

## Many People's Sunday, May 1, 2011

*Written by Reverend Paul Kwan Hang Mo, pastor of the Markham Chinese Mennonite Church, Markham, ON. Edited by Elsie Rempel, staff of Mennonite Church Canada*

### **Introduction:**

This worship resource emphasizes the multicultural and multi-racial nature of Mennonite Church Canada. According to Mennonite Church Canada statistics, we have 225 congregations and over 31,000 members worshipping God across Canada. As noted by Raul Bogoya, author of the Many Peoples Sunday resource for 2010, we are part of an ever-changing global family. In the culture of our author, Paul Kwan Hang Mo, pronouns for God/Jesus are typically presented in ALL CAPS. We have preserved these features in this worship resource as an awareness building function for planners and presenters.

People move from one place to another for various reasons. First generation immigrants like me encounter various barriers in our daily lives; barriers such as language, culture, working habits, and weather. Suffering and struggle are very common among our new immigrant brothers and sisters.

The Church is a new creation of our Lord God. God uses this new creation like a graciously saving ark in midst of challenging lives to carry HIS chosen people. Faith in God makes this grace and salvation known to us but we still tend to worry about many things. Can we see that the Lord is always before us? Can we tell the non-believers we have seen our Lord? Can we tell people how God has made the path of life known to us? Will claiming the Lord as our refuge show others that HE keeps us safe? God calls us to show people that we are filled with the Holy Spirit and rejoice at taking our place in the Body of Christ.

To recognize Many Peoples Sunday, we encourage churches to plan joint services with other ethnic churches. Form a Many Peoples worship committee with people from many cultures, languages and Mennonite congregations to plan this service. Committee tasks could be as follows:

- Write some personal prayer(s) and put them in a box. The prayer requests can be used to show how we deal with life's challenges through our faith in God. This is to show the people who attend the "Many Peoples Sunday" that God is with us and can make the path of life known

to us. It will also show the meaning of suffering in our daily lives. At the end of the sermon, burn the prayer requests as an offering to God.

- Find a location that can provide enough space for two or more churches.
- Invite a preacher who speaks in the most common language.
- Have other ethnic groups provide sermon translations to project in Power Point form. This will avoid chopping up and dragging out the sermon time.
- Invite a music team to lead the worship songs. Music teams are common to most worship cultures and make it easier for others to offer their voices in song.
- Children's Story time should include an interactive element to make it more interesting than just a story. Invite a presenter who connects well.
- Conclude the worship with a multicultural potluck lunch and provide this opportunity for building relationships.

### **Theme:** The path of life

Our theme comes from Acts 2:28 & Psalm 16:11. When Peter and the eleven disciples stood up and proclaimed their faith in a large crowd of people, they did not deny the suffering and struggle that were part of their lives (Acts 2:19-20). God, who sent the Holy Spirit to fill Peter and the eleven disciples, whose spirit fell on King David, can also send the Holy Spirit among us, and empower us as witnesses of our risen Lord Jesus Christ, who makes known to us the path of life. Therefore, we will not be shaken, our hearts are glad; our tongues rejoice and praise our Lord even while our journeys are filled with challenges. This is so because we can rely on HIM to overcome all these difficulties.

**Scripture texts:** Acts 2:14a, 22-32, Psalm 16, 1Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31

### **Suggested songs:**

Find hymns that suit the theme and can be learned easily or sung in more than one language. Including other worship

songs, as well as hymns from Mennonite Hymnals will model inclusivity. For instance, the verses of “Lord, I lift your name on high” could be sung in different languages while the refrain is sung in English. Some suitable songs from *Sing the Journey* (STJ), and *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (HWB), and other contemporary Christian selections appear below:

*Take Your Place* by Darrel Neustaedter Barg, track 1, and *May the Light of Love*, by Anne Hills, *Flying Fish*, final track, (CD, *Take Your Place*, 2010, Mennonite Central Committee Generations at Risk Program)

<http://takeyourplace.mcc.org/cds/take-your-place>

STJ 11 - *Praise, praise, praise the Lord!*  
 STJ 13 - *My soul is filled with joy*  
 STJ 26 - *God is our refuge and strength*  
 HWB573 - *What a friend we have in Jesus*  
 HWB 143 - *Amazing grace!* (Sing in own language)  
 HWB 575 - *Precious Lord, take my hand*  
 HWB 601 - *Take my hand and lead me, Father*

## GATHERING

### Call to worship

Psalm 16:2, 5-11. This beautiful psalm names the theme, path of life, in verse 11.

