



Mennonite
Mission
Network

Mission Sunday

2016 resources

November is mission month. Help us celebrate what God is doing in the world and how God calls us to share the good news with others. Here are some tools to plan a Mission Sunday celebration. We hope you'll find them helpful.

Scripture text

Luke 24:44-49, Romans 12:9-17,
Acts 2:2-6, Acts 3:25-26

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RETURNING TO OUR ROOTS

God at work in spite of the
Doctrine of Discovery

Introduction

What is the Doctrine of Discovery?

God is doing amazing things in our world! Look around you: God is at work in our neighborhoods around the world. Despite the tragedies of the past and present, God is in both the suffering and the life-giving moments.

This Mission Sunday, we'll explore how God works *in spite of* the Doctrine of Discovery, and more broadly, hatred in the name of Christ. Join us as we repent of past and present violence, and celebrate the diversity of God's kingdom.

It started with the early explorers. They were accompanied by priests with the goal of bringing Christianity to the New World from Spain in 1492. The Papal Bull "Inter Caetera," issued by Pope Alexander VI a year later, played a central role in the Spanish conquest of this New World. The document supported Spain's strategy to ensure its exclusive right to the lands "discovered" by Columbus. This philosophy has become the primary world view of colonization, domination, exploitation, and Christianization of the world by people of Western European origins for the past 500 years. At its core is the claim that all land not settled by European Christians is available for their development and settlement, and that those people currently living on and using the land have no claim of ownership or rights of use.

Even as late as 1823, this "Papal Bull," called the Doctrine of Discovery, was affirmed by the United States Supreme Court in a series of decisions. Chief Justice John Marshall justified the way in which colonial powers laid claim to lands belonging to foreign sovereign nations. The doctrine has been primarily used to support decisions invalidating or ignoring indigenous and aboriginal possession of land in favor of colonial or post-colonial governments into the present.

You can deepen your own understanding of the Doctrine of Discovery, and its impact on indigenous people groups globally, through the resources found at www.MennoniteUSA.org/what-we-do/undoing-racism/doctrine-of-discovery/.

Why talk about the Doctrine of Discovery on Mission Sunday?

These Mission Sunday materials are quite unusual in their theme, because we are celebrating what God has done *in spite of the church* as well as *in partnership with the church*. Our relationship with people “outside” the church includes the genocide of the crusades, the oppression and imperialism of mission driven colonialism, and the decimation of indigenous populations in order to replace them with “Christian” settlers. We must recognize these behaviors and repent of them.

In the midst of these destructive social, political and church movements, we celebrate the Christians whose witness was to listen to “the other” and whose mission—in addition to sharing the gospel—was to stand with the people. Some of these same missionaries worked with predecessor agencies of Mennonite Mission Network. For at least the last 60 years (and in many cases, before that), it has been our practice to join with local people to build up the body of Christ in all cultures without imposing our own cultural bias and biblical interpretations.

How are we to respond to the flawed practices of the past (and present)? Do we need to abandon cross-cultural mission? No. We celebrate God’s wonderful ability to use our words and actions, limited though they may be, to reconcile the world to God’s purposes.

The Doctrine of Discovery continues to shape our systems and world view in unhealthy ways. To pursue God’s mission, we must recognize it, repent, and resolve to act differently. And in some cases, to make amends.

We can be confident that no matter how enlightened we consider ourselves in our current work, we will undoubtedly learn that God still has much to teach us about God’s mission.

Worship resources

Call to worship

Returning to our roots: paying homage to indigenous peoples

Almost without exception, indigenous men and women are peaceful and respectful and seek harmony not only between human beings, but also with other forms of life and elements of nature—all God’s creations. As the first inhabitants of many continents, indigenous peoples give voice to these values even in the manner of social introductions. For example:

I come from the land near the Atlantic Ocean, the Androscoggin River, and the Mukoosuc Mountains. The original peoples of this land were the Passamaquoddy and Penobscot, who fished from the sea and hunted on the land.

My people were farmers and factory workers who came to this land from across the sea 400 years ago.

I now live on the land of the Potawatomie near the confluence of the St. Joseph and Elkhart rivers. My name is Paula. And I am a child of God.

Many of us from the dominant culture may not immediately be able to name the physical features and original people groups from the land of our birth. Some research may be necessary. Indigenous forms of introduction can ground us in a place and people that are a part of our history that goes untold. Try it, with this template:

I come from the land near **(body of water)**, and the **(other land features)**. The original peoples of this land were **(the original indigenous peoples)**, who **(their life-providing activities)**.

My people were **(original life activities of your ancestors)**, who came to this land from **(where and when)**.

