

***Gathering,* Pentecost 2 2021**

From Creation Time 1 to Reign of Christ Sunday

[From Creation Time 1 to Reign of Christ Sunday 2](#_Toc75532290)

[Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost 2](#_Toc75532291)

[Sunday 2](#_Toc75532292)

[September 12 – Sixteenth after Pentecost 3](#_Toc75532293)

[September 19 – Seventeenth after Pentecost 5](#_Toc75532294)

[September 26 – Eighteenth after Pentecost 7](#_Toc75532295)

[October 3 – World Communion Sunday 9](#_Toc75532296)

[October 10 – Thanksgiving Sunday 11](#_Toc75532297)

[October 17 – Twenty-first after Pentecost 13](#_Toc75532298)

[October 24 – Twenty-second after Pentecost 15](#_Toc75532299)

[October 31 – Twenty-third after Pentecost 17](#_Toc75532300)

[November 1 – All Saints’ Day (Monday) 19](#_Toc75532301)

[November 7 – Twenty-fourth after Pentecost 21](#_Toc75532302)

[November 14 – Twenty-fifth after Pentecost 23](#_Toc75532303)

[November 21 – Reign of Christ Sunday 25](#_Toc75532304)

Excerpted from

*Gathering: Resources for Worship Planners*

Published four times a year, *Gathering* is a worship planning magazine for ministers and lay leaders, music directors, and United Church of Canada worship committees. Subscribe or browse single issues at [UCRDstore.ca](https://www.ucrdstore.ca/magazines/gathering).

## 

## From Creation Time 1 to Reign of Christ Sunday

## Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost

**Dates:** Five Sundays in the Season of Pentecost beginning with the Sunday after Labour Day and continuing through Thanksgiving Sunday. Occasionally there are six Sundays in this time frame.

**Meaning of Name**

*Creation* comes from the Latin *creare* and *creatio* meaning “to create.”

The root of Creation Time is in the liturgical Ember Days. *Ember* is thought to come from the Old English *ymbren*, possibly an alteration for *ymbryne* “period,” from *ymb* “about” + *ryne* “course.” Another possibility is that the name is derived from the Latin *quatuor tempora*, meaning “four periods or times.” Ember may also come from the German *Quatember*, translated as “quarter day,” a day of asking God’s blessing on the new season

**Liturgical Colour: Orange**

Orange is a warm colour, associated with enthusiasm, creativity, fruitfulness, endurance, and strength as well as with sunrise and sunset, fall and harvest, and the changing seasons, nature’s last burst of colour before winter. It is the red of passion tempered by the yellow of wisdom.

## Sunday

**Dates:** Sunday is the traditional day of worship for followers of the Way of Jesus. It is a day to worship, sing, pray, and break bread together. Each Sunday is meant to be a celebration, a “little Easter,” and a break from fasting and abstention, such as during Lent.

**Meaning of Name**

The term Sunday comes to us from Old English *Sunnandæg*, a translation of the Latin *dies solis*, literally “the day of the sun.” This was the day upon which the disciples discovered the empty tomb and the resurrection of Jesus. *Sabbath* comes from Old English, through Greek from the Hebrew word *shabbat*, meaning “to rest.” Sabbath is a day of rest or a time period of rest.

**History of the Sabbath**

Scripture is clear that Jesus celebrated Saturday, the seventh day of the week, as the Sabbath. The change for Christians came about during the reign of Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century. Constantine became a Christian and made all the citizens of the Roman Empire Christians as well. Many pagan practices were Christianized or recycled into celebrations of the Christian God. Prior to their forced conversion, the cult of Mithraism or sun–worship was the official religion of the Roman Empire. It had an official worship day on the first day of the week, a day set aside for special homage to the sun. This is where we get our name Sunday. Constantine tried to make it a little easier for his citizens by accepting their special day of worship, Sunday, instead of the Christian Sabbath that had been observed by Jesus and his disciples. Traditionally, the day is to be set aside as a day of rest and worship.

*Note: For background on Ordinary Time, see Pentecost 1 2021 issue, p. 9.*

## September 12 – Sixteenth after Pentecost

##### Creation Time 1 in the Season of Pentecost

##### Creation cries out: Love me!

##### Proper 19

*Worship materials for September 12 to October 10 were contributed by Nathan Wright, Nashwaaksis U.C., Fredericton, N.B.*

**Proverbs 1:20–33**

Wisdom cries in the streets

**Psalm 19** (VU pp. 740–741)

The heavens declare the glory of God.

**James 3:1–12**

Not many of you should be teachers of God’s word.

**Mark 8:27–38**

Who do people say that I am?

### To Ponder

By which names and words do you most often describe Jesus?

### Spark

Around the worship space, place signs or pieces of paper with “Messiah,” “Friend,” “Saviour,” “Redeemer,” “Word,” “I AM,” or other words to describe Jesus written on them. They could also be projected on a screen, as well as spoken in American Sign Language.

