

*Gathering,* Pentecost 2 2024

From Creation Time 1 to Reign of Christ

[CREATION TIME IN THE SEASON OF PENTECOST 2](#_Toc168479450)

[SUNDAY 2](#_Toc168479451)

[September 8 – Sixteenth after Pentecost 4](#_Toc168479452)

[September 15 – Seventeenth after Pentecost 6](#_Toc168479453)

[September 22 – Eighteenth after Pentecost 8](#_Toc168479454)

[September 29 – Nineteenth after Pentecost 10](#_Toc168479455)

[October 6 – World Communion Sunday 12](#_Toc168479456)

[October 13 – Thanksgiving Sunday 14](#_Toc168479457)

[October 20 – Twenty-second after Pentecost 16](#_Toc168479458)

[October 27 – Twenty-third after Pentecost 18](#_Toc168479459)

[Reformation Sunday 18](#_Toc168479460)

[November 1 – All Saints’ Day (Friday) 20](#_Toc168479461)

[November 3 – Twenty-fourth after Pentecost 22](#_Toc168479462)

[November 10 – Twenty-fifth after Pentecost 24](#_Toc168479463)

[Remembrance Sunday 24](#_Toc168479464)

[November 17 – Twenty-sixth after Pentecost 26](#_Toc168479465)

[November 24 – Reign of Christ Sunday 28](#_Toc168479466)

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## 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 2024 issue, p. 7.*

## September 8 ‒ Sixteenth after Pentecost

*Creation Time 1 in the Season of Pentecost Creation cries out: Love me!*

### *Proper 18*

*Worship materials for Creation Time 1 to Creation Time 5 were contributed by Houen Lee and Kathleen King Martin, First U.C., Waterloo, Ont.*

**Proverbs 22:1–2, 8–9, 22–23**

A good name rather than riches.

**Psalm 125 (VU p. 849)**

Do good, O God, to those who are good.

**James 2:1–10, (11–13), 14–17**

Faith without works is dead.

**Mark 7:24–37**

The Syrophoenician woman’s faith challenges Jesus.

### Creation Connection

Considering the 2024 Doomsday Clock remains at 90 seconds to midnight, a human-made global catastrophe, can our expression of faith be matched by meaningful actions in environmental stewardship, or does it risk being lifeless without active effort?

### Spark

Display or project a variety of depictions of Jesus. Invite discussion: What does it mean that Jesus was a true human? Can we imagine that Jesus had authentic human limitations? Could Jesus have made real mistakes? Was he capable not only of teaching people but also of learning from them? Did he undergo a learning curve as well?

### With Children

Invite children to talk about their favourite colours and why they love them. With permission from the publisher, read the book *The Crayon Box That Talked* by Shane DeRolf and Michael Letzig (Random House Books for Young Readers, 1997). Just like the crayons in the story, we all come in different colours, shapes, and sizes, and that’s what makes our world so beautiful and interesting. In a church, each one of us is unique and different from the others. Let’s embrace our diversity, just as the crayons learned to work together and create something amazing.

### Sermon Starter

Why did Jesus initially decline to help the Syrophoenician woman who sought healing for her daughter? Jesus visited the prosperous Roman Empire colony of Tyre. The city’s residents, who controlled the flow of goods, often left farmers from Galilee and rural areas hungry, particularly during poor harvests. In *Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective* (Wipf and Stock, 2003), Hisako Kinukawa suggests that Jesus may have implied that the mouths of the impoverished in Galilee should be filled first. The Syrophoenician woman, acknowledging her privilege, humbly requested even a few crumbs, hoping not to be excluded from his table fellowship, along with her child. Because of her persistence, Jesus recognized that God’s purpose for him transcended his initial expectations and called for a ministry that embraced both Jews and non-Jews. Reflecting on our privileges, how can we actively contribute to positive change in the world? How can we rub out the old boundaries that divide us from others, as God calls us to do today?

### Hymns

*Proverbs 22:1–2, 8–9, 22–23*

VU 457 “As we gather at your table”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

MV 171 “Christ has no body now but yours”

*Psalm 125*

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

MV 84 “In you there is a refuge”

*James 2:1–10, (11–13), 14–17*

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

VU 600 “When I needed a neighbour”

VU 606 “In Christ there is no east or west”

MV 28 “God of the Bible”

*Mark 7:24–37*

VU 326 “O for a thousand tongues to sing”

VU 570 “Jesus’ hands were kind hands”

VU 619 “Healer of our every ill”

VU 627 “Now there is no male or female”

MV 62 “There is room for all”

## September 15 ‒ Seventeenth after Pentecost

*Creation Time 2 in the Season of Pentecost Creation asks: Learn my stories!*

### *Proper 19*

**Proverbs 1:20–33**

Wisdom cries in the streets.

