

SEPA SYNOD SEKUCO SUNDAY OCTOBER 4, 2009

WORSHIP HELPS LECTIONARY 27 - PROPER 22 EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

You and the congregation you serve are invited to celebrate SEKUCo Sunday with music, adaptation of liturgical elements, a temple talk, or sermon illustrations. We hope these worship helps inspire your imagination to come up with new ways to tell the story of God's work through global partnerships, universal concern for children with special needs, and the future of our planet.

Introduction: The Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA is a companion synod for the North Eastern Diocese (NED) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT). In October of 2007, the NED opened a new university named SEKUCo (Sebastian Kolowa University College). Supportive congregations from Tanzania, the Tanzanian Government, and delegations from Southeastern Pennsylvania and several European countries were present to celebrate the dedication of Tanzania's first university devoted to training teachers, lawyers, and business leaders who will be especially sensitive to persons with special needs. Nearly 800 students are expected to attend SEKUCo in 2009, only its third year of operation. Our Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod has supported this new college through individual and congregational financial gifts, fostering helpful relationships between SEKUCo and other institutions, and providing expertise by consultants and guest faculty.

SEKUCo SUNDAY 2009 is focused on children and ecology, two themes drawn from the mission of SEKUCo and the Lutheran liturgical resource, *Sundays and Seasons* (for October 4, 2009.)

Key Scripture:

Genesis 2: 19 – 20a ¹⁹So out of the ground the Lord GOD formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field;

Psalm 8

¹O LORD our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!—

²**you whose glory is chanted above the heavens**

out of the mouths of infants and children;

you have set up a fortress against your enemies,

to silence the foe and avenger.

³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,

the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,

⁴**what are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them,**

human beings that you should care for them? R

⁵Yet you have made them little less than divine;

with glory and honor you crown them.

⁶**You have made them rule over the works of your hands;**

you have put all things under their feet:

⁷all flocks and cattle,

even the wild beasts of the field,

⁸**the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,**

and whatever passes along the paths of the sea.

⁹O LORD our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth! R

Mark 10: 13 – 16

¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

Hymn Suggestions for SEKUCo Sunday

(emphasizing children, persons with special needs, global relationships, ecology, water, and hymns of African origin)

ELW 532 Gather Us In

ELW 641 All Are Welcome

ELW 819 Come, All You People

ELW 824 This Is My Father's World

ELW 740 God of the Sparrow

ELW 860 Waterlife

ELW 455 Crashing Waters at Creation

ELW 781 Children of the Heavenly father

ELW 715 Christ, Be Our Light (verses include "longing for water" and more)

ELW 595 Jesus Loves Me

ELW 444 Cradling Children In His Arm

ELW 764 Have No Fear, Little Flock

ELW 866 We Are Marching in the Light of God

Worship Helps for SEKUCo Sunday have been prepared by Pastor John Haugen, St. John's Lutheran Church, Melrose Park, PA on behalf of the SEKUCo Coordinating Committee of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod -- ELCA

OFFERING PRAYER

God of majesty,
in your might you have created all things,
and you entrust to our care what you have made.
Receive our offerings,
and make them a sign of our dedication
to provide for the needs of all people and creatures,
in the name of the one who sustains all things by his word,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Receive the Lord and live.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Loving God,
in this meal you sustain the weary and heal the broken.
May the gift of your word made flesh,
the body and blood of Christ,
inspire our tongues to praise you
**and our bodies to serve you, fully committed to mend creation
in the name of our** [delete **and proclaim to the entire world the**]
Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING OF COMMUNION

Holy God,
as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,
so your Son was lifted up,
that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.
Bless those who now carry your word and sacrament
to our sisters and brothers who are absent,
that all the world might be saved through him,
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

BLESSING

May the life-giving God, who sets us free in Christ **to love and serve our sisters and brothers
and all creation**, encourage you with the presence of the Holy Spirit and + bless you now and forever.

Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Remember the poor.

Thanks be to God.

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Children with Special Needs in Tanzania

Children are cherished in Tanzania, but families with children who have special needs face extraordinary challenges: resources for Special Education are rare in their country. Many families are forced to care for special needs children at home without help or training. They are too poor to afford appropriate services and too isolated from schools with Special Education programs. The North Eastern Diocese of the ELCT is an incarnation of the welcoming arms of Jesus, blessing special needs children with a school (The Rainbow School in Irente), an outreach program from Irente that has reached 500 children, and now SEKUCo, which is currently training more than 400 students to be teachers for children with special needs. Children with special needs are being brought out of hiding, and Jesus' affirmation of children ("It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.") is being re-enacted more and more often because of the efforts of Lutherans in the NED and those of us who support them. It is a holy mission.

