



Legacy Sunday

2019 Worship Resource

Introduction

What is a Legacy Sunday and why celebrate it?

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. However, it is also a good time to start people thinking about planning to make a legacy through their wills. 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 the gifts they leave behind can reflect the life they live now. This Sunday can help start the conversation.

The recommended date for a Legacy Sunday is November 17, 2019; 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.

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](http://presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/resources) at presbyterian.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 about the different ways to give planned gifts, ready for you to download and print? These include gifts in your will, annuities, gifts of stock, life beneficiary and life insurance. They can also be ordered, free of charge, from resources@presbyterian.ca.

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. (See more contact information listed at the end of this resource.)

Worship Resources

Opening Words

We find God – and God finds us – in the past, the future and the only timeframe we can experience on an ongoing basis: the present. Our actions today, based on all our yesterdays, can help us to shape the future with hope. With a sense of awe and wonder and joy, we observe the universe God created, and ponder our place in it. With gratitude, we express our trust in God's future, by being intentional about the legacies we leave for those who follow us. Just as the early explorers used the stars to guide them, we too can help provide direction and encouragement to future communities of God's people through the gifts that we leave. Every gift counts. Let us work together to build a future with hope!

Suggested Hymns (Book of Praise, 1997)

Hymns Referencing the Sun, Moon and Stars -

- 5 Lord, our Lord, your glorious name
- 57 You who dwell in the shelter / On Eagle's Wings
- 81 Unto the hills around
- 97 We thank you, Lord, for you are good
- 106 Let all creation bless the Lord
- 324 Great is thy faithfulness
- 333 I sing the almighty power of God
- 338 Let all things now living
- 407 Praise, my soul, the King of heaven
- 410 Joyful, joyful we adore you
- 434 For the beauty of the earth
- 495 The heavens declare your glory, Lord
- 769 Lord of light, whose name and splendour

Hymns Referencing the Future

- 440 For all the love
- 478 To Abraham and Sarah
- 666 Living God, your joyful Spirit
- 674 In the bulb there is a flower
- 717 We cannot own the sunlit sky
- 759 In loving partnership

Hymns Referencing Hope

- 587 Called as partners in Christ's service
- 613 Give thanks for life, the measure of our days
- 726 May the God of hope go with us every day
- 748 Lord of all hopefulness

Responsive Call to Worship

Praise the Lord!

Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!

Praise him all his angels; praise him all his host!

Praise him, sun and moon; praise him all you shining stars!

Let them praise the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.

Let us praise and worship God together.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of all Creation,
we gather in your presence in prayer, filled with awe:
for your creation is a gift of life for us.

From the universe
was born our sun, the source of light and heat for our planet.
You sparked life into the elements of the earth
and life in all of its variety
emerged across the planetary Garden of Eden.

You have gifted us with intelligence, emotions
and an awareness of your presence everywhere.
We are grateful for your goodness,
and your good intentions for us.
All praise and glory belong to you,
now and throughout all eternity.

Your light shines into the darkest corners of our lives,
illuminating those missed opportunities
to be the people you would have us be,
in thought, word and action.

As much as we are aware of your generosity toward us,
we know we fall short in compassion and acceptance.
Forgive us our anxious attitudes
when we should be celebrating
the freedom and unconditional love you offer us.

Encourage us to live fully into our identity in Jesus
and to be a source of hope and joy
to those around us.

We pray in the name of Jesus who bids us shine!
Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

God offers us forgiveness and a lifetime of second chances.
In God's pardon
we are freed from sin and guilt.
Know that you are loved and forgiven.
Love and forgive each other.

Prayer for Understanding

Generous God,
help us to absorb the words of Scripture;
write the words on our hearts
and empower us to apply them
in our own place and time. Amen.

Scripture Readings

- Psalm 8
- Mark 4:30 – 32
- 1 Corinthians 15:35 – 42

Invitation to the Offering

The impulse to give, to share,
comes from a sense of awe, wonder, gratitude and humility
that we experience when we recognize God's presence
in the universe and in our lives.
At last we become ready to let go of our anxious living
and embrace the grace and generosity of God.
Let us express our faith in God's vision for today
and for the future.
Our gifts will now be received.

