

Theme: "Enough for All"

Assembly Sunday Worship

Winkler 2004,
Mennonite Church Canada



This material has been prepared by the worship team for Winkler 2004, led by Pam Driedger of Altona, Manitoba. Congregations and their leaders are invited to use this material in a variety of ways:

- As a worship resource when "Assembly Scattered" participants will worship in local churches on Sunday, July 11.
- As a worship resource when your congregation's delegates report back to you about their experience at assembly.
- The ideas and resource herein are also worthy of use on other occasions.

Faith Statement for Worship:

God's Spirit of generosity overflows, surrounding our hearts, our communities and our world, and drawing us into worship of the One who creates enough for all. In worship we are transformed by Jesus Christ into a people who overflow with the generosity of God.

This statement served as the anchor point for all of the worship events for the conference.

Primary Scripture for evening worship during Assembly: John 6:1-69

Suggestions for Sunday Worship July 11: Assembly Scattered

Also included are two Readers' Theatre dramas using the Biblical texts from the Gospel of John.

Call to Worship:

Right side: God stretches out the heavens and shapes the earth.

Left side: Come and give thanks!

Right side: God raises up the mountains and pours water into the seas.

Left side: Come and give thanks!

Right side: God calls forth plants from the soil and forms animals in infinite variety.

Left side: Come and give thanks!

Left side: God breathes upon us and fills us with life.

Right side: Come lift your voices in praise!

Left side: God gives our lives meaning through laughter and tears.

Right side: Come lift your voices in praise!

Left side: God touches our hearts through family and friends.

Right side: Come lift your voices in praise!

Leader: God loves us and blesses us with everything good.

All: Come and worship!

Leader: God loves us and overwhelms us with never-ending generosity.

All: Come and worship!

Leader: God loves us and surrounds us with love in abundance!

All: Come and worship!

Prayer of Invocation:

Holy and wonderful God, we live because you have loved us into being. We come before you because your love draws us near. We stand together as one church because your love unites us.

It is your unending gift of love that makes our worship possible. Please open our eyes that we may see your love in new ways. Please open our hearts that we may accept your love more completely. Please open our arms that we may share your love more generously. Please bless us and transform us through our time of worship.

Prayer of Confession:

Leader: Lord, you breathed your own Spirit into us to give us life. We are sorry for the times when we have failed to appreciate the blessing of our lives and of the lives of those around us. *(Pause for silent reflection)*

Response: *Kyrie eleison* (HWB # 144)

Leader: Lord, you have blessed each one of us with gifts of wisdom, knowledge and understanding and with a unique ability to share your love. We are sorry for the times when we have failed to use our own gifts or failed to recognize the gifts of others. *(Pause for silent reflection)*

Response: *Kyrie eleison* (HWB # 144)

Leader: Lord, you have blessed us with family and friends, with neighbours and with a church community. We are sorry for those times we have failed to include those who might feel isolated and alone. *(Pause for silent reflection)*

Response: *Kyrie eleison* (HWB # 144)

Leader: Lord, you have blessed us with homes to live in, with clothes to wear and with food to eat. We are sorry for the many times when we have failed to share with those who do not have these things. *(Pause for silent reflection)*

Response: *Kyrie eleison* (HWB # 144)

Leader: Lord, you have blessed us with abundance and we have responded with stinginess. Please forgive us for our past failings and give us grace to be more generous in the future.

Response: *Kyrie eleison* (HWB # 144)

Words of Assurance: God who gives life in abundance also gives grace and forgiveness in abundance. As you have placed your sins before God and asked for his forgiveness, so now you have been washed clean.

Scripture:

1Kings 17:7-16 or 2 Kings 4:1-7

Psalm 145

John 6:1-15 or John 21:1-17 (dramatic versions of these texts are provided)

Children's Feature:

Ask the children what happened when Jesus fed the 5000 people. Why was there enough food? Help them to understand that when we offer what we have to God, wonderful things can happen – what seemed like only a very little bit can become more than enough.

Object lesson: You will need a small bottle of “magic bubbles” (the kind kids blow) and a small electric fan. Dip the bubble wand into the bubbles and ask a child to blow. How many bubbles are produced? Then dip the bubble wand again and hold it in front of a fan which is blowing on low or medium. Repeat this a few times. The number of bubbles is astonishing. Explain that the fan is like the breath of God blowing upon what we offer and making more than we could have imagined.

Note: before you do this in church you should practice it. The fan speed, the wand angle and the distance from the fan all make a difference in the number of bubbles. So does the humidity level.

