

# 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.

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Célébrants et célébrantes de culte, veuillez prendre note de ce qui suit.

Lorsque vous utilisez des textes de **Gathering**, nous vous demandons d’inclure la mention suivante:

Texte de \_\_\_\_\_.  
**Gathering**, Pentecôte 2 2026, page \_\_\_\_\_.  
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### 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 abstinence, 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 2026, p. 7.*

## September 13 – Sixteenth after Pentecost

*Creation Time 1 in the Season of Pentecost*

### Proper 19

*Worship materials for Creation Time 1 to Creation Time 4 (World Communion Sunday) were contributed by Lisa Waites, Calgary, Alta.*

#### **Exodus 14:19–31**

God parts the sea for the Hebrew people.

#### **Exodus 15:1b–11, 20–21**

Miriam and Moses lead the people in singing.

#### or **Psalms 114**

Tremble, O earth.

#### **Romans 14:1–12**

Whether we live or die, we belong to God.

#### **Matthew 18:21–35**

How many times must I forgive?

#### **Creation Connection**

The epistle and gospel texts remind us to offer forgiveness to one another and to refrain from judging others, living graciously within the web of life, restoring relationships.

#### **Spark**

Decorate the communion table with symbols of abundance, reconciliation, and forgiveness, such as a set of scales, a cross, an open lock and key, a paper map, and an image of people of different ages, abilities, races, and cultures smiling and shaking hands.

#### **With Children**

Using a set of scales, invite the children to find the balance with various small items. Talk about balance, demonstrating how the weight needs to be the same on both sides. As the children try out the scale, explain that balance is also needed in the web of life, but human over-consumption is putting too much weight on one side, disrupting the balance of the planet, which hurts the land, water, and air, and all the creatures who live there, including humans. How are they and their families living to restore balance in our relationship with Creation? Pile all the materials on one side of the scale and talk about the weight we feel in our hearts when we make big mistakes or hurt others.

When Jesus forgives us, it's like taking that weight away. (Have the children remove items until the scales are empty again.) Jesus gladly takes that weight away, again and again. God also asks *us* to forgive others, just like we've been forgiven by God.

#### **Sermon Starter**

Work through the theme of God's generous forgiveness toward human beings as demonstrated through Christ and God's subsequent call for all who follow Jesus to demonstrate forgiveness to one another. Highlight Paul's exhortation to refrain from judging others. Describe how an attitude of forgiveness, humility, and trust in the abundance of God's love can reorder the way we spend our time, structure our priorities, and use physical resources, helping us to live as disciples of Jesus with greater humility and respect in Creation. Discuss how the choices we make in our daily lives are not neutral. We participate in either environmental destruction or environmental restoration each day! An attitude of passivity or fatalism toward ecology and conservation is a judgment against the capacity of our fellow humans to act, to make positive changes for the sake of the planet. Sing or sign or have the choir or congregation sing TLUS 2 "A strand in the web of life let me be" at the beginning and end of your sermon.

#### **Hymns**

*Exodus 14:19–31*

VU 449 "Crashing waters at creation"

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

*Exodus 15:1b–11, 20–21*

VU p. 876 "Song of the Sea"

*Psalms 114*

TLUS 64 "There's a wild hope in the wind"

*Romans 14:1–12*

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

VU 589 "Lord, speak to me"

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

*Matthew 18:21–35*

VU 232 "Joyful, joyful we adore you"

VU 266 "Amazing grace"

MV 28 "God of the Bible"

MV 145 "Draw the circle wide"

MV 154 "Deep in our hearts"

TLUS 2 "A strand in the web of life let me be"

TLUS 78 "Trust these words" (Words of Assurance)

TLUS 118 "It's not enough"

## September 20 – Seventeenth after Pentecost

*Creation Time 2 in the Season of Pentecost*

### *Proper 20*

#### **Exodus 16:2–15**

God sends bread and quail to feed the people.

#### **Psalms 105:1–6, 37–45**

Make known what God has done.

#### **Philippians 1:21–30**

To live is Christ and to die is gain.

#### **Matthew 20:1–16**

Wages for workers: What’s “fair” in God’s economy?

#### **Creation Connection**

Tell one another of God’s wondrous works. Instead of groaning and grumbling, we hope in God’s power and provision.

#### **Spark**

Hand out pens or pencils and index cards with the words “Grumbling and Groaning” on one side and “Grateful and Glorifying” on the reverse. As worship begins, ask people to list their top-five chronic complaints (e.g., about their lives, relationships, bodies, bank accounts, the planet). At the end of the sermon, ask them to take the card home and pray for guidance to transform the grumbles into praise.

#### **With Children**

In your own words, narrate the story of the Israelites complaining in the desert. Ask the children what they complain about. Give a few examples of things adults complain about, too. Then invite the children to act out the story as you read it again (e.g., by folding their arms across their chests, stomping their feet, and scowling). Invite them to whine on cue: “We’re HUNGRY, we’re THIRSTY, and we’re TIRED!” Tell them about how God miraculously provided quail and bread for the people to eat. God wanted them (and us) to trust God. God asks us to have an “attitude of gratitude,” instead of moaning and groaning (though some days, we just need to get the grumbles out to make space for gratitude).

#### **Sermon Starter**

Share statistics or headlines about unemployment rates, inflation, the cost-of-living index, local food bank use, or other social indicators of financial

instability to demonstrate that even in wealthy nations like Canada, people are suffering and have legitimate reasons to complain. As you shape your sermon, be aware that some (or many) in your congregation may be experiencing this exact situation.

