

Service Sunday 2023 Compiled List:

Call to Worships

One: God, you have called us to a life of radical change.

All: We want to be the voice of radical change.

One: You alone have given each of us the gifts and skills necessary to step in and lend a hand to those who falter.

All: Strengthen our faith and make us able to live a life of radical change.

One: God, stir us out of our slumber and our preference for comfort and convenience to see that we need to move past what is convenient for us.

All: Compel us, Lord, toward a life of radical change.

One: Lord, help us to see with your eyes, the eyes of compassion and care, so that we can look on the troubles of the troubled and know that you are calling us to serve as you serve.

All: Oh God, keep us alert to your movement in the world so that we can live a life of radical change.

One: God, we know that we can depend on your Holy Spirit moving within us to mature us and make us more like you.

All: We want to radically change the world by loving as you have loved us.

One: May we join our voices and lives together as one mighty choir singing an anthem.

All: Here I am, Lord, send me! Use our voices, our lives, our gifts and talents, our faith and love to serve wherever you have called. Radically change the world through us!

~Brethren Disaster Ministries

Today is Service Sunday. This is a day to remember those who have served us as individuals. We admire those who serve our congregation. We celebrate those who work for the denomination and other ministries beyond the Church of the Brethren. Let us take a moment to silently name those who have served in the past and continue to serve us now.

[Silent moment.]

May these saints be an inspiration to us as we rejoice in the gift of serving others as Christ has taught us to do. Let the message today of selfless service move us to be the hands and feet of Jesus as we enter into this time of worship.

~Ben Bear, BVS Unit 277

One: Awake, arise, and gather. Come together to worship, to serve, and to grow in faith.

All: Arise? Some of us are weary and tired. Some of us are energetic and ready. We are so different.

One: Let us build up and encourage each other. Together we can find strength and hope in the scriptures.

All: The scriptures speak differently to each of us. We are different people, from different families and different lives. Our education, work, and way of living each day are different.

One: We are all God's children, different parts of one body. When we choose to live with our differences, the body becomes stronger.

All: It's hard to trust people who are different. We are afraid.

One: Through God's grace there is a place at the table of Christ for all of us, even in our differences.

All: If God accepts and loves us all, we should learn to accept each other.

One: When we help each other and serve God together we are brought closer to God and each other.

All: When we serve God by helping others, we feel more hopeful and closer to God. Let us come together to worship, serve and grow.

~Roy Winter, Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 183

One: Come and learn from the example Christ has set for us.

All: We have come to follow Jesus.

One: Give generously to those society has cast out.

All: We have come to follow Jesus.

One: Forgive your enemies and bless those who curse you.

All: We have come to follow Jesus.

One: Clothe yourselves in love and be bound in harmony.

All: We have come to follow Jesus.

One: Come and learn the ways of life.

~Hannah Shultz, BVS Unit 307

Prayers

Holy Creator God, breathe life into us, your people. We ask that you give us strength to be the powerful voice you need us to be, but we realize that powerful doesn't always mean loud. Sometimes powerful is simply the voice we need urge us to swim upstream, to combat injustice, to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. Please bless our hearts, our minds, and our words as you use us for good in this world. May we show the world your hope. May we reach out and show peace to our struggling neighbors. May we serve with open hearts. May we sing your praises for all that you have done and will do.

Thank you, God, for the blessing of a powerful voice for peace. We pray that we use it tirelessly for you. Amen.

~Deanna Beckner, BVS Unit 311

God of all humanity,
When you give us strong arms,
Let us use them to build houses for the unhoused.
When you give us deft fingers,
Let us use them to stir pots of soup for the hungry.
When you give us listening ears,
Let us use them to hear heavy stories.
When you give us swift feet,
Let us use them to play games with disadvantaged children.
When you give us sharp minds,
Let us use them to think up new initiatives.
When you give us our voices,
Let us use them to both shout and whisper for peace.
When you give us warm hearts,
Let us use them to love all your children.

