

WEEKLY SERVICES



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 2025, p. 9.

September 7 – Thirteenth after Pentecost

Creation Time 1 in the Season of Pentecost

Proper 18

Worship materials for Creation Time 1 to Creation Time 5 (World Communion Sunday) were contributed by Rosemary Godin, Sydney, N.S.

Jeremiah 18:1–11

God is the potter; we are the clay.

Psalms 139:1–6, 13–18 (VU pp. 861–862)

God has searched me and known me.

Philemon 1–21

A plea for Onesimus, the enslaved runaway.

Luke 14:25–33

The cost of discipleship.

Creation Connection

Creation invites: Enjoy my songs!

Without clay and its properties, there would be no life on earth. It's a building block for creating life. And just like most living things on earth—ourselves included—clay needs water and air to form and exist!

Spark

It would be easy to skip over the epistle to Philemon. Yet, it is rich in Christian theology. Paul asks Philemon to receive back as a brother in Christ a young man named Onesimus whom he once enslaved. Paul is asking Philemon to do what Jesus would do and have empathy for Onesimus. For a delightful explanation of the difference between sympathy and empathy, watch “Brené Brown on Empathy” (available on YouTube).

With Children

The Jeremiah scripture provides an opportunity to engage in intergenerational learning. Prior to the service, prepare little bags with a lump of coloured playdough in each. Give a bag to each person and ask them to knead their lump into a vessel that would hold water. Explain the concept of God as potter and us as clay to the young ones. Add details about how important clay is to humankind and our development through the ages. (For example, clay has been used to fashion dishes, build houses, and make art. God created life from clay!) Ask

people to bring their clay masterpieces up to the front and place them on the altar table for the rest of the service as a reminder of how connected we are to God as Creator.

Sermon Starter

There is a distinct thread running through the readings. From the awesomeness of God creating us out of clay (a theme that runs through all ancient religions) to the psalm reassuring us that we are “wonderfully and fearfully made”—*fearfully* in that creating life is a reverent, holy process—we are encouraged to feel the wonder and preciousness of it all. We then move on to the readings asking us to take care of all this preciousness on earth—holy stewardship, putting God ahead of everything.

The Lucan passage is one of those hard ones to preach, because it may be misunderstood or downplayed. Preachers must avoid the temptation to underplay what we are being asked to do. Our inclination is to respond with “Jesus must be kidding!” when it appears to our modern minds that we are being asked to sacrifice our possessions and “hate” the ones we love. In fact, we are being asked to love radically.

Luke writes that Jesus is being followed by a crowd. Jesus turns and advises them that if they really want to follow him and participate in the fullness of God's grace and blessings, then they must be prepared to make sacrifices and to be serious about it. He's not kidding around!

Hymns

Jeremiah 18:1–11

VU 376 “Spirit of the living God”

VU 578 “As a fire is meant for burning”

Songs of the Gospel 122 “Have thine own way, Lord”

Psalms 139

VU 293 “We praise you, Creator”

VU 574 “Come, let us sing of a wonderful love”
(*You may wish to change the Father to Creator.*)

Philemon 1–21

VU 316 “Praise our Maker”

VU 600 “When I needed a neighbour”

VU 602 “Blest be the tie that binds”

Luke 14:25–33

VU 135 “Beneath the cross of Jesus”

VU 338 “Ask me what great thing I know”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

September 14 – Fourteenth after Pentecost

Creation Time 2 in the Season of Pentecost

Proper 19

Jeremiah 4:11–12, 22–28

The land shall be desolation; the earth shall mourn.

Psalms 14 (VU p. 735)

The foolish say, “There is no God.”

1 Timothy 1:12–17

Christ came to save sinners; I am the foremost.

Luke 15:1–10

The parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin.

Creation Connection

Creation encourages: Seek my intelligence!

In this time of climate crisis when the country is experiencing fires, floods, and severe storms of many kinds, we can relate to the Jeremiah reading. What have we done to God’s earth?

Spark

It is sometimes (wrongly) said that nobody dies an atheist. A few unfounded claims circulate of famous atheists/agnostics from Charles Darwin to Christopher Hitchens who are said to have had conversion experiences as they approached death. We’ll never know for sure. But it doesn’t matter anyway—because faithful Christians understand that our purpose is to be welcoming of all, whether they believe in God or not. Today might be a good day to reflect upon and demonstrate the welcoming ministry of your congregation.

With Children

Is God good? Young people know the answer is supposed to be a resounding YES! Why do they think that? Welcome the answers. Share that you are a bit sad today because you lost your favourite scarf (or any item that you conspire with a congregant to hide ahead of time). Ask the young ones if they would search for it. It will be found (thanks to the church folks) and returned to you. Make a *huge* deal over your happiness that it is found. Tell them that God feels the same way about us! We are precious to God. Share the parable about a woman who lost a coin. Hand out foil-wrapped chocolate coins (or another precious, non-food item if there are allergies) as you tell the

story. Would they be sad if they lost it? We are like shiny, precious gold to God. End with a prayer that expresses gratitude to a kind Creator for all that we have and the way we are all taken care of.