Describe the differences between toxic grumbling (fruitless, passive, chronic complaining that leaves us marinating in our misery) and productive complaints that prompt us to take faithful action, improve difficult circumstances, or reframe our attitudes. Both the parable and the Exodus passage offer strong illustrations. The Israelites complain that God was going to “let them die,” somehow forgetting that God had miraculously delivered them from enslavement and was feeding them and leading them to a “promised land.” How quickly their complaints replaced their recent memories of God’s goodness and provision! How easily we may fall into the same pattern.

We have the Holy Spirit’s help to move us from toxic “moaning and groaning” to a more transformative approach.

God’s economy might initially seem “unfair” to us, like the labourers who worked all day and bitterly complained when the landowner gave the same wages to those who were hired last. How does God’s view of underemployment and just compensation challenge our ideas? How might God be using this gospel text to disrupt our beliefs and expand our concepts of fairness and generosity?

#### **Hymns**

*Exodus 16:2–15*

VU 425 “God, dismiss us with your blessing”

MV 109 “My soul is thirsting for you”

TLUS 165 “Larger than our creeds and customs

*Psalms 105*

MV 26 “Your love is amazing”

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

MV 122 “This is the day”

*Philippians 1:21–30*

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

MV 79 “Spirit, open my heart”

TLUS 96 “All my life I will seek your face”

TLUS 117 “Could it be that God is singing”

*Matthew 20:1–16*

MV 4 “All who are thirsty”

TLUS 62 “In all times past”

TLUS 100 “In my wrestling, and in my doubts”

## September 27 – Eighteenth after Pentecost

*Creation Time 3 in the Season of Pentecost*

### Proper 21

#### **Exodus 17:1–17**

Water flows from the rock for the thirsty people in the desert.

#### **Psalms 78:1–4, 12–16**

God has done marvellous things in the past; magnify God's name today!

#### **Philippians 2:1–13**

Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus.

#### **Matthew 21:23–32**

By what authority does Jesus act and teach?

#### **Creation Connection**

The scriptures remind us that God often chooses to work co-operatively with and through willing human beings. Ecological stewardship is a form of discipleship.

#### **Spark**

These readings address humanity's relationship with God and the natural world, as well as our relationship to one another. Water is a symbol of God's provision in Exodus, and the waters of baptism are what enable us to empty our former selves, put on Christ, and live faithfully in obedience to God. If possible, move the baptismal font to the centre of the congregation, fill it noisily with plenty of water and offer a generous asperges.

#### **With Children**

Share St. Francis of Assisi's "Canticle of the Sun." Tell the story of St. Francis. This would easily transition into a conversation about honouring God by caring for the land, the waters, the air, the plants, and the animals, and also about how we can praise God by living rightly within the planetary rhythms God has created—the rhythms of day and night, working and resting, singing and silence—through every season of our lives.

#### **Sermon Starter**

God is our Creator and our Sustainer, the Faithful One who provided gushing, abundant, miraculous water from the most unlikely of rocks

in the middle of a desert for thirsty people. Just as God was faithful to our faith ancestors who were feeling the stresses of that liminal time in between their past (Egypt) and their future (the Promised Land), so too will God be faithful to us in our seasons of struggle, our liminal, in-between times of discomfort or disorientation. God still provides Jesus, the Living Water, as our source of rescue and redemption today! Jesus is eager to quench our deepest thirst. Among the dryness and uncertainties of life, Jesus is a ready source of spiritual water! He is like the deepest-drilled well, the Living Water that can never run dry. Link the biblical narrative to the state of our natural world and point out our unique role as human caretakers of Creation. Is our inadequate, too-shallow reading of Philippians 2, which renders us unwilling to make costly, self-emptying decisions on a daily basis, both an explanation for the environmental crisis and a possible remedy for it? What if we were to model living in harmony with one another and with the earth, embodying costly, generous, Christ-like humility and service? Remind your congregants of their baptismal identity. Encourage the community of faith to worship God with open-hearted gratitude and Christ-centred values and priorities in response.

#### **Hymns**

##### *Exodus 17:1–17*

VU 559 "Come, O Fount of every blessing"

VU p. 806 "O God, our help in ages past"

MV 17 "God in the darkness"

MV 92 "Like a rock"

##### *Psalms 78*

MV 37 "Each blade of grass"

TLUS 48 "Worthy of every song"

TLUS 49 "You are my strength"

##### *Philippians 2:1–13*

VU 330 "Jesus shall reign"

MV 81 "Love us into fullness"

MV 120 "My soul cries out"

TLUS 57 "We wait for God"

##### *Matthew 21:23–32*

VU 334 "All hail the power of Jesus' name"

MV 212 "Sent out in Jesus' name"

TLUS 109 "All this pain"

## October 4 – World Communion Sunday

*Creation Time 4 in the Season of Pentecost*

### Proper 22

#### **Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20**

God gives Moses the Ten Commandments.

#### **Psalms 19**

The heavens declare the glory of God.

#### **Philippians 3:4b–14**

Paul gives his testimony.

#### **Matthew 21:33–46**

The parable of the landowner and the violent tenants.

### Creation Connection

The Ten Commandments describe how to live in right relationship with God, with other people, and with the wider earth community, helping to safeguard the earth's resources.

