

VOICES *Together*

DIFFERENT GIFTS BUT THE SAME SPIRIT

Voices Together dedication by Sarah Kathleen Johnson

We give thanks to God whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from age to age (Psalm 100). We give thanks to God for the gifts of worship and song that sustain us. We give thanks to God for the church that unites us as followers of Jesus across time, space, culture, and tradition. We give thanks to God for *Voices Together*, and for the hundreds of people who shared their gifts to create this collection of songs and worship resources for Mennonite Church Canada and Mennonite Church USA over the past five years.

DOWNLOAD

These resources are available online at <http://voicestogetherhymnal.org/resources/>, with permission to photocopy and adapt them for congregational use.

Receiving a new hymnal and worship book is a significant moment in the lives of worshipers and worshipping communities. In the weeks and years ahead, the songs and worship resources in *Voices Together* will accompany us through times of suffering and joy. They will shape how we enter into God's story through Scripture and the Christian year, how we share our stories with one another week by week and on occasions like baptisms and funerals, and how we live into God's story every day by joining God's mission of peace and justice.

Some may be excited to receive *Voices Together*, eager to engage the challenge of learning new songs and ways of worship and to discover new connections through these pages. Others may be concerned or uncertain, anxious about learning new songs and apprehensive about the unknown. Many will experience a complex mixture of emotions when facing a change so closely connected to our faith and life as individuals and communities.

Dedicating *Voices Together* is an opportunity to give thanks to God for the gift of worship and song and to commit ourselves to receive this gift in ways that honor God, one another, and our neighbors.

These resources have been developed to help your congregation dedicate *Voices Together* using one of three options:

- A Sunday worship service focused on dedicating *Voices Together*. The resources provided for this service may be adapted to take a contemporary, blended, or traditional form.
- A worship night or hymn sing apart from Sunday worship.
- A time of prayer and song to dedicate *Voices Together* in a worship service with another focus: read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7, pray the prayer of dedication, and sing either "Summoned by the God Who Made Us" or "I Will Sing with You."

This resource provides components that can be combined in different ways and adapted for your context. (*Voices Together* page numbers were pending at the time of this publication.)

- Scripture readings
- a prayer of dedication for *Voices Together*
- song and worship resource suggestions
- ideas for conversation with children, preaching, and visuals

Additional resources are available online:

- prayer of release for communities to use when *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, *Sing the Journey*, and/or *Sing the Story* are removed from a worship space
- additional song and worship resource suggestions
- sample worship outlines that provide several ways these resources may be combined



Sarah Kathleen Johnson is the worship resources editor for *Voices Together* and the editor of the *Voices Together* worship leader edition. Other members of the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee contributed to the creation of the dedication resources.

Scripture

Two Scripture readings anchor the dedication: Psalm 100 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-27.

Psalm 100

Psalm 100 is an ancient call to worship and song of praise. It affirms that we belong to God, and God is faithful to all generations. Although Psalm 100 is a corporate hymn of praise, the book of Psalms—the “hymnal of the Bible”—includes a wide range of songs that use personal and corporate language to tell stories, impart wisdom, and express a wide range of emotions, including lament and anger alongside joy and thanksgiving.

Psalm 100 may be read as an act of praise in the middle of a song set as a band or accompanist plays in the background, used as a call to worship, or read as a Scripture reading.

Psalm 100 is included in *Voices Together* as a Scripture worship resource. Printed in plain and bold type, the specific parts are not assigned. The parts may be read by (a) a leader and the congregation, (b) two groups within the congregation, or (c) two readers. Or the entire resource may be read by (d) one reader or (e) the entire congregation.

1 Corinthians 12:4-27

First Corinthians 12 reminds us who we are as the church—the body of Christ. Paul wrote these words to a group of Christians in Corinth who faced uncertainty and conflict as they navigated what it meant to be a culturally and theologically diverse community. Paul emphasizes that diversity is necessary—just as each part has a crucial role to play in the human body, each role in the community is essential. The Spirit baptizes us into one body. The Spirit gives us diverse gifts for the common good. All members of the body are essential and worthy of respect. We need one another to be the body of Christ, and we are united with one another as the body of Christ.

We often approach this reading with personal gifts in mind. Our many individual gifts contribute to shaping worship and to receiving *Voices Together*. Organizers, artists, technicians, storytellers, and more are crucial leaders alongside the musicians and worship leaders.

We can also read these words and think about the diverse communities that contributed to *Voices Together*. We need music and words from different cultures and theological perspectives, from around the world and across time periods, in order to live fully into our identity as the body of Christ. Each of these distinct expressions is a gift offered for the common good. Giving and receiving these gifts unites us as the body of Christ, suffering and rejoicing together.

