**The Presbyterian Church in Canada**

**Heritage Sunday**

**Sunday, February 19, 2012**

Resource Materials prepared by Rev. Dr. Tom and Rev. Paula Hamilton on behalf of

The Presbyterian Church in Canada Committee on History

**INTRODUCTION**

The 135th General Assembly designated the third Sunday of February as **Heritage Sunday –** as an opportunity to celebrate the history, traditions, and individual and collective faith stories that make us uniquely Presbyterian. For 2012, Heritage Sunday will be celebrated on **Sunday, February 19th.**

In the midst of weekly worship and the work within our congregations, the historic contributions of servants and leaders in the Reformed Tradition, as well as stories of faith within our own individual church families are often overlooked or taken for granted. Heritage Sunday gives us the opportunity to celebrate our heritage, embrace the present, and look forward with hope to the future as we continue to serve God.

The following materials are suggested as a guideline for ways you and your congregation can celebrate Heritage Sunday.

**Promotion of Heritage Sunday**

**ADVERTISE**

* Have announcements in your bulletin several weeks prior to Heritage Sunday to kindle interest. If you have a worship planning team, have them come up with ideas of how to best celebrate our Reformed, Presbyterian heritage in your congregation. You could have a skit portraying Reformers (it’s not as boring as you think….read some of Martin Luther’s words! For instance, “If you’re not allowed to laugh in heaven, I don’t want to go there!”)

**BULLETIN COVER**

* The PCC has produced a bulletin cover for Heritage Sunday 2012. If you don’t have a standing order, you can order covers from the Book Room. The code for the Hertiage Sunday bulletin cover is **13-02123.**

**Heritage Sunday Activities**

**FELLOWSHIP TIME**

* If you don’t normally have a fellowship time after the service, plan to have one for Heritage Sunday so people can have a chance to chat and see a display of Heritage Sunday items. Don’t forget the food! Why not have a variety of foods available that represent the different ethnic backgrounds of the families in your congregation. Ask families to bring a dish or snack food that is traditional to their family’s heritage.

**DISPLAY**

* If you have congregational archives, you can ask your archivist to choose some photographs and/or articles to display for the congregation. It’s also a great opportunity to remind people to save newspaper clippings that relate to the life and work of the congregation.
* Display Boards like the ones students use for Science Fairs are a great way to display photographs or other documents pertaining to the history of your congregation.
* For congregations with longer histories, have a “Remember When . . .” section and display things like communion tokens, old hymn books, catechism booklets, etc. Many of our younger and newer members have no idea what a communion token is, many have never even seen a communion card!

**PROFILES**

**Life Stories**

In most congregations, there are individuals with some amazing life stories. Why not profile a few members of your congregation during the Heritage Sunday service?

For instance, Charter Members (if any are still living), or the descendents of Charter Members showing the connection of the past to the present.

Alternatively, you can profile any of the Reformers like John Calvin, John Knox, or Martin Luther and how they have influenced us as Presbyterians.

Canadian Presbyterian profiles may be found in the conference papers of the Canadian Society of Presbyterian History or in the multiple volumes of *Called To Witness*.

**Family Profiles**

Profile family connections from within: for example, in some congregations four generations of the same family worship together. Or, profile a new family or an immigrant family to “introduce” them to the congregation.

**Movie Night**

There are several good moviesyou can show for a movie night such as **“Luther”** (MGM Home Entertainment) starring Joseph Fiennes, profiling the life of Martin Luther. **“The Second Chance”** (Sony Pictures) tells the story of a two churches – one old, one new; the old is slated for closure and demolition. For a more family-oriented movie consider showing **“Dreamer”** (DreamWorks) which tells the story of how three generations of a family work together to save the family horse farm. (There is no religious content in this film, but it is a great story of the generations coming together to preserve their heritage.)

**STORIES OF FAITH**

Heritage Sunday is a great opportunity to share stories of faith from within your congregation. Choose several individuals and have someone ask them a few questions and have capsules printed up on an insert for the bulletin.

Suggested questions:

What made you want to be a member of this church?

What is most important to you about your faith?

What’s the most profound answer to prayer you’ve ever had?

What’s your favorite scripture verse?

What’s your favorite hymn?

What do you most want the next generation to know about faith and this place?

**Sample Story/Profile**
“Name” is an Elder at *St. Somewhere Presbyterian Church*.

“Name” says she became a member of *St. Somewhere* because she and her husband moved to town and wanted to attend a Presbyterian Church.

She says the most important aspect of her faith is knowing God is with her. She says daily Bible reading and prayer keep her connected to God.

“Name” says she regularly sees answers to prayer and believes that if we pray regularly, we will see answers. She says that too often people only pray now and then and they often miss the day to day answers God gives.

Her favorite scripture verse is John 14:2.

Her favorite hymn is “Guide Me, O, Thou Great Redeemer”.

Her hope for the future is that the youth (in her own family and in the greater church family) will embrace faith and make a personal relationship with Jesus as their Saviour and Lord their priority.