### Spark

The lyrics of TLUS 27 “To your table we come hungry” offer a glimpse of Christ’s intentionally inclusive, deeply welcoming table. Examine your worship space, your entire church, and especially the placement of your communion table. How do we more faithfully share and sing, pray and live the abundant, sacramental hospitality that Jesus offers to all?

### With Children

Bring many different kinds of bread for the children to sample, such as pita, bannock, sourdough, rice cakes and crackers, rye, dinner rolls, and a baguette or crusty loaf. Include and label those that are safe for various allergies. The more variety, the better! As the children examine and taste the breads, share about the diverse cultures and countries that are represented. Each is different, yet they are all welcome and needed at Jesus’ table. We are all different people, too, but we are brought together as one body, one church, through Jesus. Today, Christians all over the world participate in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

### Sermon Starter

On World Communion Sunday, as Christians from every part of the global church gather in profound

unity of faith and purpose at Christ’s own table, we remember Jesus’ prayer for unity: that we the church may be one, just as Christ and Creator are one, bound together in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Today, we not only celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion, which binds us together as the beloved Body of Christ, but we also deepen our collective commitment to the care of God’s Creation, which is our God-given, sacred duty. Our unity in Christ extends beyond Christ’s table to include the earth itself. As we partake, let’s reflect on what it means to be faithful caretakers of this planet. The parable of the landowner and the tenants reminds us that God expects us to live our faith when the stakes are high, and to embody Christ’s radically inclusive welcome, respecting “all my relations,” all who call this planet home.

At Christ’s table, as we are deeply welcomed by God, our values change, and, like Paul, we view our former material “gains” as losses, compared to the true riches of knowing Christ and being known by him! As we celebrate this global feast, our hope is renewed, our commitment to care is strengthened, and we become capable of living in humble, more ecologically harmonious ways. We may have arrived at the table spiritually hungry and thirsty, but we leave filled with the Saviour’s goodness and kindness.

### Hymns

*Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20*

VU 375 “Spirit, Spirit of gentleness”

MV 84 “In you there is a refuge”

*Psalms 19*

MV 142 “Oh a song must rise”

*Philippians 3:4b–14*

MV 135 “Called by earth and sky”

MV 143 “We cannot own the sunlit sky”

TLUS 155 “We gather as Christ’s body”

*Matthew 21:33–46*

VU 477 “I come with joy”

MV 147 “God, help us to treasure”

MV 162 “Christ, within us hidden”

TLUS 57 “We wait for God”

*Communion*

VU 460 “All who hunger”

VU 477 “I come with joy”

MV 182 “Grateful”

TLUS 27 “To your table we come hungry”

TLUS 29 “When Jesus sets the table”

## October 11 – Thanksgiving Sunday

*Creation Time 5 in the Season of Pentecost*

*Worship materials for Thanksgiving Sunday to All Saints' Day were contributed by Matt Emery, Cloverdale U.C., Surrey, B.C.*

### **Deuteronomy 8:7–18**

God will bring you to a bountiful land.

### **Psalm 65** (VU pp. 782–783)

God provides; the valleys shout and sing.

### **2 Corinthians 9:6–15**

God loves a cheerful giver.

### **Luke 17:11–19**

Ten healed; one returns to offer thanks.

### **Creation Connection**

This whole day is about the gifts of Creation. How does our stewarding of those gifts demonstrate our gratitude to God, even when we feel alone in giving thanks?

### **Spark**

The day is called *Thanksgiving*, not *Thanksfeeling*. We don't practise gratitude fully unless and until we actually "give" our thanks—that is, passing along our thanks to the intended recipient. Either as a prayer station during the service or as an activity during fellowship time, invite participants to write thank-you notes—real, handwritten ones to be sent in the mail—on behalf of your church to other individuals, organizations, or causes in the wider community for which your congregation is thankful. (Supply the cards, paper, pens, envelopes, and stamps.)

### **With Children**

Share an experience where you offered a thank-you to someone. What happened? How did they respond? Or share an experience when you wished you had offered a thank-you but forgot to do so. Is it ever too late to share your gratitude? How do we show our gratitude? What are some fun ways to give a thank-you?

With copyright permission, share *Splat Says Thank You!* by Rob Scotton (HarperCollins, 2012).

### **Sermon Starter**

The lepers all follow Jesus' command and, as they are on their way, they are healed. To the only one who returned to give praise and thanks, Jesus declares, "Your faith has made you well." But weren't the other nine "made well" too? Why does Jesus specifically tell *this* one that his faith has made him well?

Could it be that there is some sense of being "well" that goes beyond the physical healing of the leprosy? Could it be that there is more to a transformed life than simply receiving something physical, even if that something is a cure to an ailment?

In his words to the one who returned to praise and give thanks, Jesus indicates that there is a healing, a wholeness, a salvation even, that transcends the physical healing. For us, too: In God, there is a wholeness, a health, a salvation that transcends the particular circumstances of our lives. Moreover, the act itself of giving thanks and praise—that can be our healing. The only difference between the one leper and the other nine is that one came back to give thanks and praise. We typically think of "faith" as an internal affair having to do with belief and conviction and trust. But we have no evidence of any of that with this man—all we have is his demonstration of thanks and praise. Perhaps practising faith is simply a matter of practising gratitude—faith as a matter of giving thanks, as praising God in all times and in all places. Could it really be that simple?

