Called to Be the Church: Congregational Giving Program, 2020

Loving Our Neighbours Near and Far: A Program for Any Three Weeks

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# Sunday 1 Worship Service: God Inspires

### Prelude

### Welcome

### Acknowledging the Traditional Territory

Long before those of us who are settlers and those who are descendants of settlers came to this land, there were people here. Many Nations of people live—and still live—on the land we call Canada, given responsibility by the Creator to be stewards of this land and all that lives on it. We know these people as Indigenous.

Today, as we remember what it means to **love our neighbours**,let us give thanks for the Indigenous peoples of this land—and let us remember that we worship God on the historic (*and unceded*) territory of the (*name of the Indigenous people*(*s*) *whose territory you are in*).

As Christ’s people, let us be people of Love, of Truth, and of Reconciliation.

### We Focus Our Hearts and Minds

Jesus says to his friends, to us here today, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

### Lighting the Christ Candle

We come to celebrate the love of God in Jesus Christ—for us, for this community, for all creation. This love reaches into our lives, inspiring us to reach out to those in need—around the corner and around the world. Will we answer the invitation to share this love to make a difference?

**We light this candle to celebrate the light of Christ, the one who offers love and acceptance, not judgment and rejection.**

### Call to Worship

God loved the world, God loves the world, all are beloved!  
**May this love story shine in our worship, inviting us to share this love near and far.**We come with our doubts, our hopes, and our fears. We come to discover how Jesus reveals God’s love.  
**We are here to listen for God’s love story and to respond to the great invitation to love as God loves.**Friends of God, here and everywhere, let us worship!  
Amen!

### Hymn

“Let Us Build a House” (*More Voices* 1) or“The Church Is Wherever God’s People” (*Voices United* 579)

### Our New Beginnings

Introduce the video [*Living Our Mission Locally with* [*former Moderator*] *Jordan Cantwell*](https://youtu.be/rO-I6yqkT6M)(on the United Church YouTube channel). Consider Jordan’s invitation to answer the questions “What is God up to in your congregation?” and “What excites you about what God is doing through you today?”

Invite a leader to share their “Why I Give” story. Ask: Why are you here—in the United Church and/or in this congregation? Why do you stay? What difference do you, through the church, make in lives of others? Why—not how or what—do you give?

### Invitation to Prayer

In Jesus, God became one of us: becoming poor that we could receive the gift of mercy, taking on death that we could be made alive. God is up to something wonderful in our lives, inspiring, challenging, and longing to embrace the world in love. Let us offer our prayers for new beginnings—for this day and for our lives—knowing that in God’s love we are made whole.

**God, you love this world so much  
that you became one of us in your own child, Jesus Christ.  
You offer this gift of wholeness that we might have abundant life. Forgive us for keeping that life to ourselves,  
for holding too tight to your generous gifts,  
for choosing self-interest instead of your compassion and justice. Teach us what it means to live as neighbours,  
generously sharing your abundance  
with our brothers and sisters around the corner and around the world.**

We pray this as Jesus taught us:

The Lord’s Prayer

### Words of Promise

God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn, but in order that the world may know love.  
In great mercy, God speaks a word of healing and gives us life with Christ. We are forgiven, loved, and made free to make a difference.  
Blessed because we are made in God’s image,  
may we respond to God’s blessing by the way we love others.

### Time for the Young at Heart

I wanted to introduce you to my friend Grover! Grover is going to help me talk about Mission & Service! Grover, we have partners in Kenya that work with farmers. Is that near or far? (*Grover is seen to ponder. Ask the kids, who hopefully will say “far.” Then Grover will run down the aisle to demonstrate “far.”*) That is right, Grover, it is far. (*Now name a Mission & Service ministry that is close to where you are and have Grover move near to the kids.* *Share that there are many Mission & Service partners and ministries that are both near and far!*)

### Hymn

“Draw the Circle Wide” (MV 145)

### Scripture

John 3:14–21

### Reflection Notes

Begin the reflection by sharing a few stories of congregational life from the previous week: the highs, the lows, busy times, quiet times, joyful times, and times of sorrow.

Our faith community together can be messy and chaotic! But this is our church, and this is part of the world God loves—whether in moments of prayer and vulnerability or in moments of exuberant praise and laughter.