**Psalm 19 (VU p. 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?

### Creation Connection

How can we overcome the obstacles, such as air pollution, climate change, and habitat destruction, that often dim the heavenly display of God’s glory in the skies of our planet? And how can we play a part in restoring the beauty of God’s creation?

### Spark

In Johannes David’s *Orbita Probitatis Ad Christi Imitationem* (published in Antwerp in 1601), there is a plate depicting [Christ carrying the cross over Golgotha, surrounded by nine painters at their easels](https://mondadori.wg.picturemaxx.com/id/4.AKG10035162) (internet search *author, title, Golgotha painters*). Each painter is depicting the event from a unique perspective. Even in our Christian scriptures, there are four distinct books and versions of Jesus’ story. It could be argued that there is not a single Jesus Christ, but rather multiple *Jesus Christs*.

### With Children

Invite the children to explore who Jesus is to each of us. Ask them to imagine: What if Jesus were a superhero? Who would he be, and why? Maybe Jesus is like Superman, always helping those in need, or Wonder Woman, spreading love and kindness wherever she goes. Perhaps he’s like Spider-Man, teaching us that “with great power comes great responsibility.” Just like superheroes, Jesus did amazing things. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and showed us how to love one another. But Jesus was even more special because he taught us about God’s love and acceptance for everyone, no matter who they are. So, who do you think that Jesus is?

### Sermon Starter

In his book *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis presents the so-called trilemma of “Jesus as Lunatic, Liar, or Lord.” He argues that if Jesus is not the Lord, then he must be categorized as either a lunatic or a liar. According to C.S. Lewis, there is no room for him to occupy an intermediate role, such as being a moral exemplar, as Mahatma Gandhi might perceive him. Whether we agree with C.S. Lewis’s argument or not, this trilemma suggests two important points: first, there exist myriad interpretations of Jesus, and second, we must create our own portrait of Jesus.

In the gospel reading, Jesus asks his disciples two questions: first, “Who do people say that I am?” and second, “But, who do you say that I am?” The initial question invites diverse and different perspectives about Jesus. The second question begins with *but*, which is critical. Amid the myriad doctrines and interpretations of Jesus, we have to face this *but* before we can answer the question of who we say Jesus is. Through this assessment process, we can offer our responses. This important question encompasses not only who Jesus is but who we are. It asks us to ask ourselves, Who am I as a follower of Jesus? Where am I? With whom do I join when I declare who Jesus is?

### Hymns

*Proverbs 1:20–33*

VU p. 892 “Who comes from God”

MV 6 “Holy Spirit, come into our lives”

MV 10 “Come and seek the ways of Wisdom”

*Psalm 19*

VU 217 “All creatures of our God and King”

VU 226 “For the beauty of the earth”

*James 3:1–12*

VU 506 “Take my life and let it be”

VU 589 “Lord, speak to me”

*Mark 8:27–38*

VU 561 “Take up your cross”

VU 567 “Will you come and follow me”

MV 113 “Jesus saw them fishing”

“Jesus asked one day” by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette ([carolynshymns.com)](http://www.carolynshymns.com/)

## September 22 ‒ Eighteenth after Pentecost

*Creation Time 3 in the Season of Pentecost Creation calls: Nurture me!*

### *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.

### Creation Connection

How can we connect the wisdom and guidance found in Psalm 1 with our responsibility to care for and protect the beauty of God’s creation?

### Spark

In the Gospel of Mark, there was tension between the disciples and the multitude, particularly the children. Considering the few children and youth in the pews these days, how do we understand the words of Jesus to the disciples, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me” (Mark 9:37)? What project might your community of faith do that intentionally cares for children?

### With Children

With permission, read the book *God’s Dream* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams (Candlewick, 2010). With beautiful illustrations by LeUyen Pham, it explores the idea of God’s dream for the world. God’s dream is for everyone to be friends and love each other. He believes that God smiles when we show kindness to others and that God cries when people are unkind and hurt each other. Ask the children to share a time when they were kind to someone. How did it make them feel? When we help others, we are also helping God.

