



Legacy Sunday

Shine Like a Star Worship Resource

Background and Introduction

Legacy Sunday is the third Sunday in November; but you could use this resource at any time of year or do a series of legacy moments in November and December. Please adapt these materials to suit your congregation.

Why celebrate Legacy Sunday?

Everyone can leave a legacy. A Legacy Sunday is a great time to get people thinking about the legacies they leave – not just financial treasures, but also how they live their lives.

When it comes to talking about money, congregations often struggle to help people think about how to faithfully manage their finances including, leaving a financial legacy. Peter Dryden, from Abundance Canada says it well:

“Will and estate planning provides an opportunity to share your values and help determine what impact your wealth will have in the world. After all, the greatest financial gift many of us will ever make is through our estate.”

A Legacy Sunday can help people consider how what they leave can reflect the life they live now. This Sunday can help start the conversation.

Legacy request in your bulletin

If your congregation has a plan for legacies, 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, the mission statement of Knox Presbyterian Church, Oakville is “Developing empowered and loving disciples of Christ.” So their legacy request can be something like this:

“A legacy gift to Knox, Oakville 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.”

Help with planned giving

If your congregation doesn’t yet have a plan for legacy or planned gifts, check out the PCC resource [Setting up Legacy Funds and Endowments](https://www.pcc.ca/plannedgiving/resources) at [presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/resources](https://www.pcc.ca/plannedgiving/resources)

to help you build one. This document contains sample policies and procedures to guide your congregation through the process of setting up and administering legacy funds.

Promoting planned giving

Did you know that the Presbyterian Church of Canada's website has colourful bulletin inserts ready for you to download and print about the different ways to give planned gifts? These include gifts in your will, annuities, and gifts of stock. They can also be ordered from custserv@parasource.com.

Watch stewardship and planned giving webinars at presbyterian.ca/webinars/previous-webinars

Contact the Stewardship & Planned Giving department of The Presbyterian Church in Canada at stewardship@presbyterian.ca for other ideas and assistance with planned giving.

Prayers, hymns, sermon, children's story for worship service

Opening Words

Every Sunday we gather to worship around a table, a sign of God's generosity, gifts, provision and goodness to us in every way. Today we will reflect on how we can be generous throughout our lives and what our legacies might be. A legacy gift is a gift of hope. It is a gift of faith in the future of the church. It is like a star, shining for many generations.

Suggested Hymns (Book of Praise, 1997)

- 769** *Lord of Light, whose name and splendour*
- 773** *Jesus bids us shine*
- 471** *We are one in the spirit*
- 123** *My soul gives glory to my God*
- 478** *To Abraham and Sarah*
- 227** *God is love, and where true love is*
- 759** *In loving partnership*

Call to worship

We gather today to witness God's love shining among us.

We gather to find hope in Christ.

We are drawn together into the circle of God's marvelous light

As loving disciples of Christ, the Light of the World.

We seek the courage to reach out and let our light shine

For generations to come.

Let us worship God!

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Creator, Christ and Spirit,
creator of all, redeemer of all,
you are extravagant, and your giving has not ending,
your wisdom is beyond measure,
your love has no limits,
your glory incomparable and
your majesty beyond our imagination.
We praise you for your loving kindness which extends from you throughout creation to all
eternity and through all ages.
In your goodness you have created us,
out of desire to redeem all things you sent Christ to live and die and rise again, and
by the inspiration of you your Holy Spirit we see your hand guiding us through all of life.

In recalling all that you are and all that you have done,
we remember what who we are and what we have done.
Hear us now as we confess to you our sins:

Though we are rich beyond all measure, we live as though we have little;
we receive your pardon and the forgiveness of others but live as though we were hard done by.
Freely accepted by you, we continually try to earn our own way;
Freely forgiven by you, we withhold forgiveness from others;
Empowered and equipped by you to shine, instead we hide your light under a bushel,
fearful that if we freely share your light we will somehow have less for ourselves.

Forgive us, O God, and set us free from the fears that cripple us. Loosen our grip on ourselves
and our possessions so that we might recognize our wealth and use all we have and are for the
common good. We pray in the name of Jesus, who became poor that we might become rich
and who offered his life as a ransom for many. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; God's mercies never come to an end; they are new
every morning. Know that you are forgiven and forgive one another.

Prayer for Understanding

As we read your Word let us hear your voice, and in hearing, let our lives be changed and your
world transformed.