### **Hymns**

VU 216 "Sing praise to God, who reigns above"  
VU 226 "For the beauty of the earth"  
VU 227 "For the fruit of all creation"  
VU 236 "Now thank we all our God"  
VU 516 "Come, you thankful people, come"  
VU 520 "We plough the fields and scatter"  
MV 42 "Praise God for this holy ground"  
MV 182 "Grateful"  
MV 187 "We give our thanks"  
TLUS 35 "Bless the Lord, O my soul"  
TLUS 43 "I thank you, O my God"  
TLUS 59 "Tu m'as tout donné"  
"Take my gifts," Shirley Erena Murray (hymnary.org)  
"We are an offering," Dwight Liles (hymnary.org)

## October 18 – Twenty-first after Pentecost

### Proper 24

#### Exodus 33:12–23

God speaks to Moses face to face as a friend.

#### Psalm 99 (VU p. 819)

God is a ruler who delights in justice.

#### 1 Thessalonians 1:1–10

We always give thanks to God for you.

#### Matthew 22:15–22

Give to God the things that are God's.

### Creation Connection

When we think about “Creation,” we so often turn our attention to flora and fauna, but when was the last time you gave thanks for God's gift of *metal*, as was used to create the coin in today's gospel reading? What about giving thanks for other minerals that help in our daily lives?

### Spark

Have you ever given out cash during worship, as opposed to taking up an offering? Consider passing out a small amount of money—either one or two dollars—to each worshipper, with the instruction to decide over the coming week an intentional way to use it, in light of the “give unto Caesar / give unto God” instruction from Jesus. The one thing they're not allowed to do is place it right back in the offering plate.

### With Children

Show the offering plates. Share the particular ways our offering practices have been changing, from giving cash or writing cheques (do the children even know what a cheque is?) to the move toward PAR (automatic withdrawals from a bank account), online giving, e-transfers and other cashless forms of offering. Has your congregation eliminated an offertory time as a moment in the worship service entirely or stopped passing the offering plates? Giving an offering is a spiritual practice. How might you help children in your congregation participate more fully in the act of offering?

### Sermon Starter

Jesus' answer to the Pharisees may not be as enigmatic as it seems. It doesn't require the sorts

of mental or spiritual gymnastics that Christians have often used for it. It's really quite simple, once you realize one thing: What, in *all* of Creation—from your money and possessions to your time, effort, allegiances, and even your very identity and being—could there possibly be that is the emperor's and not also God's first?!

Just imagine the coin they held up for Jesus to examine. Sure, it had the emperor's image and title on it at that point, but where did the metal come from? God's Creation. Where did the skills and talents needed to make it into a coin come from? People created by God. Sometime later in history, that coin probably got thrown into the melting fire...and *Caesar's* image dripped away... but even then, the *metal* was still God's Creation.

But let's not forget about that image itself. That image of Caesar on that coin: What is *that* other than an image of a human face? The first Creation story in Genesis proclaims: “So God created humankind *in his image, in the image of God* he created them; male and female he created them.” So, even Caesar's image pointed beyond itself to God's image, the image in which all of us were created.

What could possibly belong to the emperor that is not also God's *first*? What could possibly be due to one's nation or country that is not due to God *first*? What could possibly be *ours* that is not also God's *first*?

### Hymns

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| VU 256   | “O God beyond all praising”                             |
| VU 506   | “Take my life and let it be”                            |
| VU 507   | “Today we all are called to be disciples”               |
| VU 542   | “We give you but your own”                              |
| VU 581   | “When we are living”                                    |
| VU 655   | “All my hope on God is founded”                         |
| MV 37    | “Each blade of grass”                                   |
| MV 135   | “Called by earth and sky”                               |
| TLUS 3   | “A whisper from the universe”                           |
| TLUS 59  | “Tu m'as tout donné”                                    |
| TLUS 130 | “Who will speak a word of warning”                      |
|          | “God, whose giving knows no ending,” Robert L. Edwards* |
|          | “Heaven shall not wait,” John L. Bell/Graham Maule*     |
|          | “O God, you search me,” Bernadette Farrell*             |
|          | “We are an offering,” Dwight Liles*                     |

\*[hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org)

## October 25 – Twenty-second after Pentecost

### Proper 25

#### Deuteronomy 34:1–12

Moses dies and is buried in Moab.

#### Psalms 90:1–6, 13–17 (VU pp. 805–806)

O God, our help in ages past.

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:1–8

We care for you like a nurse tenderly cares for her own children.

#### Matthew 22:34–46

Love God; love your neighbour as yourself.

#### Creation Connection

Our “neighbours” are not only those who are around us *today*; our love of neighbour *must* include caring for the earth we leave behind for those who are yet to come.

#### Spark

Consider making a mobile of sorts, inspired by Jesus’ statement that “on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Place the two commandments at the top, and then hang other commandments—the remaining Ten Commandments or a more expansive list of commandments, instructions, and common sayings—from them, where appropriate (i.e., as either a “love of God” commandment or a “love of neighbour” commandment). Challenge each other, through your faithful living, to make the structure a balance between the “love of God” and “love of neighbour.”

#### With Children

Share Jesus’ two commandments to love God and love neighbour (others, enemies). As a variation on the mobile, the leader and children could sort out various commandments (e.g., the Ten Commandments and sayings of Jesus) as either a “love God” commandment or a “love neighbour” commandment. Which commandments do not seem to be either? Or seem to be both? Why would Jesus give us those two commandments? Why is loving God and loving neighbour a good way to live?

#### Sermon Starter

To love God and love our neighbour is a central thing, perhaps *the* central thing, for our lives as Christians. All that we do together as a Christian community stems from the command to love God and love our neighbour: to love God *through* loving our neighbour, to love our neighbour by lifting them up to God, to bear witness to our neighbour about the life *we* find in loving God, and to invite *them* into that kind of relationship, too.