### Sermon Starter

When Jesus repeatedly taught about his impending death and resurrection, the disciples were lost for words. Yet, instead of grasping these profound teachings, they started arguing over who was the greatest. Can you believe it? When they heard that Jesus was about to be killed, they started quarrelling about who was the most important. Isn’t this something we can relate to when panic sets in? The disciples, much like us, struggled to comprehend the upside-down logic of this kin-dom of God. They often dodged the topic, diverting their discussions to matters like who should be first, who was the best, and who held the greatest rank.

Let’s consider our community of faith through the lens of God’s topsy-turvy kin-dom. Do we prioritize the presence of toddlers and make them feel welcome in our worship, or are they considered a noisy distraction? Are children, youth, and young adults included and valued within our community? Jesus made crystal clear the inseparable relationship between God, Jesus, and a little child, the most vulnerable. Does our Canadian society welcome the most vulnerable?

### Hymns

*Proverbs 31:10–31*

VU 580 “Faith of our fathers” (note verse 2)

VU 590 “A prophet-woman broke a jar”

*Psalm 1*

VU 416 “Forth in your name, O Christ”

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 359 “He came singing love”

VU 581 “When we are living”

MV 170 “Ubi caritas (Where There Is Charity)”

*Mark 9:30–37*

VU 340 “Jesus, friend of little children”

VU 357 “Tell me the stories of Jesus”

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

MV 127 “I saw the rich ones”

“Servant of all” (Maranatha! Music)

“Who is greatest in the kingdom?” by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette ([carolynshymns.com)](http://www.carolynshymns.com/)

## September 29 – Nineteenth after Pentecost

*Creation Time 4 in the Season of Pentecost Creation requests: Lend me your voice!*

### *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.

### Creation Connection

In Psalm 124, the psalmist declares that “if God had not been at our side,” various natural disasters might have occurred. If we are not by God’s side to care for God’s creation, what further consequences might arise?

### Spark

How do we understand demons and hell? Milton’s 17th-century world view, as depicted in his epic poem *Paradise Lost* and in the diagrams of heaven, hell, and chaos based on it, often continue to inform our understandings. While imagery of demons being cast out and threats of hell cannot be taken literally, we should consider them symbolically and seriously because something like this hell is still happening in today’s world.

### With Children

With permission from the publisher, read the book *The Story of Esther: A Purim Tale* by Eric A. Kimmel, illustrated by Jill Weber (Holiday House, 2011). Esther, a remarkable person, showed immense courage and strength during challenging times. She faced a daunting task when she had to advocate to save her people. Ask the children to share a moment when they had to summon their own bravery. What helped them find their courage? Esther’s tale reminds us that even when things seem tough, we can make a difference by doing what’s right. How can we be like Esther and work for justice in our own lives, even when it’s not easy?

### Sermon Starter

Consider how we might approach the violent language of Jesus, such as, “If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off […] And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off […] And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out.” These words of Jesus alert us that we need to take the image of God seriously but not literally. Genesis 1:27 states that humankind was created as God’s reflection: in the divine image of God, people were created. We humans are all the bearers of the divine image.

If we don’t respect or protect God’s image in ourselves and our neighbours, something goes badly wrong.

What is hell and where is hell? Hell is a strong symbol of separation from God. There are places where the divine image in every human being is damaged. This is against God and God’s will. The place where things are against God’s initial aim is called hell. It is a place that was designed to strip off the divine image from every single person. For example, the residential institutions formerly known as Indian residential schools and concentration camps were hells on earth. If our ignorance, failures, and mistakes and our narrow understanding of the gospel cause others to stumble, something serious, something seriously bad, happens. We must be alert. We should not ignore the warning of Jesus.

### Hymns

*Esther 7:1–6, 9–10; 9:20–22*

VU 216 “Sing praise to God”

MV 120 “My soul cries out”

MV 179 “Sisters let us walk together”

*Psalm 124*

VU 131 “If our God had simply saved us”

MV 119 “God our protector”

MV 129 “To the high and kindly hills”

*James 5:13–20*

VU 619 “Healer of our every ill”

VU p. 747 “The Lord’s my Shepherd”

MV 83 “Let my spirit always sing”

*Mark 9:38–50*

VU 344 “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds”

VU 581 “When we are living”

VU 582 “There’s a spirit in the air”

MV 209 “Go, make a diff’rence”

“You are salt for the earth, O people” by Marty Haugen

## October 6 ‒ World Communion Sunday

*Creation Time 5 in the Season of Pentecost Creation invites: Depend upon me!*

### *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.

### Creation Connection

As stewards of God’s creation, how should we take on our responsibility in caring for the earth and all its inhabitants?