I now live on the land of the **(original indigenous peoples)** near **(what land features)**. My name is **(your first name)**. And I am a child of God.

Sermon starters

Luke 24:46-49

Old Testament theology

In our Old Testament Scriptures, true worship of Yahweh was strictly laid out in The Law. It could only faithfully happen in Jerusalem. All people were to return to the Holy City to pray the same prayers, sing the same Psalms, sacrifice in the same ritualistic ways. This was how true worship was defined in the Old Testament ... from all places to Jerusalem. This was the theology of the Doctrine of Discovery. This was also the heart of theology of early Christian mission.

New Testament theology

Jesus changed all that when he said he had come to fulfill the law in new ways. Jesus’ view of faithfulness was to be from Jerusalem to all the nations of the earth. Luke 24:46-49: ⁴⁶“Thus it is written, that the Messiah[a] is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, **beginning from Jerusalem.** ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city **until you have been clothed with power from on high.**”

Unfortunately, the “Jesus model” of engaging with the world was short-lived and moved into the background of Christian mission in the fourth century with Christianity

becoming a state religion under Emperor Constantine. At that point, the Western world reverted to a modified version of Old Testament theology lasting into the present day. Rather than making disciples as Jesus did, this reinterpreted Old Testament model was souls saved, often through mass and sometimes forced baptisms in the state church of Rome. The dominant culture and expression of theology was the only faithful response to God.

Doctrine of Discovery empire building and Christianity went hand-in-hand as European domination moved across the world with exploitation of land, resource extraction, and conversion of indigenous peoples from their culture, language and worship—**from our 21st-century perspective, we might describe this as cultural and religious genocide.** This is our history ... Mennonites often took up residence on land in North America that had been part of indigenous tribal territory until just prior to their arrival.

Here is a quote from S. S. Haury, a Mennonite pastor in 1883:

“We may teach the Indian child all the arts of our civilized life, keeping him away from the influence of his ignorant, superstitious and idolatrous tribe for many years. But without a living Christ in the heart of such a child, returning as a young man to his people, will soon fall back into the old superstitious customs and habits of his race.

“The Indians are religious people; religion permeates their daily life; almost every act they do is connected to some religious meaning scrupulously inculcated into the child from its infancy. They will be civilized only by giving them higher, the only true religion, that of Christ.”

This, too, is our history

The modern mission movement continued to use the Old Testament model of theology, but instead of Jerusalem, the conversion focus was the adoption of the one and only true cultural norm and theology—defined by where that particular missionary body originated!

In the mission field of the 1800s here in North America and globally, this was manifested in the creation of mission compounds consisting of store, school, clinic and chapel. Each separate building was usually constructed in the European home style symbolizing the area of program concentration designed to contribute to the elimination of indigenous life. (Shenk, Wilbert R. *Changing Frontiers of Mission*, Orbis, New York 1999)

Romans 12:9-17

Marks of the True Christian

⁹ Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. ¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all.

Mennonite mission efforts change

Over the years, Mennonite mission efforts have changed significantly. Missionary Irene Weaver has seen this change in her 103 years of life and service. She was born into a missionary compound in India, in 1910—just 11 years into the first overseas mission endeavor of North American Mennonites.

After marrying Ed and returning to India, Irene began to realize that Western mission had encumbered Mennonites in India with colonial structures that hampered their capacity to be God’s people (*Missio Dei, Volume 8, A New Day in Mission*).

For more stories about how God is seen in and through indigenous cultures, read the following:

- [In Argentina, mission includes preservation of a language.](#)
- [AIMM moves administration to Africa.](#)
- [Mission workers support indigenous Christians to preserve their culture.](#)

Acts 2:1-6

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

¹ When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵ Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶ And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.

The gifts of the Spirit as described in various New Testament passages are meant to empower followers of Jesus. In Acts 2, Peter quotes the prophet Joel, who said that the Spirit will fall on both women and men, old and young, slave and free. This is still happening today. This is the transformation that occurs through our dependence on the Spirit for empowerment, where it doesn’t matter whether you are male or female, rich or poor, Black or White or Brown.

God chose to perform the miracle in Jerusalem in a specific way. Scripture does not say that everyone was able to understand one language. Rather, each person present from all nations heard God’s words through the Galileans

Worship songs and readings

There are many songs and readings that fit the theme of these mission materials. You will, of course, have your ideas, but here are some that we found.

