



# Legacy Sunday

## Stepping Forward in Faith

This worship resource can be used on Legacy Sunday (the third Sunday in November), or any Sunday you wish to designate. Feel free to use or adapt all or part of this resource.

### Preparation

#### **Why celebrate Legacy Sunday?**

Everyone can leave a legacy. The Presbyterian Church in Canada sets aside one Sunday a year as Legacy Sunday, giving worshippers an opportunity to think about the long-term impact of their gifts of time, talent and treasure. Legacy Sunday is a good time to start people thinking about planning to build a legacy through their wills. We also are often remembered by what we share through volunteering and church participation.

#### **Legacy request in your bulletin**

If your congregation is prepared to receive legacy gifts, consider including a legacy request at the bottom of the bulletin. This should include a statement or story that reflects the impact a gift can make as well as an invitation to give. The statement can reflect your congregation's vision. For example:

Your legacy gift will help our church have a lasting impact on future generations in our congregation, in our community and around the world. Please consider making a legacy gift, now or in your estate plans. Thank you.

If your congregation does not have a plan for legacy or planned gifts, check out the PCC resource *Setting up Legacy Funds and Endowments* at [presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/legacy-gifts-and-planned-giving/](http://presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/legacy-gifts-and-planned-giving/) to help you build one. This document contains practices, policies and procedures to help your congregation set up and administer legacy funds.

#### **Promoting planned giving**

People give when they know how. The PCC's Legacy Giving bulletin inserts explain how people can give a large donation to your congregation using one of the top five most popular ways to give a substantial gift. These include gifts in your will, annuities, gifts of stock, life beneficiary and life insurance. Order online: [presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/legacy-giving-bulletin-inserts](http://presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/legacy-giving-bulletin-inserts).

Contact the PCC's Stewardship & Planned Giving department at [stewardship@presbyterian.ca](mailto:stewardship@presbyterian.ca) for other ideas and assistance with planned giving.

## Worship Service Components

### Responsive Call to Worship

Let us praise the One

who has filled the world with blessings!

**Let us sing to the Creator**

**who has filled our lives with joy.**

Troubles come upon us,

unexpected opportunities cross our paths,

**But we step forward in faith,**

**sharing our gifts.**

### Scripture

Isaiah 43:18–21

Philippians 3:4b–14

Matthew 5:1–10

### Hymn Suggestions

570 – I have decided to follow Jesus

626 – Lord of all power

726 – May the God of hope

648 – One more step along the world I go

663 – God whose giving knows no ending

674 – In the bulb there is a flower

425 – We praise you, O God

798 – What gift can we bring

334 – God who gives to life its goodness

### Stewardship Moment / Generations of Generosity (optional)

*Ask someone who is a part of your faith community to share what their parents or grandparents taught them about faith. How did they share their resources of time, talent and money with their church? Did they have a sense that they were giving so that future generations would receive ministry and learn about faith? What did they teach about legacy?*

### **Prayer of Adoration and Confession**

Blessed are you, O God,  
 You are eternal and  
 your truth is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow; and yet  
 you are new each day and you breathe life  
 into what is tired and stale.  
 You have created us and this world we inhabit, and out of  
 your generosity, all things live and move and have their being.  
 You are the one we turn to in good times and in bad for  
 Your wisdom, truth, grace and reconciling love; and so we praise  
 you as Creator, Christ and Spirit.

You touch our lives in many ways  
 And we move through life  
 understanding more about your blessings and your grace  
 in the world and in our lives.  
 In the silence now, we reflect on your many gifts to us

*(Time of silence)*

**ALL: God of mercy,  
 In recalling all that you are and all you have done,  
 We remember who we are and what we have done.  
 We admit that at times  
 we pull away from being generous.  
 We are hesitant to share our gifts.  
 We are unsure about the path ahead.  
 Guide us and give us courage,  
 we pray in Jesus's name, the Lord of love and life,  
 Amen.**

### **Promise of Forgiveness/Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news! Through Christ, we are forgiven.  
 Dare to believe in this gift of a new beginning.  
 Continue the journey and be at peace.

## Litany

**Leader:** Generous God,  
you proclaim over and over  
that you will always provide enough for us.

**ALL:** **We have enjoyed the harvest of your generosity  
at home, at work, at church  
and in every aspect of our living.**

**Leader:** You teach us to share freely,  
to step forward in faith with courage.

**ALL:** **In our communities,  
we want to nurture a spirit of joy.  
As we share our gifts,  
we want to nourish hope.**

**Leader:** Guide us on our journey.  
Strengthen us along the way.

**ALL:** **Thanks be to God  
for your indescribable gifts  
of love and life!**

## Offering Prayer

In response to all of our blessings, we return to you a portion of all you have given us—  
the offering of our money, our talents, our time and our very selves.