### Spark

Set up a display featuring various elements from different cultures that represent the act of communion. Include different types of bread, wine, or alternative beverages used in communion around the world. Provide information about each tradition and how they celebrate communion.

### With Children

With the publisher’s permission, read the book *Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña, illustrated by Christian Robinson (Penguin Random House, 2015). After Sunday worship, a boy named CJ and his nana take a long bus ride through the city. When they finally get off the bus, CJ notices that this part of the city seems a little old and messy. He asks his nana why it always seems dirty. His wise nana smiles and tells him that sometimes we have to be the ones to find what is beautiful. Then they find unexpected beauty in the area. Just like CJ and his nana discovered beauty even in a less-than-perfect place, how can we notice God’s beauty everywhere, even in unexpected places around us?

Alternatively, as October marks Latin American Heritage Month, read (with permission) *Sleeping with the Light On* by David Unger, illustrated by Carlos Vélez Aquilera (Groundwood Books, 2020) or *Abuelita and Me* by Leonarda Carranza, illustrated by Rafael Mayani (Annick Press, 2022).

### Sermon Starter

Albert Camus, the renowned French author, once said, “Fiction is the lie through which we tell the truth.” In essence, through storytelling or a well-crafted “lie,” we can explore deep truths. The Book of Job is a fiction that delves deep into the realm of truth. It provides a platform to ask daring questions. Why do we lose our loved ones? Why do we go through illness? Why do we experience all these kinds of suffering? Where is God and why is God allowing this to happen? The Book of Job does not answer all these questions. Instead, it invites us into an ongoing discussion. The story of Job serves as a thought experiment, asking us to imagine a hypothetical, completely righteous person who is suffering. It encourages us to be honest in our responses to God, to offer gratitude but also to voice our complaints. As the biblical scholar William Safire noted, “Devout defiance pleases God.” It is okay to ask God, “Why is this happening to me?” or “Why have you made me your target?” (Job 7:20). We can also inquire, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them or mortals that you care for them?” (Hebrews 2:6).

### Hymns

*Job 1:1; 2:1–10*

VU 617 “I love you, God, who heard my cry”

VU 707 “For the faithful who have answered”

*Hebrews 1:1–4; 2:5–12*

VU 190 “The head that once was crowned”

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

VU 327 “All praise to thee”

VU 341 “Fairest Lord Jesus” (or “Beautiful Saviour”)

*Mark 10:2–16*

VU 365 “Jesus loves me”

MV 133 “Jesus laughed out loud”

MV 195 “Long ago and far away”

*World Communion*

VU 461 “Bread of the world”

VU 467 “One bread, one body”

VU 468 “Let us talents and tongues employ”

MV 192 “We come now to your table Lord”

MV 193 “God bless to us our bread” (*try all three languages*)

## October 13 – Thanksgiving Sunday

*Creation Time 6 in the Season of Pentecost Creation prays: Weep with me! Dance with me!*

*Worship materials for Thanksgiving Sunday to All Saints’ Day were contributed by Taylor Croissant, Southminster U.C., Lethbridge, Alta.*

**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.

### Creation Connection

Consider how precarious our life and our civilization truly is. Can the earth reliably provide enough food for all of us to eat every year as the effects of climate change take root?

### Spark

We typically decorate our sanctuaries in a harvest theme for Thanksgiving Sunday. How can we expand these visual displays to make Thanksgiving Sunday a festival that celebrates the giving of our non-agricultural first fruits? You might pair this with a congregational giving program.

### With Children

Thanksgiving Sunday is an opportunity to discuss how offering a table grace at each meal can be part of the larger spiritual practice of gratitude. You can encourage children and their families to adopt this practice and teach them how they might offer grace each day, including the sharing of daily gratitude from the events of that day.

### Sermon Starter

The prophet Joel writes after a time of ecological disaster: a locust infestation that consumes Israel’s food supply. As we continue to observe ecological disaster in our own time due to the emission of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, where can we find the same reassurance of God’s providence that Joel writes about? Where is God for those who have lost their homes or lives to flooding or forest fires? In our thanksgiving, can our gratitude for our abundance move us to not only offer the aid of emergency relief, but advocate for the very hard work of transforming our society to confront the enormous challenges we face with climate change?

