

# Mission Awareness Sunday

## April 30, 2017



### Atlantic Mission Society

### Theme: “Disciples of Christ”

The Mission Education Committee has prepared these resources for the use of auxiliaries and congregations on Mission Awareness Sunday. In planning your service, you are not limited to the suggestions made here.

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**Scripture Readings:** Acts 2: 14a, 36-41  
Responsive Psalm 116: 1-4; 12-19  
1 Peter 1: 17 - 23  
John 21: 1 – 6; 15 - 19

**Suggested Hymns**                      (*Book of Praise 1972 / 1997*)

God, Who touchest earth with beauty	471	/	667
Take my life and let it be	474	/	637
Lord, speak to me	477	/	767
O Jesus I have promised	478	/	569
Take time to be holy	437	/	638
O Master, let me walk with Thee	469	/	642
Follow Me, the Master said	483	/	645
Fight the good fight	487	/	690
We have heard a joyful sound	379	/	681
Jesus shall reign	385	/	275

## **Call to Worship: Psalm 100**

Leader: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

**All: Worship the Lord with gladness.  
Come before him with joyful songs.**

Leader: Know that the Lord is God.  
It is he who made us and we are his.  
We are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

**All: Enter his gates with thanksgiving  
and his courts with praise.  
Give thanks to him and praise his name.**

Leader: For the Lord is good and his love endures forever.  
His faithfulness continues through all generations.

## **Prayer of Approach, Confession and Forgiveness**

God of Creation, we are in awe of the beautiful world you have made for us. We experience fresh air and clean water, food and shelter, with an abundance of plants and animals for our enjoyment. You have placed us in communities and also called us together into this church family, promising to be with us. We thank you for your love and we pray with hope that we can continue to care for the earth that you have created.

Yet as we come before you today we confess that we often fall short in being faithful to your word and we confess that we have not cared for the earth enough. We have not loved you wholeheartedly; instead we have followed our own path. We choose not to love those people that you bring into our lives and we fail to give care to the stranger among us. Lord, we haven't really truly loved ourselves. You alone hear our anxious thoughts and know our shortcomings.

Lord you have sent us into the world to become disciples, fishers of men, but often fear, apathy and indifference seem to stop us dead in our tracks and hinder momentum. Forgive us we pray and help us to overcome these fears. Help us to be faithful and to be full of your grace. We pray for strength to build up your community in this place.

This we ask as we pray together...Our father who art in heaven...

Amen

## **Prayers of the People**

Loving God, you call us to pray in hope and faith. We trust your love and mercy for us and all your people. We thank you for the good work of your church that brings your light and love to others. We pray for churches that are struggling financially, that are looking for faithful leadership, or are tired and needing renewal. Give them grace and strength, we pray. We pray for our own congregation as we look for your guidance to be the people and the congregation you call us to be. Bless us with courage and faith. Help us to follow you faithfully, Lord Jesus.

Our God, we thank you for the healing you provide; for times we've been forgiven; for times when our pain has been eased and our grief comforted. We pray for those suffering grief or shock; for those whose bodies need healing; and for those whose minds are troubled. Give them hope for new and abundant life with you. We pray for our brothers and sisters across the world who are working for peace and to bring your love and light into dark places of war and poverty, famine and earthquake. Send your peace and justice, we pray. Give us courage not only to pray but to act. Help us to see with your eyes and reach out with compassion as we look for the new ways you ask us to follow you.

In the silence we offer the prayers of our hearts; prayers for others and prayers for ourselves; prayers of joy and prayers of need (*10 -60 seconds of silence*).

Lord, thank you that you are God who listens, and God who answers. Give us grace to follow you faithfully, bringing your good news of life and light to those we meet. We give you all glory, honour and praise; one God, now and forever! Amen

## **Offertory Prayer**

We dedicate these offerings, God, for the work of the church. We ask you to use all that we have, and all that we are, in your service.

Amen

## **Benediction**

The amazing grace of the master, Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with all of you.

Amen (2 Corinthians 13:14 *The Message*)

## **Message: Disciples of Christ**

Today is Mission Awareness Sunday; a time when we celebrate mission and try to have a better understanding of what Christ would have us do to become more mission aware. We are to follow him as disciples, issuing the invitation to others by our words and actions to become faithful followers of Christ.

The whole church must be involved in mission and outreach not just occasionally when we have a special Sunday service as we do today. It is a privilege and responsibility for every Christian requiring understanding, love, prayer and action.

We can read the signs of the times and see that we are deficient in awareness, love and outreach. We would rather not be informed or aware of what Jesus would expect of those who claim to follow him. We are too often like the priest and Levite in the oft-told parable of the Good Samaritan when we walk by on the other side, not wanting to be involved.

All too often we turn away, and become immune to the plight of those who are suffering. We know there are millions of hungry people in our world, dying from hunger, but this usually and conveniently happens far away from us. In our own communities, where there are food and clothing banks and overnight shelters, we can turn a blind eye because that must be someone else's mission.

