



Presbyterians Sharing Sunday 2026 Worship Resource



This worship resource has been prepared for use on Sunday, September 20, 2026 (the seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost), or on any other Sunday that suits the congregation and its leadership. You can use as much of the service or as little of it as suits your context, and you are free to adapt and revise any of the material below as you wish. The sermon provides several examples of recent projects supported by funds donated to Presbyterians Sharing. You might be aware of other projects that would speak more directly within your context, and might want to draw attention to a grant that has been received by a ministry or mission in your presbytery or perhaps even your own congregation.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Exodus 16:2-15

Psalms 105:1-6, 37-45

Philippians 1:21-30

Matthew 20:1-16

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

Your hand, O God, has guided – 477

The church's one foundation – 479

God bless your church with strength – 491

Called as partners in Christ's service – 587

Guide me, O thou great Redeemer – 651

Sent forth by your blessings – 775

For the fruits of all creation – 802

Give thanks, my soul, for harvest – 805

We plough the fields and scatter – 807

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP

O give thanks to the Lord, call on God's name,
make known God's deeds among the peoples.

Sing to God, sing praises to God;

tell of all God's wonderful works.

Glory in God's holy name;

let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Seek the Lord and God's strength;

seek God's presence continually. (Psalm 105:1-4)

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

O God, we come together in prayer to give you adoration and praise for all that you are, all that you have been, and all that you have yet to reveal yourself to be. You are the first and you are the last, the beginning and the end. You are gracious and you are generous. You see us as we are, at our best and at our worst, and yet you love us still.

Loving God, we ask that you would forgive us for the times when we have tried to be first, and for the times when we have made a show of being last. Forgive us for the times when we have been envious of the gifts given to others. Forgive us for the times when, as individuals and as a church, we have been too slow to act. And forgive us for the times when, as individuals and as a church, we have acted too quickly and done harm in our haste. We ask all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, our sibling and our Saviour. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

All people have fallen short and continue to fall short of God's standards and are in need of salvation. Salvation means life, forgiveness, healing, and wholeness. And God's way to salvation has been revealed in Jesus Christ. That salvation comes from God's grace received through faith

in Christ alone. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, your sins are forgiven. Know that God has forgiven you. Forgive yourself, and forgive one another. Amen.

(Based on Living Faith 2.5.7)

CHILDREN'S TIME: MAKING THE WHOLE PICTURE

This idea for children's time requires some preparation on the part of the leader. Before Sunday, take a photo of the outside of the church building, the interior of the sanctuary, or a piece of artwork in the sanctuary (a stained-glass window, perhaps). Then use a jigsaw-puzzle-making website (there are several sites that do this for free – one is <https://jigsawmake.com/>) and create a simple (perhaps 12 piece) puzzle out of that photo. Download and print the puzzle, and cut out the pieces. (You could also simply print the picture and cut it into random pieces yourself if you wish.)

- During children's time, distribute the puzzle pieces.
- Ask if anyone can guess what the puzzle will be when it is put together.
- Have the children, as a group, put the puzzle together.
- Ask a few questions: What is visible in the whole puzzle that is not visible in each individual piece? What would happen if a piece was missing? What would happen if someone refused to use the piece (or pieces) that they were given?
- Connect this to the people who make up the congregation and the various gifts and skills that they bring.

If you normally conclude this time with a prayer, thank God for the many pieces that make up the church and ask God to help us use all the pieces that we have been given to make the best and fullest picture that we can.

SERMON: BEING GENEROUS—BECAUSE WE CAN

As Jesus tells the parable that we heard this morning, he is drawing closer and closer both to the end of his ministry and to the end of his life. He knows it. And even the disciples are beginning to sense it. One day, Peter asks Jesus what the disciples—the ones who have left everything behind to follow Jesus—are going to get in return (Matthew 19:27). Soon after that, the mother of the brothers, James and John, asks Jesus to make sure that her sons get the seats of honour on either side of Jesus in his kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21).

In between those two requests, Jesus tells a parable—a parable that is framed by the words “But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (Matthew 19:30) and “So the last will be first, and the first will be last” (Matthew 20:16). Repetition in the Bible is never an accident. These repeated words provide a frame that enfolds this parable. This frame is a strong signal that Matthew wants us to pay attention to what this story says.