A few examples of how the SEPA Synod has supported SEKUCo's mission: providing faculty (notably Amanda Grant, sent by SEPA Synod under the auspices of the ELCA's Division for Global Mission); providing additional faculty (thanks to Michelle MacLuckie) facilitating a relationship with the Volunteer Services program of the International Association of Special Educators; creating institutional relationships with KenCrest Services which hosted the head of The Rainbow School, sent specialists to Tanzania, and helped establish the computer lab at SEKUCo; and Financial Assistance (thanks to chair Susan Pursch and the SEPA Synod's SEKUCo Coordinating Committee for encouraging individuals and congregations) of \$350,000; etc. See recent issues of the SEKUCo Newsletter for updates on ways our SEPA Synod has supported SEKUCo's mission to train teachers for children with special needs.

Ecology

In 2009, 50 students will inaugurate a new field of study at SEKUCo: Nature Conservation and Eco-Tourism. These related disciplines reflect Tanzania's problems and promise. SEKUCo itself is located in a lush mountain setting, but is beset by difficulties in providing adequate water and electricity for its students and faculty. Still rich in some natural resources, others have been plundered by colonial powers. National parks attract international tourists at a rapidly increasing rate. The beauty of the country is everywhere evident. In Tanzania, as in our own nation, the Biblical mandate for humanity to "rule over the work of God's hands" is now understood as a mandate to care for creation rather than exploit it.

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Wallingford has taken on fund-raising for the purpose of solving the water problems at SEKUCo. Their gifts have helped, but the problems are still in the process of being addressed. Water is truly the gift of life for SEKUCo, both the waters of baptism and water as a daily necessity for drinking and hygiene. Visitors from St. Matthew's Lutheran Church in Chester Springs carried eco-tourism books for SEKUCo's library. Penn State University has partnered with SEKUCo in sponsoring an International Eco-Tourism Symposium on site in Tanzania.

Optional Edits of *Sundays and Seasons* Liturgical Resources to reflect the themes of SEKUCo
Sunday. (Red = new wording; Blue = suggested deletions.)

INTRODUCTION

SEKUCo Sunday focuses on Ecology and Children

The excerpt from the story of creation (as told in Genesis 2, today's first reading) provides the framework for all human relationships and for human relationships with other creatures. It is a lesson in ecology. All creation is endowed with dignity because God made it. All animals and birds, in this story, are given their names by our oldest ancestor, a powerful precedent for paying careful attention to all species. And, human beings are created by God for companionship with one another. The world of relationships is holy: of divine origin. In today's Gospel reading, Jesus affirms the holiness of children by welcoming and blessing them.

[Delete: Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?]

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + one God,
who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.
Amen.

Let us approach the throne of grace with boldness,
confessing our sin and trusting in God's mercy.
Silence is kept for reflection.

God of truth,
we have all sinned and fallen short of your glory.
We have turned away from you.
We have not kept your commandments.
We have not been good stewards of creation.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We have broken our commitments to one another.
We have neglected the poor,
and we have not welcomed all people in your name.
You know the fullness of our sin.
Forgive us, give us child-likeness,
and turn us again to you,
so that with trust we may receive the fullness of your mercy.
Amen.

Our great high priest, Jesus Christ,
sacrificed himself for us and for our sins.
In Christ, you are freed from your sins,
made children of God,
and **with all creation,** given a place in God's household forever.
Amen

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW)

Sovereign God,
you have created us to live in loving community
with one another **and all creation.**
Form us for life that is faithful and steadfast,
and teach us to trust like little children,
that we may reflect the image of your Son,
Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Lord of creation, with confidence in your abiding care, we are bold to pray for the world, the church, and all in need.

A brief silence.

For your holy catholic church, calling the baptized into service for the kingdom's sake. **At home, in Tanzania, and everywhere,** protect and nourish it with faithful leaders who trust in you. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For commitment to planting trees, renewing forests, **preserving species,** sowing seeds for plentiful harvests, [delete **that there will be enough for all,**] **and growing in our appreciation of all creation.** Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For all who represent us in church agencies and international organizations, that you bless their work of carrying life to broken people in broken lands. **Today we ask for your guiding hand to be upon all who work for SEKUCo.** Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For **children with special needs who do not receive the resources they need to live a full life,** the poor, the homeless, the lonely, those who are refugees from their own families as well as those forced to leave their homelands, that your love in our hands will help bring restoration. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

For grace to live with childlike wonder, offering our ministry to our community, that all may see how we can live together in love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

In thanksgiving for renewers of church and society (*especially Francis of Assisi and Theodor Fliedner*) and all our loved ones who live in the Lord, that their witness lead us to hope. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Lord of creation, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Amen.