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Worship Resources for

Many Peoples Sunday

Colourful Stones for Christ

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This worship resource, which emphasizes the multicultural and multiracial nature of Mennonite Church Canada, was prepared by Reverend Paul Kwan Hang Mo, pastor of the Markham Chinese Mennonite Church in Markham, ON.

Introduction:

If we tried to represent our worship traditions and current practices with images of food, Many People's Sunday worship would not be like a melting pot or a pureed soup where everything is mixed together. Instead, this Sunday's worship would be like a marvelous potluck, where many peoples join together, in the Mennonite context, with our unique flavours and different colours to express themselves in worship. Because all cultures have attributes that glorify their creator, and no single culture is able to serve all people as a vehicle for coming together to worship God, we join together on this Sunday to praise and acknowledge that God welcomes different colours in HIS kingdom. We are colourful stones, not only because our skin, eyes and hair are different colours, but because we have a colourful life in Christ. Like Peter and John, in Acts 4, we are empowered by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth as his witnesses.

To celebrate Many People's Sunday, working committees should be formed with people from many cultures, languages, and Mennonite congregations. Here are some suggestions to help you to plan a multicultural worship:

- Find a location that can provide enough space for two or more churches in a joint service.
- Decorate with fabric and symbols from different cultures.
- Encourage the congregation to wear clothing that represents different cultures.
- Invite a preacher who speaks in the most common language.
- Have other ethnic groups arrange interpreters to sit around the people who need translation instead of chopping up and dragging out the sermon time.
- Have a music team lead the worship songs. These 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 game which communicates across languages, and may be more interesting than just a story.
- Conclude the worship with a multicultural potluck as a love feast and an opportunity for building relationships.

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11

Theme:

“Colourful stones for Christ” (Acts 4:10) is our theme. When Peter and John were brought before the high priest, Sadducees, and the other men of the high priest’s family, they questioned them by what power or what name they had healed the crippled beggar (Acts 3:1-10). They proclaimed that their power was the power of Jesus, who had been raised from the dead (Acts: 4:10), and in whom there is resurrection from the dead for others (Acts 4:2). Today, we are still proclaiming and celebrating that same good news with our mouths and the actions of our daily lives. We, the colourful stones of the church, are empowered as witnesses by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Suggested Songs:

It is good to find hymns that can be learned easily or sung in more than one language. For instance, the verses of “Jesus Christ is present here” (MWC 1990 songbook) are often sung in different languages while the refrain is sung in English. Further possibilities can be found in the *Sing the Journey* (STJ), and *Hymnal: A Worship Book* (HWB), or whatever you think is appropriate in a multicultural worship.

For example:

STJ 17	<i>Halle, halle, hallelujah!</i>
STJ 6	<i>Jesu tawa pano (Jesus, we are here)</i>
STJ 59	<i>Confitemini Domino (Come and fill our hearts)</i>
HWB 143	<i>Amazing grace! (sing in own language)</i>
HWB 341	<i>Jesus loves me (sing in own language)</i>
HWB 71	<i>Joyful, joyful, we adore thee (sing in own language)</i>

GATHERING**Call to Worship**

Psalm 23 is a wonderful and popular Psalm. If possible, pre-print it in different languages so worshipers can read in their heart languages while the worship leader reads the Call to Worship in the most common language.

Silent Meditation - to let our hearts respond and squeeze the juice out of this wonderful Psalm (1-2 minutes).

Invocation

O God, we thank you for the inclusive heritage that binds us together in Christ. We thank you for our lives, for transforming us gradually into a spectrum of rainbow-colours that join to praise your name. Shape and mold us into a godly people, so that Christ Jesus is revealed in and through us. Help us not forget your love and teachings. Keep reminding us that, despite our many differences, we are more alike than different because we all have our source in you. Help us not exclude anyone from our fellowship whom you embrace in yours. We remember and pray for Mennonite Church Canada mission workers (insert the names of your Mission partners here), who are extending the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ across cultures around the world. May you bless them and bless others through them. Amen.

CONFESSING/RECONCILING

HWB 341 *Jesus loves me* (Confession of faith in different languages)

HWB 692 *Confession of Sin*

HWB 694 *Assurance of Forgiveness*

Hymns Select one or two hymns of the particular ethnic groups worshipping together.