Key

HWB = *Hymnal A Worship Book*

SJ = *Sing the Journey*

SS = *Sing the Story*

Gathering

HWB 26 *Holy Spirit, come with power*

HWB 29 *Like the murmur of the dove's song*

SJ 5 *Come and be light for our eyes*

SJ 6 *Jesu tawa pano (Jesus, we are here)*

SS 1 *Praise the One who breaks the darkness*

SJ 121 *Prayer of gathering*

SS 190 *Prayer of gathering*

Praising/Adoring

HWB 110 *Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing*

HWB 121 *Holy God, we praise thy name*

SJ 14 *Lord Jesus, you shall be my song*

SJ 31 *He came down*

SS 31 *Jesus, be the center*

SS 113 *I will stand in the congregation*

Confessing/Reconciling

HWB 137 *Forgive our sins as we forgive*

SS 50 *Woza nomthwalo wakho (Come, bring your burdens to God)*

SJ 132 *Prayer of confession*

SS 152, 154 *Prayers for forgiveness*

Proclaiming

HWB 289 *Filled with the Spirit's power*

HWB 291 *O Holy Spirit, by whose breath*

SJ 42 *Listen, God is calling*

SS 37 *Firstborn of Mary*

SS 41 *Blessed are they*

SS 95 *Jesus has done so much for me*

Affirming Faith

HWB 327 *Great is thy faithfulness*

SS 49 *I will come to you in the silence*

SJ 134, 135 *Prayers of the people*

SS 179 *Prayer of faith*

Praying

HWB 361 *O Spirit of the living God*

HWB 364 *Spirit of God, unleashed on earth*

SJ 52 *Jesus, help us live in peace*

SS 104 *Come, O Spirit, come*

HWB 727 *Prayer*

SJ 142, 145 *Prayers of the people*

Offering

HWB 387 *Lord, thou dost love*

HWB 392 *Heart and mind, possessions, Lord*

SJ 148 *Prayer of offering*

SS 184 *Prayer of offering*

Witnessing

HWB 508 *Holy Spirit, Truth divine*

SJ 69 *Cuando el pobre (When the poor ones)*

SJ 109 *There is more love somewhere*

SS 33 *Let justice roll live a river*

SS 52 *Whatever you do*

SS 117 *How can I say*

SS 145 *Prayer of calling*

Sending

HWB 420 *Heart with loving heart united*

SS 124 *My soul cries out*

HWB 762 *Prayer of sending*

SJ 157, 158 *Prayers of sending*

SS 176 *Prayer of sending*

in their own language (Acts 2:6). All people have been gifted with God's Holy Spirit in their own context and culture. Everyone must have a voice and be empowered to worship in their own authentic voice.

Acts 3:25-26

²⁵ *You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, "And in your descendants all the families of*

the earth shall be blessed." ²⁶ *When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.*

"First to the Jews, then to the Gentiles, to everyone who believes." On that day, on the Portico of Solomon, God redefined "who it is to be the people of God."

This story of healing and the power of the Holy Spirit can often seem long ago and far away for many

of us today. I think we sometimes yearn to be part of big spectacular miracles as this Scripture describes. Many biblical spectacles began as mustard-seed events. The spectacle began as something very small by people faithfully following in the footsteps of Jesus toward God's shalom—God's healing and hope for all people.

Children's time

Use Mission Network's mission bank tools to share about God's beautiful diversity in France. Share a story with children during worship or Sunday school. Age-specific activities will teach children about French culture and the diversity of French Mennonites. Mission banks can be used to gather people together and raise money for mission work in France. Learn more at www.MennoniteMission.net/MissionBanks.



Sending prayer

The prayer below recognizes the different ways we encounter the Holy Spirit in our lives. It references colors that many indigenous peoples connect with cardinal directions. Use these colors creatively in your worship service.

Great Spirit of Light, come to me out of the East (red) with the power of the rising sun. Let there be light in my words; let there be light on my path that I walk. Let me remember always that you give the gift of a new day. And never let me be burdened with sorrow by not starting over again.

Great Spirit of Love, come to me with the power of the North (white). Make me courageous when the cold wind falls upon me. Give me strength and endurance for everything that is harsh, everything that hurts, and everything that makes me squint. Let me move through life ready to take what comes from the north.

Great Life-Giving Spirit, I face the West (black), the direction of sundown. Let me remember every day that the moment will come when my sun will go down. Never let me forget that I must fade into you. Give me a beautiful color, give me a great sky for setting, so that when it is my time to meet you, I can come with glory.

Great Spirit of Creation, send me the warm and soothing winds from the South (yellow). Comfort me and caress me when I am tired and cold. Unfold me like the gentle breezes that unfold the leaves on the trees. As you give to all the earth your warm, moving wind, give to me, so that I may grow close to you in warmth. We did not create the web of life; we are but a strand in it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.

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