### Hymns

*Joel 2:21–27*

MV 174 “Soil of God, you and I”

*Psalm 126*

VU 519 “Sing to the Lord of harvest”

*1 Timothy 2:1–7*

VU 517 “Praise God for the harvest”

*Matthew 6:25–33*

VU 296 “This is God’s wondrous world”

*Thanksgiving*

VU 227 “For the fruit of all creation”

VU 520 “We plough the fields”

MV 182 “Grateful”

## October 20 ‒ Twenty-second after Pentecost

### *Proper 24*

**Job 38:1–7, (34–41)**

God’s rebuttal to Job’s complaint.

**Psalm 104:1–9, 24, 35c (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.

### Creation Connection

Do we take for granted all of the variables that were necessary for life to emerge on this planet? Are we too self-centred to consider that God made this world for all forms of life contained within it, not just humankind?

### Spark

Encourage members of the congregation to do one tangible thing in this coming week as an act of service for another individual without an expectation of recognition or reward.

### With Children

Invite the children to list every kind of animal that lives in and around their community. Ask where these animals live and where they get their food. We often mention in the church about helping other people. We should also think about our plant and animal friends and how we can help them too. For example, some people put up a birdhouse or bird feeder in the yard or on their balcony. What other things could we do to protect the places where our animal neighbours live and the food they eat?

### Sermon Starter

Reading anything from the Book of Job is an opportunity to explore where God might be in the midst of the suffering we experience in our lives. The entirety of God’s world is dependent upon God. In order for one form of creation to live, often another form must die. We notice this with wolves, orcas, eagles, and polar bears. All creatures contain within them the Holy Spirit, the breath of life, and the Holy Spirit also must sacrifice, giving of itself in order for creation to perpetuate. Death and decay are necessary for rebirth and regeneration, including our own deaths. As Christians, we believe that suffering is a result of sin in our world. Where is the God who “feeds the ravens” in our suffering?

### Hymns

*Job 38:1–7, (34–41)*

VU 325 “Christ is made the sure foundation”

MV 73 “O God, why are you silent?”

*Psalm 104*

MV 27 “Creator God you gave us life”

MV 135 “Called by earth and sky”

*Hebrews 5:1–10*

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

*Mark 10:35–45*

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

## October 27 ‒ Twenty-third after Pentecost

## Reformation Sunday

### *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.

### Creation Connection

The Protestant Reformation was enabled by the instability in Europe following the catastrophe of the bubonic plague. How might the upheaval we experience from climate change alter the course of Christian history in the decades and centuries to come?

### Spark

If we were to build this church (building, congregation, denomination) today from scratch, what would we do differently? How would we reform it? Invite people to answer these questions by writing or drawing on a piece of paper or flip chart. Share the answers.

### With Children

A simple way of introducing a complex idea like the Protestant Reformation is perhaps to compare it to the concept of changing your mind. Have you ever changed your mind about something? Five hundred years ago, some people in the church changed their minds. They thought the church was not acting the way Jesus would want it to. So, they reorganized everything. Have you ever changed the things you do in your life because you didn’t like how they were going? Jesus wants us to think about how we can be better people and how we can be a better church. What ideas do you have?

### Sermon Starter

The Hebrews passage is a great choice for Reformation Sunday. It speaks to a key concept of Protestant theology: that Jesus is the only mediator between humanity and God. The epistle refers to the High Priest of the Jerusalem temple, but Protestant thinkers drew heavily upon the writings of Paul and those they understood to be written in Paul’s name (such as Hebrews) to re-evaluate the role of priesthood in the Western Christian church. Our human rituals have no power to forgive sins, nor can this forgiveness be purchased; only belief in the grace of Jesus Christ can provide salvation. All Christians have a priestly ability to commune with God: “the priesthood of all believers.” To turn this from a theology lecture into a sermon, invite the congregation to consider their own hurts, fears, and anger and explore the idea of finding the faith to believe that Jesus has the power to take these things away through grace.

### Hymns

*Job 42:1–6, 10–17*

VU 660 “How firm a foundation”

*Psalm 34*

VU 262 “A mighty fortress is our God”

*Hebrews 7:23–28*

VU 508 “Just as I am”

*Mark 10:46–52*

VU 326 “O for a thousand tongues to sing”

*General/Seasonal*

VU 418 “Go forth for God”

MV 49 “When we seek language”

## November 1 ‒ All Saints’ Day (Friday)

**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.

### Creation Connection

Consider how the communion of saints may be extended beyond humankind. St. Francis of Assisi preached to the birds and gave thanks for the ways God was revealed in nature, with gratitude expressed to “Brother Sun” and “Sister Moon.” This concept is reinforced by the spiritual heritage we receive from the Indigenous church.

