



Legacy Sunday

Not Mine, But Ours!

This worship resource is for congregations to use on any Sunday they choose to reflect on legacy gifts and highlight planned giving. The General Assembly recommends the third Sunday in November to correspond with philanthropy week.

Your congregation has permission to use or adapt all or part of this resource.

Preparation

Why celebrate Legacy Sunday?

Everyone leaves a legacy. These resources have been created to help congregations reflect on the long-term impact of their gifts of time, talent and treasure. A Legacy Sunday is a good time for people to think about how their gifts today and in the future can participate in God's mission.

Legacy request in your bulletin

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

Your legacy gift to our congregation will impact future generations today and tomorrow. Consider making a legacy gift, now or in your estate plans, to share God's love in our congregation, community and around the world.

Promoting legacy giving

If your congregation does not have a plan to promote or receive legacy or planned gifts, check out the PCC resource *Setting up Legacy Funds and Endowments* at presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/legacygifts-and-planned-giving. This document contains practices, policies and procedures to help congregations set up and administer legacy funds.

Find colourful bulletin inserts to introduce your congregation to how they can make a gift using their will, charitable gift annuities, gifts of stock, and life insurance at presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving/legacy-giving-bulletininserts.

For other ideas and assistance with legacy gifts and planned giving, contact the PCC's Stewardship & Planned Giving department at stewardship@presbyterian.ca.

Resources for Worship

Call to Worship

(based on Jeremiah 23:1-6)

One: God asks, “Why have you not attended to my creation and shared the abundance of this world?”

All: **God notices the chaos and destruction occurring in the world.**

We have been scattered and driven apart from each other,

One: Isolation and fear keep us at a distance from each other, and from God.

All: **We have drifted from God’s fold in search of creature comforts**

One: Only to discover that we have forgotten the promise of God’s provision.

All: **The Lord God promises to gather the lost and lonely, bringing us back to safety:**

One: “I will raise up leaders who will care for my creation and for each other and they shall know fear no longer.”

All: **Sing for joy today as God’s righteousness is at hand and we are witnesses to God’s justice.**

Opening Words

Welcome as we gather to worship God, to give thanks to God and to ask God’s forgiveness and blessing. And in this time, we will consider God’s invitation to use the gifts God has given us in ways that help build the reign of God.

On this Legacy Sunday, we first give thanks for God’s abundant generosity. We thank God for sending people who have served as role models for us in generosity. We recognize that dreaming about and planning for a future beyond our lifetime challenges us. God’s invitation today is to explore how we shift from worry about money to joyfully investing in the future.

Hymn Suggestions:

585: Christ, you call us all to service

637: Take my life and let it be

648: I’m gonna live so God can use me

663: God whose giving knows no ending

798: What gift can we bring

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Giving and Generous God
Who created all things and called them good
We delight in the vast diversity to life.

At your invitation, we gather today for worship and prayer,
We gather in awe, that you have called us to care for your creation, as stewards of your world,
Surrounded by people whose generosity inspires us.

Too often we are preoccupied by looking after ourselves and caring for others,
And we forget that the future is created by actions we take today.

Things we consume and acquire draw us away from your beloved community.
We settle for worldly pleasures and treasures;
When you have promised us the power to create, to love, to heal.
Forgive us for so easily squandering these gifts.

Move our hearts, O God. Help us loosen our grip on all we claim to be “mine”.
Open our hearts, Holy Spirit, to receive the gifts and power you offer us.
Align our hearts, Christ Jesus, to faithfully steward the creation that is “ours”.
Amen

Promise of Forgiveness/Assurance of Pardon (based on Jeremiah 19.11)

Be not dismayed by what we have left undone or neglected in this lifetime, for we are forgiven.
God’s promise is that plans have been made for us; plans that include hope and a future.
Hope springs from unexpected places, from the gifts of grace and forgiveness, given and received. As forgiven Children of God, the Love of God flows through us so that we can offer this same gift to others.

Children’s Time: A Handful of Love

Preparation: Gather some small items that can be placed in children’s hands such as crayons, marbles, dominos, etc. The items should be small enough to be held easily in an open or closed hand.

Good morning, Children of God! You are part of this blessed community, and it is so good to see you. Today I have something to share with you. Can you hold out your hand so I can share a small gift with you? Hold out your hand and let me place something in your palm.

