

*Gathering,* Pentecost 1 2024

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

## Pentecost Sunday to Labour Day

## Pentecost

### Dates

Pentecost is celebrated on a Sunday 50 days after Easter (counting Easter Sunday), or seven weeks (seven times seven) not counting Easter Sunday.

### Meaning of Name

Pentecost comes from the Greek word *pentēkostē* meaning “50th” (day). Pentecost is a reference to the Jewish festival Shavuot or the Festival of Weeks, which is held on the 50th day after the second day of Passover. This festival celebrates the giving of the Torah to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. In Acts 2, it is said that the disciples had gathered on the day of Pentecost, or the day of the festival of Shavuot. That’s when the wind and fire and Spirit came!

### Liturgical Colour: Red

Red is a primary colour and a warm colour. It symbolizes fire, spirit, energy, passion, strength, power, intensity, courage, and determination. It draws to mind the flames dancing over the disciples and friends of Jesus gathered in the upper room on the day of Pentecost.

## Ordinary Time (a.k.a. Season of Pentecost)

### Dates

Trinity Sunday through to Reign of Christ Sunday—the longest season of the church year.

### Feast Days\* and Special Days

**\*Trinity Sunday** – the Sunday after Pentecost.

**Season of Creation** – the Sundays after Labour Day to Thanksgiving.

**World Communion Sunday** – the first Sunday of October.

**Thanksgiving Sunday** – the Sunday before the second Monday of October.

**\*Reformation Day** – October 31: the day in 1517 when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses.

**\*All Saints’ Day** – November 1: for Protestants, a general commemoration of those who have died. In the Celtic tradition, November 1 is Samhain, marking the end of harvest and beginning of winter.

**Remembrance Sunday** – Sunday before **Remembrance Day** (November 11), honouring those in the armed forces who fought and died for their countries in times of war.

**\*Reign of Christ** – the last Sunday before Advent.

### Meaning of Name

“Ordinary” comes from the Latin *ordo*, meaning “order.” Ordinary Time is the commonplace, the regular, the everyday time. In between feasts and grand celebrations is the regular time of our lives, the time when faith lives and grows and sustains.

### Liturgical Colour: Green

Green is a cool colour, evoking nature, growth, vitality, freshness, harmony, endurance, and fertility. It is associated with healing and rest. It is the depth and stability of blue combined with the warmth and joy of yellow.

## May 19 – Pentecost Sunday

*Worship materials for May 19 to June 9 were contributed by Leigh Sinclair, St. David’s U.C., Leduc, Alta.*

**Acts 2:1–21**

The coming of the Holy Spirit.
or **Ezekiel 37:1–14**The valley of dry bones.

**Psalm 104:24–34, 35*b* (VU p. 827 Part Two)**

How great are all God’s works?

**Romans 8:22–27**

The Spirit prays for us with sighs too deep for words.

**John 15:26–27; 16:4*b*–15**

Jesus will send the Advocate, the Spirit of Truth.

### Creation Connection

The Spirit’s movements can be noticed in the growth cycle of perennials as they move downward for deep rest and upward for profound stretching, until they are bright and blooming, then return at the right time to deep rest.

### Spark

You are worshipping with people created and alive through the Spirit. Invite deep breathing this morning and ask people to wonder (aloud or in silence): How are my bones this morning (crooked or straight, dry, limber, painful)? How are my sinews (tight or loose, strained or joined, lubricated, tender)? How does my breath feel (easy or rough, deep or shallow, congested)? How is my spirit (deep or shallow, connected to the Holy, disjointed, easy, upset)? Remind people that God’s Spirit is with us and in us however our body and spirit are feeling.

### With Children

The psalm this morning proclaims that God made all the creatures on earth: the ones we consider majestic (lions, tigers, bears) and the ones who are harder to love (mosquitoes). What are the children’s favourite creatures? What qualities do these creatures have that proclaim God’s creativity and love for diversity?

### Sermon Starter

In the story from Acts, God allowed the disciples to speak all sorts of languages to help more people understand God’s amazing love! Pentecost is a great day to explore and celebrate how the Spirit is ever-expanding our circles of knowledge and people through languages of all sorts (not just spoken or written, but signed language and languages of art, music, and drama). Pick some of your favourite words from the ancient languages of scripture (such as *koinonia, agape, shalom*) and choose some from the languages understood by people in your congregation (their words for dimensions of Christian faith). How can broadening our words and our understanding allow the Spirit more room to move about and connect us?

### Hymns

*Acts 2:1–21*

VU 199 “Creative Spirit, come to us”

VU 373 “As comes the breath of spring”

MV 2 “Uyai Mose”

*Psalm 104*

VU 296 “This is God’s wondrous world”

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

*Romans 8:22–27*

VU 415 “God, we praise you for the morning”

MV 130 “Rise up, rise up”

*John 15:26–27; 16:4*b*–15*

VU 382 “Breathe on me, breath of God”

MV 102 “Jesus, your Spirit in us”

MV 219 “Ameni”

*General/Seasonal*

VU 202 “O breath of life”

MV 144 “Like a healing stream”

## May 26 – Trinity Sunday

**Isaiah 6:1–8**

The call of Isaiah.

**Psalm 29 (VU p. 756)**

God’s voice is over the waters.

**Romans 8:12–17**

Adopted by the Spirit as children of God.

**John 3:1–17**

Nicodemus visits Jesus by night.