The parables are often hard to interpret, because they say pretty much what they need to say. But as with all of the stories that the Bible tells, we can understand this parable more fully when we understand the context within which it is set.

Day labourers—those who worked by the day rather than being employed more consistently for a longer period of time—were always a part of society. Both Leviticus and Deuteronomy make it clear that such workers were to be paid every day (Leviticus 19:13 & Deuteronomy 24:14-15). It was not lawful to withhold such a person’s wages until the next day, because their survival and the survival of their families depended on them being paid immediately. But the Roman occupation and the Empire’s regressive tax system meant that many small landowners lost their homes and farms and vineyards and were forced to become day labourers. The pool of people who stood in the marketplace every day hoping to be hired to do something—to do anything—grew.

The other contextual tidbits that are key to understanding this story fully have to do with units of time and units of money. The Roman clock divided both the day and the night into twelve equal hours. The day began at dawn, and what we would call noon was the sixth hour. Roman currency

had a number of units, but the most common of these was the denarius, a small silver coin that represented roughly a single day's wages for a labourer.

And so, Jesus says, once upon a time, the owner of a large vineyard discovered that his crop was ready for harvest. He went to the market at the beginning of the day, where several people were standing, waiting for work. He hired them, sending them to his vineyard to harvest his grapes and telling them he would pay them each a denarius.

The landowner returned to the marketplace at the third hour (mid-morning) and at the sixth hour (noon) and at the ninth hour (mid-afternoon). Each time, he found more people standing there, waiting for work, and each time, he hired them, sending them to his vineyard to help with the harvest and telling them he would pay them each what was right.

The landowner returned to the marketplace one final time late in the day. Our English Bibles often say that this last visit happened at five o'clock, but that's not quite right. The Greek text says it was at the eleventh hour, that is, an hour before sunset, considerably later than five o'clock. (By the way, this is the origin of the English phrase "at the eleventh hour," meaning "at the last possible minute.") And even at this point in the day, the landowner found more people standing there, waiting for work, and he hired them, sending them to his vineyard to help with the harvest.

But only a short time after those last workers arrived, the day ended, and the landowner told the manager to pay all of the labourers, starting with those hired last and ending with those hired first. Those who had worked only an hour received a denarius, which thrilled those who had worked all day, because they assumed that that meant that they would get more than that. But when their turn came, they found that they, too, received a denarius, and only a denarius.

They complained about this. But when the landowner heard them, he told them that their complaints were without merit. They agreed to work for what he had offered them, and that was exactly what he had given them. That he had been generous and also given the same wage to others, the landowner said, was really no business of theirs. And while the landowner didn't say this, it is worth noting that by doing what he did, he spent a considerable amount of money that

he didn't need to spend. It also is worth noting that by doing this, he made a considerable difference in the lives of the workers who were paid for a full day when they had no reason to expect it.

So, what does this parable teach us?

One of the ways that we can figure out what message the parables and other stories of the Bible have for us is by asking ourselves a simple question: Who are we in the story? What character is most like us? What character does the things we do, says the things we say, lives in a way that most closely parallels the ways in which we live?

Who are we in this story?

Most of us likely identify with the workers hired at dawn. We've borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. We've worked hard, doing the work that others wouldn't, keeping the church here and the roof intact and the lights on and the doors open. And if the end result of all that work is that we get the same reward as those who turn up at the last minute, well, that doesn't seem right! It's not fair, is it?

The problem with this interpretation, however, is that it leads to division and disagreement. Focusing on fairness and asking whether we have been treated fairly or not tends to bring out the worst in us. And the Gospel is supposed to make us better, isn't it?

It is possible that some of us feel like we are the workers hired at the last minute. We've been given a reward that we didn't really earn, a reward that is the same as the one given to those who worked a lot harder and for a lot longer than we have. It isn't fair, but that's grace, isn't it?

There is one more key character in this parable, a character that might not exactly be like us, but a character that perhaps we should aspire to be more like. That character is the landowner. Maybe instead of seeing ourselves as the workers we should think about what we can learn from the landowner.

