

Stewardship Sunday, January 17, 2016

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

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

October 2015, *Equipping* #160

Introduction

These worship resources are designed to assist you in planning worship for Stewardship Sunday. In uncertain economic times, it is difficult for us not to choose perspectives of scarcity and fear over abundance and generosity. In our congregations, many may be asking, "Can we afford to be generous?"

When we focus on stewardship in worship, we more easily remember that God owns everything and is generous beyond our imagination. In response, we can share with gratitude what we have been given to manage for God's purposes.

Our generosity is a response of trust in God's economy of abundance. Giving changes us because it can move us beyond our personal ability (can we afford it?) to an active confession of faith (all that we have and are come from God).

While designed to assist you in planning for worship on Stewardship Sunday on the third Sunday in January, these resources can be used any time during the church year.

Theme: Risking Generosity

(Based on Narrative Lectionary Text: Mark 4:1-34)

- Visual: project image of Pando, www.atlasobscura.com/places/pando-the-trembling-giant, field of grain, or interesting light source (moon, lightning, etc.)
- For themes based on Common Lectionary text, John 2:1-11, see 2010 resources (150 Gallons of Generosity) www.commonword.ca/go/277
- For themes based on Common Lectionary text, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, see 2007 resources (A Variety of Gifts: One Source, One Purpose, One Body) www.commonword.ca/go/278

Song Suggestions

Gathering:

- STJ 3 - Jesus calls us here to meet him
- STJ 6 - Jesu tawa pano (Jesus, we are here)

Invocation:

- HWB 521 - Come, thou fount
- STS 31 - Jesus, be the center

Praising and Proclaiming:

- STJ 18 - Over my head
- STJ 27 - God of the Bible
- STJ 29 - You are all we have
- HWB 224 - The kingdom of God

Confessing:

- STJ 23 - Slowly turning, ever turning

Response:

- HWB 226 - You are salt for the earth
- HWB 454 - Seed, scattered and sown
- HWB 606 - Oh, have you not heard

Offering:

- STJ 60 - Lord of all good

Sending:

- STJ 74 - Now go in peace

Gathering

(Psalm 36:7-10)

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.
O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!

Prayer of Confession

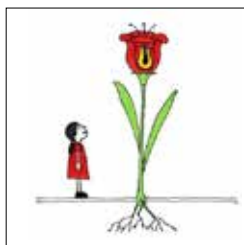
- HWB - 737

Affirmation of Faith

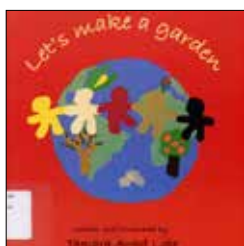
MC Canada Statement of Identity and Purpose

www.commonword.ca/go/279

Children's Story Possibilities



- The Growing Seeds, Mark 4: 26 -29. Retold by Elsie Rempel, illustrated by Allison Froese
www.commonword.ca/go/280



- Let's Make a Garden, by Tamara Awad Lobe
www.commonword.ca/go/281
- Use the mustard seed image and "Wonder" idea from *Shine On: A Story Bible*, (MennoMedia, 2014) p. 226. When children pretend to become trees, as the Wonder idea suggests, comment about the strength of being trees together. If your group is of the right age and temperament, tell them about aspen trees and their root system. Then, try linking your feet together to simulate an aspen grove with a connected root system. Imagine how strong such a forest system must be and thank God for creating it.
- After each of these choices, imagine together what the world would be like if everyone shared and no one had to be hungry. Thank God for blessing us through God's amazing generosity, and ask God for help in being cheerful as we share what we have.

Sermon Starters

What happens in these parables? In the first, even though the sower only had access to marginal land marked by footpaths, gravel, and thorny weeds, the sower goes out to sow and the good soil yields a bumper crop. In the next, hiding a lamp would have been both foolish and a dangerous fire hazard but shared on a lamp stand for all it

reveals everything. In the third, seeds or spores, that might have been impulsively or inadvertently scattered, yield a harvest with no human intervention. And finally, when a seed takes hold for an invasive plant that no one would intentionally plant in a garden, it provides shade and safety.

When we bring the theme of risking generosity alongside these parables, there are some rich insights:

- Though results cannot be guaranteed, giving can yield more than we imagined;
- Hoarding for ourselves is foolish and dangerous;
- Even inadvertent generosity can grow beyond our control;
- Acts of generosity, no matter how small, can take root and form a network that provides safe space for the vulnerable;
- In all, God's initiative and grace provide the outcome.

The imaginative possibilities of the last parable, that of an invasive root system, might not seem appealing but do offer an image of the kingdom of God coming near through the church as a biosphere of generosity (strengthening one another, providing space for risking, for the good of all). The Pando, the grove of quaking aspen in Utah, provides some great metaphorical connections (see <http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/pando-the-trembling-giant>).

Offering

- STJ - 152 (for theme of Risking Generosity)

Sending

- STJ - 121 (change the first line to God of generous love, and add this line to the end: And send us forth to share your generous love with others.)

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