

**Sermon seeds:** (See *Connect* and *Youth* for further inspiration.)

In the time and culture of Balaam, donkeys were valued and an indicator of wealth. They carried heavy loads but were treated well. Perhaps Balaam's treatment of his donkey indicated not only his frustration with the animal but also his struggle with God. Did he want to hear what God was saying? Did the sound of recognition, wealth, and power drown out God? What blocks us from hearing God's voice? How do we respond if what we hear isn't what we expect or what is pleasant? Nothing is more important than obeying God. Who has helped you hear God's voice?

## RESPONDING TO GOD

**Song of response:** SS 65 *Abre mis ojos* (*Open my eyes*)

**Prayers of the people**

## SENDING

**Song:** SJ 42 *Listen, God is calling*

**Benediction:**

Go now and be aware of God  
Go now and hear God speak.  
Go now and be surprised by God,  
For God may come to you anytime and anywhere.  
Go anticipating to meet God.  
Listen and be blessed.

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Session Two

# *Deborah the prophet*



**Text:** Judges 4 & 5

**Focus statement:** God provides leaders.

**Visuals:**

Balance scales, symbols of leadership – mallet, award or plaque; pictures of past and present congregational and denominational leaders

## GATHERING

**Welcome**

### *Call to worship:*

Leader: Rise to your feet and say,  
**People: “What a great thing God has done!”**  
Leader: Make music to God, to the God of Israel.  
**People: To God, yes to God, I’ll sing.**  
Leader: Lift your hearts high with abandon!  
**People: Bless the Lord!**

—adapted from Judges 5:3, 9, *The Message*

### *Prayer:*

Amazing God, we gather in awe as we remember how you led your people and empowered ordinary women and men to guide others. We say with Miriam and Moses, “Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders? In your steadfast love you led the people who you redeemed” (Ex. 15: 11&13). Guide us today as we open our hearts to worship you.

## **PRAISING**

### *Song suggestions:*

SJ 19	<i>I will call upon the Lord</i>	HWB 545	<i>Be thou my vision</i>
HWB 17	<i>We gather together</i>	GR CD	<i>Rejoice in the Lord always (text, Together p. 2)</i>
SJ 12	<i>Contai ao Senhor (O sing to the Lord)</i>		

## **OFFERING**

### **LISTENING TO GOD**

*Affirmation of faith:* SS 199

### *Children’s time:*

Play a simplified version of “Follow the Leader.” Do a simple activity such as clapping your hands until everyone joins in, then touch your ears, etc. After a few rounds ask, “Who wants to be the leaders?” Take time for a few people to be leaders. (Be sure that one of the children who leads is a girl). Ask, why did some children like to be leaders and some don’t want to lead? Not everyone can be leaders and not everyone can be followers. The Bible is full of stories of leaders and followers. Today we will learn about a good leader named Deborah. Deborah was a judge—she listened to two sides of the problem and then had to make a decision on what to do. Deborah knew that God would help her be a good leader. Offer a prayer asking God to help the children become good leaders.

*Song:* HWB 304 *There are many gifts*

### *Scripture reading:*

Judges 4:1-10 (or see *Connect* p. 22 for a comparative reading between Judges 4 (story) and Judges 5 (song)).

*Sermon seeds:* (See *Connect* and *Youth* for additional inspiration.)

What are the qualities of a good leader? Why do we need leaders? “A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go but ought to be.” —Rosalynn Carter  
The Mennonite Church advocates a priesthood of all believers rather than having one person who makes all of the decisions. How do we balance that with respecting those who are called and designated as leaders?

Do you believe that God provides leaders at given times to guide the congregation? Interview one of the leaders in your congregation.

What women have given you wise counsel? Was Deborah the only female who filled this high calling of a judge. How do you affirm and use the gifts of women in your congregation?

## RESPONDING TO GOD

*Song of response:* SS 31 *Jesus, be the center*

*Prayers of the people* (Include prayers for congregational, local, and national leaders.)

## SENDING

*Song:* HWB 418 *Move in our midst*

*Benediction:* *Words for Worship* 2, 165

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Session Three

# Ruth and Naomi



*Text:* Ruth

*Focus statement:* Outsiders can teach us about God's love.

*Visuals:* Stalks of grain, basket, passport, knapsack, items we use from various cultures

## GATHERING

*Welcome*

*Call to worship:* SS 190 or litany "God's Love" in *Together* p. 6.

*Prayer:* SJ 139

## PRAISING

*Song suggestions:*

SJ 3 *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

SJ 44 *The Love of God*

HWB 306 *In Christ there is no East or West*

HWB 362 *Help us to help each other*

## OFFERING