We love this church—all this life whirling around. All the ways that life evolves here: the welcoming of new beginnings, the grief when we say goodbye, the stress of family, the rush of planning, creating, and serving; noisy, noisy life. Messy, breathless, full and ready and dangerous even. Motion and energy, fearless. This is the world God loves. And to this world, God gives…everything.

How do you see the height and depth of God’s love in your community? Where are lives changed for the better? What are the ways you are at work with God in this world that God loves so very much?

Share more stories of God at work: stories from your own community, your local mission, and stories from Mission and Service of how God, through generosity, changes lives both locally and globally.

What does it look like for us to love like God, to see the world as God sees us? Can we love the world as God loves it?

Can we love the world with God?

The Mission & Service of The United Church of Canada is one way we can love the world—touching lives here at home and around the world, changing lives today and tomorrow. In our shared Mission and Service, together, we love the world.

Do we choose today to love this world?

Because it is a choice. Between life and death, we choose it all the time. To engage or to hide. To celebrate God’s presence, to live with respect in Creation, to seek justice and resist evil, we choose.

In the effects of our generosity known here at home and through the Mission and Service of the United Church, we catch glimpses of how we continue, despite fear or weariness, to choose life; we catch glimpses of how we continue to choose love. Together with God, who loves this world so much, we embrace and carry each other in love.

When we live in the light of a God who loves us so passionately to give us everything, and then lets us make the choice of what to do with that gift, we can choose life, we can choose generosity, we can choose to make a difference.

Thank you for the ways you choose to love this world, near and far!

### Hymn

“Come Touch Our Hearts” (MV 12)

### God’s Invitation

### Minute for Mission

See [Stories of Our Mission](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/stories-our-mission) on united-church.ca.

### Our Intentional Response

Being a Christian is not just about what we believe—it is a way of life!

God has blessed us abundantly. Our response to this generosity is to care for God’s beloved world and all our neighbours near and far. This includes caring for ourselves, other people, and the world. Every action and decision, no matter how mundane, comes from the starting place of recognizing this sacred responsibility. We are God’s beloved children, and this leads to living with loving and generous intention. In our community, we do this by patterning our life after Jesus Christ.

It is helpful to periodically take time to reflect on our abundant blessings and intentionally share a portion of what we have been given. The act of setting aside a portion of our time, talent, and treasure in response to God’s generosity and for the good of others and creation cultivates a deeper, stronger faith.

This Sunday, we are sharing information to help you reflect on your blessings. You have also received a Response Card—a way for you to share with us your intentions, and for us to have an understanding of our resources as we plan for future ministries.

These cards are important. This week and next, you are invited to prayerfully consider how you might support God’s mission here in this church and in the Mission and Service of the United Church, and to make an appropriate and meaningful gift of time, talent, and money. You are not required to make any decisions today; please take the time you need to make your intentions thoughtfully and in tune with God’s spirit for you.

### Invitation to an Offering of Gifts

We are invited to love our neighbours, both near and far. What we bring to Christ’s table makes a difference: right in our own community, throughout Canada, and around the world. Did you know that in the 93 years of our life as The United Church of Canada, our generosity has meant that gifts of $1.2 billion have been given to Mission and Service for the work of the church? That doesn’t even begin to count the years of time, piles of talents, and dollars and cents that have been given to this congregation of (name).

In our giving, in our sharing, in our living, we are part of all God’s love. May God’s love inspire us so that we may love this world that God loves so much through our gifts today.

### Sharing Our Gratitude

### Prayers of Dedication, Thanksgiving, and Concern

Jesus, you remind us that God loves this world—  
 not just our corner, but all the world.  
With the gifts we offer today,  
gifts to this congregation and to the Mission and Service of the United Church,   
may we love the world with you.  
It is in this world, messy and chaotic, joyful and delightful,   
that we discover your spirit and purpose for our lives.  
We give thanks for your abundant life,  
for your presence inspiring us to live in love and generosity,   
for times when you strengthen us to overcome challenges,  
for times when your love brings comfort and healing.  
We want to share your love with the world.  
Help us to care for this world that you love so dearly with open hearts:  
 to respond to conflict with peacemaking,  
to respond to dis-ease with healing,  
to respond to cruelty with compassion.  
(*Include the prayers of your community.*)  
Holy God, Sustainer, and Renewer of life,  
you call us into partnership with you and with all who embrace your way.  
We pray for our Mission & Service partners today,  
for a world where abundance of creation is respected, preserved, and enjoyed,  
a world of right relationships, of safety, of care for the vulnerable.

