

## Assembly Sunday, July 6, 2014

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

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Delegates, guests, children, and junior youth will gather July 3-6, 2014, in Winnipeg, MB for the first biennial Assembly, *Wild Hope: Faith for an Unknown Season*. This Assembly Sunday worship resource, prepared by Mennonite Church Manitoba and Mennonite Church Canada, can be used prior to the July event as a way to prepare and pray for the national church gathering or as a follow-up after Assembly when delegates share their experiences.

In the weeks following Assembly, the resources developed for the four worship services will be posted on the Mennonite Church Canada Resource Centre website. 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.

### Introduction to the Theme:

The western world is rapidly moving beyond Christendom. The church must take Christian faith into a new cultural and civic landscape, one that is already well entrenched in Europe and Australia. There is disorientation for God's church in this new wilderness, but also a strong sense of hope that this represents a tremendous opportunity to hear God's call anew and shape a new kind of church for the future, a future that may be more like witness planting than church planting. The beliefs and convictions of individuals will be influenced in ways we have not yet imagined nor discovered.

In Canada, we are well acquainted with the four seasons: will we be able to embrace an entirely new and, to us, possibly foreign season? What role will there be for the



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institutional church at all levels: congregational, area church, and national church? How we choose to face this new season, and how we experience Christ in this new season, will influence how it concludes. That is why the Being a Faithful Church process is such an important exercise in discernment and understanding of God's word, and why the Future Directions Task Force is looking ahead.

### Call to Worship

In the middle of  
Broken toys and disrupted play dates,  
Incomplete studies and projects,  
Family upheavals,  
Congregational decision making,  
Kaleidoscopic changes in society,  
We feel the gale force winds of life  
That tempt us to retreat from the world.

We come this morning facing the wind of our worries,  
Our questions,  
Our hopes.  
Expectant that the warm breath of your Spirit  
Will stir and guide us,  
Even though questions may linger.

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

## Suggested Songs

- SJ 27 - God of the Bible
- SJ 71 - Alleluia, the Great Storm is over
- SS 17 - Alleluia!
- SS 1 - Praise the One who breaks the darkness
- SS 115 - Beauty for brokenness
- SS 45 - Calm me, Lord
- HWB 567 - How firm a foundation
- HWB 299 - New earth, heavens new
- HWB 580 - My life flows on
- HWB 372 - O healing river
- HWB 493 - I heard the voice of Jesus say
- HWB 589 - My Shepherd will supply my need
- HWB 364 - Spirit of God, unleashed on earth
- HWB154 - This is my Father's world

## Scripture Reading

Mark 4:35-41 (Jesus Calms the Storm)

## Children's Feature

Faith in God's Care (a retelling of Mark 4:35-41 for young children)

### Introduction:

*Warmly welcome the children as they come forward for the story and help them develop a sense of holy anticipation for hearing God's message in ways that are clear to a child. Ask them if any of them, or any of their pets, gets frightened during thunderstorms. Tell them many people are frightened by storms. In today's Bible story, the disciples get very frightened while they are on a boat with Jesus. Show them the place in your Bible, then put down your Bible and show the children how to make a boat with their hands to help them enter the story.*

### Story:

It had been another full day with Jesus. We wanted to get to our home on the other side of the lake but people kept talking with Jesus. It was getting late by the time we started our boat ride home across the lake. (*Cup hands into a boat shape.*)

We started rowing. (*Use thumbs to make a rowing action.*)

As the darkness of the evening filled the sky the wind picked up. Thankfully, the wind was behind us and was pushing us toward home. (*Begin rocking your boats.*)

Jesus was tired and lay down on a cushion in the stern of the boat. It didn't take long until we could hear he was sleeping. The rest of us were rowing and looking forward to being safe at home. But then the wind got stronger and the waves got bigger! (*Rock boats harder.*)

Water started splashing into our boat. I stopped rowing and started scooping out the water so Jesus wouldn't get wet and we wouldn't sink. (*Use hands to scoop water.*)

It was so scary. But Jesus just kept sleeping. (*Place hands together under one ear.*) I could hardly believe it. We were working as hard as we could to get safely across, (*row boat with thumbs*) and Jesus just slept as if he were at home in his bed!

(*Rest hands on lap.*) Finally I woke him up. I shook his shoulder and said, "Teacher, don't you care that we are sinking?" He seemed surprised that I was so scared, and shook his head at me as he shook himself awake. Then he stood up in the madly rocking boat, (*rock boats again*) looked out at the storming lake, and said, "Peace! Be still!" in a voice the storm had to listen to.

(*Boats come slowly to rest.*) And it did. The wind slowed down and the waves grew calm until we could see the reflections of the moon and the clouds in the water. Jesus sat down, looked at us, and told us we didn't need to be afraid, because God is in charge and God takes care of us even in a storm.

We were amazed! We kept thinking about this; how Jesus could sleep right through the storm, how he could calm the stormy sea, and how Jesus just knew that God was with us and was caring for us. After that, when we were scared, we would remember Jesus sleeping peacefully in our sinking boat because he knew God, and he knew that God was in charge and cared for us. It helped us remember God was still caring for us. And that helped us be less frightened.

### Prayer:

Thank you God, for Jesus, who helps us know and believe you are with us and care for us, even when we're scared. Amen.

## Sermon Seeds

1. In biblical times, the sea was feared as the place of chaos, evil and demonic powers. The catacombs of the early church in Rome depict the persecuted church as a boat on a storm-tossed sea. What experiences in the life of your congregation's history have felt like a boat tossed at sea? What fears and doubts did the congregation face in those experiences? How did the congregation experience Christ in the midst of that turmoil?
2. What are some current stories of experiencing Christ in the midst of life's storms? Do these testimonies evoke a sense of calm, hope, fear, indifference? Does Jesus seem asleep in your life? What fears and questions does Jesus provoke within your life? What role does facing fears and questions have in experiencing Christ?

## Prayer items for Congregational Prayer time:

- Pray for the Future Directions Task Force as they continue to discern what the Spirit is saying to us in how to be the area and national church in a time of great change.
- Pray for the Being a Faithful Church process and the BFC Task Force, as they now take the congregational responses that have sent in regarding the BFC paper #5 and prepare for discussions at Assembly regarding important questions of sexuality.

- Pray for the changes and transitions that may be faced by people in your family, your congregation, and your community.
- Consider and pray for a specific region of the global church that is facing challenges.

## Suggested prayer format:

Mennonite Church Canada congregations worship in 16 different languages. A number of congregations in our multi-cultural mix have the practice of everyone praying out loud at the same time. This may seem a bit wild and chaotic to those who are used to one person praying at a time, but it can be freeing, powerful, and hope-filled as we experience the church at prayer. This congregational praying could follow the sharing time if that is a practice in your congregation.

The worship leader gives a few preliminary comments of explanation and then begins: "We come to you, God, with our joys and concerns in the language of our heart, knowing that you not only hear us, you love us, and your Spirit is stirring ..." Give ample time for prayer.

Then as the room becomes quiet, conclude the prayer.