



Legacy Giving Sunday

2017 Worship Resource

This entire resource can be used as it is or adapted in any way that would best suit your needs and those of your congregation. If you can't do an entire service on leaving a legacy, consider incorporating the stories in the sermon as a 'legacy moment' into a couple of services.

Preparation

- 1) Acknowledging the traditional territory of the Indigenous people where you worship is one way to live out The Presbyterian Church in Canada's Confession to Indigenous people and recognize that this land is their legacy. These resources can help you find information on which treaty and/or Indigenous communities to acknowledge:
 - aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100028574/1100100028578
 - native-land.ca
 - Contact nearest local Friendship Centre
 - Contact the Indigenous or Aboriginal Student Centre at a university or college in your community
- 2) Legacy giving is about values, mission and long-term vision. If you have not personally thought about the legacy that you'll leave behind, this worship time can be both an opportunity and a challenge to you. There is an option for anyone and everyone, regardless of means, to participate in the legacy giving ministry of your congregation (through gifts of life insurance, gift annuities, donations of stock; a designation in one's will; naming the church as a beneficiary of a GIC, RRSP, TSFA, etc.). For more information on ways to give and options for making a legacy gift, contact the Stewardship & Planned Giving department of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.
- 3) For the children's story, the leader will need to collect 2-3 items that speak of legacy to them. See the story below.

Possible Quotes for the Bulletin

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
Matthew 6:21; Luke 12:34

"And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8

“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.”
Wm. Shakespeare

“The power of the future lies not in the hands of those who believe in scarcity but of those who trust God’s abundance.” Walter Brueggemann

“You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve.” Walt Whitman

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Maya Angelou

“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare.” C.S. Lewis

Legacy Ask in Your Bulletin

If your congregation has a plan for legacies, consider including a legacy ask at the bottom of the bulletin. The ask should include an impact statement and invitation to give. The impact statement can reflect your congregation’s vision. An example:

“A legacy gift to [Name of the church] will help develop empowered and loving disciples of Christ, for today and tomorrow. Please consider making a legacy gift, now or in your estate plans. Thank you.”

(This impact statement is based on the mission statement of Knox Presbyterian Church, Oakville which is “Developing empowered and loving disciples of Christ.”)

If your congregation doesn’t have a plan for legacy or planned gifts, check out the new PCC resource to help you build one: *Setting up Legacy Funds and Endowments* at presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/resources. This electronic download contains sample policies and procedures to guide your congregation through the process of setting up and administering legacy funds.

Hymns: The numbers for the hymns listed are from *The Book of Praise* (1997). Feel free to use other music familiar to your congregation.

We approach God

Opening Words

Today is Legacy Giving Sunday. It is an opportunity to reflect on what legacy means to us and the church.

The Bible is full of stories of people who left legacies. The teachings of Jesus and the church today are part of God's gift – and legacy – to the world. If we think of a legacy as the imprint we leave on the world and the people around us, then everyone leaves a legacy simply by living their lives. From the minute-old infant to the decades-old elder, everyone touches the lives of others in a kaleidoscope of ways along the journey. We are woven into the fabric and memories of our families and friends, communities, society and the culture in which we find ourselves – as were our ancestors and generations past.

By leaving imprints of God's love, our legacies become part of living out God's mission to the world.

Call to worship

Adapted from Psalm 90:1-8

As we gather for worship, we remember that you, God, have been our dwelling place, in all generations.

Eternal God, before the mountains were, you were. As the earth and this world were formed, we were gifted with abundant and ever-lasting beauty. From star-lit skies to dew on morning grass.

God, you have gifted us with unique talents, with one another, and with your son, Jesus Christ, that we might know you more completely.

In Christ, your giving spirit knows no limits – with those who have gone before us, with us today, and with the generations of tomorrow.

Let us worship God, whose abundant grace never fades with the years nor with the evening's radiant sunset.

Hymn #814 – Morning has broken

OR

Hymn #434 – For the beauty of the earth

Prayer of Adoration & Confession

Adoration

God of life, your spirit fills us beyond measure.

We praise your holy name.

God of endless giving, it is in you that we find hope to sustain us and healing to help us in our darkest hours.

We praise your holy name.

God of patience we are humbled as you wait on us to be your people.

We praise your holy name.

