

# Celebrate World Fellowship Sunday 2002

## *Walking in Unity in the Light of God*

Mennonites and Brethren in Christ from North America invite brothers and sisters around the world to join them in celebrating World Fellowship Sunday on January 27.

### **Scripture Texts:**

Isaiah 9:1-4

Psalm 27:1, 4-9

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

### **Suggestions for Worship:**

#### **Make Use of Light as a Symbol**

Jesus Christ is the light of the world. As followers of Jesus Christ we are encouraged to walk in the light. Every culture is fascinated by the light of the sun and by the lights we use to see when it is dark. Use light as the focal point in a display or activity during the worship service. In North America, lights and candles are used for celebrations. This is especially true at Christmas and also during Lent and Easter. Candles are used for celebrations of all kinds: birthdays, anniversaries and weddings. Use candles in the service to celebrate unity in God.

#### **Choose Songs that Speak of the Light of God**

Choose songs from your traditions. Some suggestions might be:

Jesus is ever shining # 5 *International Songbook MWC 1990*

We are walking in the light of God  
(*Siyahamba*: Swahili)

With you, O Lord (from the Taize tradition)  
Send out your light (Iona community)

Veni Sancte Spiritus # 298 *Hymnal: A Worship Book*

Christ whose glory fills the skies # 216  
*Hymnal: A Worship Book*

Shine Jesus shine #177 *Sing Alleluia Hymnal*,  
Kindred Productions

#### **Tell stories about Light**

One suggested story might be:

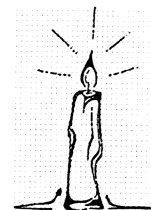
A teacher (rabbi) asked his students how they could tell when it was dawn.

One said, "When you can tell a sheep from a goat."

Another offered, "When you can stand at a distance and tell an olive tree from a fig tree." "You are both wrong," said the rabbi. "Dawn is when you can look into the face of a stranger and see your brother or your sister."

When we see others, including strangers as our brothers and sisters we are walking in the light of God. (Excerpted from a General Conference Mennonite Church News Service packet for January 5, 2001).

If it is possible to darken the room, light a candle and see if you can recognize the brother or sister next to you. If you move away from the light, can you still see your brother or sister? If the light illuminates the face of the brother or sister, you can move anywhere in the darkness and still see his/her face. What does this say about God as our Light? What darkness in your congregations does God's light need to penetrate? What darkness in your life should God's light brighten?



## Call to Worship

O Christ,  
Help us as we watch and wait  
for the warmth and light of your presence.  
As candlelight overcomes the darkness,  
So your light radiates within us  
And warms the cold and bleak seasons of our  
lives.

We live with hope  
That the good news of your coming  
Will warm and brighten every heart  
And all the world will fall to its knees in joy.  
Amen

-Adapted from *Words for Worship* by Arlene Mark

## Prayers of Intercession

Prayers of intercession for the North American Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches.

- Pray that the churches of North America would reflect the light of Jesus, drawing those in darkness to the Light of the World.
- Pray that the witness of North American churches against violence would be strengthened, bringing God's peace and reconciliation to a hurting world.
- Pray that North American churches would be good stewards of their wealth and influence.
- Pray that North American churches would be open to the witness of other brothers and sisters around the world.

Add prayers for brothers and sisters around the world. Pray for those persons the Spirit of God brings to your mind.

Some suggestions are:

- Pray for brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe who are excited about hosting the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in 2003
- Pray for the churches in Africa, that they may be sensitive and take positive action in response to the needs of Africans due to tribal conflicts, wars, famine, HIV/AIDS.
- Pray for reconciliation between Christians and fundamental Muslims in Asia.

- Pray for the youth in Europe, that they may be open to the word of God and find a place in the Mennonite churches where their concerns might be heard and heeded.
- Pray for a renewed capacity for Latin American churches to nurture a missionary spirit that seeks to advance the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Litany** (from Psalm 27:1, 4-9):

**Leader: Praise the Lord who does not hide when we seek his face.**

*People:* Praise the Lord, who hears our cry and answers when we call.

