

Many People's Sunday, May 1, 2016

March 2016, *Equipping* #164

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*

Scripture Texts:

Psalm 67; John 14: 23-29; Acts 16:9-15; Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

Theme:

God's call to proclaim the Kingdom of Jesus Christ to all nations.

Introduction:

Many People's Sunday is an opportunity to celebrate the diversity of God's multicultural church around the world and grow into God's vision of being a people where God's light shines more fully because the gifts of all nations are welcomed (Rev. 21). "Birds of a feather flock together" is an old proverb that many find comforting; yet God's vision challenges uniformity. The growing diversity of peoples becomes God's way for the church to learn and grow together, and to be transformed into greater Christ likeness.

Canada is becoming more and more multi-cultural, with people on the move from around the world. If churches are not responding to this changing reality within society, we will be left out. Anabaptist churches are not an exception. We may come from different flocks but one of our hymns reminds us that "We are strangers no more, but members of one family"; we are all citizens of God's Kingdom and are to grow together in the Body of Christ.

Call to worship:

L: Come, people of God, and worship the Christ.
Once we were separated from him,
aliens and strangers who did not belong,
without hope and without God in the world.
Once we loved darkness rather than light.
Once we could not sing the Lord's song.

P: But now we are joined with Christ,
brought near through his blood,
for He is our peace.
Now we who lived in darkness

have come into the light.
Now we who could not sing have been
given a new song.

All: Let us give thanks to God! Let us
worship the Christ!

Prayer of Praise with Psalm 67 (feel free to use your own language)

All: ¹ Praise the Lord.

Leader: God, be gracious to us and bless us.
Make your face shine on us
So that your ways may be known on earth,
Your salvation among all nations.

People: May the peoples praise you, God;
May all the peoples praise you.

Leader: May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
For you rule the peoples with equity.
And guide the nations of the earth.

People: May the peoples praise you, God;
May all the peoples praise you.

Leader: The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.

All: May God bless us still,
So that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

Suggested songs:

- STJ 15 Santo(Holy)
- STS 34 You are holy
- STJ 54 Longing for light
- HWB 322 For we are strangers no more
- HWB 323 Beyond a dying sun

Prayer before sermon

(adapted from the *Prayer Book for Earnest Christians: A spiritually rich Anabaptist resource*, translated and edited by Leonard Gross)

O Lord, almighty God! You provide us not only with all kinds of temporal necessities; you also give us the true living bread from heaven, with which you feed our souls for eternal life. We poor children do not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from your mouth, according to the testimony of your beloved son Jesus Christ.

In Jesus name we now are assembled here in your presence, to proclaim, to hear, and to understand what is your holy and divine will for us. You O God! have kindled in us this zeal and have put into our hearts this desire and love for this work. Thus we have gladly and freely gathered for that purpose, coming together in a spirit of unity.

O Christ! be in the midst of this congregation with the power and grace of your Holy Spirit. Make your servant competent, and put holy words into his mouth. Grant him openness and courage to speak out with true discernment according to your holy and divine will, then bless and consecrate what you have given him.

Open the ears of our hearts and give us obedient hearts, cleanse every vain thought and passing concern. So may we hear your divine Word, understand it, and faithfully keep it in faith and obedience.

This we ask through Jesus Christ your son. Amen

Children's Time:

John 14: 23-29

There are certain things that we can't see but we know they are real. What are those? ... Fresh air, soundwhat else?

When we want to talk to grandparents or friends who live in another town or country, what do we do? We use our phones or our computers. Nowadays many people have a cell phone. They carry it everywhere. People use cell phones to talk or text with others. But does anyone know how a cell phone works?

It changes our voice to an electronic signal and that signal or wave travels through the air, back and forth to the phone of our friend. It is hard to understand because we cannot see what is happening with our eyes. Even if we don't know

exactly how it works, we know it works because we can hear the voice of the other person.

Jesus knew that he would be leaving this earth and that his friends would miss him, but he wanted them to know that he was still their friend and loved them. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come.

Like the signals or waves that make cell phones work, the Holy Spirit is a mystery. We can't see the Holy Spirit. And yet Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will always be with us to remind us of Jesus' love and teachings. The Holy Spirit is like those signals or waves. The Holy Spirit helps us talk to Jesus and hear what Jesus wants to say to us.

The Holy Spirit is a much more powerful signal than a cell phone signal but because we can't see the Holy Spirit and because the Holy Spirit doesn't have a voice that speaks out loud it takes practice to know when the Holy Spirit is trying to help us remember and follow Jesus.

Maybe...

You hear the Bible story of Paul sharing the good news of Jesus with the woman Lydia and the Holy Spirit reminds you that you can share Jesus' love and be a friend to the new boy or girl in your class.

We sing a song and the Holy Spirit takes away your sadness and gives you joy.

You are afraid and the Holy Spirit reminds you of Jesus' words: Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. Don't be afraid.

Pray: Dear Jesus, Help us to notice the signals of the Holy Spirit so that we love and follow you.

AMEN.

Sermon Suggestions:

Acts 16:9-15

Paul has a vision and with his companions discerns it as a call to go and preach the gospel to the people in Macedonia. They travel several days before they finally arrive in Philippi where it seems that nobody welcomes them. Have they misinterpreted the vision? Where was the man of Macedonia that begged Paul to come? Have you ever obeyed and followed God's nudging, even when not everything made sense?

Whatever questions they may have, the apostles stay in Philippi several days. What is the significance of the time, place and people in the encounter?

The apostles meet Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth who is a worshipper of God and her heart is opened to become a believer. What is Paul's role in her responsiveness? What is God's role in her responsiveness?

There are many people who are religiously oriented to God but do not necessarily know Jesus Christ. Consider friends from your neighbourhood or community. How can personal stories or stories from Scripture introduce them to Jesus?

Lydia becomes a believer and responds by sharing the good news with her household which leads to baptisms and she extends hospitality to the apostles. Stories, whether personal or Biblical tend to focus on the change for the person receiving the good news. How are messengers of the good news also changed and transformed when good news is shared?

Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5

The image of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven is an indicator that God's Kingdom is not something that we will only taste after death or in our imaginations; it is also to be a physical and earthly reality now.

Revelation 21: 22-26 speak of all nations walking by God's light, where there will be no barrier for any nation and each nation will contribute its gifts to life and worship in God's city. What nation or nations are represented in your congregation? Who are the nations in your neighbourhood, community or city? Does your congregation know these nations well enough to know their gifts? How does receiving their gifts help us know God more fully? Does receiving the gifts of other nations change how we share the gift of our faith, Jesus Christ?

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