### With Children

It is not uncommon for children in North America to hear, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” But words can often cause pain that lasts far longer than a physical injury. The reading from James addresses the power of words to bless or curse. Talk with the children about how it feels when someone calls them a name or says something hurtful. Ask, “How does God want us to treat others? What words can we use to help people feel good instead of bad?”

### Sermon Starter

The power of words is a connecting theme in this week’s readings. In Proverbs, Wisdom cries out in the street and declares, “I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you” (1:23), ultimately asserting that “those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease” (1:33). James vividly describes the power wielded by the tongue and the damage it can cause. In Mark, Jesus asks the pointed question: “Who do you say that I am?” which is essentially: “What words do you use to describe me?” How we answer that question can have a powerful effect on the way we live our lives and interact with others. If we echo Peter’s words that Jesus is “the Messiah,” what does that mean with regard to how we engage with the world? How will our other words, whether written, spoken, signed, or embodied, be different because of this declaration? What does it mean for us to be followers of the word made flesh in our local context?

### Hymns

***Proverbs 1:20–33***

VU 272 “Open your ears, O faithful people”

VU 514 “God the Spirit, guide and guardian”

MV 6 “Holy Spirit, come into our lives”

MV 10 “Come and seek the ways of Wisdom”

MV 63 “Long before my journey’s start”

***Psalm 19***

VU 305 “Into the unshaped silence”

VU 499 “O Christ, the Word incarnate”

MV 108 “I know your Word”

***James 3:1–12***

VU 609 “In all our grief and fear”

MV 172 “God says”

MV 173 “Put peace into each other’s hands”

***Mark 8:27–38***

VU 335 “At the name of Jesus”

VU 561 “Take up your cross”

MV 113 “Jesus saw them fishing”

## September 19 – Seventeenth after Pentecost

##### Creation Time 2 in the Season of Pentecost

##### Creation asks: Learn my stories!

##### Proper 20

**Proverbs 31:10–31**

A tribute to a capable woman.

**Psalm 1** (VU p. 724)

Blessed are those who follow God’s law.

**James 3:13—4:3, 7–8*a***

Wisdom from above is gentle and peaceable.

**Mark 9:30–37**

Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me.

### To Ponder

What seeds have you planted in your faithful living? What fruits have come of these seeds?

### Spark

Place bowls or baskets with different kinds of fruit (preferably something in season in your area) at the entrance to the worship space and on the communion table. Instead of naming the fruit, make a sign that says “Wisdom” for each of them.

### With Children

Bring the baskets of fruit mentioned in “Spark” to the place where you speak with the children. Ask them to identify each kind of fruit, then ask, “Where does it come from? Can an apple come from a pear tree? Can grapes come from an orange tree?” The kinds of seeds that are planted determine the kind of fruit that grows. Talk about how God wants us to be wise and plant seeds of peace with our words, actions, and choices, so that one day there will be a harvest of peace and goodness for everyone.

### Sermon Starter

Autumn is a time that is often associated with harvest, which ties in well with the focus on fruit in three of this week’s readings (Proverbs, Psalms, James). Those who listen to God’s wisdom will yield fruit that reflects it. What does this fruit look like? “She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue” (Proverbs 31:26) and “The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits” (James 3:17a). In other words, the fruit of God’s wisdom is a harvest of actions that make for right relations between all of God’s people. It nourishes compassion, respect, and gentleness, all of which work together to settle disputes and create lasting peace. Jesus describes this fruit well when he tells his disciples, who have been arguing about who is the greatest, that “whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35*b*)

### Hymns

***Proverbs 31:10–31***

VU 323 “Maker of the sun and moon”

VU 590 “A prophet-woman broke a jar”

MV 136 “When hands reach out and fingers trace”

***Psalm 1***

VU 255 “The living God be praised”

VU 701 “What does the Lord require of you”

MV 117 “By the well, a thirsty woman”

***James 3:13—4:3, 7–8*a**

VU 227 “For the fruit of all creation”

VU 581 “When we are living”

MV 157 “I am a child of God”

***Mark 9:30–37***

VU 340 “Jesus, friend of little children”

VU 593 “Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love”

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

MV 137 “Welcome, Jesus, you are welcome”

## September 26 – Eighteenth after Pentecost

##### Creation Time 3 in the Season of Pentecost

##### Creation calls: Nurture me!

##### Proper 21

**Esther 7:1–6, 9–10; 9:20–22**

Esther pleads for the life of her people.

**Psalm 124** (VU p. 848)

If God had not been at our side.

**James 5:13–20**

The sick should be anointed by the elders.

**Mark 9:38–50**

If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off.

### To Ponder

Reflect upon a powerful experience you have had in prayer, either while praying for someone or having someone pray for you.

### Spark

The reading from James presents an opportunity to offer a healing service with anointing and laying on of hands as part of the Sunday worship. If you do not want to do this as part of the service itself, invite those who wish to participate to remain in the worship space after the final benediction.

