

decisions people hate to make sometimes because of their beliefs.

(*Option:* Find a book or internet site that tells of the Jewish Passover meal. Bring some of the foods for the children to taste. Tell of the importance Jewish families still place on eating kosher foods. Connect with Daniel's story about eating foods that were healthy and not connected with the religion of the Babylonians.)

Song: "Dare to be a Daniel" by Philip Bliss (public domain)

Scripture reading: Daniel 1 (Read in sections)

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

How do you think persons who are forced to assimilate into another culture, like Native Americans, might feel? Going against cultural expectations is not easy. For a current story, view and/or show the Bonus clip in the VIA curriculum about a young soldier from a military family who was convicted to leave the military. Sometimes choices about how and what we eat are based on ethics.

At one time Mennonites were known as the different ones. Since it is no longer dress that sets us apart, what are our "marks" of non-conformity? Do others know they are based on our faith? This story calls for us to be sensitive to those who are different than us and to take the time to find out why they believe and do what they do. It also offers a challenge to contemporary Anabaptists to be willing once again to be set apart for Christ.

RESPONDING TO GOD

Song of response: HWB 545 *Be thou my vision* or HWB 374 *O young and fearless prophet*

Prayers of the people

SENDING

Song: HWB 435 *May the Lord, mighty God*

Benediction: "Go with us, God" (*Together*, p. 7)

Session Eleven

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abenego



Text: Daniel 3

Focus statement: Stand firm in the faith.

Visuals: Modern day "idols" placed on the table

GATHERING

Welcome

Call to worship: (Begin with the blowing of a shofar.)

Leader: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

People: **We come here to receive Christ's assurance and the support of our bothers and sisters.**

Leader: One thing I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

People: **We come for renewed strength to stand firm in our convictions.**

All: Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!
—based on Psalm 27: 1, 4, 14

Prayer: *Words for Worship* 2, 125

PRAISING

Song suggestions:

HWB 567 *How firm a foundation*

SJ 50 *Keep me safe. O God*

HWB 447 *O Jesus I have promised*

HWB 343 *My hope is built on nothing less*

African American spiritual: *I shall not be moved*

OFFERING

LISTENING TO GOD

Affirmation of faith: HWB 712 or SJ 135 Hispanic creed in Spanish and English

Children's time:

Read the story "A Familiar Tune" from *Plant a Seed of Peace* by Rebecca Seiling (Herald Press). Sometimes worshipping God and doing what we know is right takes courage. For some people it is dangerous. For us it could mean that people make fun of us. No one likes that to happen. But God can help us to be brave when we know that what we believe is right. It helps to have friends who believe the same way and can encourage us. The more we stand up for God and what God wants us to do, the more we feel the peace and strength of God inside us.

Scripture reading: Daniel 3

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

(Read the details about the statue, an obelisk, in *Youth*).

What are foundational beliefs for you, your congregation, and the Mennonite denomination? Are your Christian beliefs worth risking your popularity, even your life? (See 1 Peter 3:13-18a.) What are the idols that may tempt us to turn away from God? (See *Words for Worship* 2, 51.) Are your friends the types who encourage your faith and help you to be strong? Encourage regular spiritual practices which will strengthen our foundation, our relationship with God.

RESPONDING TO GOD

Song of response: SJ 98 *All will be well*

Prayers of the people

SENDING

Song: SJ 73 *The Lord lift you up*

Benediction:

Go with the assurance of God's strength as you stand firm on the foundation of Jesus Christ in all you experience this week.

Session Twelve

Daniel



Text: Daniel 6

Focus statement: Trust that God is with us.

Visuals: A lit lantern or candle almost hidden by rocks

GATHERING

Welcome

Call to worship: Psalm 56: 3-4, 9-11

Prayer:

This morning, Lord, as we worship you, we release our fears. We want to focus our eyes on you, not all the things that are pulling at us. Help us to experience you in a fresh and powerful way as we take another step in trusting you. We praise your name.

PRAISING

Song suggestions:

Praise song: *Forever* by Chris Tomlin (www.frequencyworship.com)

HWB 59 *Sing praise to God who reigns*

SJ 97 *The Lord is my light*

HWB 576 *If you but trust in God*

OFFERING

LISTENING TO GOD

Children's time:

Invite the children to tell you the story of Daniel in the lion's den, or read it from a children's Bible story book. Talk about Daniel's need to trust that God was with him when he was really afraid. Read the story,