



**Mennonite
World Conference**
A Community of Anabaptist
related Churches

**Congreso
Mundial Menonita**
Una Comunidad de
Iglesias Anabautistas

**Conférence
Mennonite Mondiale**
Une Communauté
d'Eglises Anabaptistes

WORLD FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY WORSHIP RESOURCES

World Fellowship Sunday, January 24, 2016

Each year Mennonite World Conference (MWC) encourages Anabaptist-related churches around the world to worship in spirit together around a common theme, on a Sunday close to January 21. On that day in 1525 the first Anabaptist baptism took place in Zurich, Switzerland.

World Fellowship Sunday provides an opportunity to remember our common roots, to celebrate our worldwide community (Koinonia), and to enter more fully into fellowship, intercession and thanksgiving with and for our global family of faith. These 2016 worship materials include many suggestions to include in your Sunday worship, Bible studies, or prayer meetings.

Responsibility for preparation of these materials rotates among the continents. This year these worship resources are the fruit of the work of the MWC officers, based on the theme for the Assembly Gathered in Pennsylvania last August. These worship resources are available on the MWC website in English, French and Spanish.

1. Theme and Texts: “Walking with God”

Walking with God finds its total meaning in fellowship – in the breaking of bread, in serving, and in meeting the needs of others. It does not mean any absence of challenges, but recognizing we are assured of victory with and through Him.

Walking with God was the theme for Assembly Gathered in Pennsylvania in July 2015. This theme was selected to give space for different ideas on what it means to be the people of God, together as a people, on a journey together, with God at the centre. In English “walking” refers to a constant endless action. In Spanish “caminemos” is an invitation to walk together. In French “en marche” implies becoming completely involved in walking, being totally committed. All of these ideas come together in this theme and through these texts.

- Psalm 23
- Luke 24:13-35
- Philippians 2:3-4

2. Songs (from the PA 2015 Songbook)

- #1 Ewe, Thina (We Walk His Way)
- #3 Hamba Nathi (Come Walk With Us)

- #11 Sizohamba Naye (We will Walk with God)
- #20 Sari Srishti Ke Malik Thumhi Ho (All Praise to the God of Creation)
- #30 Abre Mis Ojos (Open my Eyes)
- #35 Speak O Lord
- #47 As I Went Down to the River to Pray

3. Visual Aids for Worship

- Various kinds of walking sticks for young and old, abled or disabled
- A shepherd's staff or a herdboys stick
- Various kinds of lunch containers, empty or full

4. Prayer Requests

- That friendships and relationships established through the Pennsylvania 2015 Assembly will strengthen the church.
- For Anabaptists and other Christians who suffer from persecution, war, or poverty.
- That God will use MWC to foster mission, and grow the church.
- That MWC will continue to grow into being a global communion.
- That there be adequate resources for MWC's four Commissions (Faith and Life, Peace, Mission, Deacons) to help our member churches face these issues together.
- Those persons who were denied visas to come to Harrisburg will find other ways to connect with the global church.
- For the first meeting of the new MWC Executive Committee in February, that they may set an example of what it means to walk with God in our relationships.
- That we become a source of encouragement in mobilizing the Church to live this message in the coming years leading to the next Assembly in Indonesia in 2021.
- For peace to prevail where there is conflict, such as South Sudan and the Middle East.

5. Offering

MWC invites a special offering to be taken for the global Anabaptist church community on World Fellowship Sunday. One way to think about this offering is to invite every member to contribute the cost of at least one lunch in their own community in order to support the networks and resources of our global Anabaptist church family. Sacrificing one lunch is our humble way of giving thanks to God, and supporting the on-going ministry of God through the church.

This gift of "one lunch" per person once a year is something that all MWC members can do. Some people have resources to give much more than this, and should be encouraged to do so. Others with more scarce resources might be encouraged to hear that the Executive Committee of the Mennonite World Conference, with members from every continent, is confident that most adults all around the world can give the equivalent of one lunch per year for the work of the global church.

Here are some ideas on how you might be able to make an offering like this work for your congregation.

- Plan for One Lunch offerings to be given in special envelopes or culturally appropriate lunch bags/containers during the worship service on World Fellowship Sunday.

- Plan for a second offering designated for Mennonite World Conference during the worship service on World Fellowship Sunday.
- Plan for a shared congregational meal together before or after worship on World Fellowship Sunday.
 - This could be “potluck”, with each family bringing big dishes of food to share. Include an offering for Mennonite World Conference with the meal.
 - Have people each bring a packed lunch, labeled “vegetarian” or “non-vegetarian” or any other culturally-appropriate labels. These packed lunches are then available for auction or for purchase or donation by everyone to take home, or to eat together after worship.
- Plan for a time of shared fasting and praying for the global church during a mealtime before or after worship on World Fellowship Sunday, and include an offering for Mennonite World Conference during that time, an offering that would be at least the value of the meal that is not being eaten.