But take heart! There is a prescription in Scripture that will help us regain our vitality as followers of Jesus.

In today's gospel reading, Jesus asks three times, "Do you love Me?" Sometimes Jesus had to say "verily, verily", "truly, truly", or "listen, listen" to get his followers to open their ears. We have to ask ourselves if these questions were only for Peter or are they being asked of us today?

This passage holds three short phrases which call to us for a response.

### **First, Jesus asked, "Do you love me?"**

**Love** should be an easy word to understand. We all should know something about love. We all could use more love. When someone says "I just love this chocolate cake", it is not the same as when someone says "I love you!" Some may love chocolate cake more than they love you. We can usually tell how sincere people are when they use the word "love".

Jesus asks "Do you truly love me?" and he expects an answer. How would we answer? How can we measure our devotion to Jesus? Do we love him because he

first loved us? Jesus is trying to get Peter to think about his love and how committed this love is. We need to be asked about our love too and how connected it is to Christ. Does our love include the billions in our world, people like us, for whom Christ died?

We have to confess that there may be some in our churches who do not love the people of our world, let alone Jesus. Jesus tells us to love even our enemies. Are we...are the churches?... truly in love with our Lord and do we truly love all whom Jesus loves?

The answer is sadly too often “no”. We do not love as Jesus loves. Our love is selective. This is why Jesus probes Peter with love questions. When Peter confesses his love, Jesus tells him that he is going to face a violent death. We need to be aware of the cost of love. We need to love the world as God has loved our world with a love that is costly, a love that cares to send the very best. It is giving to God the best we have and giving with joy because our love knows no better way.

**So follow Jesus and love.**

**Secondly, Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.”**

What Jesus means by feeding is not restricted to Peter. It is an ongoing command for the church today. “Feed” literally means giving food. Feeding may be easier than loving.

People are desperate for food. Many are so worried about food security that they will go anywhere and give up everything for food. Our recent refugee arrivals can help us know what people will do for food and safety.

We have heard of the many issues facing countries like Malawi, for example. Their food problems over the years have been compounded by famine, political instability, HIV/AIDS, globalization, and unjust international trade conventions. With our missionary connections, we should know enough to be more concerned with the plight of Malawi. They need our understanding and loving help. The command of Jesus could be made country specific. "Feed my Malawian flock." There are too many other countries and people groups that need spiritual and food feeding. Too much...too many...overwhelming...and too confusing... are reasons given to not even think about what Jesus said.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada has many programs that address those overwhelming needs. We are partners with the Canadian Food Grains Bank. Through Presbyterian World Service and Development, we bring fresh water and

sanitation for El Salvador. With help from Presbyterians Sharing, the Saskatoon Native Circle Ministry provides a warm and safe place where people in inner-city Saskatoon can gather for food, friendship and support.

“Feed my sheep” also implies that Peter was to be a shepherd, a guide for the sheep. This would mean that we, like Peter, have to do more than provide food. We need to guard and guide people to every provision for their souls as well.

**So follow Jesus and feed His sheep.**

**Thirdly, in today’s lesson, Jesus said, “Follow me!”**

We are called to be disciples of Christ both to the physically and to the spiritually hungry. The disciples had just witnessed another fish miracle on the shores of Galilee: a catch of very large fish. But more than that, Simon Peter, the big brash fisherman would go on to catch human fish through the power of the Gospel. This miracle is a reminder to us who follow Jesus that we are to share the Good News and become “fishers of men” to those who are lost in a sea of apathy.

We may not feel that we can do what Jesus requires but Peter is a good example for us. He denied Jesus three times. He could not stay awake and pray for Jesus. Despite these failings, Jesus loved Peter and commissioned him to do great things.

We are like Peter. We may not have been aware enough of the world around us. We have failed, but we like Peter are forgiven and loved. We can attempt great things for God.

We live in God's world and we are not alone. We need to make our own the Christ-given awareness of the needs of others. We are called to love what Jesus loves. Because we love Jesus, we want to do loving things for him, and through him.

[Take this time to share stories of mission outreach and special projects in the local congregation/s and the AMS auxiliary.]

Like Peter we are called to be in the world helping others and extending an invitation to those around us, far and wide to enter into relationship with God.

On this Mission Awareness Sunday, let us give thanks for the opportunities that are ours, as Christ’s disciples, to love and serve.

## CHILDREN'S TIME

There are two suggested stories. The second one will require more preparation but will appeal to those with a dramatic flair.

### GONE FISHIN'

“Good Morning Everyone!

What did you eat for breakfast today?”

(Listen to answers and comment on favourite foods.)

“Does anyone like to eat fish for breakfast? Let me tell you a story about fishing...

Well one day at the Sea of Galilee the disciples were out fishing.

Maybe some of you have gone fishing?

Sometimes it can be very hard to catch a fish and the disciples were having no luck. Nothing was going into their nets.

But Jesus arrived and he told them to drop their nets on the other side of the boat and before you knew it there was lots and lots of fish inside the nets. It was a miracle!