Sermon Starter

Well, we’re sinners. That declaration makes us cringe! But if we are honest with ourselves, few of us will get through a day without making a judgment that veers a little off course from what Christ would have us do and be. It takes humility to admit that we are wrong. Thirty years ago, the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission held hearings at which victims and perpetrators of apartheid were both invited to share their trauma and their guilt.

Here in Canada, we had our own Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings around the residential institutions and the terrible harm that was perpetrated against Indigenous children and their parents. The focus of the TRC, according to its shapers, was to receive the truth from the victims’ testimonies.

The United Church of Canada apologized in 1986 for its role in the operation of some residential institutions, and the work of reconciliation is ongoing. What has your church community done to admit that the effects of colonialization continue today? Are we, as individuals, ready to admit the ways in which we are complicit in systemic racism that exists now? What can we do to ensure that reconciliation continues to move forward? The United Church of Canada website has many resources addressing these justice initiatives under the Social Action menu.

Hymns

Jeremiah 4:11–12, 22–28

VU 266 “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound”

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

Psalms 14

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

MV 81 “Love us into fullness”

MV 83 “Let my spirit always sing”

1 Timothy 1:12–17

VU 477 “I come with joy”

Luke 15:1–10

VU 360 “A woman and a coin”

VU p. 747 “The Lord’s my Shepherd”

MV 33 “Jesus came bringing us hope”

September 21 – Fifteenth after Pentecost

Creation Time 3 in the Season of Pentecost

Proper 20

Jeremiah 8:18—9:1

Is there no balm in Gilead? No physician there?

Psalm 79:1–9 (VU p. 793)

We are mocked by our neighbours.

1 Timothy 2:1–7

Offer prayers for those in high positions.

Luke 16:1–13

The parable of the dishonest manager.

Creation Connection

Creation asks: Journey lightly upon me!

The earth and sea contain gardens that need to be tended. The sky needs to be kept clean. How are we doing? Are we reaping what has been sown by humankind? And how's that going for us? Is there a balm we can offer? Share pictures of marvellous ways that life continues and blooms in the midst of difficulty.

Spark

Hand out two foil-wrapped chocolate coins (or pennies, especially if people have food allergies) to each person who comes to the service, to keep them and reflect upon them during the service (if using the Lucan passage).

With Children

Each of the children should have two gold coins. Ask them what they're going to do with them. Answers might include keep them, eat them, and put them in their piggy bank. Someone might say to give them away. Those are all good ideas. Doing God's work with them is the best way they can use everything that they have. For example, point out that if everyone puts one of their coins in a pot, together they can do so much more. Invite the children, if they wish, to put one of their coins in the offering plate. Together decide what to do with these coins.

Sermon Starter

Is it a proper thing to be dishonest at work and then be rewarded for your shrewdness? It doesn't sound right to us, but Luke tells us a story in which that happens. Jesus comes to us in order to reverse the existing order of things. Luke is full of situations in which the status quo is questioned and shifted. In this parable, a new relationship with others and with money is created. The manager's shrewdness and generosity bring greater equality of wealth-based power within society. The manager, however, has some self-serving reasons for his generosity to those who work the employer's land. Should he make his employer angry with his actions and lose his job, he will have grateful friends who will take him in. The importance of community in Christ is emphasized.

Perhaps, scholars have theorized, the boss isn't upset because the manager has reduced his own commission in the debts owed and it really doesn't make a difference to the boss in the long run. So, it's a win all around! Under all these puzzling layers is a major understanding: We cannot serve God and wealth equally. Through Christ, we are called to share our wealth, overturning established hierarchies and developing new friendships and priorities.

Hymns

Jeremiah 8:18—9:1

VU 612 "There is a balm in Gilead"

Psalm 79

MV 65 "When we are tested"

MV 83 "Let my spirit always sing"

1 Timothy 2:1–7

VU 376 "Spirit of the living God"

VU 506 "Take my life and let it be"

VU 713 "I see a new heaven"

Luke 16:1–13

VU 377 "Holy Spirit, hear us"

VU 382 "Breathe on me, breath of God"

VU 513 "Give to me, Lord, a thankful heart"

MV 65 "When we are tested"

SHARE YOUR COMMENTS AND IDEAS

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September 28 – Sixteenth after Pentecost

Creation Time 4 in the Season of Pentecost

Proper 21

Jeremiah 32:1–3a, 6–15

Houses, fields, and vineyards shall again be purchased.

Psalm 91:1–6, 14–16 (VU pp. 807–809)

God will raise you up on eagle’s wings.

1 Timothy 6:6–19

The love of money; fight the good fight.

Luke 16:19–31

The rich man and Lazarus.

Creation Connection

Creation pleads: Advocate for me!

Why do we buy land? Is it for power or status? Or is it that we are born with a yearning to take care of nature around us? The earth, sea, and sky and all that is in it and upon it—even if it is a rented community garden plot—is ours to tend.