### Creation Connection

The Spirit’s movements can be noticed in the daily movements of Earth, which allow us to witness the sun’s arrival and departure from our point on the planet and invite us to celebrate the powers of day and night to heal and restore.

### Spark

To help imagine the evening visit of Nicodemus, choose some evening hymns that we rarely get to sing in worship due to its daytime traditions. For example, VU 432 to VU 439, or look at the list under “Evening” in the *More Voices* index.

### With Children

Jesus receives an important visitor, but it is at an odd time for a visit. Have the young people imagine that their next birthday party is held after their bedtime and after the sunset, when the world outside is full of starlight. What games would they want to play? It could be extra fun (scary fun) to play at night. How beautiful their cake candles would be in the dark! Jesus’ important visitor discovered something in the nighttime that he couldn’t have discovered in the daytime. I wonder what God has waiting for us to discover in the nighttime? Imagine with the young people.

### Sermon Starter

In the story from John’s gospel, we are told about how the Spirit is expressed in one specific relationship. Two men who love God and scriptures discuss and explore how the Spirit is ever renewing our lives (so we are born again), our faith traditions, and our communities of faith. How does your community of faith approach questions and challenges in their ever-changing faith journey? What one-on-one conversations could congregational people have with one another or with church elders to nourish them in their wrestling with new concepts, just as Jesus ministers to Nicodemus’s wrestling?

### Hymns

*Isaiah 6:1–8*

VU 390 “How great the mystery of faith”

MV 147 “God, help us to treasure”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

*Psalm 29*

VU 264 “Immortal, invisible, God only wise”

MV 144 “Like a healing stream”

*Romans 8:12–17*

VU 376 “Spirit of the living God”

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

MV 157 “I am a child of God”

*John 3:1–17*

VU 60 “Jesus, teacher, brave and bold”

MV 137 “Welcome, Jesus, you are welcome”

MV 139 “True faith needs no defence”

*General/Seasonal*

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

MV 176 “Three things I promise”

## June 2 – Second after Pentecost

### *Proper 4*

**1 Samuel 3:1–10, (11–20)**

God calls to the boy Samuel.

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

You have searched me and known me.

**2 Corinthians 4:5–12**

A treasure in clay jars.

**Mark 2:23—3:6**

Gathering and healing on the Sabbath.

### Creation Connection

The Spirit’s movements can be noticed in the healing of wounds in the earth and its creatures. When there is a wound, blood, water, and tears well up and settle into a protective shield, allowing healing to arise from within.

### Spark

Have someone call or text you during church. Ask them to share, in their own words, Samuel’s story via voice or text. How might scripture be understood differently this way? Does the way we receive a message affect what we do with the message?

### With Children

The psalm and the 1 Samuel 3 reading tell of God’s knowledge about our lives, including that God holds hope in our possible future skills and hobbies. Celebrate all the children’s favourite school subjects and how these joys are “seeds” for their future. What they love now might become what they want to embrace for life. For example, ask them what type of art, sports, or reading they love. How would they like to experience that love in the future when they are teens or elders? Have the children join you in speaking, singing, or signing the words God might call out to them: “You, my child, come and be (a painter, runner, dancer, mathematician, healer).” You might explain that the words *calling* and *vocation* describe something that we know we just need to do (e.g., as a job) because of our relationship with God. You might share the personal story of your own call and how what you loved as a child became part of that call.

### Sermon Starter

The Holy Spirit is actively present when we are alone as well as in our communities and in one-on-one encounters. Both the psalm and the reading about Samuel explore how God knows our inmost being and has hopes for where we will go and grow next. Consider ways that this can be wonderful, frightening, and demanding. When is it wonderful to know God treasures us even though we have human frailties? How is it scary as well as comforting that God knows our deepest secrets? How best can we be in active relationship with the Holy Spirit, even when we are alone? If you did not share your personal story of call during the Children’s Time, you might share it as part of the sermon.

### Hymns

*1 Samuel 3:1–10, (11–20)*

VU 509 “I, the Lord of sea and sky”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

*Psalm 139*

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

*2 Corinthians 4:5–12*

VU 508 “Just as I am”

MV 85 “Take, O take me as I am”

*Mark 2:23—3:6*

VU 619 “Healer of our every ill”

MV 144 “Like a healing stream”

## June 9 – Third after Pentecost

### *Proper 5*

**1 Samuel 8:4–11, (12–15), 16–20, (11:14–15)**

Appoint a king for Israel.

**Psalm 138 (VU p. 860)**

I praise God with all my heart.

**2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1**

Our inner nature is renewed day by day.

**Mark 3:20–35**

Who gives Jesus his power?

### Creation Connection

The Spirit’s movements can be witnessed in the rising and lowering of tides: the world’s oceans breathing in and out to feed, cool, and wash our world.

### Spark

Balance is one sign of health and strength, and it is found in many areas of life. Some people have physical balance and get strong through yoga; others strive to have a good balance in their diet and love to learn about food. Or we may seek balance between work and rest, in the frequency of our activities and engagements, and in our overall health. What area of our church life needs more balance?

### With Children

Today’s reading from Mark is difficult. Jesus is experiencing something that some of us may have experienced. Jesus is being called names, and people are trying to make him change how he lives, teaches, and heals. Jesus’ response is to remember that all he is and all he values comes from God. He will not change just to be accepted by the crowd. That’s not easy to do, is it? How can we remember whose we are and who loves us when others are mean or tell us what we should be and do?