### Invocation

O God, we thank you for the inclusive heritage that binds us together in Christ. We thank you for our lives; for making the path of life known to us; a path that gradually shapes and molds us into godly people. We gather this morning as the Body of Christ. Lord, help us enjoy being one, being one in thought, being one in Spirit and purpose, so that Christ Jesus may be revealed in and through us. Help us live lives that radiate your love for those in need. Amen.

## CONFESSING/RECONCILING

Our gracious Father in heaven, we confess that we turn our backs to you  
 in wickedness and with lies that suppress Your truth.  
 Even as you show us Your great costly love on the cross, we still turn away from you.  
 Jesus, we thank you for the cross, for your blood which sets us free.  
 Thank you for your sacrifice that washes away the stains in our life,  
 that gives us the right to address The Almighty as Father;  
 that opens the way to the eternal life.  
 We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Words of assurance

“Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.” Revelation 1:3 (NIV)

## HEARING GOD’S WORD

### Scripture thoughts and sermon seeds:

This year, May 1 is the second Sunday of Easter and several weeks before Ascension Day (Thursday, June 2). During this church season we remember the forty days after the resurrection, when Jesus showed himself to his twelve disciples and more than five hundred other followers. We are reminded of Jesus’ assurance that, “I am going there to prepare a place for you; I will come back and take you to be with me” (John 14:3a). Therefore, whatever happens and however much we suffer, it is only a temporary testing in our lives. Jesus has ensured for us the opportunity to be reunited with the Father if we follow HIM. Jesus has made the path to God known to us as recorded in the Holy Bible. We can rejoice with words from Psalm 16, as adapted in Acts 2:26, “Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope.”

Psalm 16: This Psalm of David describes his feelings when he was in danger and responded to God’s presence in his daily life. As Christians, we not only sense God indirectly as when Job said “my ears had heard of you” (Job 42:5a), we can also say with Job as he continues, “but now my eyes have seen YOU” (Job 42:5b). David writes that God will not only fill him with joy in HIS presence but also show him the path of life. Pastors are chosen to be the servants of God who open the path of life for others. Share some concrete examples of how God has shown you the path of life.

1 Peter 1:3-9: Peter tells us about the path of life. In Christ we can praise HIM for being a living hope even as we endure all kinds of trials. Like a goldsmith uses the highest degree of fire to extract the precious mineral when refining gold, God can use trials to purify us. As we patiently endure in faith through all kinds of trials we will enjoy the purifying salvation of our souls.

John 20:19-31: In this passage, Jesus states three times, “Peace be with you.” Jesus has told us that HE gives peace that is greater than that which the world gives. HE stresses to people who follow HIM, “do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:1). Therefore do not be troubled by the world but believe in HIM and HIS words as they bring HIS peace among us; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed. Because of HIM, we can be strong and we can be at peace.

**Children's time:**

Preparation: Enlarge the attached black & white picture in advance. This black and white picture was created by a Sunday school teacher to help children see an image of Jesus. Depending on the number of children you expect, you may want to make additional copies.

During the Childrens Time: Ask all the children to stare at the four points which are at the centre of the picture for 30 seconds, then close their eyes, look up to the ceiling, and then open their eyes slowly. Ask them what they saw. Normally children will say they saw Jesus. In a similar way, Jesus helps us find HIM and see HIM in the Bible and in those who love and follow HIM.

If you wish, add appropriate materials to explain how God shows us the path of life. Close by singing a song with the children, such as Jesus loves me.

Responding hymn: select to suit your own ethnic groups. One possibility is:

STJ 96 - *I'm pressing on the upward way*

**Offering prayer:**

Generous God, we thank you for the gifts we have received. They do not belong to us alone, but to all our sisters and brothers...so that in sharing ourselves, we discover the Christ who walks with our brothers and sisters. Amen. (adapted from HWB750)

**Benediction:**

As we leave this place "May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it." (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24)

**Sending Song**

HWB 427 - *You shall go out with joy* (or whichever song is appropriate)



請以虔誠的心境，用力注視圖形中央的四個黑點30秒，然後閉上眼睛仰頭朝上，眼睛再慢慢張開看天花板，慢慢地你會看到～看到～～啊！那是～天啊！