~Amanda Orndorff, BVS Unit 324

Creator of the strong and the mighty, Creator of the struggling and weak, we are grateful for this time to give thanks for the gift of serving one another. We rejoice in the call you have given us to be spiritual shepherds for those who struggle. Your example of selfless love for all of God's children compels us to lift our voices and advocate for those who have yet to find the words or be heard. May we discover within ourselves the fortitude and gumption necessary to join in a harmonious chorus, singing a song that seeks to selflessly serve.

~Ben Bear, BVS Unit 277

One: Compassionate God, through loving us you show us how to love one another. Teach us to use our gifts and creative energies to build up others and break down systems of hatred and indifference. Inspire us to create communities of peace and justice where your presence is known. Help us to hear our call and join the chorus of many different voices singing for peace. Encourage us to work together as deep-spirited friends. Guide us in a spirit of harmony as we wade into the messiness of the world to follow Christ's example and lend a helping hand. And all God's people say:

All: Amen.

~Hannah Shultz, BVS Unit 307

Children's Story

Adult: Today's scripture verse asks us to ask, "How can I help?" and to pay attention to the troubles people are experiencing. Today we are going to "step into another's shoes" but exploring what refugees or migrants face when they are looking for a place to stay in another country like the United States.

Next, ask the children to either take out their shoelaces or remove one shoe. Explain that families at the border, which include many children like themselves, have their shoelaces taken from them before they are allowed to enter our country.

Have the children walk around the church to experience how hard it can be to walk without shoes that fit properly and how their ability to walk changes, and even how they look to others. Their gait changes and they may appear disabled or hurt to others. (If they do not have laced shoes, suggest just removing one shoe for the exercise.)

Have them return to the front of the church and share how it felt to walk without laces or with only one shoe.

Ask: What was it like to walk in a different way?

Ask: How can we help welcome people who are new to our country and community? [If there are organizations that help resettle refugees in your community, share some ways that those organizations are asking people to help.]

End with a prayer for migrants:

Jesus, friend, and brother, You and your parents know how it feels to leave your home and family, to carry nothing with you, to travel as a stranger. Help all refugees and immigrants far from home, driven out by war and hunger. Lead them safely on. They are our sisters and brothers. Help us to show our love and a true welcome. Amen.

~ Lisa Neuhauser, OEP Migrant Justice Organizer, and Marie Benner-Rhoades, OEP YYA Director

Poems

A sonnet from an English teacher at Hillcrest School, Jos, Nigeria

To teach, to learn, to know the kids advance—
There is a way to lighten loads and dance,
To hold a smile and say a word by chance,
A word that heals and soothes a friend perchance.

To kneel to pray, to give a hand a rest—
He hears, he calms, he offers love as blessed.
It's often hard and often long to go
But stay the course and bring the soul to tow.

Rise up, cheer up, pick up for tomorrow.
Sing songs, chant hymns, make melodies stir hearts.
Stretch wide, hold on, reach high, and then bow low.
Forget your sorrow, bear it though it smarts.

God holds you in the palm of his own hand.
Be buoyed and grateful, and take a stand.

~Judy Minnich Stout, BVS Unit 319. A note from the author: I served two years in BVS in Nigeria.

I was blessed

I was blessed with intelligence, so I intend to teach.
I was blessed with joy, so I intend to entertain.
I was blessed with love, so I intend to love.

I was blessed with community, so I intend to invite.
I was blessed with attention, so I intend to advocate.
I was blessed with ability, so I intend to serve.

~Colin Keiper, BVS Unit 324

God's Peace

God's tender love and peace
Is what we all long for
In a world so hopelessly chaotic,
So unstable and unsure

It brings stability to our minds
And calmness to our souls,
For that is what we desperately need
As this world can be so cold
We need to have God's peace
When turmoil's in our lives,
For God's peace doesn't depend
On the daily pressures of life

When we have those stressful days,
God's peace can often soothe
And bring us such a quiet hope
That chases away the blues

So when you feel the pressure on,
Remember, Jesus Christ,
Receive from Him the peace He gives
As His daily dose for life!

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Reflections

How do you hear God calling you? From a still quiet voice? A loud calling out? When's the last time you heard a voice from a burning/not burning bush? I have yet to hear God calling to me from a burning bush.