### Sermon Starter

Psalm 138:3 is about strength of soul. Explore some biblical descriptions of strength-building exercises for our soul and our faith. What are some ways that we, like Jesus, can remain firm in our faith and live out our principals during conflict? 1 Samuel invites us to rely more and more on God (perhaps before reaching out to a more human authority). The psalm encourages building strength by calling out to God for help and trusting God to respond. Paul teaches that we can extend grace to others more and more as one way to strengthen our faith and renew our inner selves. Sources of “strengthening exercises” in the Christian tradition include the Centering Prayer, the Rule of St. Benedict, Ignatian practices, and *lectio divina*.

### Hymns

*1 Samuel 8:4–11, (12–15), 16–20, (11:14–15)*

VU 221 “Sing praise to God”

MV 80 “Beyond the beauty and the awe”

*Psalm 138*

VU 240 “Praise, my soul, the God of heaven”

MV 150 “Spirit God, be our breath”

*2 Corinthians 4:13—5:1*

VU 222 “Come, let us sing”

VU 652 “Be still, my soul”

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

MV 153 “Body, mind and spirit”

*Mark 3:20–35*

VU 595 “We are pilgrims”

MV 139 “True faith needs no defence”

## June 16 – Fourth after Pentecost

### *Proper 6*

*Worship materials for June 16 to July 7 were contributed by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine U.C., Kincardine, Ont.*

**1 Samuel 15:34—16:13**

David is anointed as King.

**Psalm 20 (VU p. 742)**

Trust not in horses or chariots, but in God.

**2 Corinthians 5:6–10, (11–13), 14–17**

Walk by faith, not by sight.

**Mark 4:26–34**

Parables of the growing seed and the mustard seed.

### Creation Connection

Take a journey through a natural setting nearby, pausing to actually perceive the interconnections between the flora and fauna, including yourself, as relational interdependence. Invite the congregation to take time this week to do the same.

### Spark

Recruit a few people share photos of themselves: one of them as a child and a more recent one. Ask those people what they wanted to be as children and what they are now. Create a slide presentation of these sets of photos and the information the participants offered about themselves. Another option is to provide verbal descriptions of the people then and now. You might also offer other examples of growth (e.g., plants, animals, crops, geological formations).

### With Children

Have an apple, extra apple seeds, a knife, and a cutting board prepared in advance. Once the children are gathered around, ask them to describe the apple (e.g., taste, shape, colour, texture, smell). As you cut the apple open while separating out the seeds, ask them what you can make apples into (e.g., pies, applesauce, apple crumble). Talk about how those things are different from the original apple—they are transformed. Then give them each an apple seed to dissect once they get home to discover what is inside. (You might wish to provide a small envelope or bag for transporting the seed.) Invite them to discuss with their family the wonder of God’s design that the seed transforms into an apple tree big enough to climb and produces apples for us to eat.

### Sermon Starter

Jesus was a mystic, someone whose relationship with and in God was numinous. Notice that the parables Jesus shares about the kingdom of God are rooted deeply within that mystical understanding of the Divine. Mystery abounds because God’s ways seem to defy logic and “common sense.” The very human Paul gives some theological thought to that ineffable relationship with and in God that he names “a new creation.” When Samuel becomes disappointed with Saul, despairing for the future, he is guided by his mystical relationship with God to discern outside “common sense” and the usual qualities perceived as suitable for a successful king. How do we, in the here and now, drink from the well of divine mystery that transforms and equips our living in unexpected ways?

### Hymns

*1 Samuel 15:34—16:13*

VU 703 “In the bulb there is a flower”

*Psalm 20*

VU 326 “O for a thousand tongues to sing”

MV 58 “We sing of your glory”

*2 Corinthians 5:6–10, (11–13), 14–17*

VU 601 “The church of Christ in every age”

VU 608 “Dear God, who loves all humankind”

MV 94 “Love knocks and waits”

*Mark 4:26–34*

VU 227 “For the fruit of all creation”

VU 503 “When seed falls on good soil”

VU 605 “Jesus, teacher, brave and bold”

MV 172 “God says”

## June 23 – Fifth after Pentecost

### *Proper 7*

**1 Samuel 17:(1*a*, 4–11, 19–23), 32–49**

David and Goliath.

or **1 Samuel 17:57—18:5, 10–16**

David meets Saul and Jonathan.

**Psalm 9:9–20 (VU pp. 732–733)**

I will tell of God’s marvelous deeds.

or **Psalm 133 (VU p. 856)**

It is good for God’s people to be together.

**2 Corinthians 6:1–13**

Now is the acceptable time, the day of salvation.

**Mark 4:35–41**

Jesus stills a storm.

### Creation Connection

Research how many species are endangered around the world while contemplating that we, as humans, oppress God’s good Creation with toxic, negligent practices. How do we still the storm of extinction?

### Spark

Drape the communion table with cloth strips of every colour from the Intersex-Inclusive Progress Pride flag as a visual representation of God’s radical inclusion of each of us in all our wonderful diversity.

### With Children

Read the book *It’s OK to Be Different* by Sharon Purtill and Sujata Saha (Dunhill Clare Publishing, 2019). Afterward, you may wish to discuss some of the ways people are different that may not have been covered in the book. Psalm 133 tells us that it is good for God’s people to be together, all God’s people in all the wonderful diversity with which God made us.

