



**Mennonite  
World Conference**

A Community of Anabaptist  
related Churches

**Congreso  
Mundial Menonita**

Una Comunidad de  
Iglesias Anabautistas

**Conférence  
Mennonite Mondiale**

Une Communauté  
d'Églises Anabaptistes

# Worship Resource

## PEACE SUNDAY 2013

This Peace Sunday worship material is provided by the Peace Commission of Mennonite World Conference. We encourage its use by all MWC-related congregations on the Sunday closest to the International Day of Peace, September 21, 2013.

### INTRODUCTION

Psalm 23 is a strong image of peace. There we celebrate sitting at the table in the presence of our enemies, and the cup is filled to overflowing. Using this image we respond to God's call to peace with a ritual of anointing.

These peace-worship resources use movement, image, art, and ritual to explore the theme of peace. They begin with the idea that art (construction) is the opposite of war (destruction). While it is difficult to do art together in a time of worship, there are ways of making art to interact together.

Please use these ideas as guidelines to adapt to your congregation's context. The children's worship connects with the prayers of the people through a prayer movement. Please feel free to change, adapt, or print material as needed.

### FOCUS STATEMENT

God fills our cup to overflowing with what is needed to work for peace.

### MAIN SCRIPTURE

Psalm 23

Supporting Scriptures: Genesis 1; Matthew 6:9-13; 2 Corinthians 5:18

### MUSIC SUGGESTION

If known: Dona Nobis Pacem;

From the MWC *International Songbook* (1990):

God made heaven and earth #4 (Taiwan)

They come with joy #23 (Spanish)

You called me, Lord, my God #44 (Honduras)

### CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: We have arrived to meet with God.

People: Some of us come tired and distracted,  
overwhelmed with too many things to do

**ALL: Come, meet with God the All-knowing One.**

People: Some have arrived ready to learn.

Some of us carry hard questions and doubts.

**ALL: Come, meet with Jesus the Teacher.**

People: Some have arrived troubled, yet hopeful over the widespread conflicts in our world.

**ALL: Come, meet with the Holy Spirit who moves among all peoples to bring reconciliation and hope.**

Leader: Come with thanksgiving and worship God who calls us Beloved, who is present and active in our lives and in the world.

**ALL: Amen**

## **WORSHIP FOR ALL AGES OR TIME WITH CHILDREN**

Today we want to learn a prayer movement. Holding our hands helps us concentrate. Sometimes if we pray with only our mouths we lose interest and focus. Sometimes it helps to do something different with our hands. What are some other things to do with your hands in prayer?

Let us learn one thing that we can do.

- First cup your hands together and pray your words and imagine your prayers being poured into your cupped hands.
- Then the second thing we do is lift them up. (*Lift both your hands above your head as if you were offering what is in your hands to a very tall person.*) This is a way to say, 'Here God, these are my prayers to you. You take care of all the things that are in my hands.'
- Then the third thing we do is release our prayers. (*Pull your hands apart so that your prayers move out of your hands and are released to God.*)

*(Ask the children for prayer requests, and pray some prayers using the prayer movement. Invite the congregation to pray with you. Later the prayer movement will be used for Prayers of the People.)*

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION (based on Genesis 1)**

*(Option: one person pray on behalf of the congregation.)*

Leader: Searching and all knowing God  
When the world says not good enough  
Not thin enough  
Not smart enough  
Not manly or feminine enough  
God says –

**All: Enough!**

Leader: When the church says  
Not clean enough  
Not spiritual enough  
Not perfect enough  
God says –

**All: Enough!**

Leader: All that was made, God saw and declared good!

People: We confess that too often we disrespect, discriminate or degrade that which God has called good. Mostly, we confess that we have failed to love.

**All: Forgive us O Lord.**

Leader: Teach us to live our lives through Your vision of humanity, Your purpose for the church, Your hope for the future.

With the power of the Holy Spirit , and through Jesus' example of servanthood, may we know with certainty that God gives us

**All: Enough! We pray with thanksgiving, amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

*(Note: Use the movements of "cupping hands, lifting, releasing" from children's worship time. Use the prayer suggestions or pray extemporaneous prayers in each section.)*

Generous God,  
Who walks with us through green pastures and dark woods,  
Walk with us today as we bring our prayers to you.

We cup our hands and pour into them our gratitude and prayers for those who are sitting around us, in front of us, beside us and behind us. *(Pause)*

We lift our prayers to you,  
and release them into your care.

We cup our hands and pour into them our gratitude and prayers  
for ourselves and those we love:  
our friends and family who are not feeling well;  
our feelings of helplessness as we watch the struggles of those we love.