These two commandments were not new, though. It’s not what Jesus said that was radical. Rather, it is what Jesus did. Jesus took things to a deeper level, asserting that “all the law and the prophets” hang on them. Jesus stakes a claim, takes up his own unique voice, and asserts his own authority. Really, anyone can lift up a commandment or two. It takes a special courage and a special authority to declare confidently a position that says, “No, this is what it all means.”

And so, perhaps it simply isn’t enough for us to think others will, as the song declares, “know we are Christians by our love.” Maybe the way that others will know that the body of Christ is in their midst is when we are bold enough to stake a claim about what love ultimately means—finding our voice and making our testimony, being bold enough to say, “Thus says the Lord.”

#### Hymns

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| VU 595   | “We are pilgrims”   |
| VU 600   | “When I needed a neighbour”   |
| VU 604   | “Not for tongues of heaven’s angels”  |
| VU 702   | “When a poor one”   |
| MV 79    | “Spirit, open my heart”   |
| MV 196   | “We will take what you offer”   |
| TLUS 48  | “Worthy of every song”  |
| TLUS 142 | “As a parent holds a child”   |
| TLUS 164 | “Neighbour, I am your neighbour”  |
|          | “More love to thee, O Christ” ( <i>The Hymnary</i> 498)   |
|          | “Love, love, love your God ( <i>Songs for a Gospel People</i> 43)                                 |
|          | “Love the Lord your God,” Jim and Jean Strathdee ( <a href="http://hymnary.org">hymnary.org</a> ) |
|          | “What is the world like,” Adam M. L. Tice ( <a href="http://hymnary.org">hymnary.org</a> )        |

## October 25 – Reformation Sunday

*This service may also be used on the actual day, October 31.*

This year, October 25 is also Reformation Sunday. Reformation Sunday is observed on the Sunday on or before October 31, the date when Martin Luther purportedly posted his 95 Theses on the church door in Wittenberg in 1517, fanning the glowing embers of religious and political discontent into the full fire of the Protestant Reformation.

The traditional liturgical colour for Reformation Sunday is red, like at Pentecost, a recognition of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit to form, reform, and empower the church by the living Word in each new age.

Ecumenically, Lutherans (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada [ELCIC] and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [ELCA]) have long turned to a set of scriptural texts specifically offered for this observance. More recently, the Presbyterian Church (USA) began suggesting these readings as well:

### **Jeremiah 31:31–34**

A new covenant written on the heart.

### **Psalms 46**

God is our refuge and strength.

### **Romans 3:19–28**

Righteousness through faith in Christ.

### **John 8:31–36**

Disciples are freed by truth and the Son.

Reformation Sunday is a good opportunity to intentionally focus on how our “rightness” with God is a sheer gift given to us by God, and not the result of our own efforts, no matter how “good,” “noble,” or even “justice and mercy filled” our own actions are. This is central to our faith. The Romans 3 and Jeremiah 31 readings are particularly helpful in focusing on this theme. Psalm 46 is associated with the Protestant Reformation because it was the inspiration for “A mighty fortress is our God,” the well-known hymn written by Martin Luther.

Reformation Sunday also can be an opportunity to dip into Christian history more deeply, beyond the comparatively short history of The United Church of Canada (although one must be careful

to keep one’s preaching to a proclamation of good news and not an educational lecture). It can also be an opportunity to consider where the church is called toward continued “reformation.” As the old saying goes, *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est* (“the church reformed is the church always reforming”).

Share information about Toward 2035, The United Church of Canada’s strategic plan inviting communities of faith to a hope-filled, bolder future: “What purpose lies at the heart of The United Church of Canada in the beginning of its third generation? Are we called as a unique and liberating witness of the risen Christ in this place and time? The answer to that question is a Spirit-filled ‘Yes!’” (Visit <https://united-church.ca/toward2035>).

### **Hymns**

VU 262 “A mighty fortress is our God”  
VU 331 “The church’s one foundation”  
VU 686 “God of grace and God of glory”  
VU p. 806 “O God, our help in ages past”  
MV 28 “God of the Bible”  
TLUS 78 “Trust these words”  
TLUS 146 “The Holy One has chosen you”  
“Built on the Rock,” Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig (hymnary.org)

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### SHARE YOUR COMMENTS AND IDEAS

Contributions to **Gathering** can be submitted through [GatheringWorship.ca](https://GatheringWorship.ca) or emailed to [gather@united-church.ca](mailto:gather@united-church.ca).



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### Worship Leaders

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Written by \_\_\_\_\_  
**Gathering**, Pentecost 2 2026, page \_\_\_\_\_.  
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## November 1 – All Saints’ Day (Sunday)

### Revelation 7:9–17

They will hunger no more and thirst no more.

**Psalm 34:1–10, 22** (VU pp. 761–762)

Taste and see that God is good.

**1 John 3:1–3**

What we will be has not yet been revealed.

**Matthew 5:1–12**

The Beatitudes.

### Creation Connection

Even in Revelation, when this realm of existence reaches its conclusion, the gifts of Creation do not end. The saints wave palm branches, arrive at springs of water, and rest among fruit-filled trees.