In your loving purpose, answer our prayers and fulfill our hopes.  
Grant us grace and wisdom to respond to your invitation   
as we live our lives in the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

### Hymn

“Your Love Is Amazing” (MV 26) or “My Love Colours Outside the Lines” (MV 138) or“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (VU 333)

### Blessing and Sending Out

Just as God came into the world through Jesus  
to heal and redeem,  
so God sends us into the world today  
 to be healing, hopeful, and loving.  
Let us go into God’s world  
**to be the neighbours God calls us to be.**

Let us go into God’s world  
**loving God,  
loving our neighbour,  
 loving ourselves,**and in that love, may we be filled with thanksgiving.  
**For this is God’s world.  
We are not alone!  
Thanks be to God!**

### Postlude

# Sunday 2 Worship Service: Ordinary People Called to Do Extraordinary Things

### Prelude

### Welcome

### Acknowledging the Traditional Territory

Long before those of us who are settlers and those who are descendants of settlers came to this land, there were people here. Many Nations of people lived—and still live—on the land we call Canada, given responsibility by the Creator to be stewards of this land and all that lives on it. We know these people as Indigenous.

Today, as we remember what it means to love our neighbours, let us give thanks for the Indigenous peoples of this land and let us remember that we worship God on the historic (*and/or unceded*) territory of the (*name(s) of the Indigenous people(s) whose territory you are in*).

As Christ’s people, let us be people of Love, of Truth, and of Reconciliation.

### We Focus Our Hearts and Minds

Jesus says to his friends, to us here today, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”

### Lighting the Christ Candle

We come together in worship. We come knowing that no matter who we are, each of us carries the light of Christ in our hearts. May the light shine so brightly that we will have the courage to share our light with others.

**We are called to share Christ’s light, to lift up those who are broken, to offer healing and hope to the lost, so that all may see the face of Christ in you and you may see the face of Christ in others.**

### Call to Worship

Believers, Servants, and Misfits, come together in worship!  
**We come in brokenness and praise, in sorrow and in joy.**Come and bring your true selves, broken and healed, doubting and trusting.  
**We come in faith.**Come knowing that you are beloved and called as disciples in faith.  
**We come in thanksgiving and praise.**

### Hymn

“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” (*Voices United* 333) or “Are You a Shepherd?” (M*ore Voices* 126)

### Our New Beginnings

If your worship space has the capacity to project videos, share the Mission & Service music video [*Perfect Little Thing*](https://youtu.be/7cS6fBWRSLc)(on the United Church YouTube channel). If your worship does not have that capacity, print and place around the sanctuary images selected from [Stories of Our Mission](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/stories-our-mission) (united-church.ca; see the downloadable photos at the bottom of many of these webpages); use one of the images for the cover of your bulletin. Introduce the video or guide people to look at the pictures around your worship space. Ask, “Where in your congregation do you see people doing extraordinary things? Where do you see God at work in your congregation?” Then, “I want to show you a video” or “I want you to look at the images on the cover of the bulletin and around the worship space that illustrate many of our extraordinary Mission & Service ministries and partners in Canada and around the world.”

Invite a leader to share their “Why I Give” story. Ask: “Why are you here, in the United Church and/or in this congregation?” “Why do you stay?” “What is the difference that you, through the church, make in others’ lives?” “Why—not how or what—do you give?”

### Invitation to Prayer

We pray this as Jesus taught us:

### The Lord’s Prayer

### Time for the Young at Heart

(*Ahead of time, create a “rainbow animal.” Select an animal that you might see in areas around camps, e.g., beaver, chipmunk, owl, elk, or moose. Choose a name for your animal, e.g., Beatrice Beaver, Charlie Chipmunk, Oliver Owl, Elmer Elk, or Monica Moose.*)