Spark

Using the metaphor of an eagle, Psalm 91 beautifully describes the transformative and gentle saving power of God. Many First Nations revere the majestic bird’s spiritual power: The eagle is sacred because it flies closest to the Creator and symbolizes respect, honour, strength, courage, and wisdom. Learn more about how other cultures and communities understand eagles.

The Skit Guys (skitguys.com) have a lovely two-minute video on Psalm 91. It is a pay-what-you-can download that includes streaming rights.

With Children

Bring a big bag of “stuff” to church and let the children rummage through it. Share that you like your things, but they don’t hug you, feed you, kiss your bruises, or keep you warm. Your things make you happy for a while—but not forever.

In the Bible, there is a story about a rich man who passed by and ignored a man who was sick and had nothing. This man sat in front of the rich man’s house every day.

We want to do the right thing. Sometimes it isn’t easy. When people share, it makes God smile.

Let the children take an item and give it to someone in church. Point out that people smiled every time they received a gift, and that sharing, in whatever way we can, keeps us close to God, who loves us more than anything.

Note: Consider the economic situations of those in your congregation and adapt this story as needed for the dignity of all.

Sermon Starter

We will never know, from our pulpit perspective, how many people attending to our sermon have come for assurance that God both exists and cares about us. The opportunity to preach on Psalm 91 provides a familiar and comforting promise of both. The psalm begins with words of refuge, shelter, fortress, and trust. Don’t pass these by too quickly. Stress that these and more are promises to us from a powerful and compassionate God who will follow through.

Refrain from describing God as if God is some kind of fairy godmother or wizard, able to grant wishes at will. Instead, your message should include the context of the world we live in. Everyone has troubling times and often we suffer for much longer than we would like to. We trust that God saves, but the way that is manifested by God may not be instantly recognized by those among us who have prayed for some other way. God’s wisdom is greater than ours. God’s care never abandons us.

Hymns

Jeremiah 32:1–3a, 6–15

VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

VU 292 “Creating God, we give you thanks”

(omit verse 2 or change woman, man to humankind)

VU 690 “From the slave pens of the delta”

Psalm 91

VU 660 “How firm a foundation”

VU p. 808 “On eagle’s wings”

MV 214 “May God’s sheltering wings”

1 Timothy 6:6–19

VU 674 “Fight the good fight”

Luke 16:19–31

VU 234 “Let us with a gladsome mind”

VU 405 “New every morning”

VU 488 “Friends, let us love each other”

VU 661 “Come to my heart”

October 5 – World Communion Sunday

Creation Time 5 in the Season of Pentecost

Proper 22

Lamentations 1:1–6

The lonely city, like a widow, grieves.

Lamentations 3:19–26

Great is God's faithfulness.

or **Psalm 137** (VU pp. 858–859)

By the rivers of Babylon, we wept.

2 Timothy 1:1–14

A faith that lived in your grandmother and mother.

Luke 17:5–10

Faith as a mustard seed; we've done as we ought.

Creation Connection

Creation prays: Sustain me!

If ever there was a time to drink in God's beauty in the northern hemisphere, now is it! Invite people to make a spiritual practice of noticing the small beauties in nature, including the way so much of the living world changes and retains beauty even as it dies or sleeps. Some might like to document it through photos or drawings to meditate upon.

Spark

God's promise of comfort and strength is all around us. But too often, we miss it as worldly noise drowns it out. The world of Lamentations exists, but so does the world in which the Good News is always around us. Spend time outdoors (or check out the Facebook page Hearts in Nature) and find all the times a heart shape appears. Invite people to bring heart photos to share.

With Children

Bring a collection of small items, including mustard seeds, in tiny jars. First, ask the children about sadness and if it creeps into their lives sometimes. There is a book in the Bible called Lamentations that talks about sad times, but also tells us that God is with us always, helping us through those sad times. Briefly paraphrase Luke's parable of the mustard seed. Tell the children that we often search for big things to make us feel better, but if we believe in God's love for us, even a small bit the size of a mustard seed, then we will be okay, because our Creator's love is so huge and freely given.

Sermon Starter

Resist the temptation to preach only on the familiar parable of the mustard seed in Luke 17. This week is rich in its scriptural choices, as well as being World Communion Sunday. The experiences written about in Lamentations are familiar experiences for people. You can easily weave both Lamentation readings and the Lucan passage into a message of hope for those who are hurting. The mourning and unconsolable grief found in the first chapter of Lamentations has been felt by many and lets them know they are not alone in their despair. Follow up with the verses from Lamentations 3 that are full of hope in God's goodness! People may need the words from verse 22: "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end."

The second Lamentations reading also contains the words: "The Lord is good...to the soul that seeks him," which causes us to cry out as the apostles did to Jesus in Luke 17, "Increase our faith!" And we are assured there is power and strength even in faith that is as small as a mustard seed. For this holy Sunday of World Communion, you might share the history of the day and its origins in the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1930.