**Leader: The Lord does not turn away in anger but helps us in our distress.**

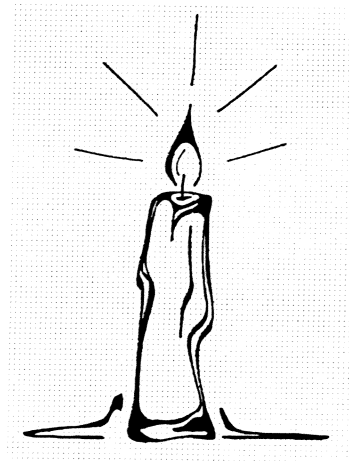
*People:* The Lord our God and Saviour never rejects or forsakes us.

**Leader: The Lord protects us from oppressors who threaten us with lies and violence.**

**All: We walk in confidence; our Lord is strong.**

-From a litany by Ferne Burkhardt, Petersburg, Ontario; in MPH Bulletin 9-29-91, adapted. Used with permission.

This Psalm could be a song or a prayer for disciples today desiring to be faithful. It may be a prayer for someone making difficult decisions or answering difficult questions.

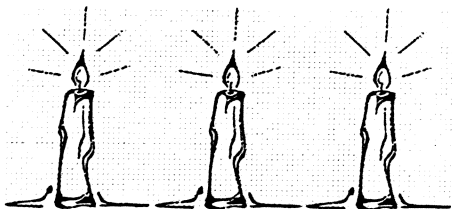


## Sermon Ideas:

### 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

The cross brings us together, unites us. Before the cross we all stand on level ground, not one above the other. The temptation can be to form small groups, or divide people into family or work-related groups and do one's own task or project. Instead, walking in God's light would be to recognize brothers and sisters and to join hands as co-workers, co-laborers, partners. The future of living and walking in the Gospel, bringing light where there is darkness, depends on our ability to join hands and work together. It depends on our being open to the Light of the Spirit breaking upon us in unexpected ways. Give examples of how together we are stronger than alone.

- A rope made of separate strands is stronger than the separate strands.
- An orchestra needs many different instruments to make a good sound.
- A large room needs many candles to give light to everyone in the room.



### Matthew 4: 12-23

Both children and adults face the challenge of making difficult decisions in light of all being called to proclaim the good news. As followers of Jesus Christ, we face life-changing decisions. Disciples of Jesus faced the decision of leaving familiar fishing and following Jesus, which was unfamiliar. Some of our decisions might be sharing our faith and our peace witness; telling the truth when half-truths are the norm; remaining faithful in marriage when covenant is not valued.

The decisions we face are individual, but there are also congregational choices.

Name choices that are relevant in your circumstances.

How does walking in the Light of God help you make the decisions God wants?

How does the testimony of brothers and sisters around the world help you in your faithfulness to the Light of God.

An additional text for the sermon could be from 1 John 2:7-11.

John brings together the two challenges of walking in unity and walking in the light. If we are united with Christ (v.8), the darkness is passing and true light is shining through us. Jesus is both light and truth; those who are his followers will both live in (walk) and convey the light of Jesus. Those who are followers of Christ are also united in him. Thus, unity with one another is evidence that Christ's light has an actual impact. Disunity effectively negates any claim to be in Christ (v.9,10). Love for one another brings light to bear on our walk, so that we don't stumble in our way.

### Sending (Benediction):

May you be made strong with all the strength  
that comes from God's glorious presence,  
And may you be prepared to endure everything  
with patience,  
While joyfully giving thanks to the Father,  
Who enabled you to share in the inheritance of  
the saints in the light. (Col. 1:11-12)

The service might end with giving everyone a candle. Lighting the candle would remind us to pray for one another in the Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches around the world.

An additional activity with the lighted candles might be to ask everyone to hold the lighted candles as low as possible, below the back of the pews or chairs. The leader might read from the suggested Scriptures or simply announce "You are the light of the world" and all the people would raise their candles above their heads. The difference between light and darkness would be obvious.