### Spark

All Saints’ Sunday is a great time to provide rituals for worshippers to remember loved ones who have died. A rite of remembrance could include a solemn reciting of the names of those connected to the congregation who have died in the preceding year, with each name accompanied by the lighting of a candle, the tolling of a bell, and/or a moment of silence. The ritual may be extended so that people can include others they’d like to remember. Invite them to come forward to light a votive candle or write the name on a small paper tag, which can be hung on an artful display of branches, creating a “tree of life.” Conclude with a prayer of thanks for all God’s saints.

### With Children

All Saints’ Sunday can be a good time to have a gentle but honest conversation with children about things related to death, including how to live with all the many emotions that come up when we are missing someone we love. God promises to comfort us and wipe the tears from our cheeks. Discuss ways that the congregation remembers people we’ve loved.

### Sermon Starter

Some distinguish between All Saints’ Day on November 1 and All Souls’ Day on November 2, with the former focusing on those identified as “saints” and the latter focusing on “the faithful departed.” In our Protestant traditions, we understand that the “communion of saints” includes all those who have

gone before us in the faith and have now joined that “great cloud of witnesses.”

Those who first received the visions in the Book of Revelation—in the face of struggle and oppression, rejection and death—needed a vision that pointed toward hope. The vision painted by Revelation is at times complicated, confusing, and downright bizarre. The important thing is not all the wild details, but the overall point. In Revelation, the message is simple: God wins.

In chapter 7, when the tensions in Revelation are heightening and everyone on the earth observes that a great day of wrath is coming, the people cry out: “Who is able to stand?” Who is able to hold fast when the day of the Lord comes?

“A *great multitude* that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages”—that is who is able to remain firmly rooted. As we go about life, we don’t always feel like beloved children of God. Many of us are all too aware of our own foibles and failings. We suffer under the brokenness of our world.

But who will be firmly with us through all this? A great multitude, the communion of saints, the cloud of witnesses that no one can count. Nothing can overcome the truth that God’s ultimate desire is to redeem all Creation.

Contemplate: What is your understanding of God’s vision for what is yet to come?

### Hymns

*General/Seasonal*

VU 705 “For all the saints”

VU 707 “For the faithful who have answered”

“God, we thank you for our people,” Ruth Duck\*

“I sing a song of the saints of God,” Lesbia Scott\*

“How shall I sing that majesty,” John Mason\*

*Communion*

TLUS 28 “I’m gonna eat at the welcome table”

*Revelation 7:9–17*

VU 710 “Shall we gather at the river”

VU 716 “My life flows on”

VU p. 894 “Holy God, we praise your name”

*Matthew 5:1–12*

TLUS 128 “Blessed are you who are poor”

“Blessed are the persecuted,” Tonga melody, adapted by Esther C. Bergen\*

\**hymnary.org*

## November 1 – Twenty-third after Pentecost

### *Proper 26*

*Worship materials for the Twenty-third after Pentecost to Reign of Christ were contributed by Karen Hammond Croxall, Trinity U.C., Uxbridge, Ont.; Max Ward, Highland Hills U.C., Minden, Ont.; Rodney Smith-Merkley, Buckhorn P.C., Buckhorn, Ont.; and Bob Root, Trinity-Providence P.C., Bobcaygeon, Ont.*

#### **Joshua 3:7–17**

Joshua leads the people across the Jordan River.

**Psalm 107:1–7, 33–37** (VU pp. 831–832 Parts One and Four) God’s steadfast love endures forever.

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:9–13**

Lead a life worthy of God.

#### **Matthew 23:1–12**

The greatest one will be the servant.

#### **Creation Connection**

Learn about the Jordan River and how it has changed since Jesus’ time. Has anyone in your congregation been to the Jordan River?

#### **Spark**

Invite someone to wash people’s feet or hands. Place a fountain where people enter the worship space to invite their attention to water.

#### **With Children**

Show the children pictures of wolves. Have a wolf stuffie or puppet for children to hold and touch. What do they know about how wolves live? The wolf represents being a servant to others. They live together in a pack, with each wolf playing an important role. Some are hunters, some are nurturers, some are protectors. No job is more important than another. Each wolf, just like each one of us, has a precious place in Creation. Understanding the importance of co-operation and sharing helps us all live together in a good way. Jesus talked about caring for one another so that everyone has what they need. That’s what Jesus meant when he asked us to serve one another.

#### **Sermon Starter**

Joshua is the new Moses, taking the people across the Jordan River. This mirrors the crossing of the Red Sea. It must have been quite a sight! God

is in the business of making all things new, of raising up leaders, of inspiring courage in the faint-hearted (think how frightened they must have been). God’s presence is made plain when we move out in faithful response.

The psalm points to God’s steadfast love: *hesed*, in Hebrew. *Hesed* is a love and presence you can count on—always. (See Living Language: Have Mercy in Gathering ACE 2025/26). Consider God’s unfailing love and *hesed* as a way of experiencing God.

In “Poem 133: The Summer Day,” Mary Oliver invites us to ponder what we will do with our “one wild and precious life.” We might find a response in Joshua as he commits himself with these words: “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.” What might your response be?

In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus denounces those whom he believes don’t practise what they preach. How does your community of faith live their commitment to the Jesus Way?

The meaning of life is found in grounding oneself in God’s *hesed* in all its richness and nuance, knowing our valued place in Creation, listening for the leading of the Spirit, living with gratitude, serving others, and helping the world be the place God wants it to be.