First Corinthians 12:4-27 may be read as a Scripture reading if a worship service is centered on dedicating *Voices Together*. If the dedication occurs within a service with a different focus, consider having one leader read the Scripture worship resource for 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 (Scripture resource) before the prayer of dedication.



Prayer of Dedication

Invite participants to rest a hand on a copy of Voices Together while joining in this prayer of dedication.

Leader: As we dedicate *Voices Together*,

All: *we join our voices*

Leader: with the voices of those who taught us to sing and pray:
friends, family, church communities,
those who stand beside us, and those we have never met.

All: *We join our voices*

Leader: with the voices of those who go before us in faith:
16th-century Anabaptists and medieval mystics,
20th-century activists and early communities of Jesus-followers.

All: *We join our voices*

Leader: with the voices of those we know from Scripture:
Paul and Silas in prison, Mary overcome with joy,
Miriam and Moses, psalmists, and prophets.

All: *We join our voices*

Leader: with the voices of those who speak, and sing, and sign in many languages,
in communities large and small, urban and rural, emerging and established,
in many expressions of worship and music.

Leader: And when we struggle to join our voices, we pray:

**All: *for patience as we learn new ways of worship and song,
for understanding when we encounter the unexpected,
for forgiveness when we rush to judgment,
for wisdom in choosing what and how much to attempt,
for courage to take risks and to fail,
for faith that we are held in God's grace,
for hope that we can grow together as the body of Christ,
for love of God and neighbor strengthened and expressed
through worship and song.***

Leader: With gratitude:

All: *We give thanks to God*

Leader: for poets, composers, and visual artists
who help us sing and pray in ways that are both familiar and new
about changing realities and eternal truths.

All: *We give thanks to God*

Leader: for committees, denominations, and publishers,
volunteers, supporters, and donors,
for the hundreds of people
and the tens of thousands of decisions
that create a hymnal and worship book.

All: *We give thanks to God*

Leader: for the communities of worship and song that surround us,
filling our hearts, stretching our minds,
moving our bodies, and stirring our spirits.

All: *We give thanks to God for Voices Together*

Leader: and dedicate these books and the worship they support
to the glory of God, in Jesus Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

All: *Amen.*

Sing "Summoned by the God Who Made Us" or "I Will Sing with You" from Voices Together.

Songs

Choose music from *Voices Together* for the dedication service. When songs are included in both *Voices Together* and *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, *Sing the Journey*, *Sing the Story*, or another collection, choose to sing from *Voices Together*. Singing from *Voices Together* does not mean singing only new songs. The specific songs that you choose for the dedication depend on the songs that are already known in your community.

Choose songs from *Voices Together* in the following three categories:

1. Sing **songs the community knows and loves** that are in *Voices Together* and *Hymnal: A Worship Book* or the supplements.

- Include widely known and well-loved songs like “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee,” “Holy, Holy, Holy,” “Be Thou My Vision,” and “My Life Flows On.”
- Include newer songs from *Sing the Journey* and *Sing the Story* that have been widely embraced, such as “My Soul Cries Out” and “Nothing Is Lost on the Breath of God.”

2. Sing **songs the community knows and loves** that are in *Voices Together* but are *not* in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* or the supplements:

- Songs learned at Mennonite World Conference like “Akekho ofana/Hakuna wakaita” (“There’s No One in This World like Jesus”) and “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful.”
- Contemporary worship music already known in your community, such as “Oceans,” “10,000 Reasons,” and “Build My Life.”
- Traditional hymns like “O Lord My God”/“How Great Thou Art,” “Be Still My Soul,” and “What a Fellowship”/“Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.”
- Camp songs like “Be Still and Know” and “This Little Light of Mine.”

3. Sing **songs new to the community** that are being introduced in *Voices Together*:

- Three songs recommended for the dedication, discussed in detail below.
- Songs to consider teaching during the first year of introducing *Voices Together* (list is available online). This list is intended to provide a place for leaders to begin and to help build a common repertoire across communities.

We encourage you to include the following three new songs in a *Voices Together* dedication, whether it is a complete Sunday service, a time of prayer, or a separate event.

