

“Embraced by God” in *Plant a Seed for Peace* by Rebecca Seiling (Herald Press) about the actions of Hedy Sawadsky, a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

Song: Gather 'Round CD *Didn't my God deliver Daniel* or SJ 105 *Don't be afraid*

Scripture reading: Daniel 6 “Fun Bible Skits 1,” or the reader’s theater found in *Connect* p. 124

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

The setting has shifted since chapter 3 of Daniel. Daniel is now in the Persian court after the capture of Babylon. He remains faithful to God and trusts that God is with him. How do we know when God is with us? What are some everyday activities that require trust? Arrange with someone ahead of time to do a trust fall with you. (One of you falls and is caught by the other.) Refer to powerful images in Isaiah 43:1-3a.

Daniel knew from previous experiences that God was with him in scary times. What are the “lions” that may devour us and therefore challenge us to trust God? Lions represented power and authority. Has the desire for power and money ever overtaken us? When we lack power and money, can we still trust God?

RESPONDING TO GOD

Song of response: SJ 103 *Why should I feel discouraged*

Prayers of the people

SENDING

Song: HWB 585 *In your sickness*

Benediction: *Words for Worship*, 285 or Isaiah 26:3-4

Session Thirteen

Queen Esther



Text: Esther 2-7, 9:24-32

Focus statement: Speak up for others.

Visuals: Balance scales, tiara

GATHERING

Welcome

Call to worship: *Words for Worship* 2, 31

Prayer: SJ 123

PRAISING

Song suggestions:

Praise song: “*Meant for this moment*” by Helen Baylor & Carman on *Yo Kidz! 2* (Word)

HWB 185 *Hail to the Lord’s anointed*

SS 26 *Helpless and hungry*

SJ 13 *My soul is filled with joy*

SS 124 *My soul cries out*

OFFERING

LISTENING TO GOD

Confession and response: *Words for Worship* 2, 61

Children’s time:

The victory over oppression that Esther played a key role in is celebrated even today by Jews with the Feast of Purim. It is the most festive of Jewish holidays. They fast for one day and then feast for one or two days. They send gifts of food to friends and family and help those in need. (See Esther 9:24-32.) Read the book *Martin’s Big Words* by Doreen Rappaport (Hyperion Books for Children), a story of the life of Martin Luther King, Jr., ending with the assurance that “his big words are alive for us today.”

Song: SS 64 *There is a well*

Scripture reading: “Fun Bible Skit 3” *Esther* or summary sections in *Connect* p. 110

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

Who needs a voice in your community? Are there those with power who speak for justice (for example, music groups like Black-Eyed Peas and Bono)? Hear testimonies from someone in your congregation, or highlight ways your congregation corporately has been there “for such a time as this.”

The adult issue that this story addresses is genocide. Sarejevo, Rwanda, Serbia’s attempt to wipe out Croatian and Muslim populations, apartheid in South Africa, the atrocities in Darfur, Sudan, and the Holocaust are a few examples of modern genocide. Consider the following statement by Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor, as he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize: “I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides... Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant.” (See *Connect* p.111 for the complete quote.)

Don’t miss this opportunity to challenge your congregation to speak up for those who have no voice. This passage is a wonderful example of how God works through humans to bring about justice.

RESPONDING TO GOD

Song of response: SS 115 *Beauty for brokenness*

Prayers of the people: Incorporate SJ 32 with SJ 145 or play it from SJ 2 CD

SENDING

Song: HWB 367 *For the healing of the nations*, or SS 38 *When Jesus worked*

Benediction: SS 144