

*Gathering,* Pentecost 2 2023

Creation Time 1 to Reign of Christ Sunday

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Excerpted from
Gathering: Resources for Worship Planners
Published four times a year, Gathering is a worship planning magazine for ministers and lay leaders, music directors, and United Church of Canada worship committees. Subscribe or browse single issues at [UCRDstore.ca](https://ucrdstore.ca/collections/magazines).

## Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

## From Creation Time 1 to Reign of Christ Sunday

### Dates

Five Sundays in the Season of Pentecost beginning with the Sunday after Labour Day and continuing through Thanksgiving Sunday. Occasionally there are six Sundays in this time frame.

### Meaning of Name

Creation comes from the Latin *creare* and *creatio* meaning “to create.”

The root of Creation Time is in the liturgical Ember Days. *Ember* is thought to come from the Old English *ymbren*, possibly an alteration for *ymbryne* “period,” from *ymb* “about” + *ryne* “course.” Another possibility is that the name is derived from the Latin *quatuor tempora*, meaning “four periods or times.” *Ember* may also come from the German *Quatember*, translated as “quarter day,” a day of asking God’s blessing on the new season.

### Liturgical Colour: Orange

Orange is a warm colour, associated with enthusiasm, creativity, fruitfulness, endurance, and strength as well as with sunrise and sunset, fall and harvest, and the changing seasons, nature’s last burst of colour before winter. It is the red of passion tempered by the yellow of wisdom.

## Sunday

### Dates

Sunday is the traditional day of worship for followers of the Way of Jesus. It is a day to worship, sing, pray, and break bread together. Each Sunday is meant to be a celebration, a “little Easter,” and a break from fasting and abstention, such as during Lent.

### Meaning of Name

The term *Sunday* comes to us from Old English *Sunnandæg*, a translation of the Latin dies solis, literally “the day of the sun.” This was the day upon which the disciples discovered the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus. *Sabbath* comes from Old English, through Greek from the Hebrew word shabbat, meaning “to rest.” Sabbath is a day of rest or a time period of rest.

### History of the Sabbath

Scripture is clear that Jesus celebrated Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the Sabbath.

The change for Christians came about during the reign of Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century. Constantine became a Christian and made all the citizens of the Roman Empire Christians as well. Many pagan practices were Christianized or recycled into celebrations of the Christian God. Prior to their forced conversion, the cult of Mithraism or sun-worship was the official religion of the Roman Empire. It had an official worship day on the first day of the week,

a day set aside for special homage to the sun. This is where we get our name Sunday. Constantine tried to make it a little easier for his citizens by accepting their special day of worship, Sunday, instead of the Christian Sabbath that had been observed by Jesus and his disciples. Traditionally, the day is to be set aside as a day of rest and worship.

*Note: For background on Ordinary Time, see Pentecost 1 2023 issue, p. 9.*

## September 10 – Fifteenth after Pentecost

Creation Time 1 in the Season of Pentecost Creation invites: Delight in me!

### *Proper 18*

Worship materials for September 10 to October 8 were contributed by Oliver Dingwell, Cowan Heights U.C., St. John’s, Nfld. and Lab.

**Exodus 12:1–14**

Instructions for the first Passover.

**Psalm 149 (VU pp. 872–873)**

Sing to God a new song.

**Romans 13:8–14**

Owe no one anything but love.

**Matthew 18:15–20**

Where two or three are gathered in my name.

### Creation Connection

What song might creation be singing to God and to humanity at this time? What would the melody and harmony sound like? What words or sounds would be used?

### Spark

Relating to the Romans reading, invite worshippers to write down the names of people they encounter every day. These may be people that they know well or acquaintances; people they find easy to love or perhaps more difficult. Ask them to take the list home and pray for the people they named every day for a week. Encourage them with the reminder that they owe them nothing but love.

### With Children

Lean into the idea that Jesus is with us when we are gathered. Jesus is here this morning. Jesus is here when we eat together, pray together, play together. No matter how good or bad things are, Jesus is always with us, loving and encouraging us. We can count on that.

It’s back-to-school season and a time of new beginnings for many children: new friends, new circumstances, new teachers, new courses, new schools, new activities. New isn’t necessarily fun or easy. Remind the children that Jesus is with them. Invite them to remember that whenever they are nervous or afraid.

It may be a good opportunity to do a “Blessing of the Backpacks” to solidify this concept. It is especially poignant today to lift up the theme that God is with us always. Note: if you have no children in your congregation, invite the parents and grandparents to pray for students, teachers, staff, and parents. (See Seasonal Ideas and Resources, p. 61.)

### Sermon Starter

In this section of Matthew, Jesus talks about how we might resolve conflict. He prepares the disciples for the realities of ministry and the disagreements over all sorts of things, big and small, that will arise. It will not be easy.

We might know something about that, right? There is always something to argue about in the church: doctrine, budgets, programming, biblical interpretation, the colour of the carpet in the sanctuary. Sure, there’s always going to be conflict. Yet, Jesus reassures us that conflict is inevitable.