Funds that are gathered through this special offering in each congregation can be sent directly to Mennonite World Conference using the various mechanisms shown on our website (www.mwc-cmm.org/donate). Or, these funds can be sent to your conference office, clearly marked as designated for Mennonite World Conference and indicated as World Fellowship Sunday offering, and you can ask that they pass the funds on to MWC.

We are grateful for every congregation that is part of our global Anabaptist family. Together we support each other and learn from each other so that each and every one can be a stronger servant and witness for Jesus Christ.

6. Sermon Resources – Biblical Background

- *To walk* in the Bible often means a way of life. A word search of “walk” turns up countless examples—many are literal examples, but the figurative ones say more about our walk with God.
- *“...that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” Micah 4:2*
- *“what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:8*
- *“whoever says ‘I abide in him,’ ought to walk just as he walked.” I John 2:6*
- Psalm 23 has a focus on Jesus being the good shepherd who leads, guides, protects, and provides as we walk in His ways.
- In Luke many lessons are learned while walking. In Luke 24, the two disciples are walking and talking, and they strongly disagree with each other. They were likely asking themselves whether it was worth continuing together. And yet they were walking together despite their differences because God was at the centre of their walk. They discovered that unity wasn’t something that was miraculously achieved in the end; it is something that is built along the way. This unity leads to a transformation that can only be found in community. It is at the end of the journey, in community and communion, after walking together despite their differences, that the disciples’ eyes were opened and their understanding of Christ was clarified. As a result, they returned to Jerusalem in unity.
- Philippians makes it clear that walking with God does not mean the absence of challenges, but recognizes we are assured of victory with and through Him – when we are walking together.

7. Sermon Resources – Application Stories

- African proverb: “If you want to walk fast, walk alone; if you want to walk far, walk together.”
- MWC General Secretary César García’s story from his Assembly sermon about the strength of community in facing difficult challenges. (See below.)
- MWC President Nelson Kraybill’s story from his Assembly sermon about the difficulties of walking along with a neighbourhood where there is violence and pain. (See below.)

César García:

I was 17 years old when an army captain asked me, “What would you do if our battalion was attacked tonight? What would you do if someone came and shot you?” “I would pray”, I responded. At that instant, I felt a sharp pain on my head. The captain had hit me with a lyre striker. A lyre is a musical instrument made of metal that produces sounds with a fiberglass striker. The pain was very intense.

The captain asked me again, “What will you do if someone attacks you?” I said, “I am not going to defend myself.” He hit me again and asked, “Why do you want to be a Christian? Aren’t you going to defend your country?” My answer was: “I follow Christ because I have found life in Him.”

Why was I responding like that? I was just 17, and at that time, I was full of doubts. In fact, I was experiencing a spiritual crisis to the point of almost losing my faith. I had left my church; I did not have Anabaptist convictions. Military service was compulsory in Colombia, and my Christian convictions were not strong enough that I was willing to go to jail for them.

I think the reason I had the courage to respond that way because I was not alone in my stand for my faith. Beside me there were four other soldiers who were also Christians. They weren’t Mennonites or Anabaptists. But when the captain asked them the same questions, they responded that they were just obeying Jesus and were not willing to kill to defend themselves. Some of these friends were on the floor in pain because of the blows.

I was able to respond the way I did because I had found a new community there. With me were four friends with whom I was ready to walk amid suffering, violence and persecution. With me were four friends to whom I could say, “Let’s walk with God” despite our differences. And I say to you today, “Let’s walk with God together during the years to come.”

Nelson Kraybill:

In December one year ago, an eighteen year-old black youth was shot and killed in the parking lot of Prairie Street Mennonite Church in Indiana where I am pastor. This was not a racially-motivated attack; it apparently was a drug deal gone bad. I did not know the young man who died, but he was a neighbor.

The day after that shooting was our congregation’s Christmas Eve service. Our mostly-white congregation thought we would celebrate Jesus’ birth in our church building at 5pm, then at 6pm go to the parking lot for a public service of lament for the young man.

But local television got the schedule wrong, and unknown to us they announced that the 5pm service was the lament. So at the hour we thought we were having a Christmas Eve celebration, our mostly-white congregation was joined by dozens of black neighbors who thought they were coming to the lament for a son and friend. Culturally, they were expecting a kind of wake. That was one of the most painful moments of my ministry—realizing that some of our black neighbors were hurt by what looked to them like insensitivity because we had started with our traditional Christmas Eve service before a time of lament.

Reconciliation across cultures—even within one city—is not easy. Reconciliation is hard work!

Over the subsequent months our congregation made a commitment to learn to know the family of the young man who died.

One of the miracles of the past year happened when the mother of that young man gave me a hug, and forgave us our missteps about the service of lament that Christmas Eve. We started working together as sister and brother in Christ to pray for the peace of our city and speak to violence and drug abuse in our neighborhood.

8. Sermon Resources – MWC Photos & Videos

- Video: Who is Mennonite World Conference?
<https://www.mwc-cmm.org/video/1069>
- MWC Assembly Photos & Videos
<http://pa2015.mwc-cmm.org/share-with-your-congregation>