

Mission and Service Fund Worship Service

This resource may be used for a worship service in which the congregation's Mission and Service Fund goal is being dedicated. It may also be used anytime for an M&S Sunday. **These first two pages are for the worship leader. They have general instructions and suggestions that should not be included in the worship service.** We suggest photocopying the last five pages, stapling them together, and folding them in your bulletin cover for worship. You may wish to order an M&S bulletin cover (see www.united-church.ca/sales/publications/bulletins) or you may wish to design your own M&S cover for this worship. This would be a good way to involve children in the worship service.

Before the Service

Please read the following instructions to prepare for worship.

For the **Prayers of the People** you will need a pitcher of water, a loaf of bread, a picture of the congregation, an M&S poster or logo, and the M&S Response form. Ask four people to be prepared to bring these forward at the appropriate time to place on the communion table.

Time with Children

Show the children a collection of small things: seeds, grains of sand, pennies. How can these be important?

A seed is important because it holds within it the possibility of growth; one seed planted and cared for can be a miracle of wonderful things. One apple seed can become an apple tree with apples to eat and share, with branches for birds to build nests on, with shade to give on a very hot day. One zucchini seed may become a zucchini plant, producing more zucchini than we want to eat, even when we share with our neighbours. One seed planted and cared for may become a flower to offer to a mom or a dad or a friend and say "I love you."

One grain of sand on its own doesn't seem to be very much, but if we put grains of sand together, we can create a sandbox for playing in, a beach where sandcastles can be built with friends, or a sand dune, a large hill of sand perfect for sliding down.

One penny on its own seems to be the least important thing. Yet if we gather all of our pennies together we would be surprised at what we might be able to buy.

This is a little like the Mission and Service Fund of the United Church. When we look at all the things that we would like to do to help the people of this world it seems like we will never be able to help enough. But if you bring your gift and I bring mine and we put them together with all of the other gifts from all of the other United Churches in Canada, we can begin to help. The Mission and Service Fund is all of the gifts brought together and put to work to bring God's love to the world.

In God's world each gift is important; in God's world small things count.

Children's Hymn

If the children are not familiar with this hymn, time may be taken to say the words with them before the hymn is sung.

Readings from Scripture

Versions of Matthew 5: 13–16 and Matthew 13: 31, 32 are provided. Select readers to read the

scripture with alternating voices. The version from *The Message* provides a commentary on the more traditional NRSV words.

Alternative Hymns for Worship

"When Pain of the World" #598, *Voices United*
"God of the Sparrow" #229, *Voices United*
"For the Crowd of Thousands" #355, *Voices United*
"Lord You Gave the Great Commission" #512, *Voices United*

After Worship

Suggested Activities

Invite children and adults to plant seeds for a garden. Depending on the time of year, this could be planting jiffy pots for starting seeds to be planted later in an outdoor garden, planting flower seeds in pots, working on flower beds around the church building, or creating a vegetable garden on a corner of the church property or on borrowed ground. Use the garden, which will need to be tended and watched, as a symbol of your growing M&S Fund contributions. The results, from whatever approach is chosen, are, of course, for sharing.

Begin a tradition of coin collections, with nickels, dimes, quarters, loonies, and toonies welcomed. Each Sunday, add the coin offering to a large glass jar; when the jar is full, rolled, and counted, then celebrate the gifts and send a special gift to M&S.

Please photocopy the next five pages and distribute for worship.

Mission and Service Fund Worship Service

GATHERING

Words of Greeting and Welcome

This day we celebrate small things
a seed dropped,
a hug shared,
a gift given.

Small, perhaps even insignificant things in the counting of humankind,
but in God's grace the seed, fallen to earth,
is nurtured by soil and rain and sun,
to become a tree,
shade for the weary,
shelter and home for the birds of the air.

In God's grace
a hug shared becomes a chain of love expressed,
person to person,
heart to heart.

In God's grace
one gift is joined by another,
multiplied and shared,
sending hope around the world.

We celebrate small things,
seeds of God's love,
grown to great things
in us.

Welcome to this celebration.