Scripture readings

Daniel 12:1-3

Matthew 5:13-16

Psalms 16

Call for offering

Rev. Teri Peterson, St. John's Church of Scotland, Gourock, Scotland

One: Creator of all, the earth is yours,
the world and all who live in it.

**All: You have entrusted us with gifts—
time, talent, energy, money—
and asked us to use them to build your kingdom.
With thanks and praise we respond to your call.**

One: We bring these gifts you have given,
returning your generosity, paying it forward.

**All: We offer ourselves, our lives, our hopes and fears,
our dollars and our hours.
We commit ourselves to work for your world,
to love and serve wherever you call.**

One: We ask your blessing on this, your church,
as we seek to follow you with heart, mind, and soul.

**All: Bless also these gifts, our investment in your future,
that they may multiply in faith, hope, and love.
Amen.**

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, we rejoice in your love. Every good thing comes from you. Bless these gifts and we whom you have called and use them and us for the building up of your kingdom of justice and peace in the world. Work in our hearts, our lives, our church, our world. Make known to us the paths of life. In Jesus name we pray Amen.

Prayers of the People

Gracious God of light and love, we praise you, because the light of your love still shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not, and will not, overcome it.

We thank you for the many people in our congregation and our lives, through whom your light has shone:

School teachers and Sunday School teachers...
Preachers and lay people...
Friends and family members...
Service workers and business people...

Strangers who shone your light when we needed it most...

Hear us, as we name in the silence of our hearts the people whom you have used to shine the light of your love in our darkness.

(silent prayer)

For all these people, and countless more, we thank you.

We pray for those dwelling in darkness and in special need of your love:

People living with the darkness of disease,
Those imprisoned by debt or stuck in a job that crushes their spirit.
And all who live in fear, poverty, hopelessness.

Hear us, as we name in the silence of our hearts, the people who need the light of your love.

(silent prayer)

We pray for this congregation. Shine the light of your love on us and through us. May we shine like stars in the dark night sky, spreading the light of your love in our homes, our communities, and around the world.

(silent prayer)

We give you thanks for life and for the lives of those who have loved us, taught us, nurtured us, formed our faith, and whose earthly life is now ended. We thank you for their legacy and pray that you keep us united with them until we come to join them in your company.

Hear us, as we name in the silence of our hearts, those saints of light who have reflected your light and shone in our lives

(silent prayer)

And now, O God, we join our voices into one voice and pray in the words handed down to us from Christ:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed by 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.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory
Forever and ever. Amen.

Benediction

We rejoice with the Psalmist: our hearts are glad.
We have no good aside from the Lord.
Let us not hide our light under a bushel,
but have the courage to let God's light shine before others with our words and actions.
May we be like stars shining in a dark world
so that others may be drawn into the circle of God's marvelous light.
Go, and shine Christ's light and love into the world.
And may the blessing of God Almighty,
the Creator, Christ and Spirit be with you
this day and always.

Children's Time

What does it mean if someone says, "You are a star"?

You can be a rock star – someone who is famous for their music, or a movie star who is famous for their acting. You can be a star student who has top marks in school; or a star athlete who runs the fastest or scores the most goals.

Being a star means that you shine brightly. Sometimes, we think that a star is a person who shines the biggest, or the brightest. But Jesus, the Light of the World, told **all** of us to let our light shine before others. As God's children, we shine with God's love when we share what we have; when we are loving; when we are kind and when we help people who are struggling. When people see our light, they are seeing the love of God: the light of the world!

God's love shines through the good and kind things that we do – no matter how big or small. So you don't have to be the biggest or the best to be a star. You can shine brightly just by living your life with love – just like Jesus did.

This week, think about the ways in which you can shine!

Dear God,
Your love is like a shining star in a dark sky. We are your children. Your light guides us to do good and kind things in our lives. Help us to shine your light as we go to school, as we play with friends, as we go to church. Help us to be loving and kind, as you have taught us.
In Jesus' name,
Amen

Sermon: Shine like a star

Take a moment and picture a star. Imagine it, see it shining in the sky.

Now imagine a dark sky filled with stars – in the middle of a field, in the middle of the countryside, the dark sky illuminated with a multitude of stars so often blotted out by city lights. You see many stars – but there are so many that your eyes can't even take them all in. Keep this image in your mind.

