



**Menonite
Mission
Network**

The mission agency of
Menonite Church USA



Worship resources for
**MISSION
SUNDAY**

NOVEMBER 13, 2011

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Where is our **hope**?

Introduction

November 13 is designated as Mission Sunday across Mennonite Church USA. Although we hope that congregations integrate mission with worship on a regular basis, this special Sunday is set aside to intentionally explore missional themes.

The theme for this year's Mission Sunday is "Where is our hope?" The scriptures suggested for use are Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30; and Psalm 90:1-12.

This piece will help you plan your worship for this special Sunday, providing suggestions for:

- Call to worship and prayers.
- Sermon prompts for pastors.
- Song and litany suggestions.

On our website you can find tools to help your congregation enhance your worship for this special Sunday, and throughout the year. Explore our website to find tools for worship planning that include:

- Downloadable short videos for "moments in mission" or Sunday school.
- Global music clips.
- Stories to help your congregation brainstorm how to respond to people in search of hope.

If your congregation cannot participate on this Sunday, please choose another date to celebrate ongoing commitments to mission activity.

▶ To read stories related to people's search for hope, visit www.MennoniteMission.net/OurWork/DevelopNewLeaders.

Call to worship

As we gather to worship, we pause to remember...

- ... the work of God's kingdom.
- ... the people in whom we see God's light.
- ... the people to whom we show God's light.
- ... the gifts we have received.
- ... the gifts we have to offer to the world.
- ... and the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

These things remind us why we're here. They remind us what's important. May the Holy Spirit guide us as together we learn and live out our mission. Amen.

Other calls to worship

HWB #819, SJ #121, SS #190

HWB *Hymnal a Worship Book*, SJ *Sing the Journey*, SS *Sing the Story*

Children's time

Mission bank teaching tools provide stories for children and provide mission giving projects for the entire congregation. These materials are written for use with the globe-shaped mission banks, but are projects that can also be used for Sunday school classes and family mission projects.

▶ To order materials and banks, call 1-866-866-2872 (toll-free) or e-mail MissionBank@MennoniteMission.net. PDF copies of the resources are also available online at www.MennoniteMission.net/Resources/MissionBank.

Offering time

On Mission Sunday, consider taking a special mission offering for Mennonite Mission Network. Before the offering, consider giving each member of the congregation a small slip of paper. Ask each person to write down one gift or talent that they would like to recommit or re-offer to God.

Place two or three baskets at the front of the worship space and invite people to bring their offering forward. Choose a song to sing while people are bringing forward their offering, both monetary and the written “gifts.” Celebrate together the offerings that your congregation is bringing.

If your congregation uses the globe-shaped mission banks, invite children to bring forward their mission bank offerings as well. Close the time with prayer. Invite a few members of the congregation to raise the offering baskets during prayer, to symbolize offering and blessing them for God's mission and purpose.

Mission giving project

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\$115 supports one day of ministry in Japan.
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This means that \$115 enables our mission workers and partners to give a hug, share a meal, and show care for the people of Japan in many other ways. As a challenge, see if your congregation can commit to raising funds to support one mission worker for one month.

Moment in mission

Mission Network has several short videos and clips that can be used as moments in mission for your congregation.

▶ Download these videos at www.MennoniteMission.net/Stories/Image.

Prayer

God, you are our dwelling place.
It is in you that we find our purpose and our meaning.
Though our days on this earth are short, you are everlasting and unchanging.
Your kingdom come. Your will be done. And may our talents play a part in making it so.
Amen.

Other prayer suggestions

HWB #707, #769; SJ #142

Sermon starter

Today's lectionary texts bring to mind images of fire and brimstone.

“Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the Lord's wrath; in the fire of his passion the whole earth shall be consumed; for a full, a terrible end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.” (Zephaniah 1:18)

They are hard texts that remind us of our mortality.

“The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.” (Psalm 90:10)

These texts are on the list of favorites when preaching about the end times. In fact, these are some of the verses Harold Camping, the preacher who recently predicted the end of the world, used in his failed prophecy.

“For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.” (1 Thessalonians 5:2)

As a pastor who is fully conscious of the deep problems facing the citizens of this world, I read these passages and ask, “What on earth am I supposed to do with all of this death and destruction? Where is the message of hope?”

The answer lies at the end of today's passage from 1 Thessalonians.

“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore, encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:8-11)

Mennonite Mission Network workers around the world are seeking to do just that—build up Christians who are eager to learn more about Christianity from an Anabaptist perspective. One example of this is Mennonite Partners in China.

Timothy Zhang, a young Chinese pastor, was facing a major challenge. He was pastoring a 2,000-member church in Anhui province, an area mostly populated by subsistence farmers, and he was almost completely isolated. While the church growth was a blessing, Zhang felt alone.

“When you are all alone, it is difficult to make decisions and to see things in a wider perspective,” he said.

Since 1980, Mennonite Partners in China has welcomed North American Mennonites to China to teach English to university students. In addition to their teaching duties, English professors would work with fledgling Christian congregations. This once-informal relationship has since become China Vision, a network of churches all around China who are working to build up and support each other.

“The support of China Vision pastors has been instrumental in building up our congregation at a time when the problems and needs seemed insurmountable,” Zhang said. “I see much hope. I see our congregation able to reach out into its community and to bless the people around us. They brought us together.”

This is an example of mission workers investing the talents God gave them to build and strengthen others for God’s kingdom. These are the things that last.

Consider building your Mission Sunday sermon around this theme, asking, “How do we deal with fear healthfully and productively?” “Who in our midst needs to be supported and lifted up during these hard times?” “How can we as a congregation take concrete and lasting steps to support people, here and around the world, experiencing hard times?”

Hymn suggestions

HWB #328 *O God, our help in ages past*

HWB #389 *Take my life*

HWB #410 *Lord of light, your name outshining*

HWB #479 *Lord of our growing years*

SS #118 *Keep your lamps trimmed*

SS #121 *Nothing is lost on the breath of God*

SJ #67 *Let there be light, Lord God*

SJ #95 *I want to walk as a child of the light*

Here I am to worship (©2000 Thankyou Music)

We will dance (©1993 Mercy/Vineyard Publishing)

Prayer of sending

As we go forth from this place to live the call we have been given, we go with the power of God, the love of Jesus, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. May our gifts continue to be a blessing to the kingdom of God. Amen.

Other sending suggestions

SS #159, #176

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Mennonite Mission Network

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On the cover: Meiko (center left) and Yoshiki (center right) Kanno, who have taken refuge at Menno Village, are in danger of losing their farm, which has been in the family for 18 generations.