

2026 Mission Awareness Sunday

Introductory Study

Prepared by The Message Editor

Suggested Date: **April 26, 2026**

The service may happen on any date that works for your congregation. Please approach your Session to seek permission to lead the service on the date selected, or a date suitable for your congregation. Worship resources will be available on the AMS webpage (pccweb.ca/ams/) by February 28, 2026.

The message for this year's Mission Awareness Service is titled: *The Mission of Jesus... Then and Now*. It has been prepared by The Rev. Grant Johnston. His mother, Agnes Johnston, was AMS Honorary President in 2004.

Two scripture passages are suggested for use in this year's service: a responsive reading, **Psalm 9:1-10** and a gospel reading, **Matthew 9:9-13**.

Read Psalm 9:1-10. For this study, you may wish to have it read by a solo voice, or you may read it together, responsively.

This psalm is a song of thanksgiving directed towards God. It emphasizes God's greatness and justice, particularly in relationship to Israel's enemies. In addition to acknowledging God's sovereign reign over the nations, the words of this psalm also point to God's concern for the oppressed and the troubled.

Consider together:

Select two or three words or phrases from Psalm 9:1-10 that the psalmist uses to describe God's nature or character.

According to the psalmist, what happens to "enemies"?

True or false...the Psalmist aligns herself or himself with those who trust in God.

What benefits or blessings does the psalmist declare for those who trust in the Lord?

Share what is most joyful for you in this psalm selection.

Read Matthew 9:9-13. The calling of Matthew (Levi) to be a disciple of Jesus.

What do you know about tax collectors, particularly tax collectors in the New Testament?

In biblical times, there was little community respect for tax collectors. Many grew wealthy by exploiting their position, charging “over and above” the required taxation amount. While they were citizens of Israel, much of the tax they collected supported the Roman occupation of their country. Suffice to say, tax collectors rubbed people the wrong way.

In this gospel passage, Jesus reaches out to one who is despised by many. He invites Matthew to follow him. Right there and then, Matthew gets up from his tax-collecting booth and follows Jesus.

But Matthew does something for Jesus too. He holds a dinner-party for Jesus in his home. Matthew invites others to join him, Jesus, and the disciples around the table. The guest-list is far from stellar—no mayor or local dignitaries, but other tax-collectors and some of an unsavoury reputation.

The event gets noticed, and critiqued, by the community’s “morality police” of the time.

Jesus overhears the critique and offers a rebuttal: “I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts” (verse 13). Jesus’ mission to transform the hearts and lives of those who are “out-casts” into “in-casts”; those who know they are not acceptable to God but find themselves made acceptable to God through Jesus’ forgiveness, compassion and love. People like Matthew, and his guests. People like the other disciples too. People like you and me.

For Jesus, ritual and social purity isn’t what’s important. In this story it is kindness. The kindness that shares joy with others. The kindness that energizes someone to “throw a party” and include others. The kindness that offers honour and thanksgiving to Jesus...because outcast hearts have been graciously healed.

Consider together:

In the gospels, Jesus is portrayed as gathering with others around a meal. Together, brainstorm a list of those occasions or stories. Why might such gatherings be important to Jesus?

Imagine your auxiliary is Matthew, throwing a dinner party for Jesus. What would be your menu? Who would you invite? What are some challenges you might face in such a project? How would you honour Jesus in this meal together?

In John 6:35 Jesus says *I am the bread of life*. Share ways in which this metaphor is helpful for us in nourishing our faith and confidence in Jesus Christ. If it is not helpful, why might this be?

Closing Prayer:

Holy God, we are grateful for opportunities to share with others the story of your love and faithfulness toward us. May your Spirit bless our worship, and our giving, on Mission Awareness Sunday throughout our Synod and beyond. May we like Matthew show kindness to

others in response to our joy in receiving your forgiveness and acceptance in our lives. In Christ's name we pray. Amen