I want to tell you a story about my friend here. Her name is Beatrice, and she is a beaver. Do you notice anything different about Beatrice? (*Wait for responses, such as, “She has lots of colours.”*) Beatrice has the colours of a rainbow. I am going to tell you how she got to be this way. Beatrice is a very curious beaver and one day, she followed some kids back to camp. She snuck into the craft cabin and then, when someone came in, she got scared. Have you ever been scared? What did you do when you were scared? (*Wait for responses such as “I hid” or “I ran.*”) Well, Beatrice ran, too. She ran up a pole in the centre of the cabin to hide near the ceiling, and what do you think happened then? She fell, and all the paint pots that were stored on a shelf came crashing down on her. She emerged out of the pile of pots looking like this! She was afraid, but someone picked her up, gently and carefully, and held her so that Beatrice was able to see the multi-coloured banners and the signs that read “Rainbow Camp” and “Mission & Service.” Seeing how the swoop of colours matched her own coloured coat, she felt at home. Have you ever been to camp? Did you feel like you wanted to leave or did you feel like you wanted to stay with your camp family? Camp can be a place where we feel at home, and Rainbow Camp is a place where kids who are gay, bisexual, transgender, and two-spirited, and their siblings feel at home. Rainbow Camp is supported by your givings for Mission & Service. You help kids—and beavers—feel at home, even if they don’t always look like others.

### Scripture

1 Samuel 22:1–5

### Hymn

“Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore” (VU 563) or “Jesus Saw Them Fishing” (MV 113)

### Gospel

Matthew 4:18–22

### Sermon: Here’s to Us! Here’s to Love!

In 1997 Apple developed an ad campaign titled “Think different.” The ads included the words “Here’s to the unusual ones…the misfits, the rebels, the troublemakers, the round pegs in the square hole, the ones who see things differently…. The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones that do.” The images in the ad campaign included Pablo Picasso, Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Nelson Mandela, Amelia Earhart, and Jim Henson, to name a few.

The scriptures for today are about the calling of unlikely, ordinary people who, in the end, accomplish extraordinary things that change our world forever. We all know someone in the “ordinary heroes” category, someone like Mary Dickson from Amherst, Nova Scotia, who, through the encouragement of her UCW unit, has handed out over 80 prayer shawls to people in need. The gift of a prayer shawl can seem like a simple thing until you are the recipient—it is as if you can feel and are wrapped by all of the prayers that have been poured out during the creation of the shawl. I have seen people who are agitated from pain or fear calm down when a prayer shawl is wrapped around them. An ordinary act that creates extraordinary healing!

This is an example of what it means to be a disciple—to live or act out your faith. In the biblical world, there was a tradition of teachers called rabbis who would choose the best of the best from among young boys who attended school in the Temple. The boys would be around the age of 13 years and they would be chosen to be apprentices, to learn the ways of the rabbi. All other boys would return to their families and work in the family businesses. In the Gospel of Matthew, we read about Jesus calling fishermen to become his disciples, his apprentices. In this situation they were not necessarily the best of the best; they would be ordinary; and yet they were being called to the extraordinary life of a disciple. The meaning of the word “disciple” is a person who tries to live and preach the ways of their leader. So the disciples were taking on the extraordinary life of being like Jesus, healing and preaching the Word. In Matthew’s gospel, Jesus calls Peter and Andrew to come and follow him and be fishers of people, to preach to people the words of Jesus; then Jesus calls them to also heal people. These ordinary people who, at times, seem to be clueless are chosen, chosen to speak and heal, and chosen to change the world.

When you think about it, if these ordinary people could be called to follow the life of Jesus, that gives us hope as well. I don’t know about you, but I rarely feel like the best of the best. Often I feel less than; even accomplishing one ordinary task would seem like a Herculean effort. Reading about the disciples and their times of cluelessness encourages me to move forward, to make a difference no matter how small.

We are all called to live in faith, offering compassion and hope to those we encounter. We are also called to share our gifts with our partners and ministries of Mission & Service, those whom we have not met in person, but know through the stories of Mission & Service found in Minutes for Mission and Mandate magazine. Following in the way of Jesus is twofold—giving both locally and beyond our community. Following the teachings of Jesus to love one another and to love our neighbour is at the very core of our faith. Love is the one constant; when we love one another, it fills our heart and the heart of the person whom we love. We may not like what that person is doing, but we can still love them.

Loving one another is one of the most profound ways we can offer compassion and hope to those we encounter, because through that love, others can be encouraged to take a chance on accomplishing extraordinary tasks.

Let me tell you a story. In Hamilton, Ontario, there lived a man named Roger. He had spent the majority of this life homeless, addicted to drugs and alcohol, one of “the lost and least” whom we all encounter on city streets. Roger believed he was headed toward an early death until he encountered Wesley Urban Ministries; the people here loved him back to life. He is now clean and sober and lives in a one-bedroom apartment above Wesley Urban Ministries in downtown Hamilton. Roger will tell you that without Wesley he would be dead. This story illustrates the result of an extraordinary act. Ordinary people called to the extraordinary, called to change people’s lives. So here’s to those who change things, those who push the human race forward in love. Here’s to us, called in faith, to mend the world! Amen.