Use them to demonstrate your love for the world, and for the work of your kingdom.

*(Insert this text into the Prayer of Thanksgiving at the \*\* if you are not taking up an offering  
during the service)*

## Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

God of abundance, yours is a giving that knows no ending. We benefit from your graciousness that spills into our world in all kinds of ways. You give us the courage to run the race, to follow the path, to persevere, taking one step at a time. Enable us to feel your presence. Give us the strength to continue the journey together in love. We pray for all who feel alone this day, and

for all who feel isolated. Bring comfort to them and open our eyes to see those waiting for us to reach out.

God of hope, we give thanks that you are a God who yearns for us and waits for us. We are grateful for material comfort, for the wealth of relationships and for joy. We thank you for a sense of purpose, for kind visitors, for community, connection and new beginnings.

*\*\* (insert offering prayer here, if you are not taking up an offering during the service)*

Guide our ministries, our church and Sessions, our presbyteries, our national church offices and committees, that you may help us to faithfully serve and love one another as we seek to draw near to you.

Wise God, we pray for places in our world where justice reigns unchallenged, and where people struggle to meet the needs of their families, for the people of... *(you may name specific places here)*. Bring peace and help as we dream of a world where there is enough for all.

Loving God, we pray for all who are sick this day in body, mind or spirit, and for all who mourn loved ones or other losses in their lives. *(You may name specific concerns or people here.)* Bring healing and new beginnings. Wrap your loving arms around them and grant them peace.

Giving God, we are grateful for each person who has taught us about generosity, for each one who has left a legacy for us to enjoy—family, friends, teachers, role models, people in our faith community. Help us to be generous with what we have, as we consider the legacy of faith, hope and resources that we want to leave for future generations.

All this we ask in faith, as we pray the prayer your Son taught us, saying together,  
**Our Father...**

### **Benediction**

Let us step forward in faith to love and serve the Lord with the blessings and peace of God our creator, Jesus our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit our sustainer, this day and forevermore. Amen.

## Children's Time

*If you are meeting in person, bake (or ask someone to bake) a caramel apple upside-down cake and share it during the children's story. For those meeting online, email a recipe to families so that they can bake a cake in preparation for the story. Be sensitive to the fact that some children might have allergies. You could also share apples with the children.*

Here are some links to online recipes:

<https://bit.ly/2YAqvuz>

<https://bit.ly/2X5PTRt>

<https://bit.ly/3lcDzas>

<https://bit.ly/3hvYtRO> (gluten, dairy and nut free)

## STORY

### **Have you ever planted a seed? Have you watched it grow into a plant or a tree?**

I'd like to share a story with you about legacy—about Simon and his apple tree.

Simon's tree is very special. It has a long history.

### **Simon's Apple Tree**

Simon is 85 years old. In the summer, he likes to sit outside under the shade of a big, old apple tree. In the fall, he likes to eat the apples that grow on the tree and share them with his neighbours. Birds and worms and wasps and squirrels and raccoons also eat the apples, after they fall to the ground. When the tree grows flowers in the spring, bees take the nectar to make honey.

Simon's grandma had a big, old apple tree, too. She made apple pies and apple sauce and a special caramel apple upside-down cake. She shared them at church and with her neighbours and family and friends. When Simon was five years old, he sat under the shade of her apple tree and dreamed of having a tree of his very own. One day, his grandma gave him a seed from one of her apples, and her recipe for the upside-down cake. She told him that when she was about five, her grandfather gave her a seed from one of *HIS* apples, and she planted it and grew the very tree that Simon was sitting under.

Simon took the special seed home and planted it in his backyard. He watered it, and watched it, and soon it started to grow. It grew and grew and grew. And Simon grew too! When Simon was 10, the tree started to produce apples. He was so excited. He brought some to school to share with his friends and told them the story of his apple tree.

Ever since then, Simon has shared the apples with everyone he knows. He makes apple pies and apple sauce and his grandma's famous upside-down cake. His children and grandchildren all have apple trees of their own. And when his great-granddaughter turns five, he will give her a

seed from his apple tree and the cake recipe—so that she, too can grow her very own tree, and share her very own apples.

## **DISCUSS**

### **Do you know what the word “legacy” means?**

A legacy is something that one generation passes on to the next.

Simon’s great-grandfather gave his grandmother an apple seed. His grandmother gave the seed to Simon. And Simon shared seeds with his children and their children. Think about all the apple trees that are growing, all because of one little apple seed! Those trees are Simon’s legacy, and his grandmother’s legacy, and his great-grandfather’s legacy. Not only did they pass on the apple seeds, they also passed on the tradition of sharing the apples to show love for their neighbours.