1. “Summoned by the God Who Made Us”

- This song was placed at #1 in *Voices Together* to set the tone for the collection. It celebrates our foundational unity in Christ as well as the diversity of gifts we have to share. It summons us to live into the justice and peace God asks us to extend to all humanity and all creation. It combines new and old in pairing an unfamiliar text with a familiar tune.
- The text is written by Delores Dufner, a prolific hymn text writer and Roman Catholic Benedictine sister who lives in Minnesota. (Intriguingly, the first hymn in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, “What Is This Place,” is also from a Roman Catholic writer, as is the first hymn in *The Mennonite Hymnal* (1969), “Holy God, We Praise Thy Name.”)
- The tune, NETTLETON, is likely familiar to many, as it is often paired with the text “Come, Thou Fount” (which is also included in *Voices Together*). It is an adaptable tune that can be sung with a worship band, folk instruments, organ accompaniment, brass, or a cappella. A range of options are included in the *Voices Together* accompaniment edition.
- A common practice is to write hymn texts and tunes in standard meters that have certain numbers of syllables and specific stress patterns in each line. This allows texts and tunes to be combined in different ways. Several tunes and texts are used more than once in *Voices Together*. (This is also the case in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.)

2. “I Will Sing with You”

- This song is an invitation and commitment to sing together despite and because of differences. It recognizes that this requires humility, will not always go smoothly, and that there may be conflict—yet “difference is a place where God is found.”
- This song was written by Mennonite writer and composer Nathan Grieser and has been sung at Mennonite conventions and assemblies before its adaptation for *Voices Together*.
- Originally written to be led from guitar, “I Will Sing with You” also works well with piano accompaniment, which is available in the *Voices Together* accompaniment edition.

3. “We, Your People, Sing Your Praises” (“Bon Berger, ton peuple t’adore”)

- This song sends us out to join God in revealing God’s new creation with courage, hope, and passion.
- Rebecca Mosley, a Mennonite Central Committee worker in Botswana and Tanzania, and Josephine Munyeli, a peace worker from Rwanda, collaborated on writing the words. They wrote the English and French at the same time for a conference on peacemaking in the Great Lakes region of Africa.
- Rebecca and Josephine set the text to a tune common across East Africa since at least the mid-20th century. After the publication of the song in a *Voices Together* sampler, Rebecca received an email from a contact in Japan informing her that the tune is ENDSLEIGH by 19th-century Italian composer Salvatore Ferreti. It is indeed nearly identical, although its oral transmission through East Africa has changed the melody and harmonies.
- The song may be sung in English, French, or both. One voice confident in French could sing the French verse before all join in singing the English several times. Sing a cappella or with piano or guitar accompaniment.

In addition to exploring familiar and new songs from *Voices Together*, attend to the function, topic, balance, and flow of songs in the service (for more on choosing music for worship, see the worship leader edition or accompaniment edition). Be sure to collaborate with other leaders and especially the preacher if songs are being used as examples.

Additional song suggestions related to Psalm 100, 1 Corinthians 12:4-27, and Isaiah 11:6-9, as well as songs to sing while gathering children, are available online.

Worship Resources

If your community usually prays extemporaneously in worship, prepare by immersing yourself in the Scripture readings and other aspects of worship known in advance (such as song lyrics and speaking notes) and by becoming aware of events in the worshipping community, neighborhood, and world.

If your community draws on words for worship written in advance, the following resources in *Voices Together* connect with the Scripture readings and focus of worship:

- “Christ Is like a Single Body” may be used as a call to worship, call to sharing and prayer, or response to preaching. Part 1 and part 2 can identify any two groups in the community, such as left and right, younger and older, or other options as suits the context and occasion. Avoid using categories that exclude participants.
- “You Who Open Doors and Dismantle Barriers” may be used as a gathering prayer or prayer for reconciling. It draws on the imagery of “one body in one Spirit.”
- “What Will You Offer the Body of Christ Today?” is an expansive invitation to receive an offering that draws on 1 Corinthians 12.
- “God of Power, May the Boldness of Your Spirit” is a sending blessing focused on gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Scripture Ephesians 4:1-6 is another Scripture reading that uses the image of the body to speak to the unity of the church. These words may be spoken as a sending blessing.

In addition to exploring familiar and new worship resources from *Voices Together*, attend to the balance and flow of the service.

Additional suggestions for worship resources that would be a good fit for a dedication service are available online.

Children

Gather with the children to reflect together on one of the works of visual art included in *Voices Together*. This practice is an adapted form of *visio divina* (see the worship leader edition for more about this practice).

Invite children to bring a copy of *Voices Together* with them when they come forward. Settle in, making sure each child can see a copy of the book. Others in the community can join in from their seats.

Tell the children you are all going to open to the same page together at the same time, and each of you is going to pay attention to the very first thing you see on that page. Instead of looking around at all the details, focus on just one thing.

Invite everyone to turn in *Voices Together* to *Tree of Life* by SaeJin Lee. Remind them to focus on the first thing they see—really take in one small part. Notice the details of that one part of the picture. Think about what is special about that small part for you today.