### Sermon Starter

This Sunday is part of what many places in Canada celebrate as Pride Month. Explore the relationship between Jonathan and David where there is a soul connection so deep and profound that it may well have been romantic. Weave in an understanding from Corinthians that the word *salvation* is more accurately translated as “liberation,” an experience similar to what some LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people experience at Pride events, in contrast to the toxicity and discrimination many are exposed to every day. Use the gospel story as an example of God’s faithful presence with us through each struggle, through each challenge, and through every storm. How can we be agents of liberation when life feels destructive both for ourselves and to others?

### Hymns

*1 Samuel 17:57—18:5, 10–16*

MV 62 “There is room for all”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

“As colors in the sky” by Daniel Charles Damon; Tune: VU 382 TRENTHAM\*

“For everyone born, a place at the table” by Shirley Erena Murray; Joy F. Patterson (music)\*

*2 Corinthians 6:1–13*

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

VU 661 “Come to my heart”

*Mark 4:35–41*

VU 374 “Come and find the quiet centre”

VU 391 “God reveal your presence”

VU 637 “Jesus, Saviour, pilot me”

\*Hope Publishing

## June 30 – Sixth after Pentecost

### *Proper 8*

**2 Samuel 1:1, 17–27**

David’s lament for Saul and Jonathan.

**Psalm 130 (VU pp. 852–853)**

Out of the depths, I cry to God.

**2 Corinthians 8:7–15**

Excel in generosity.

**Mark 5:21–43**

Young girl raised; hemorrhaging woman healed.

### Creation Connection

View *How Wolves Change Rivers,* a YouTube video about the transformation of Yellowstone Park narrated by George Monbiot. It demonstrates that a healthy ecology is far more complex than we once believed.

### Spark

Take an empty box with a lid and attach a mirror to the bottom of the inside, facing up. On the mirror, create raised letters that spell YOU or the braille letters for the word *you*. Wrap the box in vibrant-coloured tissue paper. Invite people to open the box to discover who God loves completely no matter what. Pass the box around during the Words of Assurance, asking people to look in or to feel what is at the bottom of the box.

### With Children

Read the story *The Rainbow Fish* by Marcus Pfister (NorthSouth Books, 1992). Talk about how, by sharing our strengths, we make each other strong and wonderful. That’s what God has created us to do. God wants us to excel in generosity, in sharing with others. We are blessed to be a blessing.

### Sermon Starter

In the gospel story, the leader of the synagogue was a man of power, privilege, and status, while the woman was unclean and outcast. Yet Jesus responded to each as they had need, perceiving the person, not their status. David’s lament for his foe, Saul, and for his beloved Jonathan reveal the very different relationships he had with each one. Paul’s letter exhorts the church in Corinth to be genuine in their love for one another, working diligently to share equitably with each other (even though Paul was well aware of the faith community’s many internal conflicts). The psalmist focuses on their abiding relationship with God, which includes forgiveness leading to hope-filled transformation. In all these readings, we can perceive that our relationship with God, rooted in deep spirituality, encourages us to bold discipleship that leads to daring justice for *all* people. How is God calling you to follow?

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 1:1, 17–27*

VU 691 “Though ancient walls”

VU p. 883 “Comfort, comfort now my people”

MV 78 “God weeps”

*Psalm 130*

VU p. 852 “Up from the depths I cry to God”

*2 Corinthians 8:7–15*

VU 399 “God, whose love is reigning o’er us”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

*Mark 5:21–43*

VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

VU 325 “Christ is made the sure foundation”

VU 567 “Will you come and follow me”

VU 570 “Jesus’ hands were kind hands”

## July 7 – Seventh after Pentecost

### *Proper 9*

**2 Samuel 5:1–5, 9–10**

David is anointed King.

**Psalm 48 (VU pp. 772–773)**

God be praised in the city of Zion.

**2 Corinthians 12:2–10**

My grace is sufficient; my power made perfect in weakness.

**Mark 6:1–13**

Jesus, rejected in Nazareth, sends out the 12 to teach.

### Creation Connection

Consider the three sisters (corn, beans, and squash) and how Indigenous people in certain regions used them as a source of nourishment and self-sufficiency, acknowledging the interdependence of the plants, where the strengths of each compensates for the weaknesses of the others.

### Spark

Place a gaudy crown (perhaps homemade), an encrusted sceptre, and a golden orb on the communion table with a free-standing cross and an open Bible on a stand. Make sure they are brightly lit.

### With Children

Play a game of Simon Says with the children. Ask them why they followed what you told them to do. Who made you Simon? Why do they trust following you? Then talk about how people earn trust from each other. Trust is earned, not demanded and not something we are entitled to. God earns our trust as we engage with the stories of the Bible and stories of other people who have relied on God to support, encourage, and inspire them.

### Sermon Starter

In today’s world of misinformation, social media rabbit holes, and conspiracy theories, many have become suspicious of authority, seeking to tear down instead of build up. To the people of his hometown, Jesus seemed rather full of himself, proclaiming the kind of divine authority that triggered their skepticism. Paul perceived himself as authoritative and full of secret knowledge, yet he resigned himself to a God-given weakness. Did it really keep him somewhat humble? David certainly earned his consolidated power the hard way as the second king of all Israel, but we know that later—as his power and authority grew—it corrupted him to the detriment of the nation and his spiritual well-being. If we are to follow the Way of Jesus, from where comes our authority and how do we best exercise that same authority? Why would people trust us, as a congregation or as individuals? From where comes the grace and humility that allows us to admit our weaknesses while staying open to the Spirit’s movement and challenge?