Yes, that is reassurance, because in the midst of conflict, reassurance makes conflict palatable, possibly even okay, and hopefully redeemable.

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

That’s an amazing thing, isn’t it? Jesus is there with us in the midst of it all. There is great comfort in this: no matter what we face, no matter what we’re arguing about, we have the assurance that Jesus is with us in the midst of it because we are gathered in his name.

### Hymns

Exodus 12:1–14

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

Psalm 149

VU 234 “Let us with a gladsome mind”

VU 714 “Come, we that love”

VU p. 888 “Earth and all stars”

Romans 13:8–14

VU 427 “To show by touch and word”

VU 571 “Eternal Ruler of the ceaseless round”

VU 593 “Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love” Matthew 18:15–20

VU 232 “Joyful, joyful we adore you”

VU 325 “Christ is made the sure foundation”

VU 389 “God is here”

VU 396 “Jesus, stand among us”

VU 479 “Draw us in the Spirit’s tether”

MV 14 “Where two or three are gathered”

## September 17 – Sixteenth after Pentecost

Creation Time 2 in the Season of Pentecost Creation encourages: Listen to my wisdom.

### *Proper 19*

**Exodus 14:19–31**

God parts the sea for the Hebrews.

**Exodus 15:1*b*–11, 20–21 (VU p. 876)**

Miriam and Moses sing the Song of the Sea.
or **Psalm 114**
Tremble, O earth.

**Romans 14:1–12**

Whether we live or whether we die, we are God’s.

**Matthew 18:21–35**

How many times must I forgive?

### ****Creation Connection****

How many times must the earth forgive us? What would the earth’s forgiveness be like?

### ****Spark****

Post stories of incredible forgiveness around the worship space, print them in the bulletin, or share them on your congregation’s social media page. It may be a story about medical debt being forgiven in the United States, a story of reconciliation, or a story about someone who, against insurmountable odds, chose to forgive. How can forgiveness be transformative?

### With Children

Ask the children the question Peter asks: “How many times must I forgive?” Guide them in guessing how many times Jesus said. When you arrive at something close to 70 x 7, do the math with them—490 is a big number! How might we forgive that many times? Sometimes it takes a while for forgiveness to stick. Sometimes what has been done to us takes a long time to forgive. (Note: Forgiveness doesn’t mean keeping someone’s bad behaviour a secret. We should always tell a trusted adult if someone has hurt us in some way.) We might have to forgive over and over again. Forgiveness frees us. What is that like? Why is it important? How can we practise forgiveness every day?

### Sermon Starter

Not seven times, but 77—that’s how many times I must forgive? sometimes read this and feel like this passage doesn’t take into account difficult personalities, those people whose names you dread coming across on your caller ID or email inbox. It doesn’t take into account estranged family, and troublesome neighbours. Is it supposed to cover politicians, too?

Yet, forgiveness is a central component of the Christian faith. When we get frustrated, fed up, annoyed with other people around us, we are called to forgive—for hate corrodes the container that it is carried in.

Jesus is not suggesting that people remain in or return to situations or circumstances that are harmful to them or quickly forgive those who have abused them. Jesus is confronting the things in life that we hold on to out of spite or pride, or for our own selfish interests. It is about the feuds that no one can quite remember how they started. It is about us being short-tempered with people who have done nothing to provoke it. It is about how we hold on to hurts and angry feelings that only harm ourselves. Therefore, forgiveness is not necessarily about reconciliation—healthy boundaries often may need to stay in place after forgiving—but instead, it is about transformation.

### Hymns

Exodus 14:19–31

VU 165 “Come, you faithful, raise the strain”

VU 449 “Crashing waters at creation”

Exodus 15:1b–11, 20–21

VU 266 “Amazing grace”

Psalm 114

VU 216 “Sing praise to God, who reigns above”

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”\*

“Israel went out from Egypt” Paul W. Quinlan (hymnary.org)

“Wade in the Water” Traditional African American spiritual (hymnary.org)

Romans 14:1–12

VU 581 “When we are living”

VU 589 “Lord, speak to me” Matthew 18:21–35

VU 211 “Crown him with many crowns”

VU 240 “Praise, my soul, the God of heaven”

VU 340 “Jesus, friend of little children”

VU 364 “Forgive our sins as we forgive”

VU 602 “Blest be the tie that binds”

\**or* “Guide me, O thou Great and Holy”

## September 24 – Seventeenth after Pentecost

Creation Time 3 in the Season of Pentecost Creation implores: Work with me!

### *Proper 20*

**Exodus 16:2–15**

Bread and quails to feed the people.

**Psalm 105:1–6, 37–45 (VU pp. 828–829 Parts One and Four)**

Make known what God has done.

**Philippians 1:21–30 For me, to live is Christ. Matthew 20:1–16**

Daily wages for the labourers; what’s fair?

### Creation Connection

How does creation feed us, physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally? Do we take more than we need to sustain us each day?

