

Assembly Sunday 2012: Dusting off the Bible for the 21st Century

HWB - *Hymnal Worship Book*, SJ - *Sing the Journey*, SS - *Sing the Story**

Mennonites from across Canada will gather July 12-15, 2012 in Vancouver, B.C. for a Study Assembly. The theme is *Dusting off the Bible for the 21st Century*. A variety of Old Testament and New Testament texts will be used in worship and in Bible teaching, inviting us to delight in scripture, and to study and interpret scripture so that we are equipped and inspired to continue our partnership in God's mission in the world. The resources that are being developed for the four Assembly 2012 worship services will be available and posted on the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre website following the Assembly.

We encourage you to use these resources creatively in your congregation:

- Plan to use this Assembly Sunday Worship resource prior to the July event as a way to prepare and pray for this important national church gathering.
- Consider planning a 4 part worship series for your congregation in the fall, based on the Assembly worship theme and resources.

This worship service draws on a variety of existing materials. We request that you acknowledge the appropriate source(s) in your bulletin.

Songs to consider

Hymnal Worship Book

- #302 *Come divine Interpreter*
- #312 *Lamp of our feet*
- #313 *Rejoice, rejoice in God*
- #314 *The word of God is solid ground*
- #315 *This is a story full of love*
- #316 *In this world abound scrolls*
- #317 *Lord, I have made thy word*
- #594 *Lord, you sometimes speak*

Sing the Journey

- #27 *God of the Bible*
- #98 *All will be well*
- #104 *God moves in a mysterious way*

Sing the Story

- #49 *I will come to you in the silence*
- #65 *Abre mis ojos (Open my eyes)*
- #106 *Comme un souffle fragile (Like a tender breath, stirring)*

WE GATHER

Call to worship:

Leader: Gracious God,
we have come in search of Christ,
the author of life.

**ALL: Open the Scriptures to us
that we might see Christ truly
and meet Christ face to face. AMEN.** (*Sing the Story* #141)

Opening prayer:

God of daybreak:
In the freshness of morning our souls awaken
to the promptings of your Spirit.
Attune our ears to hear your voice
calling us to a life of faith.
That we may say with Samuel:
"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Amen.
(*Words for Worship 2* #242)¹

Confession of Affirmation:

We believe that Jesus Christ
is the expression of God's love for all people.
Therefore, we pledge our loyalty to him and his way of life.
We accept the New Testament as the guidebook to abundant
Christian living.
Therefore, we pledge ourselves to study its message
for our day and follow the light we discover.
We believe that communion with God and fellowship with
Christ are essential to daily living and spiritual growth.
Therefore, we will devote time regularly to
personal devotions, family worship, and meditation.
We believe that God is our Creator

¹ *Words for Worship 2*, Diane Zaerr Brenneman, Herald Press, 2009.

* Song book abbreviations match those used for corresponding worship resources in *Leader Magazine*

and all men and women are our brothers and sisters. Therefore, as we attempt to live Christ's way of reconciling love, we can consider no one our enemy, we dare not hate, we cannot kill.

We believe that spiritual values are more important than material possessions.

Therefore, we live modestly, dress simply, and eat temperately, in order to place God's kingdom first. (*Words for Worship 1 #141*)²

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Children's feature: "Growing Plants and Words" by Susan Kennel Harrison is part of *Children's Stories: Based on the Common Lectionary Bible Texts* developed by Mennonite Church Canada, and can be found at

www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1737

Sermon seeds:

- a) **Psalm 1:** How do we delight in God's laws and God's Word? What are the current realities that stand in the way of delighting in Scripture as individuals and as a congregation? Invite personal stories from within the congregation of both the challenge and the joy of delighting in scripture and of developing a meaningful rhythm (verse 2b) for meditation and listening to God.
- b) **2 Timothy 3: 14-17:** How can ancient scriptures equip us for today (2 Timothy 3:17)?

The reader's theatre piece (see below link) could be used as an introduction to a sermon on

- The challenge and complexity of interpreting scripture when scripture itself is diverse and
- also the hope and the gift scriptural diversity provides for the post modern and post- Christendom age in which we live.

A Reader's Theatre piece was created by Arlyn Friesen-Epp Director of Mennonite Church Canada's Resource Centre for the very first paper and discussion on *Being a Faithful Church: Testing the Spirits in the midst of Hermeneutical Ferment*. (2009). It can be found at

www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1738

2 *Words for Worship*, Arlene Mark, Herald Press, 1996.

WE RESPOND

Prayer of Response:

O Holy One,
we hear and say so many words,
yet yours is the word we need.
Speak now as we respond in our daily living,
and help us listen;
and, if what we hear is silence,
let it quiet us,
let it disturb us,
let it touch our need,
let it break our pride,
let it shrink our certainties,
let it enlarge our wonder. AMEN.
(adapted from *Sing the Journey #137*)

Congregational prayer:

Consider prayer for the following:

- Delight and commitment for parents and grandparents to prioritize the nurture of faith and a sense of biblical wonder in their children and grandchildren
- Courage for the church to pursue the questions and doubts of those for whom God's voice and Scripture have become silent
- The Spirit's wisdom for your congregation and/or your area church on an issue of discernment
- God's wisdom and insight for Mennonite Church Canada as delegates gather this summer for study and discernment.

Words of Sending:

May the seed of Christ's word,
planted and watered by the Holy Spirit,
find root and grow in your hearts. (*Sing the Story #158*)

STUDY RESOURCES

The following are a few excellent resources to use in a study series on scriptural interpretation.

1) *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology* is a journal produced by Canadian Mennonite University and Associated Mennonite Bible Seminary. Your congregation receives this twice a year resource with the Mennonite Church Canada *Equipping* packet.

Two relevant issues on the topic of scripture:

- a) *Vision: Teaching the Bible in the congregation*, Fall 2010, Vol. 11, No. 2
- b) *Vision: Scripture*, Spring 2005, Vol. 6, No. 1

2) The Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre has a rich variety of study resources. Here are a few of the many that are downloadable:

- a) Erv Wiens, former Mennonite Church Canada pastor and a Mennonite Church Canada Witness worker in Korea has developed a synopsis of Stuart Murray's book *Biblical Interpretation in the Anabaptist Tradition*.

www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/5/13245

- b) "Reading Scripture through other Eyes" is an online video series (for an ambitious study group)

www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/6/13298

- c) John H. Neufeld has a 3-part sermon series on reading and understanding the Bible:

www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/5/13085

www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/5/13103

www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/5/13084