

Mission Awareness Sunday 2010 Resources for Worship

The Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship (Based on 1 Cor. 4:7-10)

Leader: We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us.

People: We are afflicted in every way but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair;

Leader: Persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed;

People: Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be visible in our bodies.

Leader: Hardship and suffering comes to many but Christ's love can conquer all things, even death itself.

People: In good times and in difficulties, our hope is in Jesus Christ.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Loving and gracious God, you have made all things and called them good. Your world was intended for harmony and peace. We celebrate all the moments in life when we experience your wholeness and well-being. We delight in the expression of the fruits of your Spirit in our daily existence. You have created us to express love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self-control. When we seek your ways and honour your calling, we are at one with you, our neighbour and all of creation. We acknowledge your creative empowering presence in our lives. With you we can be more than conquerors, no matter what life may bring to us. God, we know you are with us at all times and in all circumstances, but we pray for a special blessing upon us in this time of worship. Grant us new insight, new inspiration, and new clarity for the living of our days according to your purposes. Speak to us in a fresh new way in order that we may hear your call and answer it. Hear us further as we offer the prayer Jesus taught us, saying...

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn *411 **Stand up and bless the Lord**

or

***314 God is love: come heaven, adoring**

(Note: All the hymns suggested in this service are found in *The Book of Praise* of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, 1997 edition)

Call to Confession

God knows us better than we know ourselves. God invites us to confess our sins through Jesus Christ so that we may be set free to live lives of grace and truth. God invites us to dig deep within our hearts to understand the convictions and assumptions operating in our lives that hinder our ability to live in peace. Let us confess our sins before God seeking the forgiveness and peace only Christ can give.

Prayer of Confession

Leader: Abiding and merciful God, we desire to honour you in all that we do but we also acknowledge our weaknesses. Instead of putting our trust in you when we face the challenges of life, we try to do it on our own. Assuming we know best, we try to take control. How many times must we learn that we are in your hands and you know what is best for us

People: God, forgive our impatience and our unwillingness to fully submit our lives to you.

Leader: God, we also confess that there are times when we do recognize your call but we unwittingly turn away from you. Our intentions are good, but our discipleship falters as we allow the distractions of our lives to preoccupy our time and attention. We chase after the urgent instead of the important. We allow our priorities to become mired in the muck of everyday demands that pull us in conflicting directions.

People: God, forgive our lack of focus and resolve. We sweat the small stuff. Too often we place our response to your calling on tomorrow's list of things to do, but tomorrow doesn't come.

Leader: God, we admit that we have deliberately avoided your call because we understand its consequences. We know only too well the sacrifices and hurt we may endure if we truly enter into the sufferings and oppression of others. We dislike change and we hate discomfort even more. We admit that there are times that we see hurt and suffering around us and we do nothing.

People: God, forgive our unwillingness to enter into the pains and suffering of others because we fear the cost to our sense of well-being.

Leader: Sometimes we throw our hands up in despair. Sometimes it all seems to be too much, . . . too much heartache, too much prejudice, and too much suffering. We are overwhelmed by the immensity of issues and the human capacity for cruelty, so we give up.

People: God, grant us new resolve and new hope for times of despair.

Leader: Gracious and ever-present God, in those moments when it all seems too much to bear, remind us of your saving power. Repeatedly you heard the cries of your people. Ultimately, you offered yourself in Jesus Christ that we might understand that no present circumstance and no evil will reign forever.

Renew our confidence and strengthen our weak knees that we may do battle with all the powers that would seek to undermine your love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)

Friends, hear the Good News of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, you are set free!

The Peace

Leader: Since we are forgiven, let us forgive one another and share the love of Christ who died and rose again so that we might know peace and wholeness no matter what our circumstances.

The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

(The congregation may exchange the peace of Christ)

Prayer

(You may wish to invite everyone in the congregation to repeat this prayer with you. Break up the sentences into small phrases so that the children and adults will be able to repeat what you have said.)

Dear God, you love all people and you love each one of us. Help us to reach out to others to offer them your comfort and care. In small ways and in big ways, may your Spirit work through us to help others know that they are not alone. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

Hymn *496 Thy word is a lamp unto my feet

or

*674 In the bulb there is a flower

Prayer for Illumination

Through your word, O God, you give us light for our path and hope for our journey. Speak to us this day that we may hear your way and learn new truth for our life and witness. Help us to appreciate your word for our own lives and help us to apply your truth with courage and renewed commitment.

In Jesus Christ, your living word, we pray. Amen

Scripture Readings:

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 42:1-11

Old Testament Lesson: 2 Samuel 21:10-14

New Testament Lesson: James 1:2-4

(Introductions for each Scripture text:

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 42 reflects raw human emotion when life seems overwhelming at times. The Psalmist speaks of exile and the sense that God is absent and yet the Psalmist concludes that he will ultimately trust God.