### Spark

In the Prayers of the People, give thanks for the grace-filled moments in life. Ask people to share moments like these: when a stranger showed them kindness, when they were given extra time to complete a task, when they were offered something they needed. Connect these grace- filled moments to the grace of the landowner paying the last hired workers a whole day’s wage and to the love and grace God offers to each of us.

### With Children

Explore with the children the idea of fairness. Share the gospel parable. The children will totally understand the complaint of the labourers.

Whether it is older siblings who get to stay up later, a classmate who gets special privileges, or a teammate who gets more playing time, the

children get this concept. Move the conversation from fairness to love. Some things may not be fair, but they are still the right thing to do, the loving thing to do. It is important to make sure people are cared for or have what they need, and that is what Jesus calls us to do.

### Sermon Starter

It’s easy for us as human beings to side with the early-morning workers, to exclaim, “That’s not fair!” But this passage isn’t really about fairness; it’s about God redefining what is fair and what is right.

Human beings are funny, though; we often perceive equality as a slight. If someone else gets the same as what we have, even though we, personally, have not lost anything, we suddenly feel entitled, and we say that we deserve more! We don’t think it’s fair.

However, perhaps our idea of what is fair and God’s idea of what is fair are two completely different things. For starters, unlike human beings, God isn’t interested in being fair—God is interested in being just.

And that justice means that all of us receive the same love and grace from God. God’s justice means that none of us are climbing a spiritual corporate ladder or are part of a competition for God’s love. By showing up early like some of the workers did, we don’t get more than the others and we aren’t considered better. That’s because we don’t have to earn God’s love. We all receive the same love and grace from God.

### Hymns

Exodus 16:2–15

VU 274 “Your hand, O God, has guided”

VU 460 “All who hunger”

“Glorious things of thee are spoken” *The Hymnary* 166 or *Songs of the Gospel* 51

Psalm 105

VU 217 “All creatures of our God and King”

VU 226 “For the beauty of the earth”

Philippians 1:21–30

VU 317 “I bind unto myself today”

VU 372 “Though I may speak”

VU 506 “Take my life and let it be”

Matthew 20:1–16

VU 227 “For the fruit of all creation”

VU 271 “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”

VU 478 “You satisfy the hungry heart”

VU 669 “Jesus, lover of my soul”

## October 1 – World Communion Sunday

Creation Time 4 in the Season of Pentecost Creation asks: Love me!

### *Proper 21*

**Exodus 17:1–17**

Water flows from the rock for thirsty people.

**Psalm 78:1–4, 12–16 (VU p. 792 Parts One and Two)**

God did marvellous things for our ancestors.

**Philippians 2:1–13**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus.

**Matthew 21:23–32**

By what authority does Jesus act and teach?

### Creation Connection

What are the sources of water for your community? How reliable are they?

### Spark

Fill the communion table with breads from around the world to show the diversity of the body of Christ. Include prayers from around the world in worship. Sing global songs, offering background information with each song to connect with the original context of the music. Make World Communion Sunday encompass the entire diversity of God’s world.

### With Children

Explore with the children the meaning of communion. Share with them the symbol of a common loaf and cup that represents our unity. Consider the ways we exercise that unity in worship: by eating and drinking together, by having an open table (everyone is welcome), by including people of all ages in the communion celebration. Talk about the importance of diversity and inclusion in God’s world.

### Sermon Starter

When Paul outlines in his letter to the Philippians what it means to be humble, he uses the example of Christ’s life. He is not describing a lifestyle that will likely ever garner much popular appeal. To be a servant of all. To suffer. To die an untimely death.

Paul’s words are surely still relevant to us today. In a world where our political leaders seem to exude anything but humility, this text speaks words of profound wisdom. We can brag to others about what we have, our accomplishments, or our families. We are, indeed, a proud people, and we can show that pride, but it needs to be put into perspective. We need to be made humble. We need to experience the humility of the gospel.

Paul tells us that the way of humility is the way of Christ. The way of the One who could have been a dominant force but chose instead to inspire with love and truth, who spent time with those who were the most vulnerable in society, who welcomed with open arms all those considered outcasts. This is the One who died on the fringes of society like a common criminal and was buried in a borrowed tomb. What would it be like if we lived Christ’s humility?

### Hymns

Exodus 17:1–17

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”\*

Psalm 78

VU 371 “Open my eyes, that I may see”

Philippians 2:1–13

VU 147 “What wondrous love is this”

VU 327 “All praise to thee”

VU 334 “All hail the power of Jesus’ name”

Matthew 21:23–32

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

VU 242 “Let all things now living”

VU 348 “O love, how deep”

VU 601 “The church of Christ in every age”

General/Seasonal

VU 457 “As we gather at your table” VU 460 “All who hunger”

\**or* “Guide me, O thou Great and Holy”

## October 8 – Thanksgiving Sunday

Creation Time 5 in the Season of Pentecost Creation pleads: Share my abundance!

**Deuteronomy 8:7–18**

God will bring you to a bountiful land.

**Psalm 65 (VU pp. 782–783)**

God provides; the valleys shout and sing.