### With Children

What prayers did you learn as a child? (“Now I lay me down to sleep…” “Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts…” “Our Father, who art in heaven…”) Mention a few to the children and then ask them which prayers they have learned. Talk with them about why we pray. Close the time together by teaching them a short prayer that will be easy for them to remember.

### Sermon Starter

Most worship services in the Christian tradition include several prayers (an opening prayer, a prayer of confession, prayers of the people, the Lord’s Prayer, etc.), but there is often little emphasis or explanation about *why* we pray. At its heart, prayer not only connects us with God, but also helps to strengthen connections within the community. Naming particular people, places, and situations in prayer serves to reinforce the idea that we are united in very tangible ways: what affects one, affects all. The reading from James is a powerful example of why prayer is an integral part of the Christian faith: “Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed” (5:16). Notice the emphasis on community, healing, forgiveness, and restoration to wholeness. Holding each other in prayer seeks to heal the divisions that may occur when we sin against one another and ensures that relationships are healthy, so that together the community can live out its mission and ministry of reconciliation.

### Hymns

***Esther 7:1–6, 9–10; 9:20–22***

VU 280 “Mother and God”

MV 179 “Sisters let us walk together”

**Psalm 124**

VU 131 “If our God had simply saved us”

***James 5:13–20***

VU 603 “In loving partnership we come”

VU 611 “Out of the depths, O God, we call to you”

VU 613 “We cannot measure how you heal”

VU 619 “Healer of our every ill”

MV 132 “Great sorrow prodded Jairus”

***Mark 9:38–50***

VU 582 “There’s a spirit in the air”

VU 681 “Where cross the crowded ways of life”

MV 209 “Go, make a diff’rence”

## October 3 – World Communion Sunday

##### Creation Time 4 in the Season of Pentecost

##### Creation requests: Lend me your voice!

##### Proper 22

**Job 1:1; 2:1–10**

Job’s first affliction; faith intact.

**Psalm 26**

Prove me, try me, test my heart.

**Hebrews 1:1–4; 2:5–12**

God gave the world to humans, not angels.

**Mark 10:2–16**

Question of divorce; Jesus blesses children.

### To Ponder

Reflect upon a communion meal you have shared or presided at that was especially profound for you. What made it so?

### Spark

Place a globe on the communion table or in another prominent spot. You might also choose to post world maps around the worship space.

### With Children

Gather with the children at the communion table this week instead of your usual gathering spot. Point out the globe and ask them if they know what it is. Ask them why they think it is on the communion table this week. Tell them that this is World Communion Sunday, a special day when we remind ourselves that we are connected with our siblings in Christ all over the world. From Afghanistan to Zimbabwe, and St. John’s to Victoria, Christians will gather around the table to share in the communion meal as a sign that we are part of the same community of faith, no matter what language we speak or where we live. Jesus created a community of people where everyone was welcome, had an equal part to play, and received an equal share at the table. That’s what we celebrate today.

### Sermon Starter

World Communion Sunday is an opportunity to reflect on what connects us with our siblings in Christ around the globe. The reading from Hebrews, especially the concluding three verses, reinforces the familial relationship that we all share through Jesus. It also calls attention to our sanctification; that is, our “being made holy.” How do we live as the holy family of Jesus in the world today? What distinguishes us from the world around us? The specific details will differ according to our own local context, but it will always involve supporting one another, encouraging one another, and loving one another, even in the midst of family arguments. It will also entail holding up our siblings in prayer, especially those who are persecuted or suffer for their Christian faith. This may be an occasion to call attention to the United Church’s People in Partnership program, which enables United Church people and global partners to encounter each other, accompany each other in God’s mission, and learn more about each other’s contexts.

### Hymns

***Job 1:1; 2:1–10***

VU 614 “In suffering love”

VU 618 “God, when I stand”

MV 65 “When we are tested”

MV 72 “Why stand so far away”

MV 73 “O God, why are you silent?”

***Psalm 26***

VU 218 “We praise you, O God”

MV 46 “Bless the Lord”

MV 51 “Yahweh be praised”

***Hebrews 1:1–4; 2:5–12***

VU 348 “O love, how deep”

MV 141 “We are all one people”

MV 159 “In star and crescent”

MV 178 “Who is my mother”

***Mark 10:2–16***

VU 357 “Tell me the stories of Jesus”

VU 366 “like a child”

VU 445 “A little child the Saviour came”

MV 133 “Jesus laughed out loud”

## October 10 – Thanksgiving Sunday

##### Creation Time 5 in the Season of Pentecost

##### Creation invites: Depend upon me!

##### Proper 23

**Joel 2:21–27**

Do not fear, O soil, for God will provide.

**Psalm 126** (VU p. 850)

Those who sow in tears reap in joy.

**1 Timothy 2:1–7**

Offer prayers for everyone.

