing the phrase, "All its wings" in the pattern (for the sopranos) B-B- E, altos on the pitch E throughout the pattern, in a lively quarter, quarter, half-note rhythm. Singing this hymn in unison will keep the rhythm of the piece from bogging down. The correct tempo for this hymn tune is

*MM=86 for the half-note pulse.*

### **Hymns of Confession:**

Two that create the sense of humble awe in text and music are:

HWB 129 *Fire of God, undying Flame*

*Tempo is MM=84 quarter-note pulse. Sing with breadth in the line, unhurried, at a tempo voices can sing a phrase in one breath.*

HWB 75 *Heilig, heilig, heilig (Holy, holy, holy)*

*The musical language alone creates the sense of reverence and awe.*

### **Hymn of Response:**

HWB 161 *We give thanks unto you*

*This hymn recites the presence of God with us and God's faithfulness in the story of God's people. It is important that our children understand that we are part of a story that begins in the biblical account.*

### **Sending Hymn:**

HWB 427 *You shall go out with joy*

*This hymn speaks of how we wish to nurture the entire family of faith in the assurance that the life and spirit of our risen Lord goes with them; leading us with irrepressible joy that causes all of creation to sing!*

## **Call to Worship:**

by Krista Neustadter Barg

Good morning! Let's get started.

Many of you have probably heard this phrase time and time again. Some of you might even work in a setting where this is announced daily – as a call for classes to begin. It invites us to settle in, to be open and honest to be prepared for “something” to happen – something that could change our lives.

So let's get started. On this beautiful day of rest, God and this community have called us to gather: to praise God; to share the ups and downs of the journey; to be challenged and rejuvenated by God's word; and to be called and sent out as followers of Jesus.

Our theme, “...which you in turn received,” calls us to mindfulness and active participation in the Christian Education of **our** Church, of **the** Church. We are invited to share love and grace, guidance and wisdom, encouragement and strength with one another, as we each in turn received. The theme calls us to respond to all that we have received by answering God -- “Here I am. Send me!”

## **Opening Prayer:**

by Krista Neustadter Barg

**Leader:** God, we call you by many names,  
names that help us grow in our understanding of you.

Left side: Creator, Father, Jehovah

*Right side: Mother, Sustainer, Almighty*

Left side: Lord, Shepherd, Protector

*Right side: Mystery, Yahweh, ...*

**Leader:** Today, we want to remember the way you continue to be our teacher.

All: Teacher God, remind us this day of the many ways we have been taught by you AND the way you speak to us through other teachers and leaders. Help each one of us to be one who shares in word and deed the love and grace we have received from you. Teach us to teach each other. AMEN.

## **Children's Story:**

by Sherisse Penner Langner and Janice Penner

*- As a gathering activity, you may want to conduct this object lesson. To do so you will need a paper towel, basin of water, and a clear cup.*

A favourite thing about school is doing experiments. We are going to try one that helps us to see that amazing things can happen when we receive and follow instructions. *Ask a helper to crumple up a paper towel and a second one to place it inside a clear cup. A third helper turns this cup upside down and immerses it in the basin.* What happened? Were you surprised that the paper towel didn't get wet? The first time I tried this, I sure was! Surprising things can happen when we follow good instructions. Now let's hear a story where people were surprised at what happened when they listened to Jesus.

I was six years old when I saw Jesus for the first time. I remember that because it was the year Papa taught me to cast a net. We'd gone out to Lake Gennesaret nearly every day that summer. Papa and the men were using 8 foot nets, but Papa started me off with a 4 foot net. I vowed that some day I would be casting the 10 foot nets. There's nothing I wanted more than to be a fisherman like Papa. He told me once that the perfect casting technique required years of practice. Every time I cast the net into the water it became twisted and tangled. I could tell that Papa's friends were frustrated when this happened, but Papa patiently untangled the net and told me to try again, even when I got frustrated and wanted to give up.