Jesus then cooked some of those fresh fish over a charcoal fire right down on the beach and served them fish and bread for breakfast. He was very happy to see them and fill their nets with big fish

But Jesus wanted more from his disciples, especially Simon Peter.

He really wanted them to show their love for others by not just being fishermen but by becoming “fishers of men”

What does that mean do you think?

Well, he wanted His disciples to tell others about the love that Jesus has for each one of us.

And Jesus wants all of us to do that too.

We must be kind and generous to all the people we meet each day. Can you do that?

### Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for loving us and taking care of us. Help us to become fishers of men. Help us to tell others about you and invite them to church so they will know you and follow you.

Amen

## THE CAKE STORY

**Note:** This story is like a parable. It is a thinking story about making judgements and being aware of priorities in our lives. There are many versions of this story and many ways to tell it so feel free to adapt or change. Be creative.

**Preparation:** It is best to use a real cake in the telling of this story. A colourful cake that can be divided into five equal parts would create interest. Plates, forks, napkins, etc. are helpful. I like this story because I like cake. The more cake the better. A pie could also be used. A plastic or picture cake could be used but it would not taste or look like the real thing. Also needed is a storyteller, six AMS members or children and six readable signs that can hang around necks: CHURCH, HOME, FOOD, CAR, HEALTH AND BEAUTY and CREDIT CARD. Maybe the minister could be the person representing the CHURCH. He/she could hold a big offering plate. [Get permission to use the offering plate or be prepared to ask for forgiveness after using the plate.] The storyteller and CHURCH rep should practice together beforehand.

The teller welcomes everybody and gets the six to line up.

“Our Bible has much to say about giving and the use of money. In the second book of the Bible, Exodus 23:19a says: *The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.* When the fruit was ripe and ready to harvest the first of the firstfruits was brought into the House of God (also known as the Tabernacle or Church). The emphasis is on first, the firstfruits. There was a priority. God was to be thanked and honoured with the firstfruits. That was way back then. What about today?”

“Somebody had to work for the money that we spend. Our Bible tells us to work hard for the money we receive. Every kind of work that is honest and serves others is a vocation from the Lord. Our cake represents the wages or earning of our families. Each slice of cake represents money for certain important needs.”

“We all need a home, a safe and secure place to live. Our houses cost money for heat, lights and upkeep. So giving the first piece of cake to the HOME seems proper.” (As soon as a piece of cake is received it can be eaten and the eater is encouraged to make "yummy", "yummy" sounds.)



“We all love to eat. We need FOOD to live. Cake is food. So it just seems right to spend hard-earned money on FOOD.” (The next piece of cake goes for FOOD.)

(The CHURCH representative wonders aloud when the CHURCH will get any cake. The storyteller tells the CHURCH rep to be quiet and wait. The CHURCH rep continues to look very concerned as the pieces of cake are being given away.)

“We all need to have transportation sometimes. We can drive to work, school or to church. So a motor vehicle is necessary. It costs a lot of money these days for a car, or a van and for gasoline. Most of us would say it is money well spent.” (The next piece of cake goes for the CAR.)

“We need to spend money for our health. If we did not, we would be sick. So our health money is important. It is better to be healthy than sick and miserable. We also need to spend on beauty aids. It is nice to be beautiful. You can never spend enough money to make yourself look better.” (The next piece of cake is for HEALTH AND BEAUTY.)

(By now the CHURCH rep is really concerned. There is only one piece of cake left. Will it go to the CHURCH? With a dramatic gesture the storyteller tantalizingly passes the piece in front of the CHURCH rep to give it to the CREDIT CARD. The CREDIT CARD is happy.)

“After all, we have to pay our bills and credit debt. If we did not pay off our CREDIT CARD we could not buy many things. If we did not pay for our cable or telephone it would be soon cut off. So everybody owes somebody something and it is just right that we should pay what we owe.”

(The sad CHURCH rep quotes Exodus 23:19a with great emphasis on "first". *The FIRST of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord thy God.*)

“Do not worry. There is still something left. Look at the little crumbs! They can go to the CHURCH. Now you can be happy.” (Scrape off the few crumbs onto the offering plate. The CHURCH rep can say something like: "Lord make us grateful.")

**Drawing conclusions:** What we do with our money/cake is important. Does God rate first in our thinking, our actions, and our giving or do we offer God the crumbs? As followers of Jesus, we are called to honour God with our time, treasure and talents. **Prayer**

## **A Suggested Craft**

Have a large blue poster board to represent the blue ocean and cut out some fish shapes for the children to colour or glue on beads and sequins to their fish to place on the poster board. Ask the children to put a name either on their fish or beside it of a person they would like to invite to church to tell them about Jesus. Use pieces of netting or tulle to represent a fishing net on your poster board if possible.

## **Games**

Play “tag” using two or three hula hoops on the floor to represent nets. When the person is tagged they stand inside the hoop until all the “fish” are caught. Release fish and start again.

Near the end of the lesson place a fish trail on the floor which the children can follow until they reach some fish food in a bowl to share (e.g. goldfish crackers or candy fish).

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