### **Sometimes people give a special gift to their church, so that God’s love will be shared with future generations. We call this a legacy gift.**

*(Use the examples below, or if possible, use two or three examples of specific legacy gifts given to your congregation and what they were used for).*

The money might be used for a new organ, or a new roof, or a stained-glass window. It might pay for an elevator to help people who can’t use the stairs. It might buy a van to drive people to church or help start a lunch program for people who are lonely. XX years ago, people planned and saved and gave gifts to build *(insert your church name)*, so now we have a place to gather and worship and share God’s love!

### **We can leave a legacy too.**

It’s not too early for us to think about what kind of legacy we might like to leave. Like Simon, who cared for and nurtured the apple seed his grandmother gave him, we can look after the things that we have been given and share them with others. And we can share God’s love with everyone—today and every day.

## **PRAY**

Dear God,

Thank you for apple seeds and upside-down cake. Thank you for family and friends who care for us and future generations. Help us to share what we have with others and to share your love in the world, so that we might leave a legacy of love.

In Jesus’ name we pray,

Amen.

## Sermon: Stepping Forward in Faith

### *Opening Reflection*

Are you a runner? Have you ever been a runner?

If so, you may run races or you may simply run for exercise. You may love the feeling of the wind in your hair, your feet hitting the ground, or the satisfaction of crossing the finish line. *(If you are a runner, adapt to describe what you love about it.)*

Perhaps you have never been a runner, though you are impressed by people who are. Maybe you were the kid way at the back of the group in gym class, dreading sprints and endurance races. You may find it hard to imagine the desire of friends who get up at 6 a.m., even in the cold, snow or rain, to practice for a half marathon. A wise person once said of people who love to run, “I admire you, but I don’t understand you.”

Whether a runner or not, all of us understand running a race in a metaphorical way. You may remember the excitement and intensity of beginning university, college or your first job. You were filled with dreams for the future, and the next assignment or test or social event was always upon you. You may recall a season when you felt restless. You knew you were doing good work but you felt like you should be on the move, on the road to something else.

Living through a pandemic has made us feel like we are on an endurance run!

Our lives are a journey. Along our journey we may be developing a career, parenting, nurturing a relationship, being part of a community, and experiencing spiritual ups and downs. At times, the path is slow, as we wait for change to happen. At times, the path is intense, as we keep moving, trying to keep up. Sometimes we might feel like the old Family Circus cartoon by Bill Keane, where young Billy, the little boy in the family, is asked to go somewhere or retrieve something. On the way, Billy is distracted and takes an extremely indirect route, wandering all over the neighbourhood and exploring the things he sees. You understand this if you’ve ever tried to get a preschooler to go somewhere in a hurry! In the comic, we see Billy’s crazy route as he goes in circles, ventures under tables, up a tree and down again, through a doghouse, here, there and everywhere before finally reaching his destination—often not too far from where he began.



The apostle Paul also took many circuitous routes as he journeyed over land and across the Mediterranean Sea, from Damascus across Turkey to Macedonia and Greece and back to Jerusalem, planting churches and raising funds for the church in Judea.

What I love about Paul's writing is that all along the journey he is thinking about the future and always moving forward. This movement is rooted in his relationship with God through Christ, who is always calling him forward. In Philippians 3:12 Paul writes, "I am well on my way reaching out for Christ who has so wondrously reached out to me."

Even from prison, Paul helps early church communities move forward, because he has his eye on the goal, far beyond any present circumstance. The goal is drawing near to God known to us in Christ. The path is wherever or whatever God is calling us to do—to serve, to learn, to be in relationship.

Paul doesn't claim to be an expert. He says, "I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made, but I have my eye on the goal where God is beckoning us onward. We are off and running and we're not turning back" (Philippians 3:12b–14 *Message*).

### ***Supporting Future Ministry***

Legacy gifts, or planned gifts, are a way for people to keep moving forward in faith. They are more intentional than your weekly offering and generally come from savings or accumulated resources. They often have special tax benefits and require planning to give. And they generally support ministry that is forward-thinking.

The most common type of legacy gift comes to the church when a person dies: money left in a will, a gift of life insurance or a charitable gift annuity. However, a planned gift can also be given when a person is alive. Personal investments like stocks, bonds or mutual funds, or a valuable piece of property can all be used to support ministry into the future.

Planned gifts can have a big impact on communities. These gifts might allow a church to go ahead with a ministry or special project that they wouldn't otherwise have been able to do. The legacy of that investment in ministry may be felt for generations to come.