God of mercy and peace, you give us courage to break down barriers and walls that divide us within ourselves, with neighbours and strangers alike.

We praise your holy name.

God of eternity, your legacy of love for us cannot be measured.

We praise your holy name.

Confession

Holy Mystery, we confess that we are not the people we'd like to think we are. We often squander the precious gifts and talents you have given us. We regularly lose our way. Forgive those times when we have been ungrateful, and when spiritual blindness has prevented us from appreciating all that you have entrusted to us. From the tender heart of the person sitting next to us to the stranger we've never met. From the sunrise to its setting. From the babbling brooks, running rivers and majestic landscapes. Forgive us when we take without giving; when we reap without sowing. Open our eyes and hearts to see the many gifts we've received. Use our voices to speak out and to give praise. Open our hands that we will give even as we receive. And may we tread lightly on the land below our feet as we follow a path that leads us to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Promise of Forgiveness / Assurance of Pardon

The Lord's steadfast love and unending compassion are greater than we can possibly know or imagine. These are unconditional gifts. All that you would ask forgiveness for is now forgiven. Accept God's forgiveness. And forgive one another. Amen.

Children's Time

***Bring 2-3 things which represent a legacy that has been left to you by different people (grandparent, teacher, friend.) Think of a story that you treasure as well – a memory that has been left to you (about a grandparent, family member, friend, etc.)*

Good morning!

This morning I want to show you some of my favorite treasures that people have given to me.

(Show the children each thing you have brought, one at a time, and share who gave it to you and why it is important to you).

I have another treasure to share. But I don't exactly have it here with me. *(Show empty hands.)* Can you guess what it is?

It's a memory – something I treasure very much. *(Share story.)*

Can you think of something important that your grandparents, parents, family or friends have given to you? Why do you like it?

Today in church we are talking about the word "legacy". A legacy is something that we give to others that they will cherish, often long after we don't see them anymore.

Leaving a legacy is a way of being remembered.

A legacy can be a story, a memory, or an object. It can be given to us by people we know or by someone we've never met before. It has a lasting impact, long beyond when it was given, and often beyond the giver's life time.

Sometimes a legacy is a gift of money given to family or friends, but it can also be given to the church, a school or a hospital – in order to make a difference in the world.

As Christians, we are taught to be generous and share what we have with others. And when we live our lives the way Jesus taught us to live them – by being kind, loving others, and helping people – we are leaving a legacy.

When you go home today, think about something that was left to you or a special memory you have and maybe tell your parents or a friend about it.

Let us pray:

Dear God, thank you for all of the people who have left a legacy for us in their words and actions. We know that our sharing helps others but it also helps us know you better. We ask that you help us share love and kindness with everyone we meet. This is our legacy. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hymn #500 – Open my eyes that I may see

We hear God's Word

Prayer for Understanding / Prayer for Illumination

Lord, your Word is one legacy you set before us. Give us the grace to receive your truth with faith and love that it might illuminate our path of understanding and grant us wisdom for our journey; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Genesis 12:1-3

Psalm 90: 1-8 (9-11), 12

Matthew 25: 14-30

Sermon/Message: The Good and Faithful Servant

Main Theme:

We are stewards, not owners, of what God entrusts to us. Possessions and consumerism are the greatest challenges of our time. This sermon invites us to consider how we can use our accumulated assets and possessions to be generous and faithful servants while we are living and after our death.

Notes for the preacher:

This sermon is meant to be a seed – modify, change, personalize, condense, or expand it so that it may be spoken in your voice and suit the context of your congregation. Use examples of generosity from the history of your congregation to remind worshippers that legacy giving is not just an idea or opportunity to embrace, but rather a reality that has been part of their identity throughout their history and been left by those who have gone before them. For example, a church building constructed of stone can exist because its founders had a vision for ministry that would last hundreds of years beyond themselves.

Text:

The Good and Faithful Servant

Based on Matthew 25: 14-30 – *The Parable of the Talents*

A parable is a story meant to convey or illuminate a truth that is often not immediately understood by the audience or the reader. The Gospel of Matthew 25:14-30 is often referred to as the parable of the talents, though some translations call it the parable of the bags of gold. What is Jesus trying to tell us and how does it relate to legacy?