**2 Corinthians 9:6–15**

God loves a cheerful giver.

**Luke 17:11–19**

Ten healed; one returns to offer thanks.

### Creation Connection

With a sense of humility as well as gratitude, acknowledge what creation provides around you. Take time to explore beyond the obvious. From how far away does your food come?

### Spark

If you have chosen to celebrate communion this Sunday instead of last week, invite people to join you in crafting the Great Thanksgiving. Begin the Sursum Corda (“The Lord be with you…”) the

traditional way, and start the body of the prayer by saying, “It is indeed right that we give you thanks and praise, O God, for our many blessings…” You can then ask members of the congregation to call out or sign the things for which they are thankful. Or you can compile the thanksgivings beforehand and write the prayer based on them. Either

way, it will give voice to people’s thanksgivings around the communion table. After the prayer, transition to the Sanctus-Benedictus (“Holy, Holy, Holy”) with whatever words are your custom, and continue the Eucharistic prayer as per your regular practice.

### With Children

Explore the idea of thanksgiving with the children. What do we do? What do we eat? What traditions do we have about this day? Pay attention to sharing some diverse cultural practices.

Explore the idea of thanking people. Who do we thank and why?

In the gospel, we receive a story about someone who thanked Jesus for helping them. Are there people in our lives whom we need to thank? People in our family, our church, our community, and our world? How can we show our thankfulness to them and to God?

### Sermon Starter

Writer Anne Lamott says her three most frequent prayers are “Help,” “Thanks,” and “Wow.” She even wrote a book by that title, *Help, Thanks, Wow: The Three Essential Prayers* (Riverhead Books, 2012).

In this week’s gospel, we receive a story that employs these prayers when Jesus encounters 10 people with leprosy on his journey from Galilee to Samaria. They cry out to him that first prayer, “Help,” and Jesus sends them on their way, and as they travel, they are made well. Only one returns to say “Thanks” to Jesus, and then he goes forth to live his life praying the last prayer, “Wow,” amazed at the new life he has received.

In our daily living, how often is thanksgiving a priority in our lives? Do we overlook our unexpected thanksgivings? Do we pray those prayers of help, while forgetting to pray the prayers of thanks and wow? By responding to God’s gift of grace that is present in our lives, we might discover that we are bearers of God’s love and hope in a hurting and broken world.

### Hymns

Deuteronomy 8:7–18

VU 519 “Sing to the Lord of harvest”

Psalm 65

VU 231 “I sing the mighty power”

2 Corinthians 9:6–15

VU 227 “For the fruit of all creation”

VU 518 “As those of old their first-fruits brought”

Luke 17:11–19

VU 560 “O Master, let me walk with thee”

VU 619 “Healer of our every ill”

VU 665 “Pass me not, O gentle Saviour”

General/Seasonal

VU 218 “We praise you, O God”

VU 236 “Now thank we all our God”

VU 516 “Come, you thankful people, come”

October 15 – Twentieth after Pentecost

## October 15 – Twentieth after Pentecost

### *Proper 23*

Worship materials for October 15 to November 1 were contributed by Gabrielle Heidinger Baerg, Courtright- Sixth Line P.C., Courtright, Ont.

**Exodus 32:1–14**

**Worshipping the golden calf.**

**Isaiah 25:1–9**

God provides a feast on the mountain.

**Philippians 4:1–9**

Rejoice in God always; again I say, rejoice.

**Matthew 22:1–14**

Violence at the wedding banquet.

### Creation Connection

War and violence destroy not only people and their homes, but also the lives and habitats of birds, fish, and other animals, along with Earth itself. This reality is brought home in *Babylon’s Ark: The Incredible Wartime Rescue of the Baghdad Zoo* (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2008) and *The Last Rhinos* (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2013), both by Lawrence Anthony and Graham Spence.

### Spark

Consider the painting *The Father’s Forgiveness* by Daniel Bonnell as you prepare for this worship. Also great for reflection and sharing is the poem “Forgive Me” by Mary Oliver, found in her collection *Blue Horses* (Penguin Random House, 2016).

### With Children

You’ll need a roll of painter’s tape. First, stretch the tape as far as you can down an aisle or across the front of the sanctuary to discover how far the tape extends. The far-reaching tape represents God’s love. Isn’t it amazing how far it goes beyond our reach? Then wrap the tape in a loop around the group of children. (If anyone is not comfortable with this, invite them to help you do the wrapping.) You might wrap it around at waist level of the gathered group, or you could wrap their wrists together. If possible, you might then wrap tape around the whole congregation or choir. How many people can be looped in? God’s tape (of love) is even longer than our painter’s tape. God’s one strand of tape (love) wraps us all together, no matter what.