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God,
how grateful we are to be part of your community of faith,
surrounded by the saints of millennia gone by
and visions of your community in the future.
Bless these gifts given in trust and love,
and give us the wisdom to use them
in ways that shine like the Biblical stars of heaven. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Loving God,
we give thanks for the gift of life and the beauty of the creation in which we are placed.
We are blessed to live on this planet. Help us to understand where and how we fit into the global
ecosystem and teach us wisdom in exercising our influences upon it. You have given us glimpses
of the whole universe in the night sky, and we are moved by awe with the beauty and mystery of
the stars and other heavenly bodies.

We remember the people of the past who have influenced our lives: parents and
grandparents, teachers and others who sought the best for us, helping us to develop the gifts
that you have bestowed upon us. We think of people of the faith who encouraged us to pray, to
read Scripture and to listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit guiding us. How grateful we are for all
of their memories.

Today we are surrounded by family and friends with whom we share life – the good times
and the challenging times. In our church family, we are thankful for friends with whom we can
be totally honest, spiritual guides who teach us the deeper meanings of life, and the opportunity
to exercise our hearts, minds and voices in worship of you. We look to Scripture to learn the
wisdom of the prophets and the lessons taught by Jesus. We open our hearts to sense the
movement of your Spirit through our congregation. Guide us in our decisions and point us in new
directions so that we might move toward the vision you have for us as your people.

God, we look forward in anticipation of a future with hope. We trust your promises and
know that you have good plans for the wellbeing of our congregation. Help us to trust you
enough to be willing to participate in enabling congregations of the future to worship you in their
place and time.

God of compassion, we pray for those who are suffering in some way today, those who
fight disease and those who care for them; those who have died, and those who mourn them;
those who face struggles in family relationships or in work situations. We think of those who live
in terror in war zones or countries plagued by disease, starvation and poverty. We pray for
families where peace is absent and violence is present, where children go to bed each night
hungry or afraid. God, give us the courage, compassion and wisdom to change the circumstances
for people who suffer.

You know us better than we know ourselves. Sometimes we think that the blackest of holes lies within us, a place of suffering, anger, loss or fear. Look into our hearts and sense even our unspoken prayers as we now silently surrender ourselves to you...

Remind us, God, that Jesus is the light of the world, and that he calls us to share that task with him. Help us to shine like the stars, providing guidance and hope to those around us, and to those of the future. Be with us now, God, as we unite our voices and recite the prayer that Jesus teaches all disciples, saying...

Our Father...

Children's Time

Prep: *Print out or download and project pictures of the Big Dipper, Orion and the Pleiades.*

Good morning, everyone! I have a question for you. Have you ever been outside on a clear night and looked up at the stars? Have you ever heard the word "constellation?" A constellation is a group of stars that form a pattern. Can you name any constellations?

Here are some pictures of constellations. This one we call the Big Dipper. Have you seen it? Its name in Latin is Ursa Major and that means "big bear." Thousands of years ago, people thought that the shape of these stars looked like a bear.

This one is called Orion. In Greek stories, Orion was a great hunter! You can see Orion in the sky during the winter.

And these stars are called the Pleiades – the seven sisters. In Greek, the name means "to sail." The Pleiades were used by ancient sailors to determine the sailing season in the Mediterranean Sea.

All of these constellations have been used to find directions for thousands of years.

The prophet Job says that God is the Creator of all things. In the book of Job, verse 9 of chapter 9, Job says it is God who made the constellations – the Bear and Orion and the Pleiades. So just as we can look to the stars to help us tell directions, we can look to God to help guide us in life. The next time you look up into the beautiful night sky and see the stars shining, remember that God is the Creator of all things, and will guide us all through our lives.

Let's pray:

Dear God,

Your love for us shines like the stars in the constellations in the sky. Teach us to love you and to love each other. Help us make right decisions every day. In Jesus' name we pray; amen.

