



Resource Centre

From our Churches

Author: Alissa Bender

Church: Hamilton Mennonite Church

Date: Fall 2011

This resource is part of a larger **From Our Churches** archives available as an inspirational resource to teachers, ministers and others of Mennonite Church Canada. Posted by permission of the author. Permission to reproduce and distribute is granted.

Fruit of the Spirit, Fruit of the Earth

A 7-week worship resource on creation care

This 7-session series offers suggestions for drawing on Creation Care themes within Scripture, using the Fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) as a focal point. Each Sunday, you may wish to use a focus statement such as the following, changing the fruit of the Spirit each week, to connect the series:

“Together we will reflect on how, as [the fruit of the Spirit] is grown in us, God’s shalom grows in all creation”.

Near the end of the series could be a good opportunity for a time of “Celebration and Commitment,” celebrating the ways that individuals and your congregation as a whole are already caring for creation, and committing to new ways of further care. We wrote on fruit-shaped sticky notes and put them on a drawing of a tree in our worship space so we could see and be inspired by them for the remainder of the series (and continue to add to it).

The song suggestions listed are from Hymnal: A Worship Book (www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/502), Sing the Journey (www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/70), Sing the Story (www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/447), and Bryan Moyer Suderman’s “My Money Talks” CD (www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/809). For permission to use his music in worship and to purchase the CD and songbook, visit www.smalltallmusic.com. All Bryan’s songs are also available on iTunes).

1. **Love & Joy: *In Awe of God's creation***

Psalm 148

Genesis 1:1-2:3

Matthew 8:23-27 (Galatians 5:17-18, 22-25)

We begin our conversation about creation in love and joy. God, in love, has created a beautiful earth to be our home. We rejoice in this love, returning it and standing in awe of our Creator God. In the gospel story, Jesus' relationship with creation gives us a glimpse of him as God-With-Us (the disciples say in awe: "What sort of man is this...?").

Possible Songs:

HWB 89 For the beauty of the earth

HWB 154 This is my Father's world

HWB 155 O God, great womb

HWB 156 All things bright and beautiful

SJ 24 Creation is a song

SJ 28 We worship God the Rock

SJ 77 The peace of the earth be with you

Generous God – Bryan Moyer Suderman

(Many of these songs could be used at other points in the series as well. Also see the "Creation" section in the topical index of HWB)

2. **Kindness & Gentleness: *Called into relationship with Creation***

Psalm 8

Genesis 2:4-25

Colossians 1:15-23

In the Genesis 2 creation story, we remember humanity's calling to till and keep the garden, as participants in (Psalm 8:3-4) and faithful stewards of (Psalm 8:5-8) creation. The fruits of kindness and gentleness inform our attitude toward creation. Paul's letter to the Colossians reminds us that through Jesus, the firstborn of all creation, in whom all things hold together, God was pleased to reconcile all things to God's self, whether on earth or in heaven. We are part of this broad picture of creation and reconciliation.

Possible Songs:

HWB 390 God of the fertile fields

HWB 391 God whose farm is all creation

HWB 414 God, who stretched

SJ 25 When long before time

SJ 40 As rain from the clouds

Take good care – Bryan Moyer Suderman

3. Patience: *Our daily bread*

Psalm 104:1, 10-23, 27-30

Ezekiel 34:11-22

Matthew 6:9-13

The prophet Ezekiel speaks harshly to the fat sheep that are trampling the food and water of the lean sheep, and that God desires to feed all of them with justice. This image offers a poignant reminder that our food habits have a great effect on the earth and others who depend upon it for sustenance. Patience has a great deal of connection with food justice and creation care – waiting for food in season to avoid over-use of fossil fuels, preparing food from scratch and avoiding over-packaging that adds to landfills, and fasting from food that represents injustice.

Possible Songs:

HWB 90 For the fruit of all creation
SJ 48 Our Father, which art in heaven
SJ 85 Pan de vida
SJ 86 Taste and See
SS 46 Vin pran
SS 123 Let us talents and tongues employ
Prayer of Agur – Bryan Moyer Suderman

4. Generosity: *Creation Care & Justice*

Psalm 72:1-7, 16-19

Micah 6:1-8

Matthew 25:31-46

In Micah, the earth is called as a witness against Israel in the breaking of their covenant with God. The passage closes with the familiar words that justice, kindness, and humble walking with God are the sacrifice that God desires. As the sheep (and goats) in Jesus' parable were unaware of how far-reaching their actions were, we may not realize how our actions of caring for creation may be bringing justice to Jesus' brothers and sisters, but we continue in our generous actions so that we may be surprised to hear it! This could be a time to explore Mennonite Central Committee's work on mining justice (<http://ottawa.mcc.org/miningjustice>).

Possible Songs:

HWB 367 For the healing of the nations
SJ 61 How can we be silent
SJ 65 Let justice flow like streams
SJ 52 Jesus help us live in peace
SS 115 Beauty for brokenness
SS 124 My soul cries out
Enough for all – Bryan Moyer Suderman

5. **Self-Control: *Living with enough***

Psalm 103:1-18

Isaiah 58:6-11

Luke 12:13-34

In these Scriptures we are reminded that it is God who can truly satisfy our needs, despite our constant striving for more. Self-control is key to receiving the gifts that the earth can sustainably offer, rather than taking everything we want. Self-control frees us to trust in God's provision.

Possible Songs:

HWB 227 Two fishermen

HWB 229 Tú has venido a la orilla

HWB 324 Seek ye first

HWB 557 O God, in restless living

SJ 106 Just a closer walk with thee

SS 96 Had God brought us out

To be content – Bryan Moyer Suderman

6. **Peace: *Sabbath rest***

Psalm 126

Leviticus 25:1-12, 18-24

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

Sabbath is a way of life to which God invites God's people, a way of life that includes time for rest and re-creation as children of God. The rhythms of creation teach us the natural rhythms of rest, something we appreciate when we take the time to pause and breathe in the middle of hectic activity. God commanded the Israelites to give Sabbath rest to the land, as well as to all of the people and livestock who were dependent upon them. Practicing Sabbath is a practice of justice, and returns us to trust in God, who promises to sustain us as we try to live on the earth in sustainable ways.

Possible Songs:

HWB 5 There is a place of quiet rest

HWB 96 We plow the fields and scatter

HWB 299 New earth, heavens new

HWB 407 We are people of God's peace

HWB 493 I heard the voice of Jesus say

HWB 640 This is a day of new beginnings

SS 9 As the pauper waits for plenty

There's a Jubilee a-Coming – Bryan Moyer Suderman

7. Faithfulness: *Living into God's Kingdom*

Psalm 136:1-9, 23-26

Isaiah 11:6-9

Romans 8:18-25

These Scriptures speak to us of God's ultimate desires for all of creation: a reign of peace in which God is known, when freedom and redemption have broken through bondage and suffering. God is faithful; God's steadfast love endures forever. And we are called to faithfulness as children of God, we who have the first fruits of the Spirit.

Possible Songs:

HWB 35 Many and great

HWB 224 The kingdom of God

HWB 638 God is working his purpose out

SJ 49 Rain Down

SJ 108 Give thanks for life

SS 116 I saw a tree by the riverside

SS 122 Let all creation dance

Speak to the rock – Bryan Moyer Suderman