Many years ago, I was on a plane with a good friend when she said I should consider the Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) director position that was open. I knew BVS and had even been a volunteer in BVS. I live in the community where the BVS office is located. I had never considered working with BVS. I didn't know the position was open. But I was hired and was with the BVS team for almost 23 years. I guess it was a good fit.

That friend's voice was God's voice. God's call. I don't think I thought of it then, but after the 23 years with BVS and hearing about the many ways that BVSers have heard their calls, I know that God calls through people. I just need to listen.

Can God call from a burning/not burning bush? Of course. But I hear God's voice through people. How do you hear God's call?

~Dan McFadden, BVS Unit 152

The words we speak can have incredible power, especially when God speaks through us. We have the choice to use our words for good and not evil. We can choose to use our voices to speak for those who cannot, as Proverbs 31:8-9 instructs. We have the choice to be more than this world expects, to extend peace and love to all neighbors.

In Ezekiel 37:1-14, God speaks through Ezekiel in a vision where Ezekiel finds himself in a valley of dry bones. A metaphor for Israel's spiritual state, the dry bones symbolized the death of the covenant between the people and God, but they also were an image of the many deaths that occurred in the fall of Jerusalem. The hope of Ezekiel's vision was that God was bringing new life to the people, sending God's Spirit, and re-making them in a way to live in a relationship of love with not only each other but also with God.

God used Ezekiel as an instrument for God's work, speaking truth and new life to the people. May we open our hearts to God's Spirit so that we may be the powerful voice God needs us to be.

~Deanna Beckner, BVS Unit 311

In Proverbs 31:8-9 both verses begin with the word “speak.” At first, this may seem easy to do. We speak in our day-to-day lives; it is an action that is an integral part of our interaction with others. We know that we are inherently social beings, and so a call to interact is one that should come without any problem for us.

However, how do you utilize your ability to speak? Often, we trivialize this ability, relegating it to casual communication with those whom we come across; an avenue through which we share information, pleasantries, and criticisms, often of ourselves, sometimes of others.

But ask yourself this: what if we could elevate this ability? It is through speaking that we use our voices, and oh what a blessing it is to have a voice in a world where so many are stripped of theirs, stripped of what should be a fundamental right. Yes, we speak in our day-to-day lives, and in doing so perhaps we may forget the power that lies in that ability. Because in speaking, people use their voices, and history has various tales of powerful voices that have served to shape our world for the better.

Yes, to speak is merely an action that a large number of us can carry out without hindrance, and we often do. Nonetheless, take the time to realize what a treasure it is to have been blessed with the ability to speak, to have a voice in a world where millions have been silenced. How may we be more intentional in how we use this ability that so few are able to utilize.

And, in doing so, heed the words of Proverbs 31:8-9, “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and the needy.”

To speak is an act of service, and your voice is a powerful tool. Do not be afraid to use it.

~Susu Lassa, BVS Unit 322

Brother David Steindl-Rast, a Benedictine monk and renowned author/ lecturer, has said, “It is not joy that makes us grateful, it is gratitude that makes us joyful.” I discovered this quote while listening to a talk by Brené Brown, and I could not get it out of my head. Then, while I was reflecting on this theme it hit me: Miriam was so grateful to God for delivering her people that she could not contain herself. She took up her tambourine and began to sing and dance in honor of God!

As God’s children we need to take more time to recognize all the gifts God has given us. For adults this may come easily, but youth may struggle with it. Each person has a set of gifts and talents hand-crafted for them by God, but there are gifts God has given to all of us. Those gifts are our voices, our passion for service, our love of others, and our desire to seek justice for all those who need it. God has equipped us all with these gifts and it is amazing!

We have all been called to serve together, learn together, and love others together. It all comes so naturally when we are gathered on a FaithX trip or at a Brethren Disaster Ministries project site or in Brethren Volunteer Service, but once we leave those experiences we must encourage each other to take with us all we have learned.

Be grateful for the gifts we have been given. Go out with joy knowing God is always happy to see you. Be joyful in the work you do together. Go out and spread the joy of God’s love so others may understand and be grateful for the gifts God has lovingly given each and every one of us. Go in peace and continue to serve with a grateful and joyous heart.