Stars are a common metaphor in the Bible. The most famous star, of course, was the star that led the Magi to Jesus. But years and years before that, a man named Abram was praying in his tent. Unable to go back to sleep after waking from a vivid dream, he complained to God that he and his beloved wife Sarai were childless even though God had promised them an heir. In response, God took Abram outside into the dark night and said, "Look up toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." As Abram looked up, he was awed at the canopy of stars shimmering overhead. "So many shall your descendants be. . ." Abram was told.

It was a crazy promise. After all Abram and his wife Sarai were far beyond child bearing years but what was promised came to be. Abram had a name change and became Abraham, which means "father of a multitude" – and Sarai became Sarah – "mother of nations" – and their descendants would go to all parts of the world. Today people of Jewish, Muslim and Christian faiths all trace their stories back to Abraham and Sarah.

Let's think about those stars for a minute. Stars are incredibly far away and starlight takes years and years and years to travel and be seen by us. It takes more than four years for the light from Alpha Centauri, the nearest star to us, to reach Earth. So, when we look up at the expanse of stars, what we're really seeing is light from the past, light that started its journey years – hundreds of years – earlier.

The old testament scripture we heard today talks about stars. We're told in the book of Daniel that "Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

The book of Daniel was written for Hebrew people who were living in exile. Jerusalem had been invaded and the people were removed from their homeland to serve foreign powers; they were oppressed, persecuted, and on the verge of losing all hope, and even losing touch with God. Daniel's visions and words were meant to bring hope. He encouraged them to persevere through the darkness, to hold onto their Jewish faith and be true to God, even in exile. The exile would last generations, but the way they lived in exile, the way they kept their faith, would shine like stars, for generations to come, encouraging them and giving them hope.

Paul had a similar message to the Christians living in the city of Philippi in modern day Greece. In Philippians 2:15 Paul writes that "Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish . . . in which you shine like stars in the world."

Daniel and Paul remind us that we are all children of God, all descendants of Abraham and Sarah and as such we are among those stars Abraham saw so long ago.

"Shine brightly," they encourage us. "Shine brightly!"

Jesus encouraged his followers with the same message.

He was sitting with his disciples, a collection of common people – some fishermen, a despised tax collector and few other misfits. "You are the light of the world," Jesus tells them. (Matthew 5:14-16)

Can you imagine their response? This was, after all not a group of movers or shakers; they must have thought Jesus was a little crazy. But Jesus was not crazy, he just had vision. When he looked at the disciples he could see that his light reflected in their eyes. “I am the light of the world,” he says. “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”. And “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Jesus taught his disciples again and again, with his words and actions, how to be that light: by sharing the word of God and living out their faith through [acts of love and grace](#). Jesus reminded his followers not to hide their light under a basket, but to let their light shine.

And shine they did. From that hillside in first century Palestine, Jesus’ disciples fanned out across the world, spreading Christ’s gospel and shining Christ’s light. Peter carried the gospel west to Rome, the centre of political and economic power. Thomas carried the gospel east to India. Andrew carried the gospel to the region north of the Black Sea, where to this day he is known as the patron saint of Russia.

One by one, two by two, on foot and on horseback, by ship and by carriage, in synagogues and in prisons, in royal courts and courts of law, in the privacy of homes and in street corners and market places, they told the story of Jesus; and the light spread, shining for all to see.

Light we still see today – shining like stars.

That’s legacy.

As God’s children, we too are the light of the world, because our lives shine with the light of the one who is the light of the world. And we can share that light by sharing the word of God and living our faith through the simple acts of love and grace we do for each other.

I’d like to share a story of legacy and light.

(Choose one of the two stories below.)

Bethel Presbyterian Church

Thirteen years ago, Bethel Presbyterian Church in Nova Scotia had a wonderful problem: the small church was filled with children but lacking a Christian Education program. They weren't a rich church, at least in terms of money. But they had lots of kids, and that's a greater treasure.

The idea of setting up a Christian Education Worker Fund at Bethel began with one person with insight, one person who had a vision for Christian Education among the many young children in the church and in the community. And the congregation caught the dream and wanted to make it happen.

At the time, they didn't know the ins and outs of legacy giving, but they took advantage of the resources and experience provided by the national office. They created an endowment fund that would provide the money to support a Christian Education worker.

Then they taught one another about the advantages of planned gifts and what it means to give from their assets to invest in the future.

They asked people to give to the mission.

They didn't just ask for a little.

They asked for big gifts: gifts of stock and bequests – gifts made in a will.

