

Worship guide

Theme

Giving and receiving
hospitality in God's mission

Scripture texts

Isaiah 25:6-10
Psalm 23
Romans 12:9-21
John 6:1-15

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TOGETHER AT GOD'S TABLE

Introduction

“Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,” says the book of Hebrews, “for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it” (13:2). Through hospitality, which creates an opportunity for strangers to become friends, we experience the presence of God. Similarly, mission — the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ across cultures — cannot be separated from hospitality. People who are sent from one place to another, being guests, rely on the wisdom and welcome of their hosts in order to survive. And hosts, showing kindness to strangers, receive from them the blessings that they bring. As Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet’s reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous” (Matthew 10:41).

Together, in the giving and receiving of hospitality, guests and hosts find themselves in “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit” (2 Corinthians 13:13).

Mennonite Mission Network invites your congregation to explore what it means to experience the hospitality of God in the context of mission. Below, you will find resources to help your congregation plan a worship service, as well as ways to engage and support God’s mission through the workers, partners and ministries of Mission Network.

Children’s time

Giving and Receiving all year-round

What do you remember about last Christmas? Did you open a present that you really liked, or spend time with relatives that you hadn’t seen for a long time? Maybe you ate some really good food, like your grandma’s roast turkey or your uncle’s secret-recipe Christmas cookies.

However you spent your Christmas, it is important to remember the real reason for celebrating. You probably know the story of Jesus, God's only son, being born as a human so that he could save us from our sins.

You might be thinking, "Why are we talking about Christmas now? It's almost summertime." There's a good reason for that, and we'll get to it soon.

Have you ever wondered why we give presents at Christmas? It's Jesus' birthday, but you and your family are giving the gifts to each other!?

When we give presents to other people on Christmas, it symbolizes the gifts that the three wise men gave to Jesus in the Christmas story. Do you know what "symbolizes" means? It's when we do something to remind us of another thing that has happened before. We give presents to each other because Jesus gave all of us the greatest gift of all — the gift of living among us, dying to share with us abundant life. Remember that. That's what the Christmas spirit is about.

A church in Barcelona, Spain, celebrates Christmas by giving small presents to children at the Christmas Eve service. Even though the kids loved getting the gifts and the church loved giving them, sometimes there weren't enough gifts to go around. The church kept a list of all the children they thought would be at the Christmas Eve service — and they made sure they had enough presents for those kids. But sometimes, children showed up who weren't on the list, and there wasn't a present for them.

Have you ever seen someone else get a present when you didn't get one? It can be a bummer.

So, two years ago, the Barcelona congregation started a new tradition. Instead of getting gifts, the kids gave gifts to everyone. The day before the church's Christmas celebration, they decorated Christmas cookies to give to others at a party after the Christmas program.

Now, nobody gets left out, and the kids in the church know the real meaning of the Christmas season. They think about what they can *give* to others instead of what they can *get* from others. They can feel good about helping the church, and they probably get to help eat the cookies, too!

So, why are we talking about Christmas now?! Because giving is as important as receiving. Not just at Christmas, but through the whole year! We all have opportunities to give to others every single day of our lives. What are some ways that you can give and show the true spirit of Christmas to people all year-round? You don't have to give presents to someone every day, but you can give other things: your time and help, or even a simple smile. (*Give them a chance to answer or offer suggestions.*)

- Help your family with chores around the house.
- Without being asked, do your homework or chores before you play.

- Listen to your parents/guardians.
- Help your younger siblings with their homework.
- Play with someone in your class at school who doesn't have many friends.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to live on this earth and showing us how to love each other. Thank you for showing us how to forgive each other. We want to give in the spirit of Christmas all year-round. Help us to remember that, every day, we should give gifts such as our time and help and kindness. Amen.

Sharing your faith in Jesus with others

When Jesus returned to heaven, he gave his disciples one last instruction: "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). When he said that, he meant for his followers (like you and me) to share their faith with everyone they meet wherever they (we) are — on the playground, in the halls at school, or at a friend's house.

Do you know what sharing your faith means? It's like when grown-ups ask you to share a toy with one of your brothers or sisters or a friend. When you share a toy, the person you're sharing it with gets to enjoy it and have fun, too. Sharing your faith is just like that. When you share how much you love Jesus with others, it helps them to learn to love Jesus, too!

In Argentina, a country in South America, people in the Mennonite churches get excited about sharing their faith with others! In fact, they've been doing it for more than 100 years now. That might be longer than your church has been around!

Argentines drink a tea called *mate* (MAH-tay) that is made by pouring hot water over tea leaves. This tea is made in a special cup with a metal straw and it is passed around to share with everyone.

Travelers in Argentina can stop and ask people they don't know for water for their *mate*. While the water is heating up is a time when Christians will share their faith and maybe even ask others if they want to go to church!

Followers of Jesus tell the story of driving a bus from town to town. They named the bus Lazarus, because it broke down many times and would be fixed and brought back to life — just like Jesus' friend, Lazarus. When it broke down, they stayed longer in the towns to wait for repairs, and they shared their faith while waiting.

Through the years, new churches developed in some of the towns in which Lazarus, the bus, broke down. Those followers of Jesus helped other people want to share their faith because of the kindness given and received while waiting for the bus repairs.

You can share your faith by being helpful: If you see that someone forgot their lunch at school or is out of

lunch money, you can share your lunch with them. Even if they just forgot their pencil in math class, sharing a pencil with them can go a long way to showing them your faith.