**Matthew 6:25–33**

Do not worry about what you will eat or drink.

### To Ponder

What is your relationship with the land upon which you live, work, and play?

### Spark

Put together small packets of seeds and label them “Seeds of Joy and Thanksgiving.” Distribute them to those who gather for worship and request that they plant them at home or share them with someone else who has a green thumb.

### With Children

Show the children a time-lapse video of green peppers growing from seeds. (There are lots of examples on YouTube, but you could also choose another vegetable or fruit.) You can either project the video or show it on a smartphone or tablet. Ask the children what they notice about the seed’s growth. What does it need to grow? Show a seed and talk about how many peppers could come from that single seed. Talk about how God invites us to plant seeds of joy and thanksgiving in our communities by telling others how grateful we are to have them in our lives, encouraging them to do the same so that the seeds can grow and multiply until the whole world is full of thanksgiving.

### Sermon Starter

It is interesting to note that the opening words of the reading from Joel are not addressed to the people, but rather to the land: “Do not fear, O soil; be glad and rejoice, for the Lord has done great things!” For many, food is a central part of the Thanksgiving holiday, but how much attention is paid to the land that yields it? Perhaps the sermon for this Sunday could focus on an acknowledgement of the land and how it sustains life itself. How many generations, going back thousands of years, have been able to thrive because of the abundance the land (where you are now worshipping) has produced? How many great things has the Lord done in this place? Reflect on your community of faith’s relationship to the land over the years during which it has worshipped and ministered there. Be glad and rejoice that God assures us: “You shall know that I am in the midst of [the land], and that I, the Lord, am your God.”

### Hymns

***Joel 2:21–27***

VU 389 “God is here”

VU 520 “We plough the fields”

MV 42 “Praise God for this holy ground”

MV 135 “Called by earth and sky”

MV 174 “Soil of God, you and I”

***Psalm 126***

MV 182 “Grateful”

MV 185 “Ev’ry day is a day of thanksgiving”

***1 Timothy 2:1–7***

VU 523 “O God of all the many lands”

MV 187 “We give our thanks”

MV 188 “I thank you, thank you, Jesus”

***Matthew 6:25–33***

VU 517 “Praise God for the harvest”

VU 521 “Praise to God, immortal praise”

VU 522 “Give thanks, my soul, for harvest”

MV 126 “Are you a shepherd?”

## October 17 – Twenty-first after Pentecost

##### Proper 24

*Worship materials for October 17 and 24 were contributed by Diane Trollope, Sudbury, Ont.*

**Job 38:1–7, (34–41)**

God’s rebuttal to Job’s complaint.

**Psalm 104:1–9, 24, 35*c*** (VU pp. 826–827 Parts One and Two)

With Wisdom, God created the earth and all its creatures.

**Hebrews 5:1–10**

Christ learned obedience and was made perfect.

**Mark 10:35–45**

James and John request to sit on Jesus’ right and left.

### To Ponder

Have you ever asked yourself, “Why me?” What was your ultimate answer to the question, or did you find an answer?

### Spark

Put up signs, drawings, or photos that remind us of love. Provide fill-in-the-blank pieces of paper with messages that say: “God’s love is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,” “I know God’s love through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,” and “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ knows God’s love through me.” Invite people, as they arrive, to fill them in with words or drawings. Perhaps any children present might gather them in a basket. They can be used in prayers, in the Children’s Time, or as part of the sermon. You might provide examples that include pets because they know God’s love through you. Note: If we are still distancing, invite everyone to join in sharing their answers via your website, by e-mail, or by phone.

### With Children

Who likes to be first in line? Who likes to win? How does it feel inside, the winning and losing? I think we all have won and lost at some point. Right? Let’s remind ourselves... Who does God love? Everybody. All creation, too. How do you think God loves creation and us...and you? All of us win and all of creation, too. We never lose when it comes to God’s love.

### Sermon Starter

We have all seen and heard of people who need power. Power often raises red flags because it can easily become power *over* rather than the power of serving. Politicians as well as leaders in the church and the community, today as in the past, come face to face with that balancing of power *over*, power *to serve*, and the power that allows others to own their own power. Find ways to make this present to the people where you are.

Recall that the Romans were in charge in Jesus’ time, and consider the way they wielded power. Look at where in Canada the power lies; include racism, sexism, and other injustices in your examination. Sharing the power of leadership is crucial today. Good leadership can do that. As Christians, we understand the way of using power through Jesus, who gave the people the power of God’s love for them. The reminder that Jesus gave of God’s love rings true today: “[I] came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45). Do things turn out better when we live like we are loved? Does that mean it’s easier to love when we serve instead of being served?