Now, the landowner in this parable has traditionally been understood to be God. But Christians believe that we have all been made in God's image. That means neither that we are God nor that we should play God, but that we should act like God—that we should be Godly. This parable teaches us that God is generous, so if we want to be like God, then we should also be generous. The parable teaches us to think more about what we have to give than about what we might get.

And this is an important thing to reflect on as we consider our gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.

It is tempting to think of the resources of our congregation as belonging to us alone. Those resources, after all, are what allow us to fix the roof and to keep the lights on. Those resources are what allow us to pay those who lead worship and care for our members and adherents. Those resources are for us. We have worked hard for them, and goodness knows that we need them. There is lots of work to be done, right here in our own backyard. It isn't fair to expect us to support congregations and missions and staff in other parts of the country or other parts of the world.

But God calls us to think less about fairness, and more about generosity. God calls us not to think about what we should get, but to think instead about what we can and might give. God calls us to follow God's example, and to be generous with what belongs to us, not because we must, but because we can.

Our generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing support innovative congregational programs in The Presbyterian Church in Canada. With support from Presbyterians Sharing, the Rev. Konnie Vissers launched Rooted: Centre for Theology and Eco Justice in 2022, creating four urban children's gardens in Guelph and Hamilton (Ontario) through local congregations. By 2023, summer camp and Sunday School programs integrated eco-theology and gardening, reaching over 90 campers. The children's garden at Kortright Presbyterian Church has hosted workshops and a five-week class on sustainable gardening, food justice, and creation care. Future plans include a greenhouse garden and a fruit tree guild. By combining faith, practical skills, and positive coping strategies, this unique mission teaches children to connect with God, care for creation and support local food security. These programs offer hope, cultivate love for nature, and empower young people

to engage in meaningful climate action while taking home free, organic produce to share with their communities.

Our generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing support building projects in congregations of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. With support from Presbyterians Sharing, Zion Presbyterian Church in Charlottetown (PEI) has now added a modern elevator to their 113-year-old historic building. This new addition provides those with physical challenges access to the youth centre and Sunday school classrooms located on the second floor. The lower level of the building, where many meetings and dinners take place, has also now become accessible to seniors and others who have missed out on many congregational events because they could not navigate the stairs. This welcome upgrade has revitalized Zion Church's social, educational, and community programs, ensuring all members can engage more fully.

Our generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing support The Presbyterian Church in Canada in its work of embracing the commitments made in the 2024 Apology, which acknowledges the church's past role in colonization and residential schools. We are committed to listening to and sharing the truth about those histories and actively supporting Indigenous-led healing and wellness efforts. Many of these efforts are carried out with support from Presbyterians Sharing through the eight ministries of the National Indigenous Ministries Council.

Our generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing support Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan, one of the ministries of the National Indigenous Ministries Council. Mistawasis is the only Presbyterian Indigenous ministry on a Canadian reserve. It stands on a foundation of rich history and faith, dating back to the 1870s, when Chief Mistawasis helped establish the first church there. It celebrated 150 years in 2026! Today, the congregation is renewing this sacred space for the future, adding new shingles, aluminum siding, and their first air-conditioning system to make the building welcoming and strong for generations to come. Recently, they celebrated several new baptisms and anticipate more, as they nurture faith, knowledge of the Bible, and Indigenous traditions within their congregation. Though building trust with the wider community is a long journey, they move forward with hope, guided by God's Spirit and strengthened by prayers and support.

Our generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing support ministry with our international partners, including the work of Gerry Kent with the United Mission to Nepal (UMN). Gerry describes the UMN as “an advocate for those who cannot or do not have the opportunity to seek help for themselves.” With support from Presbyterians Sharing, Gerry carries out his life-long commitment to serving the people of Nepal in the spirit of Jesus Christ. Since September 2025, Gerry has taken on the three-year volunteer position of Funding Manager in Nepal for the UMN. He describes “the hand of God reaching into this area in love, offering healing.”

Our generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing support the work of the Reformed Church of Chop, a congregation in the Reformed Church of Transcarpathia in Ukraine. Amidst a war, political upheaval, and various challenges, the congregation has been providing both nourishment and service. The Reformed Church of Chop operates a social kitchen that serves weekly meals to economically disadvantaged, mentally and physically disabled, and elderly members of the community. Since 2023, Presbyterians Sharing has helped purchase ingredients and tools as well as supporting monthly stipends for those serving in the ministry. Through grace, the number of served meals has doubled, and the community has experienced communal, physical and spiritual sustenance.