You can also share your faith by asking others for help, too. It seems strange, but asking someone for help can give you the chance to make new friends that you can share your faith with. If you had to move to a new school, asking someone for help (like to borrow a pencil!) can put you on the right track to making new friends.

Or if you're searching for your lost pet (*ask the children what the names of their pets are*), you ask around the neighborhood if people have seen them. They can keep an eye out for your pet, and you might just make a new friend, too — and, hopefully, you'll find your old one (good boy!). Just remember, always make sure you are with a grown-up and ask for permission before talking to people you do not know.

What are some creative ways you can share your faith in Jesus with the people you meet at school or other places? Remember, it doesn't have to be hard. Even just being kind in small ways is enough to share your faith in Jesus.

Since we don't drink much *mate* here in _____, what can we ask people for to start a conversation? Directions? Time? Tissues?

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for all the things you do for us. Help us to be able to share our faith with people we meet wherever we are. Help us to show kindness to others, just like you would. When it feels hard to share our faith, help us find the little ways that we can help others so that they can see your love in us. Amen.

Sermon starters

With John 6:1-15 as your primary sermon text, consider using the following observations and questions to focus your study.

At the beginning of the text, Jesus "went up the mountain" (v. 3). At the end of the text, Jesus "withdrew again to the mountain" (v. 15). The "mountain" is also featured as the setting for Isaiah 25:6-10. What connections might you make between the mountain in Isaiah and the mountain in John?

References to eating occur twice in this text. The first is in Jesus' question to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" (v. 5, *italics added*). The second reference is in the voice of the narrator, who says, "from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets" (v. 13, *italics added*). How would you describe the relationship between the two instances of "eat" in this story? How would you characterize the change that took place in the story

between these two usages?

The five "loaves" and two "fish" are used to feed the five thousand (vv. 9-11). By what process did this feeding take place? Which characters participated and how did they participate?

In the middle of the text, the people "sit down" or "recline" (Greek: *anapesein*) — the posture for enjoying a meal (v. 10). Where do they recline or "lie down?" What connections do you notice between this detail and Psalm 23?

The word "sign" (Greek: *semeia*) is used twice in this text, once at the beginning and once at the end (vv. 2, 14). The nature of a sign is to point to the reality that it signifies. What does the feeding of the five thousand signify about Jesus?

Finally, how does this story speak to you about hospitality?

Worship resources

Songs and readings from *Voices Together*:

Call to worship:

- No. 853 "If you are delighted to be here"
- No. 1023 "What will you offer the body of Christ today?"
- No. 1024 "There is no scarcity"

Prayers:

- No. 958 "This home is yours, my God"
- No. 1016 "Jesus of love and leftovers"
- No. 1038 "La paz no es producto del terror ni del miedo"

Songs:

- No. 124 "For the Fruit of All Creation"
- No. 174 "Christ Has Broken Down the Wall"
- No. 460 "From North and South, from East and West"
- No. 461 "Come to the Table of Grace"
- No. 462 "We Place upon Your Table"
- No. 464 "Somos pueblo que camina"
- No. 474 "All Who Hunger, Gather Gladly"
- No. 481 "In the Singing, in the Silence"
- No. 482 "Let Us Break Bread Together"
- No. 511 "Come On, Children, to the Gospel Feast"
- No. 757 "There's Enough for All"
- No. 801 "I'm Gonna Eat at the Welcome Table"

Table blessings:

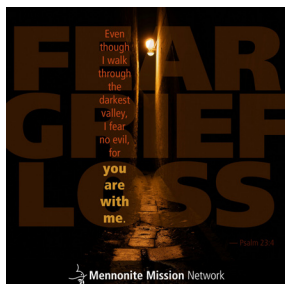
- No. 486 "Great God, the Giver of All Good"
- No. 487 "Gracias, Señor"
- No. 488 "God is Great and God is Good"
- No. 489 "Bless This Food and Bless Your People"

Downloadable scripture graphics

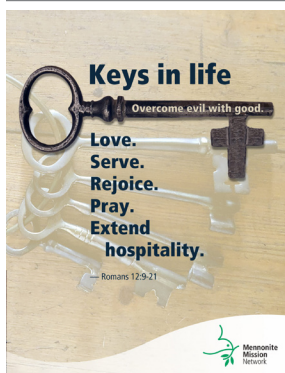
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Romans 12:13



Psalms 23:4



Romans 12:9-21

Offering

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Ideas for fellowship meal

Prepare a fellowship meal as part of your Mission Sunday celebration. Feature foods from the countries where the ministries your congregation supports, through Mission Network, are located. Make the meal a community celebration, inviting neighbors who may not have a church home. Check out www.MennoniteMission.net/MissionMonth for recipe ideas.

MennoniteMission.net

Toll-free: 1-866-866-2872

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Recipe suggestions:

Colombia — [Arroz con Pollo](#)

France — [Ratatouille](#)

Ghana — [Jollof Rice](#)

Guatemala — [Caldo Soup](#)

Indonesia — [Indonesian Fried Rice](#)

Jackson, Mississippi — [60 minute gluten-free dinner rolls](#)

Jackson, Mississippi — [Gluten-free, sugar-free brownies](#)

Mongolia — [Mongolian Fried Meat Pies](#)

South Africa — [Bunny Chow](#)

Tucson, Arizona — [Nopales Tostadas](#)

Tucson, Arizona — [Carrots and Greens Quiche](#)