### Hymns

***Job 38:1–7, (34–41)***

VU 235 “O worship the King”

VU 242 “Let all things now living”

VU 296 “This is God’s wondrous world”

***Psalm 104:1–9, 24, 35*c**

VU 291 “All things bright and beautiful”

VU 308 “Many and great, O God, are your works”

MV 30 “It’s a song of praise to the Maker”

MV 130 “Rise up, rise up”

***Hebrews 5:1–10***

VU 334 “All hail the power of Jesus’ name”

VU 341 “Fairest Lord Jesus” (To avoid racial bias, change the first line to *Beautiful Saviour* and *fair/fairer* to *lovely*.)

***Mark 10:35–45***

VU 117 “Jesus Christ is waiting”

VU 147 “What wondrous love is this”

VU 567 “Will you come and follow me”

## October 24 – Twenty-second after Pentecost

##### Proper 25

**Job 42:1–6, 10–17**

Job acknowledges God’s power; Job’s fortunes are restored.

**Psalm 34:1–8, (19–22)** (VU pp. 761–762)

Taste and see that God is good.

**Hebrews 7:23–28**

Christ the permanent High Priest.

**Mark 10:46–52**

The healing of Bartimaeus.

### To Ponder

How do you acknowledge God’s power? How have you experienced God in action?

### Spark

Share slides showing God’s grace: they can be images of art, sunsets, scenery, people being kind, children playing, a loving hand or hug being offered in the midst of tears, joyful celebration, or people reflecting together while apart as well as in person. Remember that not everyone is in a position to know or experience grace as joyful. Friends and family members still may be sick, or alone and unhappy. Acknowledge that we gather with all that is in our hearts, and God’s grace abounds when we are together.

### With Children

Let the children share about a time when they were surprised or overwhelmed by something they experienced in nature, e.g., watching a sunset or meteor shower, listening to the wind or wild animals, feeling warm rays or cool drops on skin, or witnessing people doing something amazing. Ask if they know anyone who is sick or lonely. How do we help them? Can we bring “God surprises” to them so they know we care for them? How would we do that? We are blessed by God’s love so that we may be a blessing to others.

### Sermon Starter

God created everything and saw that it was good. Yet people have, well, messed it up. Too much gouging the earth for profit harms the planet and people. Too much of a good thing causes trouble health-wise for individuals and even for communities. The disparities are growing and the gaps are dividing people, not bringing them together. Bartimaeus experienced a gap between what was available to him and what was available to others in his society.

Yet, miracles do occur. Bartimaeus experienced a miracle. Was it a healing or a cure? There is a difference but both are miracles. Both can relieve suffering, but they are not necessarily the same. How is God present in each? God’s Spirit is always present, whether acknowledged or not.

Can you name a time you prayed that someone would be healed from a disease and it didn’t happen? Instead, they died. A woman shared a story about praying for a cure for someone, but then, instead, she observed less worry and anger in the person’s face, even as the illness progressed. She had to rethink what she asked for. They were in good hands, God’s hands, and they were safe. She learned the difference between a cure and healing and how healing may be more important. “God does great things” is the theme this week. Jesus didn’t presume to know what great thing Bartimaeus was asking of him. Jesus didn’t presume what kind of mercy was being requested. How can this story be translated to the here and now and to us

### Hymns

***Job 42:1–6, 10–17***

VU 271 “There is a wideness in God’s mercy”

VU 473 “Let all mortal flesh keep silence”

***Psalm 34:1–8, (19–22)***

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

VU 299 “Teach me, God, to wonder” (Enseigne-moi, mon Dieu)

VU 460 “All who hunger”

MV 104 “Know that God is good”

***Hebrews 7:23–28***

VU 330 “Jesus shall reign”

VU 331 “The church’s one foundation”

***Mark 10:46–52***

VU 371 “Open my eyes, that I may see”

VU 378 “Spirit of God, descend upon my heart”

MV 33 “Jesus came bringing us hope”

MV 79 “Spirit, open my heart”

MV 115 “Behold, behold, I make all things new”

## October 31 – Twenty-third after Pentecost

##### Reformation Day

##### Proper 26

*Worship materials for October 31 and November 1 were contributed by David Sparks, Summerland, B.C.*

**Ruth 1:1–18**

Ruth chooses to go with Naomi.

**Psalm 146** (VU pp. 867–868)

I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve breath.

**Hebrews 9:11–14**

Christ, the High Priest of good things.

**Mark 12:28–34**

Which commandment is the first of all?

### To Ponder

What is at the heart of friendship? Does love define a true friend?

### Spark

Create a friendship table where each worshipper, young or old, will be welcomed as they enter the sanctuary. Each will be invited to write the first name of a good friend on the left side of a piece of paper, and on the right side, the aspect or demonstration of friendship they are most thankful for. For example:

“Beth…helped me when I was seriously ill.”

“Joe…listens carefully when I am feeling low.”

An alternative would be to draw a picture to replace the friendship words.

### With Children

Talk about the friendship of Ruth and Naomi as we hear about it in our Hebrew scriptures. Ask the children (or everyone present) to share some of their friendship stories and what they think makes for a good friend. Point out that God loves us as much or more than our best friend loves us, and that by being a good friend, we are sharing God’s love.