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 5:1–5, 9–10*

VU 235 “O worship the King”

VU 653 “Come, let us to the God of love”

VU 654 “All my hope is firmly grounded”

*Psalm 48*

MV 51 “YHWH\* be praised”

MV 59 “Alleluia, praise to God”

*2 Corinthians 12:2–10*

VU 560 “O Master, let me walk with thee”

MV 176 “Three things I promise”

*Mark 6:1–13*

VU 117 “Jesus Christ is waiting”

VU 357 “Tell me the stories of Jesus”

MV 212 “Sent out in Jesus’ name”

\**or* May God

## July 14 – Eighth after Pentecost

### *Proper 10*

*Worship materials for July 14 to August 4 were contributed by Karen Boivin, Bells Corners U.C., Ottawa, Ont.*

**2 Samuel 6:1–5, 12*b*–19**

David brings the ark to Jerusalem.

**Psalm 24 (VU pp. 750–751)**

The earth is God’s and all that is in it.

**Ephesians 1:3–14**

Adopted through Christ and given an inheritance.

**Mark 6:14–29**

The death of John the Baptist.

### Creation Connection

All that is in and on the earth is God’s. Are there parts that we find hard to believe belong to God? Does it change our perspective if we consider that everything belongs to God?

### Spark

Consider: What are some of the ways that you express your gratitude?

David’s life is full of dramatic and thought- provoking scenes that lend themselves well to an engaging summer sermon series. Write a modern version of David’s story for each Sunday that also ties in the other readings for that day. Perhaps continue the same characters in your stories week to week.

### With Children

Invite the children to lead the congregation in brainstorming ways to express gratitude for a meal, a kindness, a friend, a beautiful scene, etc. Encourage ideas that go beyond words. Tell the story of how David gave thanks as he returned the ark to Jerusalem (i.e., dancing, leaping, music, offerings, sharing food). You might want to move to MV 156 “Dance with the Spirit.”

### Sermon Starter

Christianity has traditionally focused mostly on words to thank God, and God alone, for their many blessings. Many other cultures and traditions give thanks not only to God, but also to that which has provided for them, such as the plants and animals that they consume. Consider the many ways of expressing gratitude, not only with words, but through other rituals, such as offerings, dancing, singing, and sharing of gifts. Some Christians have been like Michal, Saul’s daughter: uncomfortable or even critical of directions and forms of thanksgiving that they are not used to. David gives thanks with words, music, dance, and the sharing of God’s bounty with everyone. Offer a modern story from the perspective of a person like Michal that could show movement from criticism to the valuing of a full-bodied expression of gratitude, one that embraces the whole community—not only people but all creation. The psalm and the Ephesians reading speak of all things together under God. In Mark’s gospel, Herodius is another person attempting to quash a different perspective.

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 6:1–5, 12*b*–19*

VU 242 “Let all things now living”

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

*VU p. 884 “You shall go out with joy”*

MV 2 “Come all you people”

MV 156 “Dance with the Spirit”

MV 183 “I’m gonna shout, shout”

*Psalm 24*

VU 296 “This is God’s wondrous world”

VU p. 750 “Lift up the gates eternal”

MV 135 “Called by earth and sky”

*Ephesians 1:3–14*

VU 362 “Here, O God, your servants gather”

VU 541 “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”

MV 42 “Praise God for this holy ground”

*Mark 6:14–29*

VU 10 “Prepare the way of the Lord”

VU 87 “I am the light of the world”

VU 580 “Faith of our fathers [mothers]”

MV 212 “Sent out in Jesus’ name”

## July 21 – Ninth after Pentecost

### *Proper 11*

**2 Samuel 7:1–14*a***

David is not the one to build God’s house.

**Psalm 89:20–37 (VU p. 804)**

I will sing of God’s steadfast love.

**Ephesians 2:11–22**

You are holy citizens, members of God’s household.

**Mark 6:30–34, 53–56**

Jesus teaches from a boat and heals the sick.

### Creation Connection

David was not the one to build the house. Humans rarely accept that there might be things we should not do to and with Creation, even if we can. What might we need to hold back from doing today?

### Spark

Consider: What has inspired you to make big changes? How did you decide what to do?

Many people struggle with scripture passages such as those in Psalm 89 where God is portrayed as violently punishing those who go against divine commandments. Paraphrase a call-and- response version of the psalm, making the call for each verse close to the original and the response a progressive interpretation of the same verse. For example, for verse 23:

I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.

*When we have been hurt and betrayed, we’d like you to crush our foes and strike them down, but do you really do that, O God, or is it just what we wish you would do?*

### With Children

Ask the children why they might give a friend a present and how they would decide what it should be. Encourage discussion that covers information gathering, such as knowing what your friend enjoys and budgeting for the gift, as well as following your heart. Share how the Holy Spirit can inspire us to action and help us figure out (discern) what we should do. We need to ask, wait, and pay attention. Remember, God’s Spirit will never ask us to do something that hurts us or anyone else.