### Sermon Starter

God’s love extends to those we might consider unworthy and prepares a table before us in the presence of our enemies. These stories confront our common ideal of human justice in which we believe that certain people deserve punishment, sanctions, or exclusion. The passages in this week’s lectionary demonstrate the difference between God’s all-encompassing love and our limited sense of justice. As in the parable of the prodigal son, God welcomes us back with loving arms, even when we are like the older brother and question the younger brother’s worthiness. The often-avoided Matthean version of the wedding banquet needs careful attention in exegesis.\* This text marks the beginning of several politically driven parables. Our interpretation needs to edit previous allegorical readings where the “king” of the story represents God. Instead, reframe it as a comparison between the king and the people in the story and the all-encompassing love that awaits in God’s kingdom. It is a contrast between the Matthew 22 and Isaiah 25 readings, the lived experience of empire and the eschatological kingdom of God.

\**See Luise Schottroff*, The Parables of Jesus, *trans. Linda M. Maloney (Fortress Press, 2006), pp. 38–48.*

### Hymns

Exodus 32:1–14

VU 112 “O God, how we have wandered”

VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

VU 356 “Seek ye first the kingdom”

Isaiah 25:1–9

VU 508 “Just as I am”

MV 48 “I can feel you near me God”

MV 84 “In you there is a refuge”

Philippians 4:1–9

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

VU 271 “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”

VU 608 “Dear God, who loves all humankind” Matthew 22:1–14

VU 286 “If you will trust in God to guide you”

VU 628 “Come, my Way, my Truth”

“Softly and Tenderly” by Will L. Thompson, *The Hymnary* 494 and *Songs of the Gospel* 73

## October 22 – Twenty-first after Pentecost

### *Proper 24*

**Exodus 33:12–23**

God speaks to Moses in person as a friend.

**Psalm 99 (VU p. 819)**

God is a ruler who delights in justice.

**1 Thessalonians 1:1–10**

We always give thanks to God for you.

**Matthew 22:15–22**

Give to God the things that are God’s.

### Creation Connection

In relation to the environment, how might we interpret Jesus’ instructions to “give to God the things that are God’s”?

### Spark

Consider the painting *The Temptation of St. Anthony* by Salvador Dali as you prepare for this service.

### With Children

You’ll need clear packing tape, pretend money, and a cardboard cut-out of Caesar. Tape the money to the cut-out so that you can’t unstick it without peeling off all the tape. This is Caesar’s money. Caesar was the king of the Roman Empire who ruled in Jesus’ time. He loved money so much he stuck it to himself so well that we can’t get it unstuck or get it back. Good luck trying to fight it out of his hands. Jesus reminds us: “Don’t bother with Caesar’s money! We have a better currency.” God loves us so much that we stick to God the same way money sticks to Caesar. God will never let us go.

### Sermon Starter

As Jesus became aware of the bigger issue of taxes and dues to Caesar, he recognized this was not a question about money but rather the temptation to be pulled into the drama of politics and become distracted from God’s work. Jesus could have easily fallen into the trap of political debate. Instead, he recognized the idolatry of Caesar’s face on the coin and in the currency itself. In response, Jesus modelled that we should stick with God, who loves us and our community, and not be tempted by money or Caesar. There is room here to discuss the doctrine of evil. The word Satan should be translated as “the adversary,” the thing that trips us up and gets in our way, the one who undermines our trust in the truth. Here, Jesus demonstrates how to maintain our principles in the face of temptation, working around an obstacle and adversary without a fight.

### Hymns

Exodus 33:12–23

VU 333 “Love divine, all loves excelling”

VU 391 “God, reveal your presence”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

Psalm 99

VU 220 “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

VU 559 “Come, O Fount of every blessing”

VU p. 822 “All people that on earth do dwell”

1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

VU 343 “I love to tell the story”

VU 368 “Holy Spirit, truth divine”

MV 154 “Deep in our hearts”

Matthew 22:15–22

VU 115 “Jesus, tempted in the desert”

VU 672 “Take time to be holy”

VU 694 “To us all, to every nation”

## October 29 – Twenty-second after Pentecost

### *Proper 25*

**Deuteronomy 34:1–12**

Moses dies and is buried in Moab.

**Psalm 90:1–6, 13–17 (VU pp. 805–806)**

O God, our help in ages past.

**1 Thessalonians 2:1–8**

We care for you like a nurse tenderly cares for her own children.

**Matthew 22:34–46**

Love God; love your neighbour as yourself.

### Creation Connection

Who are our neighbours in creation (birds, animals, water, sky) whom we need to love?

### Spark

Consider the work of painter Tyler D. Ballon. (See “Meet Tyler Ballon: The Local Artist Tackling Race in America,” available online.) Also great for reflection and sharing is Maya Angelou’s poem “On the Pulse of Morning,” found in her collection of the same name (Random House, 1993).

### With Children

Love is extra-strength sticky. It doesn’t matter what impossible force tries to break love. It holds together and sticks strong. Just like…duct tape! We get “stuck on each other” because we want to be around the people and things we love. We want to stick together forever. Grab some duct tape and stick something you love onto yourself. “I love chocolate! I want it with me always and forever.” Get a parent and child to volunteer for a duct-taped three-legged race. Sticky is the love that keeps us together. Duct tape sticks and holds things together. But we don’t really need duct tape to stick us with the things we love. And we don’t need any tape to stick us to God. We just love God with all our hearts, minds, and souls. That’s sticky love!