Alternatively, you might share a book on the nature of friendship, such as *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* by Charlie Mackesy (HarperOne, 2019).

### Sermon Starter

The deeper we go into the story of Ruth and Naomi, the more we see its relationship to the “Great Commandment” reading in Mark’s gospel. Orpah did the sensible thing and left her mother-in-law and went back to her homeland and family. For Ruth, it wasn’t homeland or family that was of prime importance, it was her relationship to Naomi, and so she declared, “Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people.”

What was at the core of that relationship? It wasn’t money or status; she had neither. It was a deep love Ruth had formed for a person who had accompanied her through some extraordinarily tough family times. The future was not going to be easy for either of them, but love, the love that had God at its centre, would see them through.

In our most challenging times, God’s love, a love that works itself out in patient endurance, a love that refuses to accept second best, a love that goes beyond time, is there as well.

### Hymns

***Ruth 1:1–18***

VU 348 “O love, how deep”

VU 644 “I was there to hear your borning cry”

MV 103 “Ka mana’o ’I ’O” (Faithful is our God)

MV 216 “Wherever you may go”

***Psalm 146***

VU 245 “Praise the Lord with the sound of trumpet”

VU p. 867 “I’ll praise my Maker”

MV 56 “Come, O come, let us praise”

***Hebrews 9:11–14***

VU 143 “My song is love unknown”

VU 508 “Just as I am”

VU 559 “Come, O Fount of every blessing”

MV 176 “Three things I promise”

***Mark 12:28–34***

VU 271 “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”

VU 286 “If you will trust in God to guide you”

VU 589 “Lord, speak to me”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

MV 178 “Who is my mother”

MV 179 “Sisters let us walk together”

## November 1 – All Saints’ Day (Monday)

**Isaiah 25:6–9**

A feast for all peoples.

**Psalm 24** (VU pp. 750–751)

The earth is God’s.

**Revelation 21:1–6*a***

God makes a home among mortals.

**John 11:32–44**

The raising of Lazarus.

### To Ponder

Who has been a prophet for you? For whom might you be a prophet?

### Spark

On service day or in a bulletin announcement the week before, use a visual to highlight how mission dollars help those who need help most. Have an extra “new earth” by offering to support an extra mission. Visit www.united-chuch.ca/social-action for ideas.

### With Children

All is not right with our planet home, Mother Earth. Ask a congregant to pour out a bag of non–recyclable garbage and ask, “How can we care better for the earth?” Ask another person to sit, looking sad and holding a leash with no dog on the end of it, and ask, “Why does she look so sad? What might we do to help this person not feel so sad?” A third person could hold out a toy ready to give, and behind them, a fourth is holding a toy in their closed hand. “What might we do to help the person who is holding on tightly share their toy? Why might they not want to share their toy? What could we do with the shared toy?”

Talk about the concept of a *new* earth, the sort of home for all humankind that the prophet John spoke about, where plastics are recycled, the sad are supported, and the hungry are fed.

### Sermon Starter

John, the author of Revelation, was considered a prophet by the faith community of his time, and he lived at a time when the emperor of Rome was considered a god and expected to be worshipped by everyone. The Christian faith community could not do this and suffered as a result. Many were martyred. The Book of Revelation was written in coded images that those receiving it would have understood as speaking to their time. John’s prophesies spoke of an end to the persecutions and killings and the beginning of a new age when God would be in loving partnership with humankind, an age when there would be no more death, no more grief or crying or pain.

A look at the current international scene reveals huge suffering due to selfishness, corruption, and a lack of resources. We need prophets like John to call us to action. The saints of today are called to bring closer the “new earth” of Revelation 21.Who are the prophets of our age calling us to a co-operation between countries to defeat climate change, and who are the saints leading the way? Who are the prophets speaking up for children? Do we listen to the young saints like Greta Thunberg? Do we hear the prophets who speak up for those who have no warm place to sleep? What can we do as a faith community and as committed Christians to respond to today’s prophets? Sometimes it seems to us, as it did to the family and friends of Lazarus, that nothing will change, but then confident and hopeful words are spoken and the result is new life where there had only been death before.

### Hymns

***For All Saints’ Day***

VU 705 “For all the saints” (see p. 50 for new verse)

VU 706 “Give thanks for life”

VU 710 “Shall we gather at the river”

MV 28 “God of the Bible”

MV 171 “Christ has no body now but yours”

***Isaiah 25:6–9***

VU 472 “O Jesus, joy of loving hearts”

MV 62 “There is room for all”

MV 104 “Know that God is good”

***Psalm 24***

VU 226 “For the beauty of the earth”

MV 30 “It’s a song of praise to the Maker”

***Revelation 21:1–6*a**

MV 13 “O let the power fall on me”

VU 459 “Here, O my Lord”

VU 713 “I see a new heaven”

***John 11:32–44***

VU 154 “Why has God forsaken me”

MV 78 “God weeps”

MV 93 “What calls me from the death”

MV 115 “Behold, behold, I make all things new”

## November 7 – Twenty-fourth after Pentecost

##### Proper 27

*Worship materials for the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost to Reign of Christ Sunday were contributed by Bala and Chitra Balasubramaniam, Jacquelin Lovell, and Won Hur, Ebenezer U.C., Markham, Ont.*

**Ruth 3:1–5; 4:13–17**

Ruth marries Boaz and restores the family line.