### Sermon Starter

Is David’s decision to build God a house well- intentioned or controlling? If he went ahead with the plan, would he actually be limiting his access to divine inspiration? Keeping open to the Spirit’s guidance while also testing whether our decisions are divinely inspired is a challenge. The disciples demonstrate closed thinking in discounting Jesus’ idea that they can feed the people. On the other hand, Paul follows the lead of the Spirit in announcing that the Gentiles are to be included among the followers of Jesus. A modern reading of the psalm assures us that God continues to love and accompany us no matter how well we pay attention and follow.

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 7:1–14*a

VU 371 “Open my eyes, that I may see”

VU 375 “Spirit, spirit of gentleness”

VU 642 “Be thou my vision”

MV 6 “Holy Spirit, come into our lives”

MV 24 “Breath of God, Breath of peace”

*Psalm 89*

VU 654 “All my hope is firmly grounded”

VU 660 “How firm a foundation”

VU p. 804 “My song forever shall record”

MV 26 “Your love is amazing”

MV 92 “Like a rock”

*Ephesians 2:11–22*

VU 602 “Blest be the tie that binds”

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

MV 62 “There is room for all”

MV 145 “Draw the circle wide”

*Mark 6:30–34, 53–56*

VU 562 “Jesus calls us”

VU 626 “I heard the voice of Jesus”

VU 637 “Jesus, Saviour, pilot me”

MV 95 “How deep the peace”

## July 28 – Tenth after Pentecost

### *Proper 12*

**2 Samuel 11:1–15**

David and Bathsheba.

**Psalm 14 (VU p. 735)**

Fools say, “There is no God.”

**Ephesians 3:14–21**

God’s power accomplishes more than we can ask for or imagine.

**John 6:1–21**

Jesus feeds the multitude and walks on water.

### Creation Connection

So much about climate change and the environment seems overwhelming. We need to receive the encouraging message in Ephesians that God’s power at work within us can accomplish abundantly more than we can ask for or imagine.

### Spark

Write a call-and-response version of Psalm 14. You may wish to paraphrase the verses. Wear a jester’s cap. The congregation reads the verses, while you play “the fool for Christ.” Respond to verses 1 through 4 with “Fools say, there is no God.” Respond to verse 5 with verse 6.

### With Children

Share a children’s book that encourages good management of one’s wants and desires, such as *More* by I.C. Springman (Clarion Books, 2012), *Too Much Stuff!* by Robert Munsch (Scholastic, 2017), or *Too Many Toys* by David Shannon (Blue Sky Press, 2008). Then discuss together: Is it possible to want something too much? And if so, what might be the consequences? God’s power works within us to create more than we can ask for or imagine, but this is not about “stuff.” This is about being able to love and learn and become who God has created us to be. God’s power helps us make decisions that are good for us, for others, and for the world, all at the same time!

### Sermon Starter

Today’s story about David is an opportunity to continue last week’s discussion on decision- making. It demonstrates how self-centred decision-making increases exponentially over time, as the damage it can cause also does. The psalm suggests that being aware of God’s presence and love curbs such behaviour. The epistle reading assures us that our ability to make good decisions with healthy consequences increases exponentially in relationship with our Creator. The gospel reading demonstrates that possibility.

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 11:1–15*

VU 560 “O Master, let me walk with thee”

VU 637 “Jesus, Saviour, pilot me”

MV 10 “Come and seek the ways of wisdom”

MV 172 “God says”

*Psalm 14*

VU 223 “Eternal, Unchanging, we sing”

VU 283 “God is the one whom we seek together”

VU 635 “All the way my Saviour leads me”

MV 28 “God of the Bible”

MV 182 “Grateful”

*Ephesians 3:14–21*

VU 262 “A mighty fortress is our God”

VU 265 “Creating God, your fingers trace”

VU 654 “All my hope is firmly grounded”

MV 27 “Creator God you gave us life”

MV 154 “Deep in our hearts”

*John 6:1–21*

VU 661 “Come to my heart”

VU p. 747 “The Lord’s my Shepherd”

MV 4 “All who are thirsty”

MV 106 “I am the dream”

## August 4 – Eleventh after Pentecost

### *Proper 13*

**2 Samuel 11:26—12:13*a***

Nathan’s story that condemns David.

**Psalm 51:1–12 (VU pp. 776–777)**

Create in me a new heart, O God.

**Ephesians 4:1–16**

A life worthy of your calling; speak the truth in love.

**John 6:24–35**

The crowds ask for another sign from Jesus.

### Creation Connection

Like the crowds, we may be seeking a sign that God is helping us with the mess we have made of Creation. Perhaps the best sign is how Creation heals itself when humans get out of the way, such as the way the water in Venice became crystal clear during the pandemic, when cruise ships weren’t coming into the city.

### Spark

Consider: Few people like to be called out on their behaviour. If criticized, what is the best way to respond?

Create a large, textured, and vibrant heart for the congregation to interact with. Compose a prayer of confession in which a quiet time of reflection invites everyone to focus on the heart and imagine what change of heart they would like to experience within themselves. Then invite everyone to share words of assurance that we are all forgiven because we are held in God’s heart.

### With Children

Ask the children what it feels like when someone tells them that they have done something wrong. Discuss some of the ways that criticism can be both delivered and received. What ways are easier to receive and from whom? How can we understand corrections and criticism through our faith? Extend that conversation to the whole congregation so that the children can understand that all ages struggle with this.