### Hymn

“I Danced in the Morning” (VU 352) or “Love Knocks and Waits” (MV 94)

### God’s Invitation

### Minute for Mission

See [Stories of Our Mission](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/stories-our-mission) on united-church.ca.

### Our Intentional Response

Being a Christian is not just about what we believe—it is a way of life!

God has blessed us abundantly. Our response to this generosity is to care for God’s beloved world and all our neighbours, near and far. This includes caring for ourselves as well as others. Every action and decision, no matter how mundane, comes from the starting place of recognizing this sacred responsibility. We are God’s beloved children, and this leads to living with loving and generous intention. In our community, we do this by patterning our life after Jesus Christ.

It is helpful to periodically take time to reflect on our abundant blessings and intentionally share a portion of what we have been given. The act of setting aside a portion of our time, talent, and treasure, in response to God’s generosity and for the good of others and creation, cultivates a deeper, stronger faith.

This Sunday, we are sharing information to help you reflect on your blessings. You have also received a Response Card—a way for you to share with us your intentions and for us to have an understanding of our resources as we plan for future ministries.

These cards are important. Last week and this week, you are invited to prayerfully consider how you might support God’s mission here in this church and in the Mission & Service of the United Church, and how to make an appropriate and meaningful gift of time, talent, and money. If you are ready to share your response today, you may place your card on the offering plate; if you are not ready, that is okay, too. Please take the time you need to make your intentions thoughtfully and in tune with God’s spirit for you.

### Invitation to an Offering of Gifts

Let us now share our gifts of intentional living. Our offering will now be received. Let us pray:

Almighty God, we come before you with open and willing hearts. Help us to see and be thankful for your abundant blessings. Give us insight, courage, and conviction as we choose to live intentionally as good stewards. Bless our intentions for the environment, our time, talents, treasure, and our mental and physical being. We ask you to empower us with your Spirit and infuse us with Christ’s redeeming love. Amen.

### Sharing Our Gratitude

### Prayers of Dedication, Thanksgiving, and Concern

### Hymn

“Will You Come and Follow Me” (VU 567) or “I Have Called You by Your Name” (MV 161)

### Blessing and Sending Out

### Postlude

# Sunday 3 Worship Service: A New Way of Life

### Prelude

### Welcome

### Acknowledging the Traditional Territory

Long before those of us who are settlers and those who are descendants of settlers came to this land, there were people here. Many Nations of people lived—and still live—on the land we call Canada, given responsibility by the Creator to be stewards of this land and all that lives on it. We know these people as Indigenous.

Today, as we remember what it means **to live in gratitude,** let us give thanks for the Indigenous peoples of this land—and let us remember that we worship God on the historic (*and unceded*) territory of the (*name*(*s*) *of the Indigenous people*(*s*) *whose territory you are in)*.

As Christ’s people, let us be people of Love, of Truth, and of Reconciliation.

### We Focus Our Hearts and Minds

Paul wrote to the church in Corinth with words that speak to us today: “This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. [God] gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.” (2 Corinthians 9: 10–11 *The Message*)

### Lighting the Christ Candle

We come to celebrate the love of God in Jesus Christ—for us, for this community, and for all creation.

Because this love is our hope,  
because God answers promises in Christ,   
because Christ is alive here and now,  
we can live beyond mere circumstance,  
 we can live as Christ in the world.

**We light this candle to celebrate the light of Christ, the one who brings love and joy to our hearts and our lives, God’s gift for always.**

**Thank God for this gift, his gift. No language can praise it enough!** (2 Corinthians 9:15)

### Call to Worship

Come and worship, proclaim God's generous love!  
**Our lives tell the story of God’s love, unfolding in this time and place.**

Come and worship, for we are God’s people giving thanks for abundance.  
**We gather to rejoice in faith.**

Come and worship; give thanks for this indescribable gift!  
**We come to worship God!**

### Hymn

“When Morning Gilds the Skies” (*Voices United* 339) or “Come, You Thankful People, Come” (VU 516) or “Your Love Is Amazing” (*More Voices* 26) or “You Are Holy” (MV 45)

### Our New Beginnings

If your congregation has the capacity to show videos, you can share the [*Thank You!*](https://youtu.be/2J3gAna9IO4) video from Minutes for Mission 2018 (on the United Church YouTube channel).

