



**2014 Mennonite Church Canada Assembly
Worship**

Friday morning, July 4, 2014
Canadian Mennonite University

Theme: “Why are you afraid?”

Gathering Songs

HWB #290 *Spirit, come dispel our sadness*
Lord of all by Phil Campbell-Enns

Welcome

- Welcome this fine prairie morning...
- Introduce theme: explore the theme of Wild Hope through the passage in Mark 4 – Jesus calming the storm. Yesterday we opened the Assembly with two words of Jesus to his disciples – Leave & Go.
- Today we are going to enter the storm – full force and we are going to sit with Jesus’ words to his disciples – “Why are you afraid?”
- Yesterday I said that most likely the disciples weren’t so interested in leaving and going because they knew that the lake was prone to storms and a willingness to leave meant a willingness to enter the storm. Today we’re entering the storm and we will do so paying attention to our fears and with the confidence that Jesus is with us.

Call to Worship

Leader: The Lord is my life and my salvation;
People: whom shall I fear?
Leader: the Lord is the stronghold of my life;
People: of whom shall I be afraid?
All: *For the Lord is our God,
and God desires our worship!*

Song

SJ #97 *The Lord is my light*

Scripture

Mark 4:35-41

(Read in a language other than English. Text should be read in an animated way so that even in another language we feel the storm. Text appears in English on screen with the words “afraid?” emerging at the end of it. Piano “storm” sounds bubble underneath the text until “Peace! Be Still!”)

Entering the Storm

(Following the scripture reading the theme from “Jaws” is briefly heard through sound system)

Monologue “A Pastor Enters the Vortex of Fear” by Terry Goertzen
(The monologue script is not available. Please check the Assembly Friday morning video to hear the monologue - www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/2402)

(Script begins with an innocuous fear and a ‘vortex’ of fear gets created. Culminates in rising “Do you not care?!”)

Summary of actions in “Entering the Storm”:

- “Jaws” theme plays over the sound system
- Monologue begins
- Pianist plays subtly underneath monologue voice
- Storm gets unleashed in the centre when monologue voice and others call out “Do you not care?!”
- During the piano storm, long strips of cloth begin creating waves and get fairly hysterical while reading goes on... Storm sounds to accompany the waves?
- Storm continues for a bit and then... Jesus calls out “Be muzzled.” Piano storm quiets (gets muzzled) and bring us to the next song.
- Piano brings us to sing: Plays “When the storms of...” HWB #558 but brings us to sing SS #45 “Calm me Lord”
- Note regarding the waves of cloth: Long strips of blue fabric (about a metre to 1 ½ metres wide) are held by two people to create the waves. During the ‘Naming our fears’ section below these individuals hold the wave up high and slowly move from the back of the room to the front, allowing participants to add their crumpled ‘fears’ to the wave passing overhead.

Song SS #45 *Calm me Lord*

Reflection on “Fears”

What’s strange about Jesus in this story is that he’s not afraid of the storm. He finds a pillow and goes to sleep. Jesus’ is not afraid and he pushes the disciples on their fear. And it’s not surprising because our fears can paralyze us. They can prevent us from moving forward. And sometimes our fears cause us to make poor judgement. Did you know that Ghandi – as he pushed for peace and reconciliation in India, took a “vow of fearlessness.” He decided consciously not to act out of fear for in his experience, such actions often led to violence. “Why are you afraid?” Jesus asks. “Why are you afraid?” It is a good question that deserves some further reflection.

Ritual – “Naming our Fears”

Each table has paper water drops on them. We invite you to reflect for a moment on a fear you have. Not just any fear but a fear you have for the church. Here you can think of Church with a capital C (Mennonite Church Canada or even broader) or small church as in congregation. Think specifically. What are you afraid of and give your fear a name and write it down on the droplet of water (don’t worry you don’t need to share it with anyone but perhaps you do want to talk about some your fears in the next few days).

Once you’ve written your fear down, crumble it up. Seriously, crumble it up and decide on someone at your table who will gather all the crumbled fears.

Once the crumbled fears are gathered you are invited to throw them into the waves of the storm. Throw them in. The waves will pass overhead and find a way of getting them in. Let go of them.

(Each table will have blue water drops on them. People invited to reflect and name ONE fear that they have for the church or their congregation...Fears will be crumbled up like popcorn and placed into the cloth waves passed overhead and they will be thrown about like popcorn. The four cloths will be laid on the stage and eventually they will be wrapped up (at the end of the prayer) Water sounds accompanying, then SS #121 "Nothing is Lost" tune wafts alongside the melody – recorded on flute]

Scripture Isaiah 44:1-8 *(Listen to the wild hope proclaimed by the prophet Isaiah...)*

(SS #121 "Nothing is lost" wafts underneath the reading)

Song SS #121 *Nothing is lost*

Prayer by Melissa Miller

Jesus-God, Spirit-friend, Master of the wind and the waves,
and of our own weak, yet trusting hearts,

We are grateful for your presence in the boats of our lives,
for the faith that you have woken within us,
for your steadfast love and mercy,
especially known to us in times of turbulence and disorientation.

We are thankful that you do not desert us, even when we cry out, "Do you not care?"
When we fear that we are perishing, that we are separate from your love,
that we are lost and abandoned;
that the church that (has fed us), the church that we have known and loved
and labored for is in distress, swamped in heavy seas,
and facing a diminished future.
We have walked in the valley of the shadow of fear, and tightly clutched our worries.

Now we give over to you our fears, with our salty tears from the deep cries of our heart.
We let go of the worries that sap our spirits and blind us
from seeing the amazing work you are doing.
We release our fears into the deep and boundless ocean of your providence.

On this day, we ask for you to come and bless us with your presence.
We pray for the discernment of the body that has gathered.
We gather in a spirit of wild hope.
We gather with our feet firmly planted on the foundation of our ancient faith,
more solid than the bedrock of the Canadian shield.
We gather as spirit-filled dancers, not knowing the next steps, yet yearning for
and seeking your guidance in how to express our faith in an unknown season.

We give thanks for each person that is present here,

and for the churches and organizations that they represent.
As we tend to the matters of Being a Faithful Church
and the Future Directions Task Force,
we ask that your spirit may enable us to speak our truths respectfully
and to listen to each other compassionately.
Grace us with your unity in our diversity.

Bless our leaders who have toiled long and hard,
who must swim the currents ahead of us, as they call us into the new and unknown future. May they
know your peace and our trust and support in their leading.

These things we raise to you as well as the unvoiced prayers of our heart,
Merciful God, in the power of your Spirit, and the name of Jesus. Amen.

Song

SS #72 We are often tossed and driv'n