"Would people leave a legacy to support Christian Education work into the future?"

Yes, they would.

"Would people give gifts of stock to support Christian Education work?"

Yes, they would.

They gave stock spontaneously and sometimes unexpectedly.

The people responded and let their light shine.

Parents and grandparents from Bethel are grateful for the Christian Education Worker Fund that started more than a decade ago now. They have seen babies and toddlers grow up to be youth attending national conferences, going to leadership training camp and blossoming

into the people God made them to be. It's like looking at stars, seeing the light from the past shining brightly in the present.

The fund Bethel established continues to receive bequests and donations – people have seen the great work being done with children and youth in the community. Bethel continues to benefit from people who leave gifts to the Christian Education worker fund in their wills.

The advice the Rev. Lara Scholey, minister at Bethel at the time, gives to congregations considering starting legacy giving: "You can do it!"

Gloucester Presbyterian Church

Situated in Greenboro, a community in south-east Ottawa, Gloucester Presbyterian Church is a busy place.

The congregation is very intentional about being good neighbours in their community. They are located across the street from a public school. They hand out Freezies during the first week of school and people from the congregation volunteer when children are dropped off at school. They've collaborated on activities with individual classes, and they host a yearly service to honour teachers and school staff.

Gloucester dreamed of reaching out to even more children, and today they have a youth and family outreach worker. Prince Owusu serves as a liaison with the community, works with the newly re-established youth group and leads Messy Church several times a year. "God has done remarkable things and we're so grateful" says the Rev. Denise Allen-Macartney.

Gloucester's journey to this youth work included years of wandering in the wilderness. When Denise was called nine years ago, the congregation had experienced more than a decade of turmoil and had come near to closing their doors. In terms of mission and direction, they didn't really know what they were doing or where they were going.

Denise began her ministry with an emphasis on faith, not funds. The congregation wanted to build faith by getting to know Jesus. They wanted to know their neighbours and to become self-sustaining. They wanted to be people of the gospel, people who pray and seek guidance from the Lord.

Along the way, God gave Gloucester the “incredible dream” of hiring someone who could help them serve youth and families in the neighbourhood. But they already relied on grants to sustain their present ministry. In order to proceed, the congregation needed extra funds. The legacy fund goal was \$100,000 —in addition to their \$50,000 in savings— while keeping regular givings up. At the congregation’s annual meeting, there was 100% endorsement for the idea. With such agreement, the congregation knew this was God’s Spirit at work.

Much prayer, story-telling and teamwork followed. They shared stories of faith: what the church meant to them and stories about giving. People caught the vision, and in less than a year the congregation raised the funds necessary to deposit \$150,000 into the PCC’s consolidated portfolio. Not only did they meet their Legacy Fund goal, but their regular budget had a surplus. They celebrated with a blow-out service with balloons and more to celebrate God’s faithfulness and the wonderful generosity of God’s people. The interest from the Legacy Fund now supports initiatives like the family and youth outreach worker and their regular giving continues to grow.

“Don’t start from scarcity, start from gratitude” Denise counsels. “Invite the Lord to shape your vision.”

[If your church has an endowment fund share how it has made a difference and invite people to think about how they can contribute.]

That’s what legacy is about. It’s about how we live our lives to shine the light of God – today and into the future.

Investing in an endowment fund is just one way that we can shine like stars in the years to come. We may not see the results – starlight takes years to travel – but God promises us that “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven.”

Just like stars exist in many shapes and sizes, so do endowment funds. Some congregations use them to start new ministries. Others use them to support the maintenance of buildings that provide an important place for ministry to happen. Some use them to experiment with new ideas they wouldn't otherwise be able to try. But the essence of each fund is the same: they are ways of investing in the future of the church so that Christ's light can continue to shine long after we're gone.

Anyone can leave a legacy.

When we live our faith through acts of love and grace, Christ's light will shine.

We can give gifts of time, talent and treasure. Any gift – given with great love – can make a big difference in other peoples' lives. God's love will shine through the big and little things we do, like the stars in the night sky.

Amen.

The Legacy Sunday worship resource was written in 2018 by Lori Guenther Reesor and Karen Plater, with inspiration from the Rev. Herb Gale. Many thanks to the Rev. Lara Scholey for sharing her recollections from her years at Bethel Presbyterian, and the Rev. Denise Allen-Macartney for sharing her stories of Gloucester Presbyterian Church.