#### **Hymns**

##### *Joshua 3:7–17*

VU 274 “Your hand, O God, has guided”

VU 710 “Shall we gather at the river”

MV 3 “River”

MV 163 “River running in you and me”

TLUS 102 “Nothing to fear”

##### *Psalm 107*

VU 218 “We praise you, O God”

VU 405 “New every morning”

MV 144 “Like a healing stream”

TLUS 78 “Trust these words”

##### *1 Thessalonians 2:9–13*

VU 506 “Take my life and let it be”

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

VU 701 “What does the Lord require of you”

MV 182 “Grateful”

TLUS 30 “We’re the light of all the world”

##### *Matthew 23:1–12*

VU 568 “Dear Lord, lead me day by day”

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

MV 171 “Christ has no body now but yours”

TLUS 31 “Queerly beloved”

## November 8 – Twenty-fourth after Pentecost

### Proper 27

#### **Joshua 24:1–3a, 14–25**

Joshua challenges the people to choose God.

#### **Psalm 78:1–7** (VU p. 792 Part One)

We will teach the next generation.

#### **1 Thessalonians 4:13–18**

God will raise the dead.

#### **Matthew 25:1–13**

Parable of the 10 bridesmaids and the lamps.

### **Creation Connection**

Psalm 78 is about teaching the next generation. How can we remember the stories of our ancestors and make better choices, being grateful and preserving the land for those to come? It may seem overwhelming, but if each person makes some changes, a new beginning is made.

### **Spark**

Our theme is about what endures and the hope found in that. Many things may fall apart in life, but we persevere. Today is close to Remembrance Day, so if it is appropriate for your congregation and context, decorate with pictures, a beret, a globe, and some poppies. If a congregation member would like to share a story about why Remembrance Day is important to them, plan it together ahead of time so their focus connects with teaching the next generations. (One of us is privileged to have 101-year-old veteran Jim Parks in our Legion. Search for his story online and be inspired!)

### **With Children**

With younger children, focus on the poppy as a symbol of hope, how it blooms no matter what. We wear poppies once a year to remember and to hope for a better future. Hope is an important part of our faith. Each child could be given a poppy.

For older children, reflect upon the John McCrae poem “In Flanders Fields.” The torch we are given to carry is to remember what others have done for us and tell their stories. Bring an item that the children can touch that helps remember someone. What are some different ways of remembering? Holding high the torch of remembering and hope, as McCrae writes, is one way we can be a light in the world.

### **Sermon Starter**

What endures? Remembering is one of the things that endures and helps us build a strong faith foundation. We remember the stories of our ancestors in the Bible and from generations past. We remember the sacrifices made. We remember the hope and the life they made possible for us.

In Joshua, a challenge is issued to choose God, to put old idols away and decide whom to follow. Today, there are many things to pull our attention away from God as part of our daily lives. Joshua made a covenant at Shechem. What makes up our covenant with God today, in our world, in our town?

Matthew offers a vision of being ready for the kingdom of heaven, the realm of God. How is our faith life doing? How prepared are we? What are we preparing for? How is our faith expressed tangibly? Do we just gather to worship, or are we doing enough to live our faith in our communities?

Like the bridesmaids in the parable, as busy people, we tend to put things off until later. Those who went to war didn’t know if they would return, and many did not. (You may have a personal family story.) This is a good Sunday to reflect on the legacy we leave behind. How can we positively shape the next 10, 20, or 100 years of the church? When we gather up everything we need in our faith toolbox, let’s not forget to be prepared with “extra oil in our lamps.”

### **Hymns**

#### *Joshua 24:1–3a, 14–25*

VU 701 “What does the Lord require of you”

MV 176 “Three things I promise”

TLUS 149 “Yeshuko pachhi”

#### *Psalm 78*

VU 343 “I love to tell the story”

MV 106 “I am the dream”

TLUS 2 “A strand in the web of life”

#### *1 Thessalonians 4:13–18*

VU 266 “Amazing grace”

TLUS 154 “Since we are surrounded”

#### *Matthew 25:1–13*

MV 82 “Bathe me in your light”

TLUS 57 “We wait for God”

TLUS 148 “We have been called”

“Give me oil in my lamp” (hymnary.org)

#### *General/Seasonal*

VU 356 “Seek ye first the kingdom”

MV 149 “Peace for the children”

## November 15 – Twenty-fifth after Pentecost

### Proper 28

#### Judges 4:1–7

The judge Deborah speaks to Barak.

#### Psalm 123 (VU p. 847)

We lift our eyes to you, O God.

#### 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

The day of God will come as a thief in the night.

#### Matthew 25:14–30

The parable of the talents.

#### Creation Connection

The gospel invites us to use but not exploit Creation. In what ways might we, or do we, “live with respect in Creation” as A New Creed declares? Invite folks to chat with one another about this.

#### Spark

If you are using the Judges reading, you might want to read the whole chapter. A prophetess might tell the story during the service, beginning with the warning that “this story contains violence.” A huge spike and a hammer on display would get people’s attention. This could lead into a sermon on whether God works through violence and if God punishes people, individually or collectively.

#### With Children

Offer each of the children a wrapped gift, different sizes and no two alike. Items could come from a thrift store (mugs, vases, utensils, jewellery, and toys like gardening tools). Small items could be wrapped in larger boxes and prized items in smaller boxes. Does getting a big gift feel more important? Are small gifts sometimes the best? How might each item be used to help someone else or help the earth? We are each given special ways that we can help others and help the earth. Jesus wants us to share these talents, not keep them to ourselves. We might look at another person and think their talents are bigger or better than ours, but ours are just as important. Offer a prayer to bless the children in the use of their talents. At the end, give the children the option of keeping their gift or trading it for an allergen-free treat, so that every child goes away happy.

