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January 2007 *Equipping* #72

Worship Resources for

Stewardship Sunday

for January 14 and/or 21, 2007
Mennonite Foundation of Canada

A Variety of Gifts: One Source, One Purpose, One Body

Below are worship resources for one or two services, based on selections from 1 Corinthians 12, the Epistle texts in the lectionary for January 14 and 21, 2007. These resources are intended to remind Christians to be faithful stewards of the gifts God has given.

God blessed the Corinthian church with many kinds of gifts. But the variety of gifts was confusing and there were divisions.

The apostle Paul responds to this issue in 1 Corinthians 12. Verses 1-12 emphasize that the varieties of gifts in the church have one source (God) and one purpose (for the common good). Verses 12-31a emphasize that the members, with their various gifts, belong together in the one body of Christ and need each other to work well together. Paul writes about spiritual gifts, but the principles apply to the other gifts God gives us as well, including our time, skills and abilities, and wealth.

When we are humbly grateful for the gifts God has given, and when we recognize that each person is needed for the whole work of God, we are able to use our gifts freely for the common good. Let us each contribute to the work of sharing the good news, respecting the variety of gifts and functions God has given in the church, so that we can say with Paul, "God's grace toward us has not been in vain." 1 Corinthians 15:10.

The faith stories of others often inspire and encourage us to live faithfully with the resources God gives us. In addition to the sermon, or as part of the sermon, include a personal testimony each Sunday. Or have a sermon one Sunday and several testimonies the next. There are several suggestions below for focusing a testimony on this theme.

January 14, 2007 Lectionary texts:

Isaiah 62:1-5, Psalm 36:5-10, 1 Corinthians 12:1-11, John 2:1-11

Focus: God is the source of the variety of gifts, and gives them to us for the common good.

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11

Gathering (Psalm 36:7-10)

How precious is your steadfast love, O God!
All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house,
and you give them drink from the river of your delights.
For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.
O continue your steadfast love to those who know you,
and your salvation to the upright of heart!

Children's time

Conversations with children which could become a gift to your congregation:

- What can you do well? (Collect responses. Express pleasure in the variety of abilities.)
God gave each of us these abilities. We can do different things, but it is the same God who made each of us and who gives us the ability and energy to do these different things.
- How can we use these abilities to help others? (Do simple tasks at home, cheer people up, show love)
- **Prayer:** Thank-you God the many things you have made us good at. Thank-you that we can use these gifts to share your big love with others. Amen.
- For the children's story called "Using our Gifts" see www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/110

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-7

One: Now there are varieties of gifts,

All: but the same Spirit;

One: and there are varieties of services,

All: but the same Lord;

One: and there are varieties of activities,

All: but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

One: To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Sermon ideas

The variety of gifts in the Corinthian church caused divisions. They disagreed on which gifts were the most important or desirable, and which varieties belonged in the church. The variety of gifts God gives can cause divisions in and among our churches too.

What is the variety of gifts that God has given in your congregation or in the broader church? Which varieties are you ready to reject? Can you see how each variety contributes? If you take a historical perspective, can you see how the varieties of gifts, services, and activities were all from the same God, served our one Lord Jesus Christ, and contributed to the common good of the church? Can you trust that the variety currently in your congregation and in the broader church can all contribute to the common good?

Testimony topics

1. Share an experience that taught you to acknowledge God as the source of your gifts.
2. How did you learn that God's gifts are for the common good?
3. How have you learned to share generously?
4. Share how you came to recognize a particular gift was really from God and was given to build up the church even though it was being rejected by the church.

Prayer of Confession: HWB 703

January 21st Lectionary texts:

Nehemiah 8:1-10, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a, Luke 4:14-21

Focus: God arranges many members to function together as the one body of Christ.

Gathering: Psalm 19:7,10,11,14

One: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul;

All: the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;

One: More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;

All: sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

One: Moreover by them is your servant warned;

All: in keeping them there is great reward.

All: Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Children's time

Tell a story in which a child contributes in a crucial way as a member of a family, a team, or a group in the church to accomplish something significant. God chose many different people to be together in the church, and God has a job for each one. One such story can be found following this link: <http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/111>

Scripture reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 26-27

One: For just as the body is one and has many members,

All: And all the members of the body, though many, are one body,

One: So it is with Christ.

All: For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – (you could substitute the groups that have been brought together in your community here) and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

One: Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. *(pause)* If one member suffers,

All: all suffer together with it;

One: if one member is honoured,

All: all rejoice together with it.

One: Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Sermon ideas

What are the positive ways you have seen your congregation work together, each contributing to the whole? Name ways in which functions that are deemed less important contribute to the health of the congregation, the witness in the community, or provide help for suffering people.

People want to belong and contribute time, abilities, and money to a worthwhile cause. What does your congregation do that needs the contributions of each member? What does the whole body accomplish that individuals or small groups never could? Paint a verbal picture of your church community that people are proud to be part of, and that helps people see how their contribution is needed and valued.

Testimony topics

1. Share an experience where a variety of people and skills were needed in order for a project or event in the church to work well. Name how each participant contributed. This testimony could work as a children's story if children were involved.
2. Share a story of a time when part of the congregation was suffering and the rest of the congregation worked together to care for the suffering part. Or, share the story of a time when the congregation saw a need in the world that moved them to work together to meet that need.
3. Ask an athlete or a medical person to elaborate on the image of the body and how the parts function together. How do nutrition, care, training, and respect affect performance? What kind of hierarchy exists among body parts or functions? How does injury in one small part affect the rest of the body? What does this image say to your congregation?

Confession: The prayer in Sing the Journey (SJ) 132 is very fitting.

Hymns and prayers for either service

Hymns of Praise

HWB 36	God of our strength	HWB 37	Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
HWB 57	Come and give thanks to the Giver		
HWB 61	Let all creation bless the Lord	HWB 66	O worship the King
HWB 76	Praise, I will praise you, Lord	HWB 86	Now thank we all our God

Hymns of Response and Sending

HWB 289	Filled with the Spirit's power	HWB 362	Help us to help each other
HWB 366	God of grace and God of glory	HWB 367	For the healing of the nations
HWB 369	Lord, whose love in humble service		
HWB 376	O God, thou faithful God	HWB 383	God, whose giving
HWB 387	Lord, thou dost love	HWB 415	Forth in thy name
HWB 425	Come, come, ye saints		
SJ 72	One is the body	SJ 54	Longing for light

Offering prayers: HWB 750 or HWB 751, SJ 150 or SJ 148

Sending prayers: HWB 774, SJ 164

Prayers of thanksgiving: HWB 721 or HWB 726

For more stewardship resources see the Resource Centre listing:

<http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/112>