~Liana Smith, BVS Unit 324

Scripture Jam

Adapted from Jeremiah 22:3-5, The Message

Speaker 1: God gave us orders:

Speaker 2: “Go to the royal palace and deliver this Message. Say...”

Speaker 3: “Listen to what God says, O King of Judah, you who sit on David’s throne—you and your officials and all the people who go in and out of these palace gates.”

1, 2: Wait, God said what?

Speaker 4: God told us to tell them, “Listen up! God has something to say!”

(simultaneously) 1: Ohh, right. 2: Gotcha.

3: So God said, tell them I have a message.

4: Now this is the important part—

2: Now’s the time to really listen—

1: Are you ready?

3: God said, “Attend to matters of justice.”

4: Pay attention to what is happening around you.

1: Be alert and ready to help when you see something that is wrong.

3: Set things right between people.

2: Rescue victims from their exploiters.

1: Don’t take advantage of the homeless,

4: The orphans,

2: The widows.

3: “‘If you obey these commands,” people of the city, “then kings who follow in the line of David will continue to go in and out of these palace gates mounted on horses and riding in chariots—they and their officials and the citizens of Judah.”

1, 2: Rephrase please.

4: If you do what I tell you, says God, all will be well.

1: Thank you.

3: But if you don’t obey these commands, then I swear—

2: God’s decree!

1, 2, 3, 4: This palace will end up a heap of rubble.

3: No rephrasing needed there.

2: That’s clear enough to me!

4: Heed God’s word.

1: Listen to God’s commands.

2: Help one another.

4: Be alert.

3: Strive for justice.

1, 2, 3, 4: And all will be well.

~Rachel Witkovsky, BVS Unit 295

Benedictions

Let us go from here with open eyes, ready to see the evidence of inequality in our own neighborhoods, workplaces, and schools. Let us go with open hands, willing to prioritize justice and peacemaking even as we navigate our busy schedules. Let us go with open minds, actively searching for the good in people even when communication becomes messy, uncomfortable, or inconvenient. Let us embody God's love for all. Let us go in peace.

~Cara Hudson, BVS Unit 322

All/Speaker 1: May you be troubled.

One/Speaker 2: Troubled by the troubles of others. Willing to stop when you hear a call for help and take the time to listen to the worries of another.

All/ Speaker 1: May you be steady.

One/Speaker 2: Steady in your unwavering service to those in need.

All/Speaker 1: May you be open.

One/Speaker 2: Open to the constant call to work for those who do not have a voice or whose voice has been taken away from them.

All/Speaker 1: And may you be warm.

One/Speaker 2: A warm hearth that others may take shelter in against the cold injustices in our world.

All/Speaker 1: May you be ready to serve with whatever tools you have.

One/Speaker 2: God go with you and surround you with grace in the work you do in God's holy name.

~Rachel Witkovsky, BVS Unit 295. A note from the author: This reading may be done as a responsive reading with the congregation, or it may be led by two speakers.

May the God who created you for such a time as this lead your path. May the God who came into the world in human form—not to be served, but to serve—guide you this day and every day to be God's hands and feet in this broken world. May the God who sanctifies warm your heart to reach out and work to heal the world's pain.

Go in peace, to love and serve our God.

~Nolan McBride, BVS Unit 324

In service we find our voice. In service we are able to present an example of who Jesus is to others. By serving with others our voices are magnified. Our combined voices can spread farther and be heard by more people. Together we can accomplish feats that alone would be impossible. Through service we are able to be heard, like a choir singing great harmony—all to honor and worship God. Go in Peace. Amen.

~Alex McBride, BVS Unit 322

On this Service Sunday, remember those who are in direst need. Put aside your own wants and desires and look for ways to help neighbors in this broken world. We are a people of service; a people dedicated to improving the lives of those around us. We are a people who follow the example Christ set—his radical ways of peace, service, and nonviolence. The words of Isaiah 55 ring true: “You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace.” A life of service brings great joy, peace, and love to all those who live it.

~Madalyn Minehart, BVS Unit 322