In this story, the master gives three servants some property to manage on his behalf. We are told he gives one servant five talents, another two and another one – “each according to their ability.”

When the master returns, he is quite pleased that two servants took their talents and multiplied them – returning double to the master. However, he is dismayed that the servant who had one talent buried it in the ground.

At first read, one might think this parable is about growing your money, and indeed, it is sometimes used at financial planning and wealth management seminars to

encourage or justify the building up and accumulation of wealth and possessions. It's easy to understand why.

Sometimes people don't think this is about money at all and focus on the message that people should be industrious, work hard and to use their God-given talents, skills and abilities to make a better life for themselves and those around them. And it's easy to understand this reasoning too.

Let's look deeper and see what we discover about what Jesus is really talking about.

The Greek word for talent is *talanton*. It has two equal meanings: that which is weighed, and a sum of money used by ancient Romans and Greeks.¹ Jewish sources explain that the word for talent is *kikkar*². It was worth about 3000 silver coins and weighed approximately 95 pounds. A *kikkar* is the largest unit of weight in the Bible. A single talent would be equal to 15 years of earnings for a labourer.

To give you an even better sense of the kind of money we are talking about, the average Canadian earned about \$50,000 in 2016³. If we multiply that by 15 years of labour, the sum of one talent would be \$750,000. So, in the world in which Jesus lived and preached, a single talent was quite a weighty sum of money. The servants who received two and five talents received today's equivalent of \$1.5 million and \$3.75 million respectively. And even the servant who received one talent, received \$750,000! So, not only is the text talking about money, it's the kind of money that most people would never earn in their lifetime. Think about this for a moment.

What if three people here this morning were given these sums of money? What would you do with it? Would you put it in the stock market, trying to double it? Or buy a home to renovate, flip and double the original investment? Would you deposit it in the bank? Or would you hide it in a coffee can in the freezer?

The third servant buried his money in the ground. And the master was furious with him. He called him lazy. He scorns him and shunned him for keeping his money safe. I'm not sure why he isn't more empathetic. I don't know about you, but I'd have been cautious too if I were asked to look after \$750,000 on behalf of someone else. How else could I guarantee it wouldn't be lost? Sure, I could have put it in the bank, but would the interest really make that much difference – and the master already had lots of resources. Why such a scolding if this parable isn't about financial gain or financial success?

There are two other details in the story that can give us clues. First, we are told each servant was given the money according to their abilities. So the master may have known that the first and second servant would take more risk – perhaps they had entrepreneurial spirits, or experience in making money. He might have known that the third servant was more cautious, – but that it was possible for him to do something with the money – the servant could have at least invest his talent in the bank it could earn a little interest. When the servant buried the money in the ground, it is almost as if he was

¹ Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (USA: University of Chicago Press) 2001.

² Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (USA: Clarendon Press, revised ed.) 1995; *The Jewish Virtual Library* – www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org; and *Chabad on-line* - www.chabad.org

³ Stats Canada

scared to admit – or wanted to deny - that he had been entrusted with any of the master's goods, he didn't even put it in the bank.

The second thing we learn is that the third servant sees the master as “a harsh man”. Perhaps that is also key. The third servant only saw bad things about the master and he was fearful. He didn't see the master's abundance or generosity, only judgment and wrath, and so he didn't recognize the generosity of the master or the responsibility the master was giving him – nor the opportunity to share in his joy.

These Master's gifts - the five talents, two talents and even the one talent – were so exaggerated in the ancient world that people would have known that the story had more significance to it than just a lesson about making money.

I think this story is about how we use or don't use the resources we've been given to advance God's work in the world. The money in the context of this story symbolizes both a huge amount of potential and God's generosity. Will we be faithful stewards and put the resources God has given us to work helping others? Or will we allow our fear of scarcity, our need for financial security to overtake us – to the point that we deny that God has given us anything?

Today material possessions and money in the bank can make us feel like we are owners of our resources: I own my home, I own my cottage, I own my car, and all my other things. In our consumer society, with messages like, “freedom 55” and “because you're worth it”, we are repeatedly told that we deserve to accumulate wealth. The accumulation of possessions makes us feel safe and secure, and may even provide meaning for our lives. The truth is, building up our wealth and buying more stuff for the sake of it – even if it was “earned” by our labour – is as good as burying our talents.