Hymns

Lamentations 1:1–6

and *Lamentations 3:19–26*

VU 266 "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound"

VU 288 "Great is thy faithfulness"

MV 81 "Love us into fullness"

MV 161 "I have called you by your name"

Psalm 137

VU 654 "All my hope is firmly grounded"

VU 679 "Let there be light"

VU 699 "Live into hope"

2 Timothy 1:1–14

VU 635 "All the way my Saviour leads me"

Luke 17:5–10

VU 506 "Take my life and let it be"

VU 519 "Sing to the Lord of harvest"

VU 562 "Jesus calls us"

World Communion Sunday

VU 460 "All who hunger"

VU 467 "One bread, one body"

MV 1 "Let us build a house"

MV 12 "Come touch our hearts"

October 12 – Thanksgiving Sunday

Creation Time 6 in the Season of Pentecost

Worship materials for Creation Time 6 (Thanksgiving Sunday) to All Saints' Day were contributed by Frances Kitson, Whitehorse U.C., Whitehorse, Yuk.

Deuteronomy 26:1–11

Bring tithes; a wandering Aramean was my ancestor.

Psalm 100 (VU pp. 820–824)

Make a joyful noise for God.

Philippians 4:4–9

The peace of God which passes all understanding.

John 6:25–35

Give us the bread from heaven for eternal life.

Creation Connection

Creation implores: Cherish me!

In the passage from Deuteronomy, it is emphasized that the land belongs to God and is given from God. We never truly own land; the earth is always God's and in relationship with its Creator. Do we truly embrace that theology?

Spark

What is a joyful noise? Invite folks to write or draw on a card their favourite way of sharing joy and post them after the service. You might find a way to bring the ideas into worship: brainstorm noises that bring people joy and share recordings of the sounds (waves, a baby's giggle, a cat's purr, wind in the trees, etc.). Include ways of sharing joy that fit for those who find hearing difficult or who do not engage the world through sound.

With Children

Today is Thanksgiving Sunday. Do we have to feel happy when we offer a thank you? Gratitude can become yucky (toxic) when we think that we are never allowed to feel sad or frustrated or annoyed but should only be happy and positive all the time. Experiment with the kids. What does it feel like to offer a thank you with a sad voice or face? An angry one? A scared one? When we offer a thank you to God, it's okay if we're not always happy. But we keep offering thanks because sometimes it can soften the anger, sadness, or fear.

Sermon Starter

On this Thanksgiving Sunday, no one needs to be reminded that we may have much to be grateful for or that others may have it worse. The challenge in a life of faith is to translate the intellectual *knowledge* of what we should be doing (i.e., giving thanks) into a spiritual and life-giving *practice*. What does it mean to be grateful in both the ups and downs of life? How do we live in the “both/and,” practising gratitude even while we acknowledge struggle, anxiety, depression, or grief? *Why* do we practise giving thanks? What is the benefit to us, as creatures of God? How does giving thanks ground us more deeply in God? The Deuteronomy passage not only declares God's liberating works and power but enshrines them in a ritual. How are both liberation and ritual connected with thanksgiving? If a story of liberation brings hope, how is hope connected to gratitude? Why are we called to not be anxious when everyone knows that the last thing that helps worry is to be told “Don't worry”? How is gratitude an antidote to worry? And how is gratitude connected to the peace of God?

Hymns

Deuteronomy 26:1–11

VU 651 “Guide me, O thou great [and holy]”

VU 690 “From the slave pens of the delta”

Psalm 100

VU p. 820 “Make a joyful noise”

MV 46 “Bless the Lord”

Philippians 4:4–9

MV 90 “Don't be afraid”

John 6:25–35

VU 466 “Eat this bread”

MV 194 “Bread of life, feed my soul”

MV 201 “I am the bread of life”

General/Seasonal

VU 226 “For the beauty of the earth”

VU 227 “For the fruit of all creation”

VU 516 “Come, you thankful people, come”

VU 517 “Praise God for the harvest”

VU 520 “We plough the fields”

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October 19 – Nineteenth after Pentecost

Proper 24

Jeremiah 31:27–34

God's new covenant will be written upon people's hearts.

Psalm 119:97–104 (VU p. 840)

How I love God's law.

2 Timothy 3:14–4:5

People with itching ears will turn away from the truth.

Luke 18:1–8

The parable of the widow and the unjust judge.

Creation Connection

All of creation belongs to God and reflects God. Yet, its wisdom will not always be readily apparent to humans. God's teachings and mystery are present in creation.

Spark

The image of a covenant written upon people's hearts is striking. Provide paper hearts so people can write down their own covenant with God. Offer stickers and pencil crayons for those who prefer to illustrate their covenant. As a further connection, people could write on the other side of their heart the myths they struggle with.

With Children

You might focus on covenant and make a covenant with the children. Explain that a covenant is a promise between God and people. What do leaders in the church, whether lay or ordered, promise the kids? What do the kids promise in return? How will the kids be treated, and how will they respond? God will hold our promises to each other in God's heart.

Or focus on the psalm and God's law. Jewish scriptures and tradition contain 613 or more laws. This sounds onerous, until we do some research to find out the number of federal, territorial, and provincial laws we ourselves live under! Wonder together about why laws can be helpful.