We ask for help for those who walk through grief, who struggle with loneliness, chronic pain, heartaches and toothaches.

We quietly name those who are on our hearts.  
*(May add voluntary prayers of the congregation)*

We lift our prayers to You, our Father  
and release them into your care.

We cup our hands and pour into them our gratitude and prayers for our neighbors and communities where we live.

We ask for past injustices to be brought to light and healed. We pray for those who are consumed by hatred or by desire for revenge. Strengthen those in our communities who are working for peace.

*(may add voluntary prayers of the congregation)*

We lift our prayers to You, our Teacher  
and release them into your care.

We cup our hands and pour into them our gratitude and prayers for our world.

Keep calling us to name and love our enemies. To find ways to sit at table with them. We ask for vision and imaginative courage for those who search for ways to heal brokenness, mend fences and bring reconciliation on all levels.

*(May add voluntary prayers of the congregation)*

We lift our prayers to You, our Saviour  
and release them into your care.

We come before you as a church, as a people, as a world wide community  
and gather all our prayers together to pray the prayer that Jesus taught us....  
Our Father who art in heaven,.... *(sing or pray the Lord's prayer)*

## SERMON NOTES

One of the opposites of war (destruction) is art (construction). Invite an artist who works on the theme of peace to speak. Or an artist who works with different materials to talk about how they work with different materials to make one piece of art. Is there an art project that your whole congregation can do together? (*See responses for some suggestions.*)

The theme of peace begins with the reminder from Genesis 1 that God created all things, including our neighbor and our enemy. When we believe that, we will grow in our respect and love for all. How can we help our communities respect the other?

Communities have generally worked at peace in two ways: increase our military presence (response of fear); uncover the underlying causes. A third option, suggested by Tobias Roberts, living and working in Central America, invites us to see all that God made as sacred (response of trust). That which is sacred cannot live with or tolerate violence. The theme of peace begins with the reminder from Genesis 1 that God created all things, including land, neighbor and enemy. How can the church help our communities move from fear to trust?

Peace comes through in Psalm 23 at the end when God sets the table in the presence of our enemies. God invites us to sit at table with those we would count as enemies. We do not do this alone, but in God's presence. Who are the five people you would never sit down to dinner with? What would have to happen in order for God to bring you to the table? After dinner God anoints our head with oil and our cup overflows. This is a picture of overflowing and abundant joy. God gives enough for our work, our life and much, much more. Realistically, it is usually the stuff inside the cup which is enough for my life. It is from the excess that overflows out of the cup where we find what we need to continue joyfully in God's work. The trouble lies in our desire to use the excess for ourselves.

## RESPONSE OPTIONS

### Ritual of Anointing

In Psalm 23 God anoints the head of the psalmist with oil and keeps pouring till the cup runs over. As noted in *Sermon notes* it is from the excess that runs down the sides of the cup that we find the resources to work for peace.

You will need:

- A table and dishes to set the table. It could be set with the most beautiful of dishes, or it could be set with broken dishes symbolizing the brokenness of our world and our prayer for its restoration.
- A candle.
- A large cup and saucer; anointing oil or water.
- If you choose to anoint hands or do foot-washing then you will also need bowls/towels.

Moving through the ritual:

- Give instruction to the congregation.
- In front of the congregation set a table and light the candle.
- Take the large cup and saucer and have someone pour oil or water into it until it overflows.
- Invite the congregation forward for anointing.
- Use oil or water that has overflowed onto the saucer for the anointing.
- As you anoint persons you may want to speak words to remind them of who they are (*Genesis 1*): "You are made in God's image, a beloved son/daughter."
- When all have been anointed say to the congregation something like: "As God's beloved daughters and sons, may your love overflow to a waiting, hungry and hurting world."

## **Artful response**

Some suggestions, to do several weeks in advance:

- Invite each person to bring a small piece of cloth and have someone in the congregation who can sew, sew them together into a banner or table cloth. Use this tablecloth to set the table, to make peace with a neighbor, to share with another congregation in another city or country.
- Build a peace pole in your church yard that can become a gathering place of prayer and other activities. Find a way to include each person in the congregation in its construction, installation or ongoing activities
- Trace your hands, write your name on it and put them into an offering along with promises of peace-making.
- Find a local project that your congregation can work with that builds peace in your neighbourhood.

## **BENEDICTION**

Ephesians 3:20-21 (option: begin at verse 16)

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

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We are grateful to Lois Siemens who created this material for us. Lois is the pastor of the Superb Mennonite Church, a rural congregation of Mennonite Church Canada, located in Kerrobert, Saskatchewan, Canada. Thanks also to Karmen Krahn for her valuable feedback, and to *Leadership Magazine* for permission to reprint some material.