(Place one of the small items in each child’s hand. Each child could have the same item or you could use a bunch of different items.)

Hold your hand out so we can all see what you have in your hand.

Now, what happens to your hand when you say the word “Mine”?

(Many will clench their hand around the item. You may want to demonstrate and see if they copy you. Move your clenched hand to your heart.)

Yes, this is how we often think of things – that they are mine and that I need to hold them tightly and keep them safe. What else do we do to keep things safe?

(Typical responses: hide them, hug them, put them in a drawer, etc.)

Recently, I was looking for something I had hidden away for safety. Has that ever happened to you?

(Receive responses...)

Okay, you still have something in your hand, right? Is it really yours?

Where did it come from?

It came from me! And it came from, or was made from, God’s creation.

Now, say this with me: Not Mine, But Ours

(Hold your hand where everyone can see it, clench fist on “Mine” and open up your hand on “Ours”. Let adults and children see what you are doing – repeat several times – invite children to join you.)

How do you feel when you open your hand?

(Receive responses...)

Since God is the creator of all things, including these (items), can we really call them “Mine”?
Are we to hide and tuck away God’s treasures so that no one can see them?

I want you to think of this as a gift from God that is given to us so that we can share it with others. I shared it with you and now you can share it with someone you love. And they may share it back with you! God’s love is meant to be shared – so thank you for helping me share these gifts - and not hide them away so they can’t be used.

Will you pray with me?

Dear God, (children may be asked to repeat after the person leading the prayer.)

Thank you for all your gifts.

Thank you for sharing with me.

Thank you for helping me share with others.

Thank you for loving me.

Help me to love.

Help me to love others by sharing your love.

Every day. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Psalm 104

Luke 12:16-21 NIV (Sermon text)

Prayer of Illumination

Teach us your ways, O God, and give us the grace to follow them.

Give us eyes to see as you do,

hearts to love others as you do,

and the wisdom to discern how best to live as followers of Jesus, Amen.

Sermon: Not Mine, But Ours!

Teach us Your ways, O God, that we might be known as wise and faithful stewards.

I read somewhere that most people spend the first half of their lives collecting things and the second half trying to get rid of things. As I listen to friends cleaning out their parents' homes and "down-sizing", it appears we do a better job during the first half of our lives than the second!

Do you have a piece of furniture that you have been saving – just in case your kids or neighbors need it? Or a few sets of shoes or socks stashed away – just in case you run out? Have you noticed that we sometimes have so many things that cleaning out our closets feels like Christmas as we discover things we forgot we stored away?

Our consumer culture skillfully motivates us to want more, newer, faster, better. You know what I mean. And, yes, this drives our economy, so we just have to play along, right?

The flaw in this theory is that too often accumulation occurs for those who already have too much and on the backs of those with more limited options. It uses more and more of our natural resources, and creates more and more waste, hurting the natural environment God created.

Still, consumerism impacts people at all economic levels—it is an equal opportunity addiction! No matter how much we have, we never feel like we have enough.

Yes, I said addiction. And this addiction often comes with a powerful word we utter almost unconsciously. I remember with a mixture of awe and dismay when my young children first grabbed hold of a toy and with vigor and conviction uttered that powerful word: "Mine!"

What does our faith say about living a life dedicated to the care and protection of material things? To this idea of “Mine!”

Today, in our scripture lesson, we hear about a person who is collecting and storing up treasures. I wonder, and suspect you are wondering, what they were storing these treasures up for? Was it for personal gratification or planning for a rainy day? Some families, communities, and even churches store up resources for a rainy day, and then act as if a rainy day will never come, even as we wonder how to connect with a community where the message of God is viewed as ancient and irrelevant . . .but that is a sermon for another day.

Back to the person enjoying and feasting on stored-up treasures. Aren't we all inclined to store up treasures, if we are able? Aren't we told that good financial planning requires thinking ahead, saving and preparing for a yet-to-be-lived future, especially through these rollercoaster-like times?

So, this person is happy with their accumulated goods. We don't know exactly what they have accumulated—maybe grain, cloth, jewels, who knows—but we do know that this stored up treasure is the source of great satisfaction and pleasure.

But then the person learns that they will die that very night! No retirement. No bucket list. It doesn't seem fair, and yet a good reality check.