If you are unable to share videos, create a banner with the words “In Gratitude,” and using photos from [Stories of Our Mission](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/stories-our-mission) (united-church.ca; see the downloadable photos at the bottom of many of these webpages), invite people to come forward and choose a photo to add to the banner. Share what it means to give in gratitude. Invite a leader to share their “Why I Give” story. Ask: “Why are you here—in the United Church and/or in this congregation?” “Why do you stay?” “What is the difference you, through the church, make in others’ lives?” “Why—not how or what—do you give?”

### Invitation to Prayer

This is a moment given by God so that we might ask for new beginnings and so that we might give thanks for grace lived out in our lives.

Let us take this moment to consider the times and places of our lives in need of God’s new beginning, for the ways in which we have not embodied what it means to be children of God, siblings of Christ.

God of small seeds, you take our simple lives and with your love inspire us to produce acts of loving kindness—for you, for this world.

Let us live our thanksgiving for your indescribable gifts of life and love, for, too often, we hold tight to this gift. Too often, the seeds you grant us are held in clenched fists, unable to be sown. We sow your gifts of love and light sparingly in this world, because we do not see the world as you see it, because we fear we do not have or are not enough.

Open our hearts, minds, and hands to your purpose. Remind us of your generosity, that we might be generous with others. Encourage us to share your love and to risk caring for your creation.

We pray this as Jesus taught us:

The Lord’s Prayer

### Words of Promise

Children of God, know that God provides every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough, we may share abundantly! God, who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, supplies and multiplies our seed for sowing, and increases the harvest of righteousness.

We are forgiven, loved, and freed to share with joyful abandon!

### Time for the Young at Heart

(*Hold up a clapper,* *a party favour that features three hands on a stick; when shaken, the hands clap together.*)

Can anyone tell me what this is and what it does? Yes, it is a clapper. You know, I love clapping because clapping is a form of giving thanks. Sometimes, we feel nervous about clapping after we hear a beautiful piece of music in church, but if we want to give thanks, we should do just that. Of course, you can also say “Thank you!” What are the other ways we give thanks in church? (*Wait for responses.*) Through prayers and through our offerings, we give because we can; and we want to give thanks for what we have and share it with others.

Have you ever wondered what the offering is for? Do you know why it is called an offering? It is called an offering because we are offering something in praise and thanks for the gifts we have received, such as the people who love us, a place to be at home, food to eat. Our offerings go to help those who do not have the same gifts that we have as well as to make sure that we have a place to come together in worship. Now isn’t that something to clap for?

### Hymn

“Jesus’ Hands Were Kind Hands” (VU 570) or “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (VU 575) or “What Can I Do?” (MV 191)

### Scripture

2 Corinthians 9:6–15

### Reflection

At a United Church camp gathering, the youth and their leaders were leading worship for all the campers and visitors. When it came time to take up the offering, the student who was going to invite people to give leaned over to the leader and said, “I am nervous about asking for offering. Can you do it instead?” Although the leader encouraged the student, the leader ended up giving the invitation: “Our offerings, our gifts unto God.” Reflecting on this interchange, I am mindful that many are anxious about the offering. Over time, the offering has become something some perceive as something you must do, but by its very name, the offering is an invitation—an invitation to offer what you can in gratitude to God.

Why are we so afraid to invite people to give? What has happened that it has become ingrained in us not to ask to give? The act of giving is biblical. The word “give” appears 921 times in the Bible.

The scripture passage for today speaks about giving out of the abundance that God has given us. Often, we do not think we have enough to share, but we can give, even if it is a little. We give out of our thankfulness for the air we breathe, for the comfort we feel, for the life we lead. We give because God loves us and we want to share that love with others.

There are many quotes about giving:

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” Acts 20: 35

“No one has ever become poor by giving.” Anne Frank

“None of us can ever run out of something worthwhile to give.” Steve Goodier, writer

And in our scripture passage for today, we hear the words **“God loves a cheerful giver”** (2 Corinthians 9: 7*b*).

Chris Haslam offers a different version of this scripture that helps to shed light on what Paul is saying in this second letter to the Corinthians. See online: Revised Common Lectionary Commentary, [Harvest Thanksgiving 2020, 2 Corinthians 9:6–15](http://montreal.anglican.org/comments/archive/atksgm.shtml) (at montreal.anglican.org).