HEARING GOD'S WORD**Scripture selections and sermon seeds:**

This year, May 3 is also the third Sunday of Easter and several weeks before Ascension Day (Thursday, May 21). During this time we remember the forty days after the resurrection, when Jesus showed himself to his twelve disciples and more than five hundred brothers and sisters (Acts 1:3, 1 Corinthians 15:5-6).

Acts 4:5-12: When the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples, they were empowered to be witnesses for Jesus who was raised from the dead. On their way to the temple, Peter and John brought healing in the name of Jesus to heal a crippled beggar. As a result, Peter was able to proclaim the Gospel to the crowd that gathered. Like Peter, we are called and empowered to be witnesses of Jesus, our risen Lord. How are Mennonite churches witnesses in their local community (across the street) and around the world? Examples might be helping a food bank, or giving rides to people who need to go to a pregnancy centre, or helping lower income people fill out tax forms. Perhaps we advocate for the rights of our aboriginal and minority peoples. Ask each ethnic group to take one minute to share what kind of witnessing activities they are involved in beyond their local church worship service. How colourful are our ministries in our local community?

Psalms 23: This Psalm describes David's feelings while he had an appropriate relationship with God. As a shepherd, David loved and protected his sheep. Then David became the king of his people. How did he take care of his people? The insights he gained in his life's journey are reflected in Psalm 23; God is the shepherd who looks after his sheep; He guides and protects them.

As part of the sermon, or proclamation time, divide people into several groups with different ethnicities to share about the dark valleys they are walking through. Has God rescued or protected them with his "rod and staff"? What "green pastures and still waters" has God provided? Close the fellowship circles by praying for the person next to them. The worship leader or speaker can then offer a pastoral prayer to close the sermon.

1 John 3:16-24: To love one another is a new command given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. By loving one another we become witnesses of Jesus for others who know we are Jesus' disciples (John 13:35, NIV). What happens when Christians truly love others in situations such as being at the edge of economic crisis, suffering, refugees, newcomers, homeless, addicted, feeling helpless, alone and afraid? Can you give a person 4-5 minutes to listen to his/her story and to share yours? Or arrange for one or two persons to share their story with the whole congregation. Help others experience the colourful life you have, in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

John 10:11-18: The good Shepherd tending his flock was an important theme in Jesus' teaching. Even today, shepherding in the near East remains similar to the time of Jesus (Serendipity Bible, NIV). Shepherds know their sheep and the sheep know their shepherd's voice. Jesus is our shepherd who laid down HIS life for us. What was our turning point in terms of hearing "God's voice" and responding? How do we discern God's voice from all the voices that attract our attention? Can we pursue honest friendships with people from our multi-ethnic churches and with others around the world? When we give our hearts to others in friendship, we communicate with God and celebrate the care of the Good Shepherd who is among us and equips us to be in true fellowship with each other.

Responding Hymns - select to suit your own ethnic group

Offering Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, thank you for the opportunity to offer you our gifts and ourselves. May we follow the example of our Lord who gave, withholding nothing, so that we might live and share generously through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Amen.

Benediction:

As we leave this place, let us remember that there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there will be varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities in our daily life, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). May the Spirit of God upon us create a rainbow-coloured witness through us as we live the truth about the God we have come to know through Jesus. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations, for ever and ever! (Ephesians 3:20-21). Go in peace! Amen.

Children's Time Game:

Preparation:

1. Find stones, so that you have one for each group of seven children.
2. Find water-colour paint sets that have the seven colours of the rainbow (one set per group).

During Children's Time:

Divide the children into groups of seven so that the different ethnic groups are represented in each group. Have an older child or adult supervise each group. If there is a smaller group, allow some to use two fingers in the project so that each colour is used once. Ask each child to use their finger to get one colour, and to colour the stone imaginatively. After two minutes, ask the children what happened to the stone after they coloured it. The stones are now more beautiful because of their different colours. Similarly, God's mercy and work among us make the world more beautiful when different people with different gifts come together and work together.

Carry the rainbow-coloured stones to the altar as an offering. Acknowledge and thank our Lord for raising us up in different cultures, with different gifts and wisdom. Thank God that we can use our God-given gifts and wisdom to make things more beautiful; not only these stones but also around the whole world.