



Saskatoon 2002 Assembly Sunday
Worship Resources for July 7, 2002

"TENDING GOD'S FIELD, FORMING GOD'S PEOPLE"

Introduction

*From July 3-6, 2002 individuals from Mennonite congregations across this country will gather to worship and work together as Mennonite Church Canada. The theme for this Assembly is **Tending God's Field, Forming God's People**. The theme scripture text is 1 Corinthians 3:6-9. We encourage all congregations across Canada to use this theme to plan their worship service for Sunday, July 7th. The worship services at Saskatoon 2002 have focused on tending God's field and forming God's people, using the agricultural themes of planting, growing, and harvesting. Here are some resources to help you plan this worship service. Our prayer is that God will shape and form us, God's people, as we seek to tend God's field.*

Suggested Scriptures

1 Cor. 3:6-9
Mark 4:26-32
Psalm 1

Call to Worship

C 1: Clap your hands all you nations!
C 2: Shout to God with cries of joy!
ALL: How awesome is the Lord Most High!

C 1: O God, we will praise you as long as we live, and in your name we lift up our hands!
C 2: Our feet bring the good news to the world and our voices together shout for joy!

C 1: Yet, O Lord, you are our Parent
C 2: We are the clay, you are the potter.
ALL: We are all the work of your hand.

C 2: Clap your hands all you nations!
C 1: Shout to God with cries of joy!
ALL: How awesome is the Lord Most High!

Suggested Hymns

HSS #926 . Come, all you people
HSS #948 .. The Lord lift you up
HSS #968 .. Holy, Holy, Holy Lord
HWB # 46 .. I sing the mighty power of God
HWB # 59 .. Sing praise to God
HWB # 76 .. Praise, I will praise you, Lord
HWB #400 .. Santo, santo, santo
HWB #224 .. The kingdom of God
HWB # 97 .. We plow the fields and scatter
HWB #359 .. Seed, scattered, and sown
HWB #414 .. God, who stretched
HWB #372 .. O healing river

Prayer of Confession

Leader: God of all history, We give you thanks for the goodly heritage you have granted us.

Congregation:

for the earth that abundantly feeds and nourishes us year after year, for forebearers and saints who have planted the seeds of faith within us, who have watched you give the growth, who have partnered with you to reap the harvest.

L: We come before you, keenly aware of our human frailties, our inadequate care of your earth, and our unequal sharing of your resources.

C: **Forgive us with your everlasting love, when we choose to retill the same ground rather than venture onto untilled soil, when our eyes cannot see possibilities for growth, when our hands are idle, and our feet are stubbornly planted on familiar ground.**

L: Forgive us with your everlasting love, when the actions of our hands, voices, or attitudes hurt others, when our lack of actions damage and destroy. Too often we resist the gentle molding of your hands on us, shaping and forming us into your image.

C: **Grant us wisdom O God, to trust in the power of your Holy Spirit, to form and shape us into vessels worthy to be called your children. In the name of your Son, Jesus. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

L: God hears our prayers and rejoices in our desire to follow God. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

Ministry to Children

The children participating in Assembly are using the book *Let's make a garden*, written by Tamara Awad Lobe (1995), available from Herald Press in Waterloo, ON. In symbolic response to this book, create a large globe sculpture (made of chicken wire), or a mural of the world. As the story is presented to the children, they are invited to add pictures of their own experiences to the globe. These pictures can be pre-cut or could be ripped paper images as Tamara demonstrates in her book. Let these images or pictures reflect the process of planting and growing, tending to relationships, making friends, caring for one another. Because God created the world, God is the One who makes things grow and makes us grow, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

New Song!

Enclosed is a song written by Val Wiebe which you could teach the children and the congregation as well as an opening "verse" that will help to gather the children and let them know why they come together to worship.

Sermon Ideas/Starters

1. *Trusting God.*

Many of you are or have been farmers. All of us know enough about gardening and farming to know that there are limits to what we can do. There is really very little that a farmer can do to produce a crop of wheat. Essentially, all he does is put the seed in the soil. After that, it is out of his hands. Oh, he can spray for weeds, and some even irrigate. But, that's it. The sprouting of the seed, the growing of the plant, the developing of ears or heads and finally the growing of the new seed, the producing of the fruit, is something over which the farmer has no control. It doesn't really matter how impatient he gets, how much he would love to take the crop off in 50 days instead

of 100, how often he goes to look at the crop, and talk to the crop. There is nothing he can do. In fact, if you try to make a plant grow faster by pulling at it you will probably just uproot it and kill it. If you cut your wheat before it has headed, there will be no wheat harvest. If you cut it before it is ripe, your grades will be poor. If you combine it while still wet, it will spoil. Growing wheat takes time and trust and mostly it takes just planting the seed and then letting nature take its course. The same is true in Kingdom work according to Jesus. It cannot be hurried, it cannot be demanded, it cannot be done with shortcuts, no matter how good your ideas. Mainly, you plant the seed and let God do the rest. And be convinced God will.

2. *God will see God's Kingdom grow.*

There will be harvest, again and again as God works. But the work may be slow, as imperceptible as wheat growing from day to day. But it is sure as a tree that grows and pushes back or engulfs anything in its way. We have a brick wall in our back yard, a strong wall. Many years ago someone built that wall, leaving a good bit of space between it and the tree beside it. Over the years that tree has grown. It was probably hard to notice that tree grow from year to year. If you wanted a quick tree, this one would have surely disappointed. But it did grow and when it reached the wall it did not stop. It kept on growing till the wall had to give way and now has a big crack from top to bottom. The work of God is like that—often invisible, many times infuriatingly slow, but sure, so sure that nothing will stop it.

3. *We are called to faithfulness.*

From farming we know that there is little we can do to make things grow. That is up to God. Secondly, we have learned from things that have been planted that their growth can be inevitable, powerful and profound. We also know from our gardening and farming experiences that faithfulness is still required from the farmer. S/he can not just sit back and expect it to happen. Someone has to till the soil. Someone has to put the seed

into the ground. Someone has to decide when it is time to harvest and then run the combine. These and many other decisions a farmer has to make. These and many other things a farmer has to do. Poor management will mean poor crops. So too in the kingdom. Though it is God's kingdom and God causes the growth and God will not be stopped, yet, God has enlisted us in the kingdom work. God calls for faithful "farming" on our part to make it happen.

4. *Kingdom work is a team effort.*

Just as it takes the partnership of God and humanity to sow, grow, and harvest a crop, so too does it take a joint partnership between God and us to continue Christ's work in the world. This is true in our local communities and churches and in the wider world. We are called to notice where God has sown seeds of justice, seeds of peace, and to join God in nurturing the kingdom of God. Part of our task may also be to nurture the growth and reap the harvest as we create bridges between the local congregation and the larger church both within and beyond the Mennonite church.

Benediction

Leader:

May the seed of Christ's word, planted and watered by the Holy Spirit find root and grow in your hearts.

May your work and your relationships reflect Christ's constant presence in the days ahead.

Go now in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

Adapted from *Words for Worship* # 239, David B. Greiser, Philadelphia.