Sermon

Memory and Hope

2019 is a good year to be thinking about night skies and stars. In April, the first ever direct image of a super massive black hole was published, following observations made by a global group of astronomers. And in July, the whole world remembered Neil Armstrong's walk on the moon that happened 50 years ago. Makes you wonder: where were you 50 years ago? Where was our congregation 50 years ago? Where will we be in the future, 50 years down the road?

Stars have had significance for people since the beginning of time and play a role in many Bible stories. Joseph had a dream that got him into trouble. He dreamed that he was a star and that he was surrounded by eleven other stars – his brothers, he assumed – all bowing down to him. Many times, God promised the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – that their descendants would be as numerous as the stars. And the poets and song writers of the Psalms often paint pictures of all of creation, including the sun, moon and stars, praising God, their Creator. And of course, there's the star of Bethlehem which leads the Magi to Jesus.

Psalms 8 always puts us in the right frame of mind for pondering God and other mysteries of the universe. Like the Psalmist, we cannot help but feel awe when we take a good look at any part of God's creation, but especially the skies. There are no limits to the beauty of a velvet-black sky studded with brilliant stars, constellations that we come to recognize as old friends, and planets and galaxies and comets and meteor showers... the list goes on and on. With awe comes a sense of humility; being in the presence of a night sky takes us out of ourselves and our environment and causes us to look up and feel just a little closer to God. The psalmist asks God, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them?" His sense of humility is palpable but so is his profound gratitude for life and for the gift of being part of the mystery of creation.

It is that sense of humility and gratitude that prepares our hearts to consider leaving a legacy to the church of the future.

Have you received a legacy from the past? From parents or someone else who loved you enough to want to encourage the future you? Maybe a scholarship or a bursary, left by someone you never even met, which allowed you to continue your education? Think about what that gift meant to you. Think about *your* ability to surprise someone else with a legacy gift. Such gifts are not always money. Parents and grandparents, teachers and others who have encouraged and taught us to pray, to read Scripture, to think and question and listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit, have given us tremendous gifts. The impact is the same: delight, gratitude, a prayer of thanks for your presence in their life, and a stirring of the imagination as to how best to use the gift you've given them.

Nuclear fusion drives the functioning of stars, and one of the by-products of that process is light. A well-functioning star like our sun lights up its solar system and brings life to our planet. Your planned gift for the church can light the way into the future.

Stars burn with different kinds of fuels. Some burn with hydrogen, some are in the helium stage and older stars might be consuming their beryllium or carbon. What fuels your love of your congregation? Is it helping out at Vacation Bible School? Is it singing in the choir? Is it working with the young people to raise funds so that they can attend Canada Youth? Perhaps you love the satisfaction of planning and serving a hot lunch to the seniors of the community. Or do you cherish congregational retreats where you can worship and study and socialize in a natural setting? A legacy gift to your congregation can fuel such events and activities into the future, bringing the joy you experienced to forthcoming generations.

Did you know that stars, like us, are born, live their lives, and die to their nature as stars? They are reborn in supernova explosions – becoming either black holes or gases and dust to begin the cycle of creation once again. When I think of a black hole, I think about how the fear of scarcity can cause us to contract into ourselves, and all our hopes and creative imaginings disappear into negativity and doubt. However, gratitude for God’s gifts can help shrink our fears and worries about scarcity and replaces them with joyful generosity. Let us adopt an attitude of confidence for the future of this congregation and demonstrate that confidence by investing in those who will follow us. Your planned gift for the church can leave behind a legacy that helps ministries, like stars, be reborn.

There are lots of ways to leave a legacy gift to the church: gifts of securities, life insurance, charitable gift annuities and a bequest in a will. You can learn about their unique benefits in the brochures at the back of the church (or online at presbyterian.ca) A legacy can be something other than money – think of the legacy you leave when you care for one another, mentor young people, spend time with seniors, serve the community – as a church we can be a beacon of light and hope in our community, today and into the future. But money is a tangible way we can leave a gift to the church.

The size of the gift doesn’t matter. You may think you’re not legacy material because you’re not leaving behind millions of dollars – but legacy doesn’t depend on size. Jesus used the example of the tiny mustard seed that grows into a large bush, able to provide beauty, shade and life-sustaining sanctuary. Every gift counts; collectively many small gifts can add up to a lot of ministry.