Often when we try to express gratitude, words fail us. It is in those moments that our actions speak what our voices cannot express—our gifts of time and treasure. Our offering from the heart out of gratitude is a profound act of faith. Our prayer is thanks, thanks for faith, thanks for people in our lives, thanks for all of creation. We offer our thanks in word, gift, and in deed.

May we all be able to live a life of thanks! May everyone you meet see a face of gratitude shining in you, and may you see a face of gratitude in everyone you meet. Amen.

### Hymns

“Let Us Talent and Tongues Employ” (VU 468) or “Take My Life and Let It Be” (VU 506) or “Deep in Our Hearts” (MV 154) or “When at This Table” (MV 199)

### God’s Invitation

### Minute for Mission

See [Stories of Our Mission](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/generosity-through-mission-and-service/stories-our-mission) on united-church.ca.

### Our Intentional Response

Being a Christian is not just about what we believe—it is a way of life!

In the last two Sundays, we have reflected on God’s abundant blessings and we have been invited to intentionally share a portion of what we have been given. We have been invited into a time to prayerfully consider how we might each be part of God’s amazing work here in this community of faith and in the Mission and Service of the United Church, and how to make a meaningful gift of time, talent, and money. You have been given a Response Card, a way for you to share with us your intentions, and for us to have an understanding of our resources as we plan for future ministries.

What have we learned from our experiences in the past weeks?

(*Invite a member of the Giving Team to come forward to share a summary of what they have learned from the Response Cards. It is vitally important that all be thanked for the care and intention they put into their responses and for the commitments they have made to the ministry lived out by the congregation and by the wider United Church through Mission & Service.*)

During the last couple of weeks, your Giving Team has been hard at work, sharing a special invitation with you to prayerfully consider and determine your intentional gift to this congregation to support new and ongoing ministry. If you haven’t had a chance to receive your letter, which includes tools to help you to decide on a meaningful gift, please ask a member of the Giving Team.

If you have determined your special gift, thank you! You have a special opportunity this morning to return your Response Card on the plate, along with your regular offering.

### Invitation to an Offering of Gifts

Paul exhorts his friends to be “cheerful givers” having “made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion” (2 Corinthians 9: 7).

We give cheerfully because we are sharing good news of a world where justice is possible, where healing is real, and where love is not scarce, but abundant.

What we offer today makes a real difference right in our own community, throughout Canada, and around the world.

People of the One whose giving knows no ending, people of the Risen Christ, remember: God loves a cheerful giver, even as God loves a courageous and confident giver.

With trust and gladness we are invited to present our gifts: all our intentions, commitments, offerings of time, talent, and treasure. We do so, grateful for who we are and who we can become in faith, hope, and love. In our giving, in our sharing, in our living, we are part of all God’s love.

### Sharing Our Gratitude

### Prayers of Dedication, Thanksgiving, and Concern

God of Abundance, we present to you these gifts, small seeds of all that is given to us. We offer these simple cards and the financial commitments they represent. These gifts of time, talent, treasure, intention, and commitment are mere tokens of the work of our hands and the passion of our hearts. As small seeds grow to great plants, so too, with your blessings, may these offerings grow to support your ministries in our communities and around the world.

We hear your Spirit in creation around us, in laughter and joy, and in weeping and solace. We are grateful for the harvest of this life, for seeds sown and multiplied, for the abundance that we enjoy. Renew in us a sense of gratitude, of possibility, of openness. You who offer the gift of life and love, you hear the cries of those in need.

We offer our prayers that all who are troubled may know your gift of peace, comfort, and courage.

(*Include the prayers of your community.*)

God of Abundance, we are called today to be people who sow seeds of your love bountifully. May we scatter your righteousness liberally, seed your justice widely, plant your love abundantly. May we share our lives generously, that we may bring light and healing to all we meet, and to this good earth.

We pray in the name of Jesus, your indescribable gift to us and to the world. Amen.

### Hymns

“Now Thank We All Our God” (VU 236) or “Let All Things Now Living” (VU 242) or “Go to the World” (VU 420) or “Sent Forth by God’s Blessing” (VU 481) or “Sent Out in Jesus’ Name” (MV 212)

### Blessing and Sending Out

God loves you.  
**We go to share God’s love!**God rejoices in you.  
**We go to share God’s joy with grateful hearts!**People of generosity and gratitude,  
**God is with us!  
Thanks be to God!**

### Postlude