



Worship service ideas

Scripture

Lectionary scriptures for November 13

1 Kings 17:8-16, Psalm 146, Hebrews 9:24-28,
Mark 12:38-44

Call to worship

Leader: Come to worship, all you who are called.

People: Together we will share the word of the
Lord.

Leader: Bring your gifts, your talents, your
dreams and your visions.

Come together from east, west, north
and south.

People: Together we will do the work of the Lord.

Other call to worship suggestions

Hymnal: A Worship Book (HWB) 661;
Sing the Journey (SJ) 120

Song suggestions for opening worship

HWB 14, 42, 54; SJ 3, 5

Children's story

What are some ways that people serve God and tell others about Jesus? To begin, tell the story of Laura Schlabach.

Laura grew up in a church in Ohio, probably a lot like the church you're in right now. When she was in college, she studied math and decided to become an accountant. *(Clarify here what this means.)* While she was at a Christian concert one night, Laura heard a message from the singer that made her think, "I am called to serve God in another country."

But she was studying math and accounting! She didn't know if people in other countries needed accountants.

(Ask the children if they know what kinds of jobs mission workers have. Most people think of missionaries as being teachers, preachers, doctors or nurses.)

Laura decided to serve God in Pennsylvania by doing her accounting there. But she still thought she was supposed to go somewhere far away.

In 1993, she talked to someone at Mennonite Board of Missions *(a predecessor agency of Mission Network)* and was told, "We need an accountant in Mongolia."

(Show the children where Mongolia is on a map, or talk about how it's on the other side of the globe.)

"This was the clearest call I had ever received," Laura said. She went to Mongolia to be an accountant and a manager for an organization that helps people in Mongolia learn about God while also helping them get food and other things they need.

Laura says, "After serving in Mongolia for 18 years, I can see that administrators—accountants, directors, managers—are needed on the mission field, too."

(End your time with the children by asking them what they like to do and what they are good at. Laura Schlabach liked math. Then ask them to think about ways that their talents and gifts can be used to show the love of Jesus to people around them.)

Sermon starter

Today's lectionary texts serve as a reminder to us that what seems most obvious isn't always the case. Elijah sought refuge with a widowed woman and her son on the verge of death from starvation—not the most likely choice when seeking someone to help you in the midst of

famine. And Jesus points out the widowed woman with her two small coins, saying she put more into the treasury than everyone else, even the men in robes who had both the power and the money.

These women, alone and oppressed by their social stations, needed help. But because of the upside-down values of God's kingdom—a kingdom where wealth and status are not the pinnacle of success—they also had something to offer. God takes what is small and transforms it into something great.

Kuaying Teng contracted polio in his leg seven months after he was born. In Laos, people believed that if someone has a disability, he or a member of his family had sinned. In some Asian cultures, babies born with disabilities are even killed. This was the context into which Teng was born.

His parents sent him to a rehabilitation center when he was 7 months old. He lived there for the next 10 years. When he was able to walk, he moved in with his family.

Five years later, a classmate introduced him to Jesus and invited him to church to play piano in the worship band. He went to church for more than one year and still knew nothing about Jesus, but enjoyed playing the music.

One day, an American missionary preached on John 9—the story of the man who was born blind. In this story, the disciples asked Jesus why the man had been born blind—did he or his parents sin? Jesus responded that the man was not blind as a result of sin, but so that God would be glorified through the man's healing.

Teng says, "That message touched me deeply—so deeply I couldn't even focus on playing the music. This was the first time I felt I had worth! This call changed my life."

Teng thought about all the people around the world who have disabilities.

"I knew it was time for me to learn more about Jesus and to take his gospel message to them," he said, "so they would know that Jesus loves and values them just as they are. So I enrolled in Bible school."

Teng later moved to Canada to be a pastor. Through various connections, he ended up working for the Commission on Home Ministries (a predecessor agency of Mennonite Mission Network), supporting Asian ministries. This led to his position as denominational minister for Asian ministries for Mennonite Church USA.

"I don't mind when people stare at my leg," Teng says. "I use the opportunity to tell them my story and, then, about Jesus. I have sat on the street in countries all over the world and talked to people with disabilities, telling them that Jesus loves and cares for them. Even though God did not heal my leg, he used it for his purposes so I could use it to travel around the world and preach the gospel."

Mission is more than going to an international location, although that's one way that we do mission. Sometimes our life circumstances, like Teng's disability, help shape our mission. The question is: How does God call us? Every contribution matters. Everyone is called to share and to offer their gifts, no matter their background or social station. Indeed, gifts from the poorest places might mean the most.

Some things to think about: How is your congregation called to act? What are individuals from your church doing? What is happening in your neighborhood? What kinds of mission have you done in the past? What does the future hold for your mission?

For more stories of call, see the June issue of *Beyond Ourselves*, entitled "Listen, God is Calling." www.MennoniteMission.net/Stories/BeyondOurselves/Listen/Pages/Home.aspx.

Note about your service

As usual, the songs, prayers and sermon suggestions listed here are taken from Mennonite resources and are just one way that you can incorporate the theme of mission into your worship. We encourage you to take a look at the ways your church does worship, and find ways to include the themes of mission and call at least once per year.

Suggested hymns and songs

HWB 356, 389, 395, 398

SJ 13, 40, 42

Suggested reading

HWB 825

Suggested offering prayers

HWB 683

SJ 130

Suggested readings for sending

HWB 761, 763

SJ 158

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