This parable is about creating a different world. It's about realizing the extravagant generosity and graciousness of God. Remember, like the servants, we are stewards; caretakers of what we've been given. As followers of Christ Jesus we are called to live out the gospel – not to idly bury our treasures in the ground. We can use our resources to show people what God is all about – so that they will know God's love. In the end, if we haven't shared our resources and blessings, what good are they?

What if we take this parable in context with the other teachings of Jesus? Will we use our treasures to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, offer shelter, treat others with the same grace and unearned kindness that God has shown to us?

The servants in the parable who grew their talents were not growing them for their own sake. They put their gifts to work and returned to the master more than they'd been given. God provided unimaginable abundance and the first two servants responded in turn by creatively generating more abundance and returning it to the source. They were given more and were invited to enter “the joy of their master”. The third servant was scared. He didn't see the master as abundant and giving, but as ruthless and taking. He didn't see that the resources were given to him as an opportunity to do the master's work.

So, how can we be faithful servants? We recognize that God has given us many gifts: time, talent and money, and also opportunities to do creative things with all we've earned or achieved, according to the values Jesus taught: loving our neighbor, caring for the marginalized, the vulnerable, the outcasts in our midst with our skills, talents and our money.

The parable challenges us to grow our wealth and accumulate possessions for the right reasons. Part of doing God's work and stewarding generosity is being responsible to the people in our lives. We should take care of family, friends and others we care about. But we should also recognize that there are opportunities to do more. There is enough for all.

The legacy of being a faithful servant is also about how we'll be remembered – whether we have lived an abundant and generous life, or one of scarcity and fear. And, when our lives are finished, each of us must decide what will happen to our possessions. It's our final chance to act in this life and it gives us a blessed opportunity. If we don't make decisions about how our estate will be used, the government will make them for us – distributing our assets by a formula that doesn't necessarily represent our values. With good planning, we can look after our families and leave a legacy that puts God's resources to work.

Let me share with you a story about Presbyterians who have used their resources – while they were alive and in their deaths – to create legacies that continue God's mission.

Choose One Story (OR - insert a story of legacy, generosity and abundance from your own congregation that will inspire your members).

Priorities for Mission

David and Margaret Craig are devoted Presbyterians who live in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Both have served their church and community for many decades. Their interest in, and commitment to, putting mission into action was greatly influenced by their families' involvement in the church, Women's Missionary Society, Atlantic Mission Society and other charitable and community service organizations.

The Craigs are also visionaries. Over the decades they have given generously to the congregations that they have been part of, but wanted to do more. In July 2015, in gratitude for all their blessings, with prayerful planning and help from the Presbyterian Church in Canada and a financial planner, they established the *Priorities for Mission Fund* to provide seed money for the mission priorities of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, both now and in the future.

They began this fund by making an initial gift of stocks, and they plan to support it after they die through a bequest and with a gift of life insurance. The fund is their living legacy to a church they love, which will grow beyond their lifetimes. They share, "Christ gave and continues to give to us. His love inspires us to give. In giving we receive life abundant, which is transforming us and inspires us to give even more."

Others may be inspired to give to the fund as well. In fact, Margaret's parents made a generous gift through their estate.

This year the fund supported two healing and reconciliation initiatives. It helped indigenous women attend the Presbyterian Church's women's gathering in May and supported the training of 30-50 ambassadors for healing and reconciliation. The Craigs' living legacy has benefited both indigenous and non-indigenous people working together for healing – and is carrying out God's work in the world.

The Raw Carrot

Several years ago, George Van Beek gave a gift of stock to the national church to fund new experimental ministries. George and his wife Evelyn contributed to this fund during their lives, and then left generous bequests in their wills. These gifts have been making dreams come true across the denomination.

One of these dreams was to change the world, one bowl of soup at a time. In 2013, Rebecca Sherbino and Colleen Graham of Paris Presbyterian Church in Ontario dreamed of hiring people on the margins –people on social assistance; people with various abilities and skills; people who experienced significant barriers to employment – to make and sell healthy, locally sourced, homemade soups and stews.

With support from their congregation and The Presbyterian Church in Canada, Rebecca and Colleen worked to realize their dream. The Raw Carrot Soup Enterprise received financial support from the legacy gifts of generous Presbyterians. By mid-2015 The Raw Carrot was selling about 100 litres of soup per week. If one litre of soup feeds about four people, then in 2015, this non-profit, social-justice-focused outreach ministry fed 20,800 people with 5,200 litres of soup!