**Psalm 127** (VU p. 851)

Unless God builds the house.

**Hebrews 9:24–28**

Christ, the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin.

**Mark 12:38–44**

The widow offers two small copper coins.

### To Ponder

What is your vision of God’s kingdom? What or who informs that vision?

### Spark

Project a continuous stream of pictures depicting wealthy cities and shanty towns, beautiful homes and shacks, clean neighbourhoods and polluted ones, mega churches and country churches. During the service, invite reflection on the disparity of wealth. What thoughts does it evoke? What feelings? A sense of outrage, gratitude, or discomfort? Underneath these feelings, what deeper values, hopes, dreams, or prayers are beginning to surface? How do they align with Christ’s vision of God’s kingdom?

### With Children

Share a few pictures of families in a variety of living situations. Explain that God wants all children and families to have enough food, go to school, live and play in a safe environment, be able to go to the hospital if they are sick, and be happy. God wants our help to make it come true. No matter who we are, whether we are rich or poor, old or young, strong or not healthy, we can help one another. In the Bible, Jesus praised a very poor old woman for helping, even though she did not have much to give, but she gave her all. We can too, so that this world will be a better place to live for everyone.

### Sermon Starter

In a pointed demonstration, Jesus sat down “opposite” the temple treasury while watching the people, thus revealing where he stood in relationship to the temple. Furthermore, just before this, Jesus criticized the scribes for their long, fancy robes and inflated status in the community. Jesus had issues with the Jewish religious elites benefiting from the Roman occupiers who were exploiting Israel, resulting in so much oppression, suffering, and poverty. Furthermore, there were widows who had been reduced to nothing. What little they had, they had to give to the temple system. Though Jesus praised the widow, in effect, he was criticizing the temple and their place of protection under the Roman occupation. In other words, the religious institution had been compromised in the name of security, power, and wealth. It is thus no surprise that Jesus later took a whip, overturned the tables, and drove out the money-changers. This story reminds us that churches can also be compromised and the struggle for authentic faith continues.

### Hymns

***Ruth 3:1–5; 4:13–17***

VU 260 “God who gives to life its goodness”

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

MV 216 “Wherever you may go”

***Psalm 127***

VU 262 “A mighty fortress is our God”

VU 279 “You, God, are my firmament”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

MV 1 “Let us build a house”

MV 157 “I am a child of God”

***Hebrews 9:24–28***

VU 337 “Blessed assurance”

VU 660 “How firm a foundation”

VU 708 “My Lord, what a morning”

MV 88 “Over my head”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

***Mark 12:38–44***

VU 360 “A woman and a coin”

VU 361 “Small things count”

VU 575 “I’m gonna live so God can use me”

VU 691 “Though ancient walls”

MV 127 “I saw the rich ones”

MV 209 “Go, make a diff’rence”

MV 212 “Sent out in Jesus’ name”

## November 14 – Twenty-fifth after Pentecost

##### Proper 28

**1 Samuel 1:4–20**

Samuel is born to Hannah and Eli.

**1 Samuel 2:1–10** (VU p. 878)

The song of Hannah.

**Hebrews 10:11–14, (15–18), 19–25**

Provoke one another to love and good deeds.

**Mark 13:1–8**

Not one stone of the temple shall be left standing.

### To Ponder

How have you provoked someone else to love and to do good deeds? Who has provoked you?

### Spark

You might stage a skit. Start by telling someone to laugh. They respond with a quizzical look, one “ha,” or nothing at all. Then tell a good joke or offer a funny action that will make people break into real laughter. When we want someone to laugh, it usually falls flat when we simply tell them to. Instead, we tell a joke or do something funny to provoke laughter. How then do we provoke one another to love and to do good deeds? We get encouraged by one another’s kindness, courage, and generosity. What have your church and your members done that has been inspiring? Celebrate the small victories in the course of the service with pictures, anecdotes, and testimonials. Rejoice and be glad, for the Spirit of God is alive in your community.

### With Children

Ask the children what someone has done recently that made them happy. What did they do that made others a bit more happy, grateful, or lively? Ask them how it made them and others feel when they did this. Similarly, share something from your life that has happened recently. It does not have to be an unforgettable life-altering experience. Rather, a simple story about how God’s love is revealed in our world, through one another, will be easier to relate to. We can give thanks by passing that love around.

