

World Communion Sunday, October 6, 2013

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

Introduction

Being invited to the Lord's Table is the greatest honour we can be given. Sometimes we come with joy for God's goodness in creation and redemption. Sometimes we come with sorrow for our own sins and those of others. Always we come as beggars telling one another where bread can be found.

In the resources for this service you will see an adapted form of the Invitation and the Communion Prayer in Form One of the Minister's Manual (Faith and Life Press, Herald Press, 1998), a core resource of ministers in Mennonite Church Canada. The adaptation tries to keep the emphasis on Christ dying for us while highlighting what his death led to, the resurrection and the already coming kingdom.

Breaking bread on World Communion Sunday highlights neglected aspects of the meaning of 'communion'. To commune is to be made one with Christ and his body, the church. It is good to seek oneness in the congregation, but today our horizon is much broader for we celebrate and seek the oneness of the whole communion of saints on earth and in heaven.

In the early church an image arose that described what happens when we become one in Christ. It says that as grain must be ground into flour to bake bread, as grapes must be crushed to yield juice, so members of the body of Christ must yield themselves in order to become something they could never be on their own. This is true of individuals, congregations, and denominations. Today, in the breaking of bread, may we yield some small portion of our autonomy, our self-sufficiency, our self-righteousness so that we can get closer to all those who name the name of Jesus. In this Holy Supper we also offer one another and Christians around the globe gifts God has given us for others' good.

Today, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to mend the broken body of Christ. To help us in that awesome undertaking, I suggest Ephesians 2:11-22 as the preaching text. Here Paul describes the ancient alienation between Gentiles and Jews. The hostility between them was like the wall that ran through Berlin or that runs through Palestine. The church is the place where Christ has broken

down these walls of hostility by creating in himself one new humanity. That is what we celebrate today, yet with trembling hearts and hands, remembering the times when we have rebuilt the walls Christ has demolished.

Order of Service

1. Music or silence

2. Hymns

- **HWB 43** Christ is our cornerstone;
- **HWB 306** In Christ there is no East or West

3. Introduction to the day

[taken from the opening comments above]

4. Confession of Sin

Suggestions:

- kneeling: It is an act of humility and vulnerability; the posture of our body can shape the posture of our soul
- silent prayer at the end of the following spoken prayer:

People: **Almighty and merciful God, you love us more than we can love ourselves.**

We trust you and want to tell you what our lives are like.

We have not loved you with our whole being and we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have not done what we could have done to heal Christ's body.

Forgive us our sins.

Send your Spirit to help us make good what we have done wrong, for the sake of your Son, our Saviour.

Amen.

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

5. Assurance of Forgiveness

Leader: On behalf of Jesus Christ, I assure you:

You are forgiven; forgive others.

You are restored; restore others.

You are reconciled; be reconciled with others.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

6. Passing the peace

This gesture of shaking hands and wishing each other the peace of Christ arose in the early church. It is often offered after the confession of sin as a way to affirm Christ's peace to all who come to him. See Minister's Manual, 74.

7. Scripture

Ephesians 2:11 – 22, part or all of John 17, as well as the lectionary texts Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4; Psalm: 37:1-9; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10.

8. Sermon

Allow the introductory comments in this resource, as well as the way the lectionary texts, Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4; Psalm: 37:1-9; 2 Timothy 1:1-14; Luke 17:5-10, to speak into your current context as you develop the sermon. In addition, consider Tom Yoder Neufeld's Believers Church Commentary on Ephesians, pp 106-136, where he refers to Ephesians 2:11-22 as "one of the most profound and beautiful peace texts in the whole Bible." Briefly summarizing, Yoder Neufeld stresses this text's movement from alienation to participation in Christ, a movement which transforms us into new humans. As God takes the initiative in bringing about reconciliation, insiders and outsiders are joined together in becoming one family of faith whose unity is found in Christ. A dual emphasis on peace with God and peace with each other makes this peace text remarkable and important for a Sunday where we celebrate the unity Christ offers the worldwide church.

9. Silence

10. Congregational Prayer

Today would be a good occasion to add to the other intercessions a prayer for the unity of the church where you live. Pray also for Christians in other denominations and countries, especially those known to members of your congregation.

11. Offertory

- **HWB 540** Strong, Righteous Man of Galilee

12. Invitation to the Lord's Table

Leader: Sisters and brothers, it is right that we should call to mind the meaning of this Holy Supper. It is a remembrance of Christ's sacrifice for the sin of the world; a communion with the Risen One and with his body the church; a sharing in the bread of life and an offering of that bread to the world in anticipation of the day when all shall eat and be filled. It is the Lord's Table and all who are baptized are invited to it. Therefore, let us come in faith seeking God's reign.

13. Hymn

- **HWB 462** Now the silence

14. Communion Prayer

Leader: O God of perfect love, In the company of the saints in heaven and earth, we come before you remembering Jesus' life lived, laid down, and taken up again for us. You sent your only and beloved Son to teach us the way of peace and to heal our infirmities. When evil and sin arose against him Jesus willingly bore them to the cross; through his bitter death he reconciled us and the whole creation to you. In his resurrection Christ triumphed over death and sent us forth as reconcilers.

O God of bountiful grace, gratitude fills our hearts as we come to the Lord's Table. Let this bread and cup show forth Christ's work of redemption. Send your Spirit to make us one with Christ and all who bear his name so that we might be steadfast in following him. Let the bread we break and the cup we bless be a communion of the body and blood of Christ. Hear us for his sake, in whose name we pray the prayer he gave us to share with all Christians,

Our Father... (The Lord's Prayer)

15. Words of Institution for the bread followed by Prayer of Thanks

It has been common in Mennonite circles to follow the pattern of Jesus' prayer at the last supper (Matt. 26:26-28) and offer a prayer of thanks for bread and cup. For the bread see Minister's Manual, 77, 96, 97; HWB 785.

16. Hymns

- **HWB 471** Eat this bread,
- **HWB 260** When I survey,
- **SJ 72** One is the body

17. For the Cup *see Minister's Manual: 78, 96, and 97.*

Conduct the distribution in silence, following the selected prayers. This order is suitable when people remain in the rows or join a single circle around the Lord's Table. When they come forward individually it is more suitable to combine the words of institution into one and the prayers into one.

18. Footwashing

If you do not follow this practice, take a chance on it. It allows us to act out how we intend to live our lives tomorrow. Set a mood of gentleness and serenity. To make it easier to enter into, create circles of 8 to 10 people in which each person washes the feet of the person to their right. After each washing, the two people exchange a word of blessing. Singing simple songs like STJ 59, Come and fill our hearts, sets a good tone.

Words for this ritual are found in Minister's Manual: 79; HWB 783, HWB 782. If brevity is a concern the last reading may begin half way through at "Blessed is our brother..." and substitute for the reading of John 13:3 – 17.

19. Post-Communion Prayer

Eternal God, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your son our Saviour Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the sacrament of his body and blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Minister's Manual, 99, Prayer (c))

20. Sending Hymn

- **HWB 420** Heart with loving heart united

This worship resource, edited by Elsie Rempel, was prepared for Mennonite Church Canada by John D. Rempel, of Toronto, Ontario. John was editor of the 1998 Minister's Manual and is a semi-retired professor of historical theology and Anabaptist studies at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, IN. Currently, he is the director of the Toronto Mennonite Theological Centre at the Toronto School of Theology.

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