

Celebrate World Fellowship Sunday 2003

- An Order of Service -

Living in Hope and Joy

Suggested biblical texts : Romans 8:18-27; I Corinthians 15:19; Hebrews 11:1; Philippians 4:4, 6-7; Ps 42:5; Matthew 5:3-12

Call to Worship

Shalom, shalom from brothers and sisters in Africa to brothers and sisters around the world. We want to share with you our living hope founded on Jesus Christ in order that all together we may be encouraged by the faith that has been given to all of us.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all!

Invocation/opening prayer

Biblical texts : Psalm 100; John 15: 9-12

Song: *"I need thee every hour"*

Confession : Reading from I John 1:5-10
Time of open or silent prayer
Declaration of forgiveness :
Psalm 103:3, 8-12

Praise : Choirs
Singing together with clapping and dancing

Witness : Reading from Psalm 103:1-3
Everyone is invited to share their joy for all that the Lord has done in their lives.

Intercession :

- For the Church
 - pray for mission work in the world
 - pray for the unity of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ around the world
 - pray for Assembly Gathered in Zimbabwe

- pray for the growth in "self-determination" in the churches in Africa, Asia and Latin America

- For Society

- pray for countries where there is war
- pray for peace in the Great Lakes area (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda)
- pray for our Anabaptist brothers and sisters around the world who live in close contact with people of other religions, that hostilities between people of different faiths may cease

- For situations of distress or disasters in the churches and the world

- pray for situation of disaster, famine and chronic illnesses such as AIDS, malaria

- The local community

- your choice of subjects

Praise : choral groups, congregational hymns

Announcements :

- An explanation of World Fellowship Sunday
- other announcements concerning the global church
- local congregational announcements

Sermon : Living in hope and joy

Offering : Collect the offering by each row going forward to put their gifts in the basket at the front of the church, accompanied by songs of praise, clapping and dancing.

Prayer for the offering

Song: *"What a friend we have in Jesus"*

Benediction

Meet the Anabaptists of Africa

Countries where there are established Mennonite, Brethren in Christ and related churches *

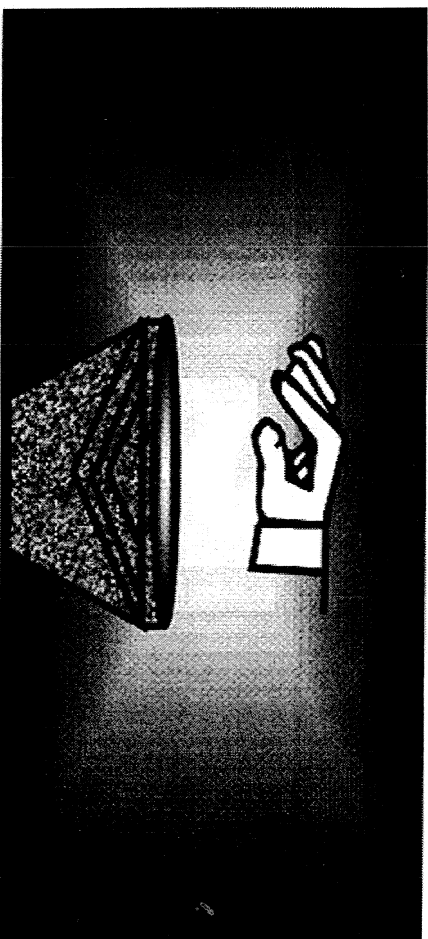
Angola	3 conferences 19,658 members	Namibia	1 conference 200 members
Burkina Faso	1 conference 6 congregations 180 members	Nigeria	2 conferences 76 congregations 9,454 members
Democratic Republic of the Congo	3 conferences 1,150 congregations 184,240 members	South Africa	2 conferences 7 congregations 383 members
Ethiopia	1 conference 275 congregations 98,025 members	Tanzania	1 conference 350 congregations 50,000 members
Ghana	1 conference 26 congregations 4,101 members	Togo	1 conference 3 congregations 76 members
Ivory Coast	1 conference 15 congregations 1,300 members	Zambia	1 conference 150 congregations 15,374 members
Kenya	3 conferences 351 congregations 31,468 members	Zimbabwe	1 conference 272 congregations 29,213 members
Malawi	1 conference 30 congregations 3,500 members		

**Statistics from the 2000 Mennonite and Brethren in Christ World Directory and additional recent census reports, compiled by Mennonite World Conference*

WORLD FELLOWSHIP

SUNDAY

LIVING IN HOPE AND JOY



JANUARY 26, 2003

Celebrate World Fellowship Sunday 2003

- Idea Sheet -

Shalom! Shalom from brothers and sisters in Africa to brothers and sisters around the world!

Africa is primarily known for its production of bad news. Bedru Hussein, MWC vice-president from Ethiopia, lists the following major problems facing Africa : bad governance, poverty, high unemployment, drought, starvation, tribal strife, war, refugees, human rights abuses, HIV/AIDS (particularly high prevalence in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia). In the face of all this he goes on to underline the good news—churches are growing more rapidly in Africa than anywhere else in the world and although there is suffering, there is also joy in the midst of all the ambiguities!