Share a story of a child's act of generosity which starts small and is transformed by God into something much bigger. One possibility is the story of the origins of *Free the Children* which began with the commitment of Craig Keilburger, a 12 year old boy in Ontario who wanted to do something about child slave labour (see www.freethechildren.com/aboutus/history_ftc.htm for more details).

Sermon Suggestions:

When we recognize and accept God's overwhelming generosity, we are able to give generously. Within our individual congregation and within the larger church there are numerous stories of how God has given in abundance. We need to seek out and celebrate those stories and allow them to challenge and inspire us.

God's incredible generosity can be seen in the wonderful variety of people that God has placed in our lives. We are surrounded by an abundance of wisdom, knowledge, understanding and insight. We are also surrounded by unending opportunities to experience and share God's love if only we choose to see them. When we gather as a national Church body we celebrate the many different peoples whom God has joined to make one people. We are not all the same, yet we are one. Together we find "enough for all."

Jesus gave without strings, so should we.

We are challenged to give even when we don't think that there is enough, trusting that as we keep giving, God will keep providing.

When Jesus told the disciples to distribute five loaves and two fish to a crowd of thousands or when a "stranger" on the shore told the disciples to cast the net on the other side of the boat, the disciples had every reason to be skeptical. How could this action accomplish anything? Yet, they were willing to try. If we wish to experience the surprising generosity of God, we must be willing to risk appearing foolish.

Too often we see shortages where God would have us see abundance. Ask yourselves, is there anywhere that we can really claim that God has not provided enough?

Benediction:

Go forth from here as people who have received life in the fullest.

From the abundance that you have been given, share joyfully with everyone you meet.

Go forth from here to continue the generous work of God.

Go forth from here and know that God goes forth with you.

Reader's Theatre – John 21: 1-17

Seven Disciples (only five speak) are standing squatting or sitting on logs by the side of the lake, talking quietly and casually pitching stones into the water. The narrator stands off to one side observing.

Narrator: After his resurrection Jesus revealed himself several times to his disciples. But of all his appearances, the one that touches me most was the one by the Sea of Tiberias. One evening, not long after Jesus' resurrection, Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, James, John and two others were together by the water. I always imagine that they were tossing stones into the water as they talked about everything that had happened in Jerusalem.

Peter: *(stands up and starts to walk slowly along the shore.)*

Nathaniel: *(puzzled)* Peter? Are you leaving?

Peter: I've decided to go fishing.

John: *(standing)* That sounds like a good idea. I think I'll come too. James?

James: *(moving next to John)* I'm in.

Thomas: Why don't we all go?

Nathaniel: Yeah. It's time to get back to our lives.

Narrator: So they all got into their boat and headed away from shore. They spent most of the night casting out their nets and pulling them back in. But each time they came up empty. *(Disciples mime rowing away from shore -- one or two at the oars. They throw out nets and pull them in. Each time they shake their heads, then one points in another direction. The rowers row a few strokes and then the nets are thrown out again.)*

Thomas: Nothing! Again, nothing!

James: What should we do?

Jesus: *(Comes to stand by the shore.)*

John: Look! There's someone standing on the shore. Why don't we go in?

Jesus: Haven't you caught anything, friends?

Disciples: *(loudly and with frustration)* No!

Nathaniel: It was another wasted night.

Jesus: Throw the net out to starboard and you'll find something.

Disciples: *(Look at each other in disbelief and confusion.)*

Thomas: It can't hurt to try. Maybe he can see something we can't.

James: If Thomas the skeptic says we should try. We should try.

Disciples: *(Shrug and mime throwing net off to the right of their boat. As they try to pull the net in they strain hard because it is so heavy.)*

Nathaniel: There are too many fish. The net is going to tear if we lift it. We'll have to drag it behind the boat.

John: *(with mounting excitement)* Peter... Peter, it's the Lord!

Peter: Lord? Lord!

(As the narrator speaks, Peter mimes jumping into the water and splashing towards shore. James mimes rowing while the rest are pulling on the nets.)

Narrator: Peter threw on his tunic, jumped into the water and started to splash toward shore. The others followed in the boat. When they reached the shore they saw there was some bread and a charcoal fire with fish cooking on it.

Jesus: Bring some of the fish you just caught.

James: *(hands Jesus some fish)*

Thomas: I just finished counting. There are one hundred fifty-three big fish in that net. One hundred fifty-three and the net didn't break! It's a miracle!

Jesus: *(Smiling.)* Come. Have some breakfast. *(Jesus breaks the bread and hands it to them.)*

Peter: *(Shaking his head as if he just can't believe what's happening.)* You did it again. You did it again.