Or, with a tiny bit of prep beforehand, act out the parable of the unjust judge and the widow. Then remind the children that community is essential when we're discouraged and losing heart.

Sermon Starter

Anytime "law" or "covenant" gets mentioned, it's important to check any biases we have about the law (which really should be translated as "teaching") as legalistic, harsh, or a means of earning God's love and grace. That's why Psalm 100 rejoices in the law—it is a gift from God, a guide for helping God's people stay in relationship with God. Whether it is by law, commandment, or scripture, God always provides for us the ways and means we require to know God and follow God's ways.

That doesn't mean we always want to do so or find it easy. In the 2 Timothy passage, it's easy to assume we're the people who are staying with the truth, but any one of us can have itchy ears! Myths are not just tales of ancient gods; they are around today as much as ever. For example: "Anyone can achieve success as long as they work hard," "The perfect body exists out there if only you'd just stick to the diet," "Youth is better than age," and "More young people in church would solve our problems." Add your own myth.

Hope can never come from everything going well. It comes from knowing God and, like the widow, being stubborn and persistent in living our faith and seeking justice.

Hymns

Jeremiah 31:27–34

VU 633 "Bless now, O God, the journey"

MV 28 "God of the Bible"

Psalm 119

VU 241 "Oh, sing to our God"

VU 242 "Let all things now living"

VU 559 "Come, O Fount of every blessing"

MV 46 "Bless the Lord"

2 Timothy 3:14–4:5

VU 577 "I've got peace like a river"

VU 642 "Be thou my vision"

VU 664 "What a friend we have in Jesus"

Luke 18:1–8

VU 271 "There's a wideness in God's mercy"

MV 120 "My soul cries out"

October 26 – Twentieth after Pentecost

Proper 25

Joel 2:23–32

Abundant rain, full threshing floors.

Psalm 65 (VU pp. 782–783)

God crowns the year with goodness.

2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race.

Luke 18:9–14

The Pharisee and the tax collector go to pray.

Creation Connection

When new life is coming forth, creation is extravagant. Consider the profusion of the cabbage plant's extra leaves or the riot of a tree blossoming in spring. Creation does not hold back!

Spark

The image of overflowing abundance also brings to mind the words of Psalm 23: "My cup overflows/runneth over." What could be poured out during the service so that the container—a cup, a bucket, the baptismal font—overflows? Water, grape juice, or oil would work for this. Have another container ready to catch the overflow and make cleanup easy.

With Children

Children love tactile explorations. What kinds of things do you have that the children can pour out on the floor (things easily cleaned up!)? Flower petals, small stones, autumn leaves, pine cones, stickers, building blocks...anything that can help everyone experience the overflowing bounty of blessings.

Sermon Starter

The passages from Joel, Psalm 65, and 2 Timothy contain within them images of pouring out, of overflowing, of abundance, and the presence of God therein. While Joel and the psalm contain promises of God providing the abundance, 2 Timothy evokes an image of finding both strength and God's presence in the act of pouring oneself out, giving everything to God, holding nothing back, being fully vulnerable. This connects nicely to the tax collector's prayer. While it is humble, self-effacing, and quiet, it is still a pouring out. The tax collector—a profession the Judean population reviled for colluding with Roman occupation and, in self interest, piling extra fees on subsistence farmers—knows full well the enormity of his brokenness and complicity. Simply naming that, as he does, is a pouring out of self, a laying of self at the feet of God and an awareness of his need for mercy. Most of us have been both the tax collector (in our humility before God) and the Pharisee (congratulating ourselves on being more inclusive and welcoming than the church down the road). Can we have mercy on ourselves in both scenarios? Can we pour ourselves out, inviting God's mercy?

Hymns

Joel 2:23–32

VU 382 "Breathe on me, breath of God"

VU 517 "Praise God for the harvest"

VU 520 "We plough the fields"

Psalm 65

VU 213 "Rejoice, the Lord is King"

VU 519 "Sing to the Lord of harvest"

MV 30 "It's a song of praise to the Maker"

2 Timothy 4:6–8, 16–18

VU 674 "Fight the good fight"

MV 115 "Behold, behold, I make all things new"

Luke 18:9–14

VU 381 "Spirit of Life"

MV 18 "Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary"

Worship Leaders

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Gathering, Pentecost 2 2025,
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November 1 – All Saints’ Day (Saturday)

Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18

Daniel’s vision of four beasts.

Psalms 149 (VU pp. 872–873)

God’s praise and God’s sword.

Ephesians 1:11–23

The hope to which you are called.

Luke 6:20–31

Blessings and woes.

Creation Connection

It is no surprise that All Saints’ and All Souls’ days come at this time of year, when creation is letting go, dying, and giving of herself that new life may come in the future.

Spark

Hebrews 12 tells us we are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses. Bring those witnesses into the service by inviting people to share photos, mementos, and heirlooms from the people who have gone before. Or invite people to tell stories of those who have witnessed to the faith for them.