### Sermon Starter

Jesus recites the Shema, the central affirmation of Judaism traditionally recited twice a day. It stems from Deuteronomy 6:4–5, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” The prayer is a true reminder to orient ourselves to God and to love. What does it mean to have our entire being and motivation oriented to an all-encompassing love? It is a reminder that we love God and are loved by God, and that we are called to allow that love to motivate our being in thought, word, and deed, with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.

### Hymns

Deuteronomy 34:1–12

VU 612 “There is a balm in Gilead”

VU 649 “Walk with me”

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”\*

Psalm 90

VU 508 “Just as I am”

VU p. 806 “O God, our help in ages past”

MV 4 “All who are thirsty”

1 Thessalonians 2:1–8

VU 216 “Sing praise to God, who reigns above”

VU 574 “Come, let us sing of a wonderful love”

MV 179 “Sisters let us walk together”

Matthew 22:34–46

VU 232 “Joyful, joyful we adore you”

VU 541 “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”

MV 120 “My soul cries out”

“Love the Lord your God” by Jim and Jean Strathdee

\**or* “Guide me, O thou Great and Holy”

## November 1 – All Saints’ Day

**Revelation 7:9–17**

They will hunger no more and thirst no more.

**Psalm 34:1–10, 22 (VU pp. 761–762)**

Taste and see that God is good.

**1 John 3:1–3**

What we will be as God’s children has not yet been revealed.

**Matthew 5:1–12**

The Beatitudes.

### Creation Connection

Consider the painting Supper at Emmaus by He Qi as you prepare for this worship.

### Spark

If focusing on Genesis, project or display images of space. Images of the Pillars of Creation taken by NASA telescopes are inspiring. A playful congregation might smile if musicians played an instrumental version of Led Zeppelin’s “Stairway to Heaven” as a prelude. If focusing on Romans or Matthew, use images of so-called weeds, like dandelions mixed in with field crops. Or provide seeds of both weeds and crops. Can people feel or see the difference?

### With Children

Ahead of time, create name tags for each of the nine Beatitudes (e.g., “Hi, my name is Meek,” and so on). Then make pieces of masking tape that say “Blessed.”

Begin by placing the name tags on various children, with their permission, or on a large doll or teddy bear. As you do this, read them aloud and/or sign them. Explain words such as meek and merciful. Then discuss what blessing means. Say, “God is very near you now. God is supporting you and caring for you.” Then place a “Blessed” piece of tape over each name tag. This reminds us that God sticks with us, drawing near to those who need God most. Have a “Blessed” tape for each child. Share with the children that under the label of blessed, we are attached to a long history of the people who came before us and will follow us. We are all blessed.

### Sermon Starter

“Our living of the gospel makes us a part of this communion of saints, experiencing the fulfillment of God’s reign even as we actively anticipate a new heaven and a new earth,” A Song of Faith (The United Church of Canada, 2006).

Our faith documents call us to partake in the church on earth, to labour and pray in working to upbuild the communion of saints. Who are the saints, current and past, of your congregation? Of our denomination? Of the secular world? How has the church been handed down from one generation of saints to the next? Saints bring blessings as they remind us of God’s presence in the church and the world. You might reflect this week on the ways your church has attended to the celebration, beauty, and traditions of death and remembering the ancestors, or whether you have neglected them. Can we hold the legacy of the church, the saints, and the dearly departed in our memory to remind ourselves of our blessings, and so bless others with those reminders?

### Hymns

Revelation 7:9–17

VU 122 “All glory, laud and honour”

VU 210 “You, Lord, are both lamb and shepherd”

VU 473 “Let all mortal flesh keep silence”

VU 709 “O holy city, seen of John”

Psalm 34

VU 234 “Let us with a gladsome mind”

VU 636 “Give to the winds your fears”

VU 686 “God of grace and God of glory”

MV 194 “Bread of life, feed my soul”

1 John 3:1–3

VU 444 “Child of blessing, child of promise”

VU 602 “Blest be the tie that binds”

MV 35 “Holy One, O Holy One”

Matthew 5:1–12

VU 560 “O Master, let me walk with thee”

MV 12 “Come touch our hearts”

All Saints’ Day

VU 36 “Angels, from the realms of glory”

VU 334 “All hail the power of Jesus’ name”

VU 705 “For all the saints”

## November 5 – Twenty-third after Pentecost

### *Proper 26*

Worship materials for November 5 to November 26 were contributed by Heather Ferrier, Trinity U.C., Mahone Bay, N.S.

**Joshua 3:7–17**

Joshua leads the people across the Jordan River.

**Psalm 107:1–7, 33–37 (VU pp. 831–832 Parts One and Four)**

God’s steadfast love endures forever.

**1 Thessalonians 2:9–13**

Lead a life worthy of God.

**Matthew 23:1–12**

The greatest one will be the servant.