Jesus: Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these? *(He holds out his hands to indicate everyone and everything around.)*

Peter: Yes, Lord, you know I love you.

Jesus: Feed my lambs. *(Pause)* Simon son of John, do you love me?

Peter: Yes, Lord, you know I love you.

Jesus: Look after my sheep. *(Pause)* Simon son of John, do you love me?

Peter: *(In a slightly hurt tone.)* Lord, you know everything; you know I love you.

Jesus: Feed my sheep.

Reader's Theatre – John 6:1-15

Jesus is squatting, tracing something on the ground with his finger. Peter, James, John, Philip and Andrew are standing off to one side talking to each other.

Andrew: What's he doing? (*Indicating Jesus*)

Peter: Andrew, you know him as well as we do. When he goes off like that on his own ... well ... I always assume he's praying, finding strength for whatever is coming. But he might just be drawing in the sand.

James: (*Pointing over the congregation.*) Would you look at that crowd! They're going to be here any minute!

John: Their must be thousands of people coming up that hill. I bet they're all impressed with **Jesus'** miracles and are hoping to see more.

James: John, can you blame them? Don't you remember how you felt the first time you saw him perform a miracle?

John: That was at the wedding in Cana. Do you remember Peter's face when he saw all that wine? (*He nudges Peter.*)

Peter: I was just surprised, that's all. It was a lot of wine!

John: Jesus never does things in small measures, does he?

Peter: Never. (*shaking his head*) Never.

Jesus: (*Stands up and looks out at the crowd.*) Those people have been travelling for a while to get here. I'm sure they're hungry. Philip, where can we buy bread for them to eat?

Philip: What?! It would take more than two hundred denarii even to give them each one little piece! We can't buy food for everyone!

Andrew: (*Aside to Peter*) Look Peter. There's a kid over there spreading out a picnic.

Peter: And you're telling me this because ...?

Andrew: Well, we were just talking about that wedding so I thought ... Yeah, maybe you're right. It's not enough. But still ...

(*hesitating slightly*) Um... Jesus. There's a child just over there with five loaves of bread and two fish. But I don't suppose that means much with all these people.

Jesus: It's enough. Make the people sit down. (*Walk off to talk to a real or imaginary child.*)

Philip: More than five thousand men plus women and children, and he wants us to have them sit down. What should we do? Have James yell?

John: Well, we better do something. That kid just gave him the food and he's on his way back.

James: (Yelling) Will everybody please sit down.

Philip: I don't believe it! They're actually sitting! (*Turning to Jesus*) Now what?

Jesus: Now we do what we do at the beginning of every meal, we pray. (*Takes an imaginary loaf and raises it slightly*) Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe who has given us bread to eat.

(*Turning toward the disciples*) Now start handing out the bread.

Philip: What?!

John: (*taking Philip by the arm*) Come on Philip, let's just do it.

Philip: This shouldn't take too long. How much should we give people?

Peter: Why don't we tell them to take as much as they need for a meal and then pass the rest on?

James: That makes sense.

Disciples: (*Each one walks up to someone in the congregation and mimes handing them a loaf saying:*) Take what you need for a meal and then pass the rest on. (*They walk back to Jesus*)

Jesus: (*Holding up an imaginary fish*) Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe who has blessed us with fish to eat.

(*Turning toward the disciples.*) Now give everyone fish.

The Disciples start to walk toward the crowd – the congregation. James stops and grabs the nearest disciple by the arm.

James: Look at that! People are still passing the food around.

Andrew: And look at how much the people near the front have! They really did take enough for a meal. Hurry, let's give them some fish!

Andrew and Peter: (*each hand an imaginary fish to someone in the congregation saying:*) Take what you need for your meal and then pass the rest on.

John: Look! It's happening with the fish too! There's enough!

James: Enough for all!

Jesus: When it looks like people are done eating, I want you to gather the leftovers.

Philip: You want us to what?

Jesus: Gather the leftovers.

John: Come on Philip. Let's just do it.

Disciples: *(Go out into the congregation ask people for their leftovers and mime accepting them and putting them into a large basket. Then carry the baskets back to Jesus.)*

Peter: *(Counting the baskets)* Twelve! Twelve full baskets!

Jesus: So there was enough?

Peter: More than enough!

John: As always, you have given more than enough for all.

Jesus: Now I need to go before they try to proclaim me as their king. They still don't really understand.

Andrew: What about us?

Jesus: I'll meet all of you later. *(Jesus exits, not toward the congregation. The disciples watch him go and then walk into the congregation.)*