Which part of the picture are you focusing on?

Encourage the children to explore the whole picture and notice all the different parts. Look at every corner of the page, and right in the center.

What else do you see in this picture?

Tell the children that you are going to read a few verses from the Bible that describe how God wants the world to be. This is God's vision for what the world can be like. Invite the children to look for what the Bible verses describe in the picture. Read Isaiah 11:6-9 from a version accessible to children (such as a children's Bible or the New Living Translation).

Now what do you see in the picture?

Describe to the children how this is a work of art created by an artist named SaeJin Lee. She calls this work of art *Tree of Life*. Read what SaeJin writes about the work of art in the worship leader edition:

We gather at the Tree of Life, which was in the garden and will be with us in the restored creation. Around the tree we rest and play; under its branches we belong. It is our source of wisdom, and its leaves are for the healing of the nations. By the tree we need not fear, for the lamb rests in the bosom of the lion, and the child and the adder play together. By the tree we meet our friends—old and new, forgotten and familiar. And when we have gathered, we realize the tree has been with us all along. So come, friends: rest, play, and belong.

Tree of Life is one of 12 works of art in this hymnal. God can speak to us through music, words, and art about who God is, and what God wants the world to be like, and how we can be part of that vision. Invite the

children to look through the hymnal and see what other works of art they can find when they return to their seats. Thank the children for reflecting on this work of art and God's vision for the world together.

Preaching

Preaching connects Scripture with the life of a local community. Draw on Scripture to reflect on receiving *Voices Together* in your community. Recognize that individuals may have different responses, including an acknowledgment that for some, singing is not a primary spiritual expression or is not physically possible. Recognize that some of the songs in *Voices Together* will be harder for your community to receive, perhaps because of the musical style, language, theology, or other aspects of the songs. Recognize and celebrate that you will not sing some of the songs, but they may be sustaining other people and communities. At the same time, encourage the community to be open to receiving gifts from the wider church through worship and song.

Preaching ideas for a dedication service:

- Reflect on Psalm 100 with a focus on God's steadfast love and our faithful worship through the ages. How are we called to worship God in ways that connect to the past? How are we called to worship God in ways that connect with our present and future?
- Reflect on Paul's letter to the Christian community in Corinth, in which Paul describes the church as the body of Christ composed of individuals and groups with different gifts that contribute to the whole. How does this image of what it means to be church apply today to your local community and the wider church?
- How does *Voices Together* connect local congregations to the larger church? How does *Voices Together* reflect who we are as Mennonites in Canada, the United States, and worldwide today? How might it shape us into who we will become in the years ahead? How does worship and song bring us together as a church community? How do we share spiritual gifts through worship and song?
- What are the songs that sustain your faith that are included in *Voices Together*? Share stories about how songs have been part of your personal faith journey, the story of the local community, and the broader tradition.
- Instead of preaching, invite several members of the community to choose a song from *Voices Together* and share a story about how it is an

example of how they have received a gift from another part of the body of Christ.

- Locate the songs sung during worship or songs that are otherwise familiar to the community on a map and a time line. Where does each song come from? When was it written? What is the story behind it? This can be done through spoken words, using a map and time line on large posters, or by projecting the information. Often, two or more people, places, and times are involved in the creation of a single song. Check the details printed at the bottom of each page of *Voices Together* for each song's place and time. Sources for learning more about the background of songs include:
 - Hymnary.org (<https://hymnary.org/>) gathers detailed information about thousands of songs in hundreds of hymnals. Try searching for the first line, common title, or tune name.
 - *Menno Snapshots* (<http://mennoniteusa.org/tag/voices-together/>) is a Mennonite Church USA blog where members of the Mennonite Worship and Song Committee have shared blog posts about certain songs in *Voices Together* as well as background on other aspects of the process.
 - The United Methodist History of Hymns series (<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/history-of-hymns>) provides longer essays on songs often sung in worship. Search for a first line or common title.

Visuals

The most powerful visual element may be the presence of purple copies of *Voices Together* in the space, depending on how books are stored or distributed.

Additional options for visual elements include:

- Show a video about *Voices Together* (available online).
- Display or project visual art by members of the community that connects to the themes of being church, sharing gifts, worship, or song.
- Project one or more of the works of art included in *Voices Together* using the projection edition. *Tree of Life* by SaeJin Lee may be a suitable selection, although if it is being discussed with the children, projection may best occur during or after the discussion.
- Create a visual display of past hymnals and song collections, ministers' manuals, books of words for worship, and other symbols of the constant yet ever-changing worship life of the church.
- If *Voices Together* is dedicated at a specific event, participants may be encouraged to wear purple.