Gathering Hymn

"In the Bulb There Is a Flower"

#703, *Voices United*

Gathering Prayer

Holy One, ever creating God,
small things count in your kingdom.

Granules of yeast leaven bread,
a tiny mustard seed becomes a great tree,
a humble meal of two fish and five loaves provides a feast for a multitude,
and there are leftovers.

We hold within us
small seeds of hope,
the promise of joy,
and the possibility of great love.

Within your grace we are a people of abundance.

Holy One, send your Spirit into our lives
that hope may blossom,
joy spill over,
and love hold all people of this earth.

Holy One, grant us your presence. Amen.

HEARING GOD'S WORD

Time with the Children

Children's Hymn

"Small Things Count," #361, *Voices United*

Readings from Scripture

(Versions of Matthew 5: 13–16; Matthew 13: 31, 32)

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot." (NRSV)

"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage." (The Message)

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (NRSV)

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven." (The Message)

He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." (NRSV)

A Story for the Telling

"Seeds that Grow and Grow" (Minutes for Mission 2007, page 79)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Responsive Reading

A raindrop falls,
splashes on the ground
and meets another.
Drop by drop

a puddle grows,
overflows
and becomes a stream.
Streams travel on their way
join together
and become a river.

**This is the river of God, the river named Compassion
where heart meets heart
and justice sails.**

(Water is poured into the baptismal font.)

A seed is sown;
nurtured by rain and sun
it grows.
Rooted in the earth,
stem reaching upwards,
leaves branching forth.
The seed becomes a head of wheat,
grain to be broken,
milled and baked,
a loaf of bread.

**This is the bread of God,
life offered,
the hungry fed.**

(A loaf of bread may be broken and placed on the communion table.)

One person
stretches out hands
with a gift presented.
One gift joins another
and another
and another.
Generous hearts giving.

***These are the people of God
where love gathers
and spills into the world.***

(A picture of the congregation or the congregational picture album could be placed beside the bread.)

The Mission and Service Fund
of our United Church

is gifts gathered,
joined together
and sent into the world.

**This is God's love
made known.
Praise be given to God.**

(The symbol of the M&S Fund could be added to the congregational picture. You may add the M&S Response form which represents the congregation's commitment to giving to the wider church.)

Invitation to Offering

*We live within the abundance of God's grace;
when bread is broken,
when love is lifted up,
when generous hearts give great gifts,
adding them one to the other,
there is enough for all.
Come, share your gift.*

Offering

Sung Response "God Is Passionate Life," #695, *Voices United*

Prayers of the People

Endlessly loving, endlessly creating God,
we are a people who once had great dreams.

We planned to bring your Shalom, your Peace into our world;
we intended to build the kingdom of God on earth.
We believed that the hungry would be fed, the prisoner freed,
the lame would walk and all would see your face.
But somehow, we lost hope; the vision faded.

The need of the world seemed too great
and the gifts we would offer too small.
Creating God,
tell us again the story of the mustard seed grown to a great tree;
tell us of the loaves and fish that made a banquet.
Remind us that within your grace, small things have great value;
that within your grace the gift is multiplied
and it will be enough.

Grant that we will see this world with compassion and offer to your service
the gift of our hearts—time, talent, and money.

This day we ask your blessing.
We give to you our concerns—

the difficulties of our working world
the housework that never gets done
a world that yearns for peace
a people suffering loss
all the broken ways of our everyday world
knowing that you will hold us in peace

We give to you, God, our joys
the simple, extraordinary fact that we have life;
we are alive to see the colours of the morning sun
faces of children, expectant and waiting
faces of seniors, wise and loving.

All the moments of happiness we offer to you,
knowing that you will hold us in joy.

We give to you our lives
all that we are
all that we have
all that we yet may be
knowing that you will hold us in love.

These prayers we gather into one prayer as with the words of Jesus we pray....

Lord's Prayer

GOING INTO THE WORLD WITH GOOD NEWS TO SHARE

Hymn

"May the God of Hope Go with Us," # 424, *Voices United*

Blessing for the Way