### Sermon Starter

David is able to understand the error of his acquisitive ways through Nathan’s storytelling. The crowd following Jesus, however, continues to want more signs rather than the truth, despite his teachings that a relationship with God is the way to fulfillment. Instead of constant striving, peace and relaxation can be found in the truth that each day is a fresh opportunity for a new heart, a time to start again and let God propel us forward in love.

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 11:26—12:13*a

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

VU 313 “God, whose almighty word”

VU 508 “Just as I am”

MV 94 “Love knocks and waits”

MV 144 “Like a healing stream” Psalm 51

VU 371 “Open my eyes, that I may see”

VU 421 “Lead on, O cloud of Presence”

VU 661 “Come to my heart”

VU 662 “Lead me, God”

MV 97 “Listen, God is calling”

MV 98 “Like a river of tears”

*Ephesians 4:1–16*

VU 368 “Holy Spirit, truth divine”

VU 514 “God the Spirit, guide and guardian”

MV 161 “I have called you by your name”

MV 212 “Sent out in Jesus’ name”

*John 6:24–35*

VU 288 “Great is thy faithfulness”

VU 635 “All the way my Saviour leads me”

VU 638 “God, take my hand”

MV 194 “Bread of life, feed my soul”

MV 213 “Take up his song”

## August 11 – Twelfth after Pentecost

### *Proper 14*

*Worship materials for August 11 to September 1 were contributed by Karen Hammond Croxall, Trinity U.C., Uxbridge, Ont.; Max Ward, Highland Hills U.C., Minden, Ont.; Rodney Smith-Merkley, Buckhorn (NM) P.C., Ont.; and Bob Root, Trinity Providence U.C., Bobcaygeon, Ont.*

**2 Samuel 18:5–9, 15, 31–33**

David’s son Absalom dies.

**Psalm 130 (VU pp. 852–853)**

Out of the depths I cry to God.

**Ephesians 4:25—5:2**

Do not let the sun go down on your anger.

**John 6:35, 41–51**

I am the bread of life.

### Creation Connection

Death, lament, anger—reflect on how Creation’s rhythms hold all these big feelings. These readings connect us to Creation as we reflect on climate change and what that means for those who are seven generations away from us. Will we love Creation enough to be forgiven by it?

### Spark

As people arrive, pass out herbs and flowers with fragrances (lavender, basil, mint, sage, sweetgrass, tobacco, cedar), whatever is readily available. Attach to each a small piece of paper with this question (from (Ephesians 5:2*b*): “How are you a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God?”

### With Children

Explore bread making: ingredients, process, and results. You might have the ingredients available to mix up together. Or you might have a gluten-free, dairy-free, and nut-free loaf that everyone can munch on while you chat. Many ingredients are needed to make something as beautiful and nourishing as bread. Wonder together what Jesus meant when he said he was the bread of life. If we are friends of Jesus, how are we the bread of life for others and for the world? What ingredients do we need to be faithful friends of Jesus? How are we the ingredients to make the bread of life for Jesus?

### Sermon Starter

These are complicated passages. David’s relationship to his favourite son is complex. Absalom was rebellious, yet David had compassion. David was both a father and a king to him. Explore the complicated nature of family relationships, which straddle two worlds—the world of family and the world of others, whom we are also responsible for. Despite all that passed between father and son, David’s heart was broken when his son died. Complicated grief influences the way we live in the world. Find Dr. Alan Wolfelt’s work on complicated grief as a reference.

The psalm and the epistle reading are companion pieces that are filled with raw emotion. The psalm offers gut-wrenching, agonizing cries grounded in an honest and trusting relationship with God. The writer of Ephesians knows how anger can take over and be destructive. Yet, we are not told to give up anger, but to understand it as a teacher. Can you feel David’s grief in these two readings?

What does Jesus mean when he says, “I am the bread of life”? Is Jesus the spiritual food that keeps us alive? Play with the idea that eating the bread of life calls us to act justly.

### Hymns

*2 Samuel 18:5–9, 15, 31–33*

VU 374 “Come and find the quiet centre”

VU 496 “Grief of ending, wordless sorrow”

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

*Psalm 130*

VU 147 “What wondrous love is this”

VU 652 “Be still, my soul”

VU p. 852 “Up from the depths I cry to God”

*Ephesians 4:25—5:2*

VU 566 “Awake, o sleeper”

MV 28 “God of the Bible”

MV 78 “God weeps”

MV 111 “A voice was heard in Ramah”

*John 6:35, 41–51*

VU 626 “I heard the voice of Jesus say”

MV 162 “Christ, within us hidden”

MV 182 “Grateful”

MV 192 “We come now to your table Lord”

MV 194 “Bread of life, feed my soul”

MV 195 “Long ago and far away”

## August 18 – Thirteenth after Pentecost

### *Proper 15*

**1 Kings 2:10–12; 3:3–14**

David’s death; Solomon’s prayer.

**Psalm 111 (VU p. 833)**

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.

**Ephesians 5:15–20**

With thanksgiving, sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.

**John 6:51–58**

Whoever eats my bread has eternal life.

### Creation Connection

Ephesians speaks of using our time well. Consider what is most needed now. What immediate action could we take, as a church, as a community, and as individuals, to look after our planet? We need to care about the legacy we leave, not just about ourselves and our life.

### Spark

These passages today call out for expression, perhaps a liturgical dance, a painting, or a poem by Wendell Berry. Or have someone paint during the sermon.