### Sermon Starter

The first half of life involves developing a healthy ego, including getting an education, career, and family life. The second half involves the development of the soul. Life itself becomes a valuable teacher that can provoke us to examine who we are. According to Richard Rohr’s book *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* (Jossey-Bass, 2011), conflicts, disappointments, and heartaches force us to reassess our values, relationships, and goals in life. Through honest and deep reflection, as painful as it can be, we grow in maturity and soul. We may then be able to dig deep to see the divine “law” written in the heart. Perhaps, we can forgive ourselves and one another. We might be inspired to love and do good deeds. We might realize that it is actually God who is doing the heavy lifting in us! In his “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote about how, as Christians, we need to provoke one another to challenge the unjust status quo. If our capacity to love is big enough, then we can also work for justice as a body of Christ.

### Hymns

***1 Samuel 1:4–20***

VU 278 “In the quiet curve of evening”

VU 286 “If you will trust in God to guide you”

VU 636 “Give to the winds your fears”

MV 20 “God of still waiting”

MV 131 “You, Creator God, have searched me”

***1 Samuel 2:1–10***

VU 218 “We praise you, O God”

VU 327 “All praise to thee”

VU 677 “O God of every nation”

MV 48 “I can feel you near me God”

MV 58 “We sing of your glory”

MV 120 “My soul cries out”

***Hebrews 10:11–14, (15–18), 19–25***

VU 248 “When long before time”

VU 271 “There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”

VU 424 “May the God of hope go with us”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

MV 154 “Deep in our hearts”

MV 165 “There is a time”

***Mark 13:1–8***

VU 675 “Will your anchor hold”

VU 691 “Though ancient walls”

VU 703 “In the bulb there is a flower”

MV 65 “When we are tested”

MV 80 “Beyond the beauty and the awe”

## November 21 – Reign of Christ Sunday

**2 Samuel 23:1–7**

David’s last words glorify God.

**Psalm 132:1–12, (13–18)** (VU pp. 854–855 Parts One and Two)

God will bless with abundance.

**Revelation 1:4*b*–8**

I am the Alpha and the Omega.

**John 18:33–37**

Pilate asks Jesus, “Are you king of the Jews?”

### To Ponder

To whom do you offer allegiance in your life? Who has the priority? Where is Jesus in this list?

### Spark

These days, so many people are so frustrated with the COVID-19 pandemic, racism, and climate change. Name the situations where people are demonstrating; if possible, show images. What are they demonstrating against? What are they longing for? Are demonstrators on “opposite” sides of an issue longing for the same thing? How can Christian faith speak to our deepest longings? Where is Christ in all this?

For your personal reflection, watch *Jesus Christ Superstar Live in Concert* (2018), starring Alice Cooper as King Herod and John Legend as Jesus.

### With Children

Who do you think Jesus is? People have asked this question for a long time. A governor for the Roman Empire, Pontius Pilate, asked Jesus, “Are you the king of the Jews?” In the musical *Jesus Christ Superstar*, there is a song called “King Herod’s Song,” which has some amusing lines about this. Ultimately, to say that Jesus is king is to say that the Roman emperor is not as important, nor is King Herod, nor celebrities, Instagram influencers, or TikTok stars. What Jesus has to say matters so much more.

Sermon Starter

In the past, people made pledges to the king, queen, or nation. Such allegiances rise and fall depending on the political climate. The question is, does it matter to see Jesus as a ruler of a kingdom that is not from this world? Jesus taught, lived, and demonstrated the reality of a kingdom that is vastly different from the ethos of the Roman Empire, or some of the purity code practices of his time. Jesus’ teaching shows up in the prayer he taught: “May your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” Preachers may spend some time describing what that kingdom might look like if enacted here on earth today. How does Jesus’ teaching of “kingdom” still resonate? Do we want to dwell in such a kingdom under his guidance and leadership? (Some today refer to “kin-dom” instead.) Ultimately, for Jesus, it was worth living and dying for.

### Hymns

***2 Samuel 23:1–7***

VU 262 “A mighty fortress is our God”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great Jehovah”

MV 45 “You are holy”

MV 182 “Grateful”

***Psalm 132:1–12, (13–18)***

VU 264 “Immortal, invisible, God only wise”

VU 333 “Love divine, all loves excelling”

VU 511 “Before you now, O God”

MV 82 “Bathe me in your light”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

***Revelation 1:4*b*–8***

VU 211 “Crown him with many crowns”

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

VU 327 “All praise to thee”

VU 330 “Jesus shall reign”

MV 4 “All who are thirsty”

MV 183 “I’m gonna shout, shout”

***John 18:33–37***

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

VU 217 “All creatures of our God and King”

VU 314 “Come now, almighty King”

VU 356 “Seek ye first the kingdom”

MV 146 “The kingdom of God”

MV 171 “Christ has no body now but yours”