With Children

This is a great opportunity to explore with the whole congregation how we think of “saints.” Share some typical images of saints, such as St. Francis of Assisi, St. Nicholas, and St. Marie-Marguerite d’Youville. Ask the children if they know what a saint is and whether the person in the picture is a saint. If they say yes, ask how they know. Is it because of how they look or what they’re doing? Maybe they have a halo. Then share unusual images of saints, such as the dancing saints of St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco and the modern saints of Gracie Morbitzer. Do these also look like saints? Make sure to explain that in the early church and in the Protestant tradition, all who follow Jesus are called saints. The children are saints, too! As an alternative to focusing on images, share the story of someone who has been a saint in your life and invite the same exploration of what makes a saint.

Sermon Starter

All Saints’ Day is followed by All Souls’ Day, and the two can be easily combined into a service on the Sunday, November 2. While our denomination

might not have an official, doctrinal recognition or definition of what constitutes a saint, it is a universal human experience to hold in our hearts and memories people who have set examples, who have made a difference in our lives, who are particularly special. They may be loved ones whom we knew intimately, or they may be public figures we never met. All Souls’ Day contains room for all of us, broken and blessed.

In everyday English, a saint is someone who displays some kind of virtue that is outside the norm of average human existence, someone with exceptional patience, integrity, kindness, etc. In fact, if you examine the lives and characters of saints of the Catholic church and more modern saintly people (Mother Theresa, Dr. King, Bishop Romero), they were flawed, complex, imperfect humans who noticed a particular need or issue with piercing clarity and then stubbornly followed that clarity in ways that were inconvenient and exasperating for the authorities of their time and dangerous to themselves. How might we be called to be these kinds of saints?

Hymns

Daniel 7:1–3, 15–18

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

Psalms 149

VU 241 “Oh, sing to our God”

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

MV 28 “God of the Bible”

MV 36 “Glory to God”

MV 46 “Bless the Lord”

Ephesians 1:11–23

VU 325 “Christ is made the sure foundation”

VU 559 “Come, O Fount every blessing”

Luke 6:20–31

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

MV 169 “When hands reach out beyond divides”

All Saints’ Day

VU 315 “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty”

VU 660 “How firm a foundation”

VU 705 “For all the saints”

VU 710 “Shall we gather at the river”

VU 713 “I see a new heaven”

November 2 – Twenty-first after Pentecost

Proper 26

Worship materials for November 2 to November 23 were contributed by Joanna Williams, ReCreation Youth and Young Adults Inc., Mississauga, Ont. Originally published in the Pentecost 2 2016 issue, and edited for this issue. Joanna Williams provided poems to go with her Weekly Services, which are included in the Bonus Material for this issue.

Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:1–4

How long will it be until God acts?

Psalm 119:137–144 (VU p. 841)

God's judgments are just.

2 Thessalonians 1:1–4, 11–12

Your faith and love are growing abundantly.

Luke 19:1–10

Jesus dines with Zacchaeus.

Creation Connection

The prophet asks, "How long will it be until God acts?" In relation to climate change and other challenges facing humanity, the question is "How long until we act?"

Spark

Have everyone close their eyes or bow their heads and reflect for a moment: In what area of your life are you waiting for God? Reach out to God in your heart and share that you trust God with this matter. Open your eyes or lift your head and know that God is faithful.

With Children

Ask, "Have any of you ever been lost? That's such a scary feeling, isn't it?" (Invite them to share some stories or share one of your own.) Being lost is not fun. You feel so small in a really big world. All you want to do is go home or have your family find you. Well, that's how Zacchaeus felt. Zacchaeus was a man in the Bible who felt so lost because no one really loved him. He felt very alone. He really wanted to meet Jesus because he had heard how Jesus loved people, and he climbed a tree just so he could see him. Instead of passing him by, Jesus stopped and spoke with Zacchaeus and invited himself to go to Zacchaeus's home. Friendship

with Jesus changed Zacchaeus completely! He felt found and loved and gave back money, love, and kindness to all the people he had cheated. God's love changed him completely! Is Jesus your friend? How has his love changed you?

Sermon Starter

What experience have you had of being lost and then being found?

In the scripture readings today, the emotions coming through the writers are very real. Habakkuk writes about the feelings of frustration and poignant, expectant waiting while violence and destruction are all around, injustice seems to be having its way, and righteousness is missing in action. Yet he declares that he will wait as he continues to trust in God and God's faithfulness. There is so much destruction, violence, and incompleteness in our world today, and we too are overwhelmed by feelings of frustration and weariness as we seem to wait and wait. But the message of God is clear as spoken by Habakkuk: "If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay" (2:3c). Zacchaeus feels lost and alone. He waits in a tree for Jesus to find him. How do we wait faithfully? How do we live in a way that reflects that we believe God is faithful and true in the midst of a world that seems so far from God's vision?

Hymns

Habakkuk 1:1–4; 2:1–4

VU 288 "Great is thy faithfulness"

VU 642 "Be thou my vision"

VU 687 "When will people cease their fighting?"