### ***Stories of Giving***

*(If your congregation has a story of a bequest that has impacted the church or community, use it here.)*

Like Paul, Mary Hopley thought about the future ministry of the church. Mary was passionate about music. She was still singing in her church choir and taking weekly voice lessons into her 90s. She wanted to pass the gift of music on to future generations, so she left a gift in her will through a foundation for St. Columba by-the-Lake Presbyterian Church in Pointe-Claire, Que. Interest from this gift allows St. Columba to support music ministry in Mary's name.

Half of the money provides two music scholarships annually for high school students in the community who have graduated and are going on to study music. The second half provides funds annually to support St Columba's ministry, which the session can designate as it sees fit. Some years it has been used to enhance the music ministry, like organ maintenance, but it has also been used to help fund equipment for the kitchen, sanctuary renovations and a new Food Ministry Coordinator at St. Columba. Mary's gift continues to bless both St. Columba and the community of Pointe-Claire. Through her planned gift, Mary's love of God, neighbour and music lives far into the future.

Many years ago, Bethel Presbyterian Church in Scotsburn, N.S., had a dream to hire a part-time Christian Education Worker. The congregation was blessed with a growing number of babies and children. They became accustomed to the delightful sounds of young voices during worship—children singing, asking questions, standing on pews so they could see during the service. This medium-sized, rural congregation realized they needed more resources, but some people said a new staff person was unrealistic. The Session created a fund for Christian education and invited people to give, while applying for a grant so the Christian educator could start right away. They renovated the nursery and restarted an afterschool program that they'd been wanting to renew for a long time. Children and youth in the church and community were served and spiritually nourished as they grew.

A planned gift doesn't have to be big—when given in faith, and joined with the gifts of others, small gifts can make a big difference. Bethel's fund, which began in 2004 with a

donation of a few thousand dollars, grew to over \$100,000 in two years. Over the years, contributions have ranged from \$40 to a gift of securities worth over \$25,000! Many have supported the fund by giving the gift of time to help with the fundraising efforts. The Sunday School and afterschool fundraisers, along with initial donations, really helped start the momentum and the children of the church made cards to say thank you. The fund grew enough to invest in the PCC's consolidated fund and continued to support the Christian educator part-time once the special grant was done.

As the years go by, people continue to support the fund through gifts of stock and legacy gifts in their wills because they value outreach and ministry to children and youth and want it to continue. A Christian educator faithfully serves Bethel to this day, sharing God's love and reaching out to the community. Children who were toddlers when the new ministry began are heading to university this year!

### ***Risk and Investment***

Jesus' teachings and stories remind us that everyone is blessed, valued and entrusted with resources—money, talents, time, life, families. We are given these resources by God and it is up to us how we use them. The ministry we do, and the impact of legacy gifts, looks a little different in each congregation.

As a church—and especially as Presbyterians—we are known to be a thinking people. We think carefully before we do things. We assess and reassess; we pray and we ponder. We look at the big picture, the long-range goals. We create budgets and prepare reports.

But even with all that planning, there are things we don't know about how ministry and our lives will unfold. This past year-and-a-half has taught us that sometimes we have to rethink everything! And yet, we keep moving forward in faith. We pledge from our resources, make use of our gifts and strengths and invest in what will enable us to serve God and make our community better.

Stepping forward in faith always involves a risk and an investment. Paul risked everything to share God's love, creating and supporting communities that would live out the way of Jesus. He ended up in jail because of this work. Jesus invested in the lives of fisherman

and tax collectors, trusting that they would pass on the good news. By his presence on earth, in his life, death and new life, God took the risk that we would accept this amazing new life and share it with others.

Giving a planned gift can be risky, as none of us can predict the future. People of faith have always taken risks, in the generous use of their lives and financial resources. Many people have made risky investments over the years in us, in this church community, and in those we love—and they continue to inspire us.

And we are asked to take risks every day—to love, to hope, to be generous, and to try something new. We may invest in education, a community project or a new ministry. We may risk a new relationship, help others, share our faith or our life story.

Once in a while, a new initiative may not go well, or it may go very well but follow an unexpected path. The good news is that even when our running route is like a Family Circus cartoon, full of twists and turns, ups and downs, wavy lines and circles, we are still in the race.

Like Paul, we are not always experts, but when we continue to run the race, and when we continue to be generous, our lives are enriched.

As we step forward in faith together, we move towards the God who created us and who loves us. The road is not always safe, the path not always smooth, but God goes with us. As we step forward taking risks and sharing our resources, there is always lifegiving community to be found.

Thanks be to God!

Amen.

*The 2021 Legacy Sunday worship service was written by the Rev. Lara Scholey  
St. Columba by-the-Lake Presbyterian Church, Pointe-Claire, Que.*

*The children's story was written by Heather Chappell  
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