### Spark

Place a whiteboard, chalkboard, or poster paper in your church’s narthex, and as people enter, ask them to write the name of a faithful Christian they know who has died and whom they wish to remember. Bring the list of names forward at the beginning of worship and display it throughout the service.

### With Children

Think together about places in your community that are named after someone and about the things they did that made us think they should be memorialized in this way. We also do this in the church. If your church happens to be named after a saint or a particular person, you can discuss that person’s life. If any of the rooms in your church are named after someone, you can discuss them. Ask the children to consider what kinds of things they could do to be remembered in that way. In the future, how might we remember the people who we go to church with now?

### Sermon Starter

All Saints’ Day is a good opportunity to discuss important Christian figures from church history who lived outside the time and setting of the Bible. For this year, I invite you to join me in remembering the life of St. Francis of Assisi. Founder of the Franciscan order of monks, a reforming movement of medieval Christianity, Francis lived a life of intentional poverty as an itinerant preacher. He is known as the patron saint of animals and the environment. His attempt to end the Fifth Crusade by meeting with the sultan of Egypt is a notable incident from his life. Francis is also remembered for his famous prayer about becoming an instrument of peace. Now, after a year of brutal warfare in multiple corners of the world, a meditation upon his words and how we can all work as agents for peace would be very appropriate.

### Hymns

*Isaiah 25:6–9*

VU 457 “As we gather at your table”

VU 509 “I, the Lord of sea and sky”

*Psalm 24*

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

*Revelation 21:1–6*a

VU 713 “I see a new heaven”

*John 11:32–44*

VU 684 “Make me a channel of your peace”

VU 705 “For all the saints”

## November 3 ‒ Twenty-fourth after Pentecost

### *Proper 26*

*Worship materials for the Twenty-fourth after Pentecost to Reign of Christ Sunday were contributed by Peter Chynoweth, Cochrane, Alta.*

**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?

### Creation Connection

Famine forced Naomi and Elimelech to flee Judah for Moab. Climate change scientists warn us of the pronounced effect of a changing climate on certain populations. The term *climate justice* reminds us that the effects of climate change are often felt most profoundly by people who can least afford to adapt, mitigate, or flee from the disasters it brings on. What does it mean to “love others” in the light of this?

### Spark

If possible, have someone lend a large family Bible that contains a filled-in family tree. A couple of generations ago, this type of Bible was a valued family keepsake and family history book. Place the Bible on a table or in a display that is decorated with items related to family trees and genealogy. Or use graphics related to family tree research (minus the growing commercial aspect, if possible!). Over these next weeks, with appropriate sensitivity to everyone’s own story, explore different aspects of family history and genealogy. Today’s particular theme is related to migration and places of origin. Add maps of the world to the display to depict this.

### With Children

One option for this week would be to read the story “Two Brave Women” in the *Family Story Bible* by Ralph Milton (Wood Lake Books, 2020), with permission. Or explore family trees. People study their family history because it helps them learn about themselves. Consider your church family tree. Who has helped to make this a place in our community where we come together to sing and pray, and to think about and learn about God?

### Sermon Starter

The story of Ruth and Naomi is rich with themes to explore: forced migration, biblical social nets, and love that stretches accustomed norms. Taken with the other passages, we are led to consider a widening circle of inclusion and acceptance.

This is the Sunday just prior to the presidential election in the United States of America, an election with a leading issue of migrants crossing the southern border.

Human migration has continued to rise around the world, with another record set in 2023 and predictions that the record will once again be broken in 2024. Naomi and Elimelech were economic refugees to the land of Moab. When economic circumstances changed, Naomi was forced back to Judah because that’s where she could expect a stronger social safety net, having experienced the death of her husband and her two adult sons. Ruth, her Moabite daughter-in-law, makes the difficult decision to go with her. It is also important to consider the decision of Orpah, who did not get the headlines. She represents the ones who stay and perhaps endure even greater hardship.

Today’s readings seem to cry out for us to consider human migration and our response to refugees who are forced to leave as a result of desperate economic, political, or social conditions. Just how is the Holy One calling us to respond?