There are seven full-time staff who would otherwise not have full employment. Through their work they gain dignity, community and employment. They are faithfully living out service to Christ – and they make absolutely delicious soup! The Raw Carrot has been so successful that it is expanding, with pop-up shops around south-western Ontario and beyond.

George and Evelyn lived out their lives faithfully by using their possessions to do God’s work in the world and to leave a legacy. Their gift has multiplied. Their legacy is making dreams happen, and changing lives.

Conclusion

Every gift given – no matter how big or how small - has the ability to impact more lives and carry out more of God’s mission and ministry in our church and the world than we could ever imagine on our own. Imagine what we can transform our accumulated assets into!

We all have more than we think we’ve been given. We need to use all of our resources prayerfully and wisely. When we put our resources to good use in God’s work and don’t bury them needlessly, we will surely hear these words from the master, “Well done good and faithful servant.”

Amen.

Hymn after message #689 – Simply trusting every day

We Respond to God's Word

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession / Prayers of the People

Abundant God, your giving knows no end:

We thank you for the gift of life. As we breathe help us inhale peace and exhale worry.

We thank you for what is known and unknown that abounds throughout your creation – help us to truly care for such a legacy of beauty and wonder.

We thank you Lord, for all ancestors – help us appreciate their gifts passed down to us, those that were given with love and those given with challenge.

We thank you for community, for family and friends, strangers and companions on the journey – help us unfurl our fingers and open our hands to give and receive support more generously.

We thank you for the unbridled joy and laughter we witness in the young and young at heart amongst us – help us enjoy these gifts and share our own joys lavishly with others.

We thank you for the gifts of those who labour in a kaleidoscope of ways across our communities and around the world– helps to be filled with sincere appreciation and gratitude.

Ever Loving God, you who have knitted your people together - you know where the edges in our lives and our world are fraying and where they are strong and resilient. You know the depths of our delights and our sorrows. We come to you in prayer and ask that you look upon us with mercy.

We pray for all those whose burdens and struggles are heavy. In the silence of our own hearts we name those we are thinking of this day ...

We pray for all people and countries in conflict that they may come to know your justice and be at peace; and that leaders will use their power wisely. In the silence of our own hearts we name those peoples and countries we are thinking of this day ...

We pray for those who are grieving, mourning and are bereaved. May each person be lifted on wings of love and hope and receive your healing and comfort. In the silence of our own hearts we name those we are thinking of this day ...

Compassionate One, where lives are torn apart, and where resentments and misunderstandings linger, we ask you to spread your healing balm of forgiveness over all wounds. In the silence of our own hearts we name those in our lives who need your healing power this day ...

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father ...

Call for the Offering

Christian stewardship involves faithfully managing all the gifts which God has blessed us with – time, talents, skills, and money – including earned, accumulated, and inherited. It also requires caring for creation, with the heart, mind and love of God. By participating in God's mission in the world, we have the opportunity to give back some of what we've been given. I invite you to offer your gifts and tithes – whether through our offering plate, by pre-authorized remittance, (or by visiting our website)*. The offering will now be received.

*Note: Invite digital giving participation only if people are able to donate via your congregation's website. If you do not have a digital giving capability, leave this out.

Offertory Hymn #306 – Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, we dedicate these, our offerings and the whole of our lives to be put to work in your service. We acknowledge that all creation belongs to you and that we are not owners but are your faithful stewards. Guide us to be responsible with all of our abundance so that we might live in right relationship; live justly and generously, and model our lives after your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Closing Hymn #663 – God, whose giving knows no ending

Benediction / Blessing / Commissioning

Our service of worship has come to an end but not our praise, prayers or generosity for one another, all creatures great and small, and for our planet. You are called to go from this place and share with all you meet something of what God has blessed you with. This broken and hurting world needs the gifts, talents and abilities you have to offer. Don't bury them – share them abundantly. Go now in Peace. In Christ's name. Amen.

The 2017 Legacy Giving Sunday worship service was written by Janice Meighan, the Presbyterian Church in Canada's Development Manager for Stewardship & Planned Giving.