Celebrating joy is truly one of the special gifts that the church in Africa has to share with churches around the world. A member of the African delegation to the 13th World Assembly in Calcutta urged: “The Spirit is saying, Celebrate, celebrate the joy of his presence in our lives, and especially in his church. Let people hear the Good News by way of celebration instead of by way of shame and guilt. Joy is catching, therefore, let it show in life by way of the body and the face; when we sing, everybody sings.”

Theme

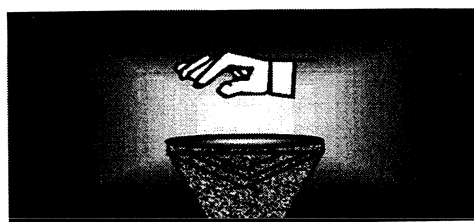
The theme chosen by African brothers and sisters is “Living in Hope and Joy.” Suggested biblical texts for worship are Romans 8:18-27; I Corinthians 15:19; Hebrews 11:1; Philippians 4:4, 6-7; Psalms 42:5 and Matthew 5:3-12.

Suggestions for Worship:

Use and adapt the order of service prepared by Congolese Mennonites.

Choose songs from Africa if you can. Include special music by choirs. African churches are known for their lively music, hand-clapping and dancing. Use drums if you feel at ease doing so.

Tell stories or African fables that teach about hope and joy. Use this image and explanation of a tam-tam, sent from the Congo:



- The hand above the tam-tam represents a supreme being who controls the universe. This hand must play in the center of the tam-tam to symbolize unity and harmony.
- The tam-tam symbolizes communication, dance and joy. The forest represents treasure, wild game, and food for survival. The people of Africa find their riches, their treasure in the forest. It is there that their hope for life is centered.

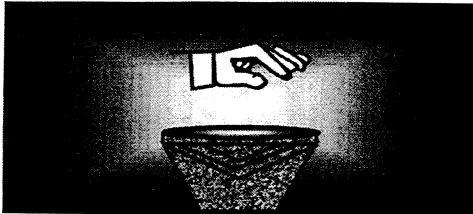
At the sound of the tam-tam, the community gathers together around the village chief to share food, for those who have been hunting have returned with bounty after having worked in hope.

For us, the Bible is the forest which contains all that we need for life. There we find God's promises, blessings for his children, material and spiritual treasures, our food for survival.

The Christian community is called to gather around the Bible to share hope, joy, suffering, love, justice, faith, and the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the “chief” of the church and giver of all good.

Spend time in confession, sharing and intercession.

Pray for our worldwide family, for the churches in Africa and particularly for Africa 2003.



Sermon Ideas:

Possible Texts : Romans 8: 18-27; Habakkuk 3: 16-19; Matthew 5 : 3-12

Notes for sermon preparation or discussion:

- Short introduction of the different contexts of suffering locally, regionally and globally
- The role of hope in God and of patience and waiting on the Lord in times of suffering
- Passive versus active hope
- Finding joy personally and collectively in the midst of suffering; testimonies of God's grace

Synopsis:

The situation in the world today is alarming at all levels – social, economical, political.

Our spirituality also suffers from the consequences of war, famine, unemployment, epidemics, suicide and insecurity.

In the face of all these difficulties, many lose hope and lack confidence in God. But the Bible calls us to put our entire confidence in God and to rejoice always in the Lord at all times (Phil 4:4, 6-7; Ps 42:5)

“Hope” is to have confidence in God who holds our lives in his hands. It is finding our refuge in God, waiting for God's time; it is having patience that sooner or later God, through Jesus, will change our situation (Rom 8:18-27). We

need to understand all that it means to live in hope and joy as a gathered church community, including discerning the profound sense of Christian witness, service, and true sharing in our pluralistic and secular societies who have lost hope.

In the context of this pilgrimage, Mennonites and Brethren in Christ around the world are called to reject passive hope which keeps us in a state of slavery and false hope in the material things of this world.

We need therefore to try to revise the biblical basis of our quest for hope and joy, and of our commitment to serve humanity. We need to attempt to clarify the attitude of the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Church towards secular power. We need to live an active hope that places the mission of our church directly within the structures of our society which has produced a world economic system that is at the root of greater and greater crises of debt, dependency, and environmental problems. We need to try to discover an “Anabaptist-Mennonite discipline/spirituality” for those who suffer and who are unable to say with the Apostle Paul : “We even exult in our present sufferings, because we know that suffering is a source of endurance, endurance of approval, and approval of hope. Such hope is no fantasy” (Romans 5:3-5).

Thus hope and joy in Jesus Christ must first be a part of our way of life and of our vision of renewal of the world before we can make sharing that hope and joy our mission.

We believe in work and hope for the way of Justice and Peace.

Amen.