### Hymns

*Ruth 1:1–18*

MV 62 “There is room for all”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

MV 169 “When hands reach out beyond divides”

MV 216 “Wherever you may go”

*Hebrews 9:11–14*

VU 559 “Come, O Fount of every blessing”

*Mark 12:28–34*

VU 299 “Teach me, God, to wonder”

VU 348 “O love, how deep”

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

## November 10 ‒ Twenty-fifth after Pentecost

## Remembrance Sunday

### *Proper 27*

**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.

### Creation Connection

In the face of the climate crisis, some people despair that anything they do is but a drop in the bucket in comparison to what is needed to reverse the warming of planet Earth. The story of the impoverished and generous widow reminds us that nothing we can do is too small.

### Spark

Start creating a family tree display that you can build over the next three weeks. Use a good graphic representation of a small tree with bare branches that you can print, or have an artist in your community create one. Add the tree to the display of the family Bible. You might want to artfully add Naomi and Elimelech and their sons Mahlon and Chilion to a branch. Then add Ruth and Orpah and finally a branch that includes Ruth and Boaz. Leave the tree relatively bare because there will be more to add.

### With Children

If you did not read “Two Brave Women” in the *Family Story Bible* by Ralph Milton (Wood Lake Books, 2020) last week, then share it this week.

Otherwise, talk about the family tree that is developing. Branches develop when children grow to be adults, and then they may have partners and there may be children. Have a conversation with the children about their family (again with sensitivity to various life stories). What are some words you can use to describe your family, your parents, your grandparents, your aunts and uncles, your cousins? Is there anyone else who belongs on your family tree, someone who cares for you? These people are all part of our family tree. It can be interesting to think about the family trees of people in the Bible. Notice how God welcomes and loves all sorts of families.

### Sermon Starter

Now is the time to address the family tree directly in the sermon. Someone once said that we live our lives forward, but understand them backward. We don’t always notice the powerful moments and decisive connections that propel our lives as family members, including our roles as ancestors and descendants. The story of Ruth reads like the beginning of a multi-generational saga, with intrigue, triumph, tragedy, foreign influences, the building of relationships with former adversaries, and all the details that could make for a sprawling feature film or series of novels.

We often don’t notice the way that our lives have followed the way of God until we think back on the importance of particular times and places, decisions, and the consequences of unexpected circumstances on our journey.

The Book of Ruth is the backstory for the future King David, who represented so much for the Hebrew people, such as a preferred political system, a surprise hero, and a helplessly human individual as well. How do the events in our lives intersect with the story of Ruth and her family and adopted family? Draw connections between the role of the Holy One in the lives we live, the relationships that sustain us, and how we move forward in life in the way of the Holy One.

### Hymns

*Ruth 3:1–5; 4:13–17*

VU 602 “Blest be the tie that binds”

MV 1 “Let us build a house”

*Psalm 127*

VU 331 “The church’s one foundation”

*Hebrews 9:24–28*

VU 213 “Rejoice, the Lord is King”

*Mark 12:38–44*

VU 236 “Now thank we all our God”

VU 333 “Love divine, all loves excelling”

VU 348 “O love, how deep”

VU 372 “Though I may speak”

VU 516 “Come, you thankful people, come”

VU 701 “What does the Lord require of you”

## November 17 ‒ Twenty-sixth 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.

### Creation Connection

For some, the desire to have children is deeply connected with creation. Today, out of climate anxiety, some people are choosing to have only one child or no children at all. Hannah desired a child, but then gave that child to God’s purposes.

### Spark

Add to the family Bible and family tree display. This week, we consider, again with appropriate sensitivity, the heartaches and challenges of infertility. How do we tell a story like this in our family tree? Perhaps there are stories of aunts, uncles, great aunts, or great uncles who did not have children for many different reasons, yet who were great at cherishing and loving other children in the family. Remember, many people do not tell of their infertility or discuss their reasons for not having children by choice. Add images of a variety of loving relationships to the display.

### With Children

Hannah was very sad. She wanted to have a baby, but she couldn’t. Another woman made fun of her and laughed at her because she did not have a baby. How do you think that made Hannah feel? Hannah prayed to God that she would have a baby, and she promised that if she did, she would make sure that her baby would follow the way of God from the moment they were born.