The day I saw Jesus was one of those frustrating days, even for Papa. We had been out on the water all day and into the night, but had caught nothing! Papa's friend, Simon, finally told us to pack it in. There would be no fish today. We docked the boat at the shore and I started washing the seaweed from the nets. As I did, I noticed Simon talking to another man. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I was awfully curious. The man didn't look like any fishermen I'd seen lately, but I saw him step into Simon's boat. Simon shrugged his shoulders and brought the boat a little ways from the shore. My curiosity finally got the better of me. I put down the nets and raced to shore, pushing my way in front of the crowd that had gathered, eager to see what this strange man was going to do. Surely he wasn't going to try fishing tonight! I asked the older boy beside me who this man was. He told me it was Jesus, of Nazareth. Didn't I know that by now! I felt sheepish. Of course I had heard about Jesus, I had just never seen him before. Jesus started speaking from the boat and, even though there were hundreds of people on the beach, his calm voice could be heard by all. I was amazed that Jesus, the man everyone had been talking about, was sitting in Simon's boat!

After he finished speaking to the crowds, Jesus turned to Simon and said, "Go out into the deep water and let your nets down for a catch." Simon, along with the rest of us fishermen, was puzzled. I started to yell, "But we've been out all day and have caught nothing!" but Papa shushed me quickly. I was still puzzled when I saw Simon move the boat further from the shore, pick up the 8 foot net and, with perfect technique, cast it out into the deep water. After a few minutes Simon yelled, "It's full! The net's breaking! We need some help here!" Papa and I ran for our boat. Before I knew it both boats were filled with fish! I was so shocked that I froze for a moment and James had to tell me to keep working. Finally we made our way back to shore in boats that were nearly sinking! What a day! I never expected anything like this to happen!

The crowds cheered as we pulled onto shore. People couldn't stop talking about what a great catch we'd had. As I turned my head to start unloading the fish I saw something few others saw that day. Simon fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Jesus then said something I still think about today. He said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." I kept watching Simon as we cleaned up our best catch of the summer, still in awe of what we had received that day. He seemed different. Then, I heard Papa calling that it was time to go home. As we left the lakeshore I saw Simon, James and John all following Jesus. They just left everything and followed! I wished I could do the same. I didn't know much about Jesus the summer I turned six, but I knew that I wanted to get to know him.

### **Prayer:**

Jesus, please help us to listen to your instructions, follow you, and get to know you! Amen.

The prayer with the children's story can serve as the prayer of confession for the whole congregation, because all of us often fail to follow instruction, fail to leave life behind to follow.

**Sermon Starters:**

by Elsie Rempel

Gil Bailie, in his lecture series on “The Gospel of Luke,” tape 3, makes the point that the description in this chapter of Luke, of catching so many fish that “they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them,” could be a reference to the Gentile churches of Paul, who helped the Jewish Christians in their ministry as “catchers of men.” Could a Church education Sunday use this image to highlight the way churches and church schools also need to help each other in the bigger mission of calling and forming Christians?

The Luke and Isaiah texts each include a story of call. We are called to our varied ministries in a variety of ways. What can these call stories teach us about the varied ways we encounter God, about changing our life direction, about mission and ministry, and about deciding whose instructions we are willing to trust?

The reading from 1 Corinthians begins with a reminder of how Paul had introduced the Gospel to this congregation. “The language of “handing on” and “receiving” that he uses in verses 1 and 3 is the same terminology employed earlier in describing the transmission of the Lord’s Supper tradition (11:23)... The fact that he “received” this tradition from others...shows that this tradition is very ancient indeed.” (Hayes, *Interpretation: 1 Corinthians*, 255). It also shows us how a process of hearing and careful sharing of what was heard, or received, helped form the early church. How does this careful “handing on” and “receiving” of the Gospel, as well as other insights and traditions we value, continue in our congregations and church schools?

**Song of response:**

HWB 161 *We give thanks unto you*

**Sending:**

Go out from here as followers called to teach and share God’s abundant love and grace with all you meet. Let us go out with joy for God’s love is never ending!

**Song:**

HWB 427 *You shall go out with joy!*



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