#### Sermon Starter

Today’s reading is the only passage from the book

of Judges in the Revised Common Lectionary. Judges follows the story of Joshua and is about conquest and settlement. After war, do things settle down?

Deborah’s name means “wild honeybee,” but it can also be translated as “woman of a fiery spirit.” Deborah is a superhero worthy of the Marvel universe. Her whole story is one of the most shocking in the Bible and worth a good examination!

The epistle reading echoes the R.E.M. song “It’s the end of the world as we know it (and I feel fine).” While the world may seem to be falling apart and some feel it’s the end of the church as we know it, our task is to remain faithful, encourage one another, and build one another up.

The gospel continues the theme of what to do in hard times. This parable is often misunderstood as being about economic prosperity. Instead, it challenges believers to emulate Jesus by using all that God has given them for the sake of the kingdom. Astronomical amounts of money are involved; a denarius is a common labourer’s daily wage. One talent is roughly equivalent to 20 years’ wages—do the math! Hard times are exactly when we need to share generously. The parable is an invitation to invest fully in life, to live expansively, to take risks, and not to hide away what has been given to us. It is exactly for times such as ours that the world needs our generosity of self.

#### Hymns

##### Judges 4:1–7

VU 701 “What does the Lord require of you”

TLUS 31 “Queerly beloved”

##### Psalm 123

VU 635 “All the way my Saviour leads me”

TLUS 117 “Could it be that God is singing”

##### 1 Thessalonians 5:1–11

VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

MV 28 “God of the Bible”

MV 103 “Ka mana’o ’I ’O”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

TLUS 8 “Way Maker”

TLUS 57 “We wait for God”

##### Matthew 25:14–30

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

MV 209 “Go, make a diff’rence”

TLUS 59 “Tu m’as tout donné”

TLUS 60 “There’s enough for all”

## November 22 – Reign of Christ Sunday

### Proper 29

#### **Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24**

God judges between the fat and the lean sheep.

#### **Psalm 100** (VU pp. 820–824)

Make a joyful noise all the earth!

#### **Ephesians 1:15–23**

May God give you a spirit of wisdom and hope.

#### **Matthew 25:31–46**

When you helped the least of these, you helped me.

### **Creation Connection**

Show pictures and play recordings of Creation making a joyful noise. How about some whale song? Search the internet to find Yo-Yo Ma playing his cello to communicate with whales.

### **Spark**

Invite people who are active in community groups to bring in posters, e.g., from a Terry Fox Run, a food bank, an environmental action group, an advocacy group for the unhoused or refugees. Display the signs and invite people to share why that group matters to them. You might have a singalong before the service with protest songs that call people to action. See also TLUS 31, 103, 118, 119, 125, 126, 127, 129, 130, 139, 147.

### **With Children**

Have a cloth bag filled with the same number of red buttons and green buttons (or two other colours, but avoid black and white). Ask each participant to pick a button. Red buttons become the sheep and green buttons the goats. Tell the story of Matthew, while it is acted out. Then, ask a sheep how it feels to be a sheep. Ask a goat how it feels to be a goat. Remind everyone that, in real life, sheep and goats are neither good nor bad. Jesus' story tells us that what is important is our actions and how we show compassion toward others. Can a goat show compassion? Yes! Can a sheep ignore someone who is in the pain? Yes, sadly. It doesn't matter if we are sheep or goats. Jesus encourages all of us, no matter who we are, to love our neighbours and offer care and compassion to others, no matter who they are.

### **Sermon Starter**

Are we judgy? What is our image in the community?

How does the media portray Christians in general and our denomination in particular? Does it reflect how we understand ourselves? How you understand yourself as a follower of Jesus? When is judgment helpful and when is it problematic? Is having a moral compass the same as being judgy?

These readings evoke a sense that God is judging and encouraging us to “do” or “be” a certain way. They are not about the afterlife and a final judgment. They are telling us what we should be doing here and now.

Yet isn't God's grace enough for us? James 2:14–26 says that faith and works are two sides of the same coin. One leads to the other. Relate a story of how your faith led you to offer works of compassion. Then tell a story of how your works of compassion led to a deeper sense of faith. These testimonies can be very relatable and may foster an opportunity for further dialogue after the service (or during it if your worship style permits it).

Be careful not to get too hung up on the damning judgment of Ezekiel and Matthew. Many of us are just as often “goats” as we are “sheep.” How do we offer service and compassion?

### **Hymns**

*Ezekiel 34:11–16, 20–24*

VU 273 “The King of love”

VU 574 “Come, let us sing of a wonderful love”

VU p. 747 “The Lord's my Shepherd”

VU p. 748 “God is my shepherd”

TLUS 22 “Build a longer table”

TLUS 121 “God of freedom, God of justice”

*Psalm 100*

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

VU p. 820 “Make a joyful noise”

VU p. 822 “All people that on earth do dwell”

TLUS 8 “Way Maker”

*Ephesians 1:15–23*

VU 335 “At the name of Jesus”

MV 21 “Open our hearts”

*Matthew 25:31–46*

VU 510 “We have this ministry”

MV 151 “Your will be done”

MV 169 “When hands reach out beyond divides”

MV 171 “Christ has no body now but yours”

TLUS 2 “A strand in the web of life let me be”

TLUS 87 “We have been forgotten”

TLUS 116 “Are these not empty words?”