If you’d like to leave a legacy gift, but you’re unsure how much you might give, make it small enough so that you are comfortable. The point is that if we were all to leave a gift to our church – an undesignated gift that trusts the decision making of God’s people in the future – we demonstrate *together* as a community our faith in God and in God’s vision for this congregation. These gifts become a statement from our generation to the next. Trust the future version of this congregation to cherish your gift and use it well. They might even be encouraged by your generosity to leave a legacy for their descendants.

I like the way one couple shared their logic in leaving a legacy gift. They have three children, all of whom are doing well. This couple decided to tithe their will. 10% of their estate will go to The Presbyterian Church in Canada, right off the top. That leaves 90% to their three children. Their

decision to tithe their estate means each child will receive 30% instead of 33% of the estate. They are still caring for their children while expressing confidence in the PCC of the future.

Another woman found a unique way to leave a legacy for her church. When she was a little girl, her father took out a life insurance policy for her and paid the premiums faithfully. When she turned 21, her father turned over the policy to her to do with as she pleased. She decided not to cash it in but continued to pay the small premium each year. When she came to a time when she wanted to provide a legacy gift to her congregation, she made the church her beneficiary. She chose to pass on the legacy she received from her father to the congregation that she loved.

Congregations are doing great things with the legacies people leave. St. James Presbyterian Church in Stouffville, for example, received a generous bequest which, when added to their existing endowment fund, allowed them to invest in the PCC's consolidated fund. This fund is now providing the income to support new ideas for mission in the congregation. Members of the congregation, including the committees of the church, are invited to apply for some of the income to meet the missional needs that they would like to see supported. To date, funding has been provided to support the Yellow Brick House women's shelter, a refugee sponsorship program, the educational needs of ministers in Cuba, and the installation of storm windows over the stained glass in the sanctuary. Members of the congregation enjoy the process and make an effort to consider other worthy missional projects.

Past, present and future; memory and hope; time. Being intentional about leaving a legacy helps us to make the kinds of gifts we really want to give, and to honour the relationships we cherish: with God and with our congregation. Remember, the starlight that we now see in our skies left its home, its star, a long time ago. The light from the closest stars in Ursa Major, the Big Dipper, started on its journey to us more than 30 years ago, travelling at the speed of light – 300,000 km per second. The light from Rigel, the brightest star in the constellation Orion, is almost 900 years old, and we're just seeing it now. Polaris, the northern pole star, is at a distance of 433 light-years. If Polaris were to blow up in a supernova today, we wouldn't know about it for another 433 years! We never know how long the light from our legacy gift will shine – but it can light the way for years and years to come.

Perhaps a good way to make the best use of *our* time is to remember yesterday, live life well today, enjoying the stars and the rest of God's creation as often as possible, and take action now for a better tomorrow. Planned giving allows us to do that. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). Paul reminds us that the gifts God has given each of us are to be shared for the common good (1 Cor. 12:7), and that sufficiency for all is the goal of our sharing (2 Cor. 8:12 - 15). Planned giving allows us to give not only in the here and now, but through time, into the future. Thanks be to God for the beauty of the night sky and the opportunity for us to share God's love across time. Amen.

Let us pray;

Eternal God, we give you thanks for the beauty of this world, for the light and warmth provided by our daystar, the sun, for the awe and majesty we feel when we look up into a star-studded black sky, and for the opportunities to share your love with those around us and those who will follow in our footsteps. May all praise and glory be yours, Almighty God! Amen.

Benediction

Go forth from this place and shine like the stars of the heavens!
Use your words to bring peace and hope to those around you.
Initiate actions that will enable others to work together for the glory of God
and the prosperity of all people.
Pray for each other and all others.
And know that you do not do this work alone,
for you are always surrounded by
the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the companionship of the Holy Spirit.

*The 2019 Legacy Sunday worship resources
were written by the Rev. Joan Masterton,
minister at St. James Presbyterian Church
in Stouffville, Ont.*

For further help to design a legacy giving program for your congregation contact the Stewardship & Planned Giving staff:

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