### Creation Connection

Today, the water flow of the Jordan River is much smaller than it was in biblical times due to diversion of water, climate change, and political wrangling. Explore the changes to the Jordan River and the Dead Sea.

### Spark

Make a display with rain boots, an open umbrella, a watering can, and a “puddle” of blue fabric. You might also add precut paper raindrops for writing the names of communities experiencing drought or needing safe drinking water.

### With Children

Show a time-lapse video of rain transforming a barren desert, or place a magic towel in water. You might also sprout a few dried beans in advance. (Place them in a clear container with wet paper towels, and bring dry beans for children to handle.) Ask the children to describe the changes made by the water. Water is refreshing, bringing new life and transformation to what was dry. Water is important to the health of all God’s creatures. How can we take care of our lakes, rivers, and oceans so that all God’s creatures can have clean, life-giving water? Ideas: Participate in a beach cleanup, take our garbage home when hiking or fishing, fundraise or advocate for a project that provides clean drinking water.

### Sermon Starter

As many churches will be observing Remembrance Sunday on this date, this week’s message could focus on the Matthew passage and the qualities of good leaders in times of conflict. Explore the difference between leaders who send their people into war for selfish reasons (such as ego and greed) versus those who seriously weigh the costs of war and are willing to go to the front lines and make sacrifices alongside their citizens.

An example could be drawn from the current war in Ukraine and the actions of the Ukrainian president, who encourages and inspires his people by remaining with them as they defend their country. As our communities remember the cost of war, what lessons might we take from the past about choosing good and wise leaders? What choices could we make today to ensure peace for future generations?

### Hymns

Joshua 3:7–17

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”\*

VU 657 “He leadeth me”

Psalm 107

VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

MV 144 “Like a healing stream”

1 Thessalonians 2:9–13

VU 387 “Loving Spirit”

VU 575 “I’m gonna live so God can use me”

Matthew 23:1–12

VU 593 “Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love”

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

MV 1 “Let us build a house”

General/Seasonal

VU 684 “Make me a channel of your peace”

MV 111 “A voice was heard in Ramah”

\*o*r* “Guide me, O thou Great and Holy”

## November 12 – Twenty-fourth after Pentecost

### *Proper 27*

**Joshua 24:1–3*a*, 14–25**

Joshua challenges the people to choose God.

**Psalm 78:1–7 (VU p. 792 Part One)**

**We will teach the next generation.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**

God will raise the dead.

**Matthew 25:1–13**

Parable of the 10 bridesmaids and the lamps.

### Creation Connection

The countdown is on: Can we mitigate further increase in Earth’s temperatures? Which bridesmaids are we like: the ones who prepared or the ones who waited until the last minute to get ready?

### Spark

As people gather before worship, play the “tick- tock” sound of a grandfather clock on a concealed speaker or display a countdown to the start of worship on your projection screen. Begin the service by asking, “It’s time for worship. Are you ready? Are you sure?”

### With Children

Invite the children to tell you how they get ready for picture day, a birthday party, or a snowstorm. Ask them what might happen if they weren’t prepared. Share the parable of the 10 bridesmaids with pictures or a felt board.

Explain that sometimes following Jesus requires us to be ready for surprises, and today we’re going to get prepared so we can help others.

Introduce an outreach activity that has been prepared in advance and that the children can complete during Sunday school. Options include preparing “blessing bags” for those in need (large Ziploc bags with socks, gloves, toothbrush and toothpaste, pull-top canned food, applesauce, wet wipes, Band-Aids, tissues, bus tickets, etc.) or making cheerful greeting cards that church visitors can bring to the hospital or nursing home.

### Sermon Starter

This week’s gospel and epistle passages touch on the end of days. Provide some examples of more recent doomsday predictions, such as Y2K and the predictions of cataclysm in 2012. Describe how people prepared for these dates and perhaps felt silly afterward when nothing happened. Explain that many early Christians expected Christ to return in their lifetimes and were concerned and disheartened as the years passed and loved ones died; the need to be prepared lost its urgency.

Considering these texts nearly 2,000 years later, our focus might not be on our eschatological hopes, but on the inescapable fact of our own mortality. What have we been putting off with the expectation that we’ll have time to make things right? Reconciling with a loved one, fulfilling a promise, volunteering, making a pilgrimage, answering a call to ministry? Will our legacy be one of action or an untouched “to do” list?

### Hymns

Joshua 24:1–3a, 14–25

VU 589 “Lord, speak to me”

MV 28 “God of the Bible (Fresh as the Morning)”

Psalm 78

VU 268 “Bring many names”

VU 299 “Teach me, God, to wonder”

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

VU 363 “Your coming, Lord, to earth”

VU 581 “When we are living”

VU 652 “Be still, my soul”

Matthew 25:1–13

VU 672 “Take time to be holy”

VU 711 “Sleepers, wake”

“Give me oil in my lamp” (Sing Hosanna) Traditional

## November 19 – Twenty-fifth after Pentecost

### *Proper 28*

**Judges 4:1–7**

The judge Deborah speaks God’s word to the general Barak.