### With Children

You might be inspired by the book *Wise at Heart* by Brody Hartman, Richard Steckel, and Michele Steckel (Kids Can Press, 2011). Discuss the quotes on pages 7 and 10.

Or explore the Ephesians passage that tells us to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thanksgiving. Why is it that we sing in church?

Why do we sing, listen, or move to music when we are very sad or very happy? Music connects with our spirits. Share some songs, such as MV 187 “We give our thanks to God” or MV 188 “I thank you, thank you, Jesus.”

### Sermon Starter

We begin with the death of David. His son Solomon was inheriting a role that already had a firm foundation. Solomon is feeling overwhelmed, too young for his new post as one to rein over so many people. God comes in a dream to Solomon: “Ask what I should give you.” Solomon asks for wisdom to rule justly, and God promises Solomon even more than he asked for. Sometimes we don’t feel equipped for a task, but this is a good reminder to stay close to God and seek wisdom and guidance in large and small things. Wisdom can come from people of all ages. Consider Malala Yousafzai, Greta Thunberg, and the children and youth of your own congregation.

Verse 10 of the Psalm 111, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” is a good companion piece to the Solomon story. Yet what does it mean to live in fear of God? How does that bring wisdom?

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians shares plainly how to live in wisdom and make good use of our time, while singing with gratitude.

In the John reading, notice how many times Jesus emphasizes the word true: “very truly,” “true food,” “true drink.” Consider what Jesus means by true food and true drink. What is the relationship between truth and wisdom?

### Hymns

*1 Kings 2:10–12; 3:3–14*

VU 287 “Wellspring of wisdom”

VU 356 “Seek ye first the kingdom”

VU 686 “God of grace and God of glory”

MV 10 “Come and seek the ways of wisdom”

*Psalm 111*

VU 232 “Joyful, joyful we adore you”

VU 242 “Let all things now living”

VU 641 “Lord Jesus, you shall be my song”

*Ephesians 5:15–20*

VU 202 “O Breath of Life”

VU 657 “He leadeth me”

VU p. 884 “You shall go out with joy”

*John 6:51–58*

VU 466 “Eat this bread”

VU 582 “There’s a spirit in the air”

MV 12 “Come touch our hearts”

MV 195 “Long ago and far away”

MV 201 “I am the bread of life”

MV 202 “Bread for the journey”

## August 25 – Fourteenth after Pentecost

### *Proper 16*

**1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10–11), 22–30, 41–43**

Solomon calls on God to keep God’s promise.

**Psalm 84 (VU pp. 800–801)**

How lovely is your dwelling place, O God.

**Ephesians 6:10–20**

Put on the whole armour of God.

**John 6:56–69**

To whom do we go? You have the words of eternal life.

### Creation Connection

The sanctuary can be the whole world. The whole world can be our sanctuary. Why are there boundaries?

### Spark

Have a doorkeeper as people arrive for worship. The doorkeeper can play at welcoming some people and pretending to keep others out, though letting them in. The doorkeeper might declare, “Welcome to God’s holy dwelling place,” and also might announce each person in a loud voice as they arrive.

You might also show or describe various scenes of nature, human situations, church buildings, etc., and ask, “Where is God in this place? Could this be God’s holy dwelling place, God’s sanctuary?”

### With Children

Explore the idea of “what’s next” (eternal life) with the children. Remind everyone that we are never outside of God’s love and care. Perhaps read *The Next Place* by Warren Hanson (Waldman House Press, 1997) or *The Invisible String* by Patrice Karst (DeVorss Publications, 2000). Explore the idea that eternal life is here and now, as well as safe in God’s love for always.

### Sermon Starter

The scriptures might be explored through the theme of God’s dwelling place. As pointed out at the conclusion of the Kings reading, God’s place is one of inclusivity (welcoming and listening to the foreigner).

The psalm continues this theme of God’s dwelling place. Sanctuaries have been considered God’s sacred living space. What does it mean that church sanctuaries are being repurposed into coffee shops or bed and breakfasts? What if the next generation doesn’t imagine God’s dwelling place the same as we do? What if they need to create their own sacred space for God?

While Ephesians urges us to put on the whole armour of God, is it meant to be rigid and stagnant? Are we really meant to understand ourselves as a fighting force to preserve our sanctuaries?

The gospel invites us to consider the invitation to eternal life. What is too hard about those “bread of life” words that causes many to give up? Do you go to the Spirit when life is too hard? Do you go to God’s dwelling place? What and who restores you when you are in God’s sacred space?

### Hymns

*1 Kings 8:(1, 6, 10–11), 22–30, 41–43*

VU 481 “Sent forth by God’s blessing”

*Psalm 84*

VU p. 856 “Behold, how pleasant”

MV 92 “Like a rock”

MV 119 “God our protector”

*Ephesians 6:10–20*

VU 227 “For the fruit of all creation”

VU 262 “A mighty fortress is our God”

VU 674 “Fight the good fight”

VU 686 “God of grace and God of glory”

*John 6:56–69*

VU 250 “God of matchless glory”

VU 363 “Your coming, Lord, to earth”

VU 461 “Bread of the world”

VU 465 “Christ, be our Host”

VU 626 “I heard the voice of Jesus”

VU 629 “Eternal light, shine in my heart”

VU 663 “My faith looks up