2 Samuel 21:10-14 is a shocking story. King David meets with the Gibeonites and discovers that they believe there is famine in the land because King Saul and his son, Jonathan have been killed. David agrees to provide expiation for Saul's death, not in silver and gold, but in the lives of Saul's descendants. As the events unfold, a woman by the name of Rizpah is caught in compounding tragedy. As the concubine of the defeated King Saul, she has no rights and it is her two sons and five grandsons that are put to death and left lying in a field as a further humiliation. Rizpah becomes a shining example of someone who refuses to give up. Our text picks up after her sons and grandsons were hung and their bodies are left in a field.

James 1:2-4 actually suggests that trials and hardships help us to mature and deepen our faith. By keeping hope-filled and by the training of endurance, we can truly find an inner peace and wholeness regardless of our circumstances.

Sermon: When it all seems like too much

Moment of Silent Reflection

Hymn *451 Dear Father, Lord of humankind

or

*722 Lord, whose love

Offertory

We offer our monetary gifts and our lives in gratitude for what we have already received. May God use our gifts to help others know that God's grace is freely available to all. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Anthem or Special Music

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, you are present in our lives no matter what life brings to us. You provide the resources we need rather than the ones we want. Help us to receive your blessings as we seek to be a blessing to others. Open our eyes to the hurt and suffering of others and help us to minister with wisdom, courage, and tenacity. In the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Loving and ever-present God, we marvel at the countless times we have experienced your guiding presence in our lives. We give you thanks for the many mountaintop experiences in which or during which you have blessed us with joy and well-being. We thank you for the rich moments when your love and power have been so clear to us, when we have recognized the signs of your grace and love at work. We also thank you for the times when we have only recognized your presence in retrospect, when we have come to understand that you have been actively engaged in the unfolding of events and moments which at the time seemed only coincidental.

We give you thanks, O God, for the work of your Spirit that touches us even when we are unaware. Even in times of great despair and disappointment, when you seemed to us to be absent, we know that you have been offering comfort, encouragement, and guidance.

Even in the darkest moments of despair, hardship, and suffering you are present, granting us the strength to go on and the ability to endure.

Today, O God, we pray for many caught in the brokenness of our world. We pray for persons trapped in the oppressive cycle of poverty, where life seems to be an endless search for the most basic of resources, For families who go to bed hungry each night, we offer our prayers and our desire to find solutions to their suffering.

We pray for many who face compounding suffering. We think of families who must take flight from their homes and familiar settings to become refugees from war and conflicting groups seeking power and domination. We cannot begin to understand the heartache of having to leave in the middle of the night with only the barest of essentials to search for safety in a foreign land. God, help us to reach out to the thousands of people trapped in refugee camps in many parts of our world.

We pray for many towns and villages desperately trying to cope with the ravages of AIDS. So many children are orphaned and so few adults are left to care for them. Help us to reach out with the resources and education to assist those who are seeking to conquer this relentless disease in their own land. Help us not to grow weary in providing care even in the face of overwhelming odds.

We pray for many people in our own communities facing one struggle on top of another. We pray for people who having lost their jobs and are now frightened for their own security and the well-being of their families. Give us wisdom to refrain from only giving hand-outs that rob dignity. Instead, help us to walk alongside such persons to work with them to find lasting solutions.

We pray for persons we know who sleep alone having lost a loved one. We pray that your Spirit would be very real and very near to them as they find their way into a different future.

We pray for ourselves that you would come to us in our private hurts and disappointments. You know us better than we know ourselves. Open our eyes and hearts to receive your guidance and direction and give us the courage to follow the path you set out for us for our own healing and growth.

O God, there are many who are quietly suffering; perhaps even the person beside us in the pew. Help us to remain sensitive to the needs of others and use us as your hands and feet to offer comfort and care.

Gracious God, hear our spoken prayers and all the unvoiced prayers of our hearts, in the name of Jesus Christ, our saviour, redeemer, and friend. Amen.

Hymn *574 With the Lord as my guide
or

*636 When voices are confusing

Benediction

As you go forth in Christ's service, never despair or lose hope either for yourself or for the accomplishing of God's purposes. Make God's love available to all with honesty, perseverance, and hope, in the name of our creator, sustainer, and redeemer.

Amen

Choral Response

Hymn *726 May the God of hope go with us every day

Or

*Go now in Peace

(words and music here)

Go now in peace. Never be afraid. God will go with you each hour of everyday.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true. Know he will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe. Reach out to others so all the world can see. God will be there always by your side. Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.

To editorial Team: If you decide you like the contents, I will fax the written music for "There's a hole in the Bottom of the Sea" and "Go now in Peace."

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The Rev. Karen Horst is presently serving as minister of First Presbyterian Church in Collingwood, On. Previously, she served as minister of Elmwood Avenue Presbyterian Church in London, ON and as an Interim Minister at Knox Presbyterian Church, Stratford, On. As a Diaconal Minister, Karen worked as an Area Educational Consultant for The Presbyterian Church in Canada and also as a church school curriculum writer and designer. Karen has travelled extensively in Africa, India and Central America, leading efforts in relief and development and offering exposure tours. She was Convenor for six years of Presbyterian World Service & Development. Karen has written many educational courses for several denominations including the four online courses called "Opening Doors to Discipleship." Currently, she teaches for the Elder's Institute and Knox College's lay education programme.