Psalm 119

VU 686 "God of grace and God of glory"

VU 699 "Live into hope"

2 Thessalonians 1:1–4, 11–12

VU 641 "Lord Jesus, you shall be my song"

VU 643 "Faith, while trees are still in blossom"

MV 12 "Come touch our hearts"

Luke 19:1–10

VU 2 "Come, thou long-expected Jesus"

VU 232 "Joyful, joyful we adore you"

VU 266 "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound"

VU 559 "Come, O Fount of every blessing"

VU 664 "What a friend we have in Jesus"

MV 127 "I saw the rich ones"

November 9 – Twenty-second after Pentecost

Proper 27

Haggai 1:15b–2:9

God will shake things up; there will be new splendour.

Psalm 145:1–5, 17–21 (VU p. 866)

Every day I will bless God's name.

or **Psalm 98** (VU p. 818)

Sing a new song to God.

2 Thessalonians 2:1–5, 13–17

Let no one deceive you; stand fast in the traditions.

Luke 20:27–38

A woman marries seven brothers; whose wife is she in resurrection?

Creation Connection

The prophet asks, “Who among you remembers the former glory?” Will there come a day when no one will remember the beauty of the earth as we have known it? Yet the prophet declares, “Have courage.”

Spark

In the narthex, display some pictures in which you need to find one small item or person in the midst of many other items or people (for examples, see the *I Spy* series of books). Or provide sensory toys or objects with many textures and gadgets for people to explore. For little ones, provide the *Usborne That's Not My* (*Dragon, Dinosaur, Puppy*, etc.) books by Fiona Watt.

With Children

Have some Lego blocks or simple building blocks for the children. Hello, my friends! Well, what do we have here? Hmm, just a bunch of blocks thrown around. I wonder if we can all work together to make something. (Work with the children to make a building out of the blocks—something that will not topple easily.) Wow, that's so much better! This is how the people of God worked together a long time ago to build a special home for God, where all the people could come together to worship God. Sometimes things that we think are nothing much can become something amazing when we ask God to help us and guide us as we work together and as we live for God's glory.

Sermon Starter

When have you been lost in the details? What brought you back to the bigger picture? Jesus was often asked questions. The reading from Luke reveals one such question that centred around marriage. As he often did, Jesus deflected attention away from the finer (and, to him, immaterial) points of the question. Instead, he moved the spotlight onto a much bigger picture. The Sadducees, who didn't believe in the resurrection, were simply hoping to catch Jesus in the details of their question to use him to prove that resurrection couldn't possibly be true. Jesus moves the concern from their petty arguments to a spiritual focus and into a whole different arena. Eternity with God will simply not be defined by earthly details. We, too, like the Sadducees, often perceive things only from a limited perspective. But Jesus draws us into the bigger picture of what God's kingdom is meant to be here on earth, a new kingdom in which concerns like marriage and death no longer have the same meaning. We who are children not only of this age but of the ages to come must think spiritually.

Hymns

Haggai 1:15b–2:9

VU 284 “Joyful is the dark”

VU 326 “O for a thousand tongues to sing”

Psalm 145

VU 37 “Gloria”

VU 232 “Joyful, joyful we adore you”

VU 312 “Praise with joy the world's Creator”

“To God be the glory” (Fanny Crosby)

Psalm 98

VU 222 “Come, let us sing”

VU 229 “God of the sparrow”

VU 230 “Heaven is singing for joy”

VU p. 888 “Earth and all stars”

2 Thessalonians 2:1–5, 13–17

VU 279 “You, God, are my firmament”

VU 331 “The church's one foundation”

VU 660 “How firm a foundation”

Songs of the Gospel 154 “My hope is built”

Luke 20:27–38

VU 282 “Long before the night”

VU 493 “Today I live”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

“Love is the reversal” (Starfield)

November 16 – Twenty-third after Pentecost

Proper 28

Isaiah 65:17–25

God shall create joy and delight; the wolf and the lamb together.

Isaiah 12:1–6 (VU p. 880)

Make God's deeds known to the nations.

2 Thessalonians 3:6–13

Do not weary in doing what is right.

Luke 21:5–19

Persecution in the days to come; trust God!

Creation Connection

Wolf and lamb together, the lion and the ox. There are many stories of animals forming bonds between species, even species that might naturally harm each other. Maybe it is time to take what happens in creation as a lesson for humankind.

Spark

Share this acronym:

N ever

E ver

W orry

Invite everyone to come up with other words for the acronym NEW that reflect their faith in God. Have fun brainstorming.

With Children

Hello, everyone! I want to ask you a question. Do you ever worry about anything? (Ask the children for some responses. Be prepared to follow up privately on any big worries.) We all have worries and things we are afraid about. But God has asked us not to worry or fear. Instead, God asks us to trust in God. Just replace the five letters of WORRY with the five letters of TRUST! (If possible, write the words on a flip chart or project them.) To trust means to really believe in something. To trust means that we can rest and relax. Trusting God means believing that God is bigger than the things that make us feel worried. God's promises and God's words can help us to end our worries. Will you trust in God? Don't WORRY, just TRUST! (Share some ways that you practise trust rather than worry.) Let's sing together MV 90 "Don't be

afraid." When you are feeling afraid or worried, you can sing this song to remind yourself that you can trust in God to be with you and help you.