**WORSHIP RESOURCES**

**Theme Scripture Suggestions:**

**Jeremiah 29:11-13** (NRSV)

*11For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.*

*12Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.*

*13When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart.*

**Hebrews 13:5b-8** (NRSV)

*5For he has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”*

*6So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.*

*What can anyone do to me?” 7Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.* ***8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.***

**Hebrews 12:1** (NRSV)

*Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us.*

**Hymn Suggestions:**

330 O God, Our Help in Ages Past

337 Eternal, Unchanging, We Sing to Your Praise

475 I Am the Church! You Are the Church!

476 Amigos de Cristo/Friends of the Lord

477 Your Hand, O God, Has Guided

479 The Church’s One Foundation

611 For All the Saints

Faith of Our Fathers

**Worship Choruses:**

Forever *(Chris Tomlin, CCLI Song # 3148428)*

In Christ Alone *(Keith Getty/Stuart Townend, CCLI Song # 3350395)*

Shout to the North *(Martin Smith, CCLI Song #1562261)*

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

**Hebrews 13:5b-8(NRSV)**

5Our Lord has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

6So we can say with confidence,

 “The Lord is my helper;

 I will not be afraid.

 What can anyone do to me?”

7Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you;

 consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

8Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Let us worship God!

**OPENING PRAYER**

Almighty and ever-loving God,

as we gather together today in Your name,

we come with grateful hearts for all You have done

and all You are doing in our lives.

Lord, You call us as Christians to celebrate the past.

Thank you for the men and women in previous centuries who serve as examples of Christian faith.

Lord, You call us as Christians to celebrate the present.

Thank you for the people around us on the same journey of faith.

Lord, You also call us as Christians to celebrate the future.

Thank you that You are the same yesterday, today and forever.

May we look ahead with hope, and live out Your purposes and plans through a dynamic reformed and reforming faith.

These things we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, who taught His first disciples to pray, saying:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.*

*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread*

*and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*

*And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

*For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God, as we bow our heads in Your presence this day, we come with the realization that we have often been less than You call us to be.

You call us to honour our mothers and fathers and to respect elders and authority.

But so often, Lord, we choose instead to ignore them and refuse to learn from their wisdom and experience. Rather than celebrate the past and learn from it, we feel sure that there must be newer, better ways to do things.

And sometimes our attitudes put us in danger of losing an important part of who we are.

Lord God, You have not called us to be all things to all people. You have called us to share the Gospel and make disciples of all nations. In Your mercy, please forgive us for our failure to do as You ask.

Through the power and work of Your Spirit in and among us, help us to honour our past while still having vision for the future. Give us strength and courage to share our faith with others and in so doing, live out Your calling on our lives.

We pray in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

**ASSURANCE OF PARDON/FORGIVENESS**

Hear the Good News God has for us in Psalm 103:

*8 The LORD is merciful and gracious,*

 *slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.*

*10 He does not deal with us according to our sins,*

 *nor repay us according to our iniquities.*

*11 For as the heavens are high above the earth,*

 *so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;*

*12 as far as the east is from the west,*

 *so far he removes our transgressions from us.* ***Psalm 103:8, 10-12*** *(NRSV)*

**CHILDREN’S STORY**

Preparation: Have an item that you have inherited from a parent, grandparent or other relative. (For example, a piece of jewelry, a book or Bible, letters, an ornament, etc.)

**Sample Story:**

Today we are celebrating Heritage Sunday. Do any of you know what the word heritage means? Heritage is something that is passed down from one generation to another. Sometimes we call it a legacy or an inheritance. It can be a custom or tradition – like a certain way of doing something; or an actual item.

Do you see this (whatever the item is)? I inherited this from my (grandmother/ grandfather/aunt etc.) This is very special to me because it reminds me of them and is something that is special to my family.

There are things that are special to our church family, too. This building is part of our heritage – other people had it built so that there would be a place to worship God. Some of the other things that we have inherited are the different hymns and songs we sing; the tradition of standing for hymns and sitting for prayers; (give other examples that pertain to your particular congregation – special traditions you have).

And do you know one of the most important things we have inherited that we have in our service every week? It’s something we inherited directly from Jesus – we call it The Lord’s Prayer! Can anyone tell me what the first line of that prayer is?

Today we are celebrating Heritage Sunday – it’s a day when we celebrate our heritage as Presbyterians and as Christians. Today we give thanks for all the things we have inherited, all the things that have been passed down to us over all the years that help to make our church what it is today.

Let’s pray together:

Dear God,

We thank You for the people, who many years ago, helped to build this church.

Thank You that we can come here, and learn about You and Your love for us and that this place and all we do here is part of our heritage.

We pray that in the years ahead, You will use each one of us to pass this heritage on as we teach other people about You.

We pray this in Jesus’ name. AMEN.

**BENEDICTION**

As we celebrate our past and live out our faith in the present, let us also look forward to the future that God has promised. Let us go from this place to proclaim the Good News, knowing that God is with us – yesterday, today and forever. AMEN.

**Useful Resources:**

Hayes, Stephen. *Being Presbyterian in Canada Toda*y.

McKim, Donald K. *Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers*. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 2003.

Moir, John S., ed. *Called To Witness, Profiles of Canadian Presbyterians, A Supplement to Enduring Witness*. The Committee on History, PCC, Volumes 1-4

Moir, John S. *Enduring Witness*. The Committee on History, PCC, 2nd Edition, 1987.

Moir, John S., ed. *Gifts and Graces, Profiles of Canadian Presbyterian Women*. The Committee on History, PCC, 1999.