The past few years have been a jarring reminder that every day is a gift. Tomorrow is uncertain and our journey home to God can occur at any time. Today is all we can be certain of.

I realize I am treading in dangerous territory, but Jesus' parables are provocative. It is hard to face the reality of our own humanity. And yet this scripture today invites us to live into this powerful possibility and promise.

What if the calling of a disciple of Christ, as Mahatma Gandhi is credited with saying, is to “live simply so that others may simply live”?

Marie Kondo offers similar wisdom in her 2014 book titled *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*. In addition to tips on how to declutter and organize your life, (I like the how-to-fold-your-socks tip), she offers a ritual to offer things back into the cycle of life. Whatever clothing, books or knick-knacks you are ready to give away, she suggests holding them in our hands, saying, “You have served me well—I release you back into creation.” How liberating to free ourselves from objects that fill our drawers, closets and physical space! This can be a radical experience.

A few years ago, a campaign to fight malaria in Africa used this tag line: If anyone has malaria, we all have malaria. This powerful mind shift acknowledges that our needs – and blessings - are not just “MINE” – they are OURS.

Here is one example of how the shift from *mine* to *ours* can impact ministry.

A minister discovered that benevolence donations were being collected and stored in a member’s home, to be distributed when needed. While the member felt that the funds were her responsibility to protect, the minister knew that it wasn’t a safe practice for either the church or the member.

To shift the church’s culture around benevolence funds, the minister bought a small wooden box shaped like a church and placed it in the sanctuary. All were invited to offer gifts into the box as they were able. The collection process became public—it became *ours*. The minister was astonished to discover a check for \$1,000 in the box shortly after introducing it. By making the discretionary/compassionate/benevolent offering process part of the whole community—it not only became *ours*— it also grew!

Today, we honor generosity through legacy gifts. On this day, we celebrate the impact of shifting stewardship of life’s blessings from *mine* to *ours*.

In today’s parable, we are warned about the temptation to build barns to store what has been accumulated during our lifetime. We don’t know how or why the person became wealthy. It could have been from good luck, hard work or built on the exploitation of others. However, we do know that his actions focused on protecting treasures rather than sharing them.

Financial planners talk about the concept of our “short-term and long-term time horizon”. Are we looking to just get through today or are we thinking about what life could be far into the future? An example of long-term planning is the person who plants trees recognizing that they are starting a project that will bless others in the future!

So how does our faith help us reconcile the advice and wisdom of financial advisors who teach us to save and invest for the future with this parable that reminds us all we really have is today?

I invite you to think about planned giving as any action that connects our decisions today, with the promise of a positive impact on the future. The spiritual gift of generosity through planned gifts is a future blessing, not a short-lived pleasure. It is a way to share the treasures we have built up when we no longer need them.

It doesn’t even take a lot of treasures to bless others. You don’t have to be wealthy to make an impact on future generations.

Many churches have scholarships and endowments created less than 100 years ago with gifts of \$500 dollars or less. Because of the long-term time horizon and accumulated interest as well as investment growth, those funds now provide thousands of dollars for mission and ministry today!

These gifts were made by real and ordinary people – like you and me – who chose the joy that comes from rejecting the concept that all that matters is MINE. They invested in possibilities that their future outlook created for OUR world. They lived with an OUR perspective—inviting us to think about OUR world, OUR future, OUR opportunity to create future possibilities—through our actions TODAY!

In the end, what does the Lord require of us? We hear that answer in our Old Testament scripture... to love and serve God with all our hearts and souls. What is important to our God? Executing justice for the orphan and the widow and caring for the stranger. What if we think about how our lives and our estates – whatever is left when we go home to God – care for our community and continue to share God’s love with the world.

You may be thinking, a planned gift or estate planning is hard. You don’t have the time to set one up. Yes, our last will and testament is best created with legal counsel, but the hardest part of the process is usually our reluctance to shift from thinking about what we have accumulated to what we decide to release back into the realm of God’s creation by giving it to others.

Here is another way to think about this opportunity.

We have incredible power to create the future today. If you think you don’t have resources to make a difference, think about the individuals and families that made \$100 or \$500 gifts in the early 1900’s, who would be thrilled to hear that their gifts are now worth thousands of dollars supporting the ministries they chose.