Sermon Starter

What are your biggest worries right now? What is your spiritual practice when you have fears and worries?

God did not promise us a perfect life once we believe and are part of God's people. Even as followers of Jesus, we will find ourselves in situations where our faith is tested by a world that pushes us into uncomfortable circumstances and where we are forced to make tough decisions. In these passages from scripture, we are promised the beauty of a new life and a new kingdom where peace and joy and harmony reign. But we are also told that we will experience circumstances where we will discover whether our faith is genuine and true. With God's assistance, these situations can help us become more resilient and able to deal with injustice and evil. We live in a world today where there is so much chaos and human suffering. We are called to advocate for justice and share God's words of wisdom, which are there in our hearts when we need them. Perhaps our own family and our best friends may not understand and may not join with us. Yet, as followers of the Way of Jesus, we join with God against injustice. With God's strength and courage, we will remain firm in our resolve.

Hymns

Isaiah 65:17–25

VU 229 "God of the sparrow"

VU 448 "We know that Christ is raised"

VU 682 "O day of peace"

VU p. 884 "You shall go out with joy"

MV 222 "May the peace of God be your peace"

Isaiah 12:1–6

VU 326 "O for a thousand tongues to sing"

2 Thessalonians 3:6–13

VU 426 "Saviour, again to your dear name"

MV 86 "Da pacem cordium"

"I have decided to follow Jesus" by Sadhu Sundar Singh

Luke 21:5–19

VU 278 "In the quiet curve of evening"

VU 427 "To show by touch and word"

Songs of the Gospel 135 "Trust and obey"

November 23 – Reign of Christ Sunday

Proper 29

Jeremiah 23:1–6

God will raise up new shepherds for Israel, God's flock.

Luke 1:68–79 (VU pp. 900–901)

The song of Zechariah.

Colossians 1:11–20

In Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

Luke 23:33–43

“Remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Creation Connection

New shepherds. New songs. A peaceable kingdom. New splendour. The scriptures of the last weeks proclaim that God continues to create and to shake things up, bringing joy and delight. Can we hold these promises in our discouraged hearts?

Spark

Turn off or turn down the light in the sanctuary and have someone read Colossians 1:11–20 from the back of the sanctuary, slowly, starting in a soft, gentle voice and gradually getting louder in order to emphasize verses 19–20 with a firm, confident voice.

With Children

How many of you like sheep? Have you been near a flock of sheep or touched a sheep? Sheep definitely need a shepherd. They will wander everywhere if someone doesn't take care of them. So Jesus said that we are like his sheep and he is our true shepherd. A shepherd doesn't just leave the sheep alone and go off to do whatever he wants. That's a really bad shepherd. Jesus is not like that. He promised that he would always be with us. That's why we call Jesus the Good Shepherd. He keeps us all together, and you can always talk with him about anything. Let's pray to Jesus, our Good Shepherd, together, because we know that he cares and he is paying attention to us. *Share a prayer with the children.*

Sermon Starter

Where do you long for reconciliation with

yourself, with others, and in the world?

What struck me most in these passages of scripture is the amazing way in which Christ has, through his death, reconciled so much that is at odds in our world. There is division everywhere in our world and even in our own hearts and lives. When Jesus died, he didn't leave us alone to live in the midst of chaos and division. In his death, he showed us another way and offered us a holy inheritance. In many ways, he turned upside down everything everyone thought was the way things should work. Jesus invited a thief hanging on a cross to be part of the new kingdom, even while they were dying together at the hands of the one in charge of the current earthly kingdom, Caesar. He lifted up those who were considered the most unworthy. In doing so, he showed that in God's kingdom, everyone is on equal footing, a radical idea. Reconciliation—what does that mean for our lives and our world today? What do you need to reconcile within yourself? Who needs to be reconciled in your community? Who needs to be reconciled in the world? What might Jesus' approach teach us about how to accomplish such reconciliation?

Hymns

Jeremiah 23:1–6

VU 210 “You, Lord, are both lamb and shepherd”
Songs of the Gospel 124 “Saviour, like a shepherd lead us”

Luke 1:68–79

VU 2 “Come, thou long-expected Jesus”
VU 336 “Christ whose glory fills the skies”
VU p. 901 “Song of Zechariah”
MV 86 “Da pacem cordium”

Colossians 1:11–20

VU 61 “Of the Father's love begotten”
VU 325 “Christ is made the sure foundation”
VU 595 “We are pilgrims”
MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”
MV 171 “Christ has no body now but yours”
“In Christ alone” by Stuart Townend and Keith Getty

“Here I am to worship” by Tim Hughes

Luke 23:33–43

VU 148 “Jesus, remember me”
VU 212 “Eternal Christ, you rule”
VU 512 “Lord, you give the great commission”
“The Saving One” by Starfield