These are only a few examples of the many programs and projects and ministries and missions that we have supported recently through our generous gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. Who knows what work will be possible through our generosity right now? And wouldn't it be wonderful to find out?

God has always been so very generous with what belongs to God. God knew us before we knew God. God loved us before we loved God. And God calls us to make the choice that God would make, the choice that God always makes, the choice to be generous with what belongs to us. And if we do that, if we think about what we can give instead of what we believe we should get, then perhaps, with God's help and with the support of Presbyterians across Canada, we can build a world where there is neither first nor last, but where all are one in the glory of the kingdom of God.

Amen.

RESPONSIVE AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

The church is Christ
together with his people
**called both to worship and to serve him
in all of life.**

The church is one.
**It is one family under God whose purpose it is
to unite all people in Jesus Christ.**

The church is holy.
**It is set apart by God through the Holy Spirit
to be a chosen people in the world.**

The church is catholic.
**It is universal, including all people of all time
who affirm the Christian faith.**

The church is apostolic.
**It is founded on Christ and the apostles
and is in continuity with their teachings.**

The church is in constant need of reform
because of the failure and sin
which mark its life in every age.
**The church is present
when the Word is truly preached,
the sacraments rightly administered,
and as it orders its life
according to the word of God.**

(Living Faith 7.1)

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

As God the gracious landowner has been generous with God's gifts to us, let us in turn be generous in our gifts in support of the ministries of Christ's church—here at home, across the country and around the world.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

O God, you are generous with your gifts to us. Receive now our gifts to you. Bless them, so that they might be useful to the work of your church and your kingdom, both here in this tiny corner of your vineyard, across Canada, and through our partners around the world. For we ask this in the name of your most generous gift to us, Jesus Christ, your son. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

God, our creator and our redeemer, you have given us a universe full of wonders that we cannot begin to understand. We thank you for all the blessings of your creation.

Lord of the nations, we thank you for the country in which we live, a country where we can live in freedom, a country where we can worship you when and as we choose.

God, head of the church, we thank you for our denomination and for this congregation. We thank you for all the people who give so much of themselves in support of your ministry in this place and around the world. We give you thanks for those who give so generously to Presbyterians Sharing and for the breadth and depth of the ministry and mission that is made possible through those gifts.

God, our parent and our friend, we thank you for the families in which we live, families into which we were born or adopted or married or accepted, and for the circles of friendship that surround us as we move through life.

God, our healer and our comforter, we ask that you would be with those who are sick, those who are suffering, those who are grieving, those who are lonely.

God who calls us to follow, we ask that you would continue to inspire us on our journey of faith. May this congregation be a source of hope and light in this community. We pray for your church in all places around the world, that it might be healed and renewed, and that it might also be a source of renewal and healing. We pray for the diverse ministries and missions made possible through our gifts to Presbyterians Sharing.

God of peace, we ask that you would use us and the leaders of our nation to bring peace to all nations. Grant that we might help to bring justice and hope to all people in this, your earth.

God of creation, we need your help to look after the world that you have made. Grant that we might be faithful stewards of your universe, so that those who come here after us will also enjoy its beauty. Grant that we might learn to control our use of the world's resources, so that our impact on this planet might be lessened.

Loving God, your son promised that our prayers would be heard by you. Remind us of your will for us, and help us to live as citizens of your kingdom of grace, right here and right now.

And now, with the church throughout the world and down through the ages, we come together as your family here on earth, praying the prayer which Jesus taught us:

Our Father ... Amen.

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

Go out into the world and be a worker in God's vineyard. Love all whom you meet. Serve all who are in need. Be generous, especially where generosity might not be deserved. Remember that God is with you, everywhere you go. And may the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you, all those whom you love, and all those whom God loves, both this day and forevermore. Amen.

This worship resource was prepared by the Rev. Alex Bisset. Alex is the minister of Riverdale and Westminster Churches in Toronto, Ontario. He is also clerk of the Presbytery of East Toronto, and has served on several committees and boards at the presbytery, synod, and denominational levels.