A gift of \$1,000—with the assumption of 5% growth and reinvested annually—could be worth \$131,501 in 100 years! That’s the power of a future oriented time horizon!

And when that gift joins the gifts of others who are also thinking of the future, the growth exceeds our imagination.

Imagine what a different ending Jesus’ parable might have had if the Rich Fool, rather than storing up treasure for personal pleasure, shared even a portion of those resources for the benefit of God’s creation. What if the Rich Fool had left a plan to distribute some of the remaining treasures after this life, to participate in God’s mission. Jesus could have pointed out the Widow and Orphans Feeding Ministry, the Home for Desert Wanderers, and the Camel Care and Protection Fund – all founded by the one we know as the “Wise Planner” rather than the “Rich Fool”.

What will delight your heart and soul in 20, 50, or 100 years from now because it exists—because you planted the seeds of your generosity with a vision for something that could exist in the future?

Rather than barns (or basements, or closets) to store our stuff, what if we shifted our focus to using our gifts as seeds for the future? What might be your legacy?

The empowering message of this parable is that we do not need to settle for barns when we have a future to create! Jesus invites us to see beyond the stuff of this world to the future we are creating in our hearts and minds—a future where hunger, sickness, economic injustice, homelessness and war no longer exist because people have invested in sharing and caring, in equity and security for all persons and in building God’s beloved community.

Are you ready to change your focus from what is MINE to what is possible when we see God’s way, and see the world as OURS? God and the world are waiting for us to choose. May each of us discover the power of generosity in this life!

Amen

Prayer After Sermon

God of Creation and Vision

You birthed us from your creation

Called it Good and called us Stewards.

Into the world and our communities you pour resources and visions,

Help us to see your vision and the tools you place at our disposal.

Give us courage and faith to be stewards for all peoples, in all places

And to build your beloved community in this time and space.

God of Grace and God of Glory

You have blessed us day by day

Ours is the gift of love and praise,

Power and promise to live Your Way.

Announcement after the Sermon

If you are interested in helping create a legacy gift, please see the pamphlets at the back of the church or talk to (contact xxxx) who is happy to discuss the benefits of the different ways of giving. If you wish to talk to someone outside of the church, contact the Stewardship and Planned Giving department at The Presbyterian Church in Canada, and they will keep all questions and information confidential.

Offering Invitation

God's goodness fills the world,
Equip our eyes to see it.
God's goodness fills the world,
Inviting our hands to share what God has given us.
All Our gifts come from God's goodness,
Today we pass that goodness along to others in Jesus' name.

Offering Response

Hymn 830: Praise God from whom all blessings flow

Offering Prayer

With humble hearts and eager thoughts
We trust our gifts reflect our Love.
Our grace revealed in Your generosity
Through gifts both simple and astounding.

You know the worries and fears of modern life
And bless us with the teachings of your Son Jesus Christ,
Who bids us trust and live each day
Reminding us to stop and pray
Cherish every chance to say
Thank you, Loving God.

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession / Prayers of the People

Abundant God; Creator, Christ and Holy Spirit, your giving knows no end:

We thank you for the gift of life. Each breath we have is from you; inspire us to live our lives with hope and purpose and with a desire to respond to your call to follow you.

We thank you for what is known and unknown that abounds throughout your creation – help us to care for such a legacy of beauty and wonder and to work to heal creation where it has been degraded and spoiled.

We give thanks for those who came ahead of us – help us appreciate their gifts of wisdom and knowledge and love passed down to us. And we are grateful for community that is around us: family and friends, strangers, and companions on the journey. Help us unfurl our fingers and open our hands, to move from a mindset of “mine” to “ours” and to give and receive support more generously.

For joy and laughter, for treasured memories and for dreams and plans for the future, we give you thanks.

We thank you for the gifts of those who labour in many ways – in our church, across our communities and around the world– help us 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 ...

In Jesus' name we pray, together in the words he taught us,
Our Father...

Benediction

Know that we do not walk this journey alone,
for we are always surrounded by
the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God
and the companionship of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord bless you and keep you,
the Lord be kind and gracious to you,
the Lord look upon you with favour,
and give you peace.

The 2022 Legacy Sunday worship service was written by Bonnie Ives Marden, leadership consultant and financial stewardship practitioner.