**Psalm 123 (VU p. 847)**

We lift our eyes to you, O God.

**1 Thessalonians 5:1–11**

The day of God will come as a thief in the night.

**Matthew 25:14–30**

The parable of the talents.

### Creation Connection

How are people worldwide investing their talents, treasure, and skills in caring for creation? What are the good news stories of how these talents are making a difference?

### Spark

Make a stack of “gifts” at the front of the church by wrapping empty boxes in plain paper and adding bows. In large letters, write a different word on each box: *leadership, teaching, music, healing, generosity, patience, kindness, faith*. Add pictures. During the Prayers of the People, give thanks for the many gifts (talents) God has given to the members of your community.

### With Children

Invite the children to name women who are leaders in their community. (If needed, prompt them to think of a premier, mayor, MLA, MP, or school principal.) Highlight Deborah’s important role as one of God’s special leaders and prophets in the Book of Judges. Talk about how God has given leadership gifts to people of all genders.

Explain that women can be, and have been, leaders at every level of our church. With pictures and story, tell about the Rev. Dr. Lydia Gruchy, the first woman ordained to ministry in The United Church of Canada in 1936, and the Very Rev. Dr. Lois Wilson, the first woman to be elected Moderator of the United Church (1980–82). Using pictures or video from her installation, show the children that our current moderator is the Right Rev. Dr. Carmen Lansdowne. Explore the role of Moderator in our denomination. (For those in other denominations, consider examples in your denomination.)

### Sermon Starter

Are you feeling brave? Jesus delivers a parable this week in which risk-takers are rewarded, so perhaps now is the time to risk exploring your congregation’s financial future: What treasures have been entrusted to your community of faith? Are they being invested in the work of the church or squirrelled away to feed the furnace this winter? How does your community’s sense of purpose and commitment to discipleship align with their stewardship practices? We notice the master’s expectation that even a single talent will be increased, as well as the excuses for why it was buried in the ground. What fears and arguments do you receive from your community when they’re asked to take a risk or make a change? Do they believe they’re too few, too old, or too poor to try something new? How might you respond pastorally to those concerns without removing the sermon’s “teeth”?

### Hymns

Judges 4:1–7

VU 286 “If you will trust in God to guide you”

Psalm 123

VU 271 “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”

VU 371 “Open my eyes, that I may see”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

VU 585 “Jesus bids us shine”

VU 646 “We are marching (Siyahamba)”

VU 686 “God of grace and God of glory”

Matthew 25:14–30

VU 361 “Small things count”

VU 506 “Take my life and let it be”

MV 212 “Sent out in Jesus’ name”

## November 26 – Reign of Christ Sunday

**Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24**

God searches for the sheep, judges between the fat and the lean.

**Psalm 100 (VU pp. 820–824)**

Make a joyful noise all the earth!

**Ephesians 1:15–23**

May God give you a spirit of wisdom, revelation, and hope.

**Matthew 25:31–46**

When you helped the least of these, you helped me.

### Creation Connection

How can we join the earth in making a joyful noise, a creation-centred symphony?

### Spark

Invite the community to bring donations for the local food bank on this Sunday. Ask volunteers to arrange the boxes and cans into the shape of a crown as they’re dropped off or place them within the outline of a crown made with masking tape on the floor.

### With Children

Before worship, hide a variety of toy or paper sheep throughout the sanctuary. Begin by telling the children that you’ve lost your sheep and ask them to help you gather them. Once all the sheep have been found, ask the children what they would do to care for real sheep. If they’re stuck, ask what they do to care for their pets. Explain that Jesus cares for all of us, like a shepherd cares for their sheep, and that we can follow Jesus by caring for others. We can help to ensure that we all have access to food and clean water, welcome newcomers to our church and community, donate winter clothing, care for people who are feeling sick, and support those involved with the justice system.

### Sermon Starter

While the image of Jesus as a judge may be uncomfortable for some, it’s important to be reminded that there are consequences not only to what we do but also to what we don’t do. The passage from Matthew emphasizes that we are to love our neighbour through concrete action, helping those who are in greatest need. As we head into the giving season of December, we might consider which causes will receive our time, compassion, and donations in the weeks ahead: Who will be held up as “worthy” of help? Who will be overlooked or ignored? How do we make these choices? Consider how neither the goats nor the sheep recognized Jesus.

Have we thought critically about how bias and discrimination in our media and communities, and within our own hearts, has limited our awareness of the needs and injustices around us? On this Sunday, how will we challenge ourselves to expand our vision of God’s kingdom?

### Hymns

Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24

VU 273 “The King of love”

MV 126 “Are you a shepherd?”

Psalm 100

VU p. 820 “Make a joyful noise”

MV 2 “Come all you people”

Ephesians 1:15–23

VU 342 “You servants of God”

MV 146 “The kingdom of God”

Matthew 25:31–46

VU 579 “The church is wherever God’s people”

VU 600 “When I needed a neighbour”

MV 114 “Behold the face of Christ”

General/Seasonal

VU 399 “God, whose love is reigning o’er us”