Children come to families in many different ways (birth, adoption, fostering, family blending). It is always amazing to welcome a child! Even though Hannah was pretty old to have a baby, she did! And then she kept her promise. She was so happy that she sang a happy song. It went something like this:

*I can hardly stop singing. It is like I’m flying, I am so happy. No longer do the words hurt me, because now I have a baby. Thank you, God! There is no one like you. You know everything. You make it so that strong and powerful people cannot use their strength for bad reasons, and you make it so that people who feel weak can find new strength. Rich people are not rich anymore and poor people no longer go hungry. God evens things out for people in the world. Thank you, God!*

### Sermon Starter

The story of Hannah could bring up very deep feelings for anyone who has struggled with infertility. The “happy ending” of this story belies the heartache, deep spiritual emptiness, and aching of the soul that can come to people who long to have children but who, for one reason or another, cannot.

The promise of Hannah to commit any child she might have to the service of God could be taken as a very pious action, or it could be a natural, desperate bargain promised by a grief-stricken woman, pleading with God.

It is important to make the strong assertion that God loves us no matter what our life circumstances might be, and especially when we face hardship and grief. Not all stories of infertility end like Hannah’s. That doesn’t mean God has abandoned us. Prepare for this sermon by listening to the CBC podcast *One in Six: A Fertility Journey*. The podcast follows Jen White and her partner Neil Hyde as they struggle, with monumental commitment, to conceive a child.

### Hymns

*1 Samuel 1:4–20*

VU 221 “Sing praise to God, who has shaped”

VU 598 “When pain of the world”

MV 73 “O God, why are you silent?”

MV 78 “God weeps”

*1 Samuel 2:1–10*

VU p. 878 “My soul is filled with joy”

MV 120 “My soul cries out”

*Hebrews 10:11–14, (15–18), 19–25*

VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

*Mark 13:1–8*

VU 147 “What wondrous love is this”

VU 348 “O love, how deep”

VU 688 “O day of God, draw nigh”

## November 24 – 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?”

### Creation Connection

Many of David’s psalms draw inspiration from creation. In this week, when we mark the last words of David, how do his words and songs link us back to the land?

### Spark

The family Bible and family tree is a place where not only births and marriages were recorded, but also deaths. Generations get added and generations come to an end. How can this be creatively and sensitively added to the family tree we’ve been displaying throughout these four weeks?

### With Children

One of my favourite writers of all kinds is Dr. Seuss. How many of you know some Dr. Seuss stories? Pretty soon, if it hasn’t happened already, you are going to start hearing about the Grinch once again. Dr. Seuss died in 1991, but his words live on and we get to read them again and again. They tell us about life in ways that are funny and very meaningful. Today, one of our readings is called the last words of David. David was a writer and a musician and a king. His words are important to people, too. Words that get written and stories that get told are one way that people continue to live on past death. Those words and stories are part of a family tree as well, kind of like the leaves or needles of a tree.

### Sermon Starter

Over the past weeks, a sub-theme in worship has been genealogy, both biblical and personal. We heard about Ruth and Naomi. Ruth, an outsider, was the great-grandmother of David, the shepherd folk artist who became the much-desired king of Israel. But it’s not David’s birth that we consider this week; it is his death.

When someone dies, especially someone famous, there is much consideration of what that person was like when they were living. Sometimes the person being eulogized doesn’t sound like the person we knew or remember. This is understandable. It is difficult to think badly of someone who is now departed, and we do believe that there is a divine spark in everyone. Occasionally, we may find an obituary that “tells it like it was.” There is a divine spark there, too, related to honesty and clearing of the air.

David was the epitome of a monarchist’s desire for a wise, smart, and talented individual who would prove that a king was what was needed for the people of Israel. But power has a pull on individuals, and despite his talent and wisdom, David was definitely not above reproach.

We are left with so much of David’s talent in the Book of Psalms, words that have empowered, comforted, challenged, and emboldened countless numbers of people over the millennia.

Compare this to the almost final words of Jesus in the gospel today, where he and Pilate can’t quite hit a level of understanding between them. Pilate’s words and questions come from one plane of understanding, while Jesus’ responses are on a whole different level. A fitting theme for this final Sunday in the Christian year is the way that Jesus’ life, his role and importance, are on a whole different plane than most of society today.

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 23:1–7*

VU 25 “Lo, he comes with clouds descending”

*Psalm 132*

VU 511 “Before you now, O God”

VU 652 “Be still, my soul”

Revelation 1:4*b*–8

VU 61 “Of the Father’s love begotten”

MV 91 “Cradle me in your arms”

MV 106 “I am the dream”

*John 18:33–37*

VU 30 “Hail to God’s own anointed”

VU 143 “My song is love unknown”

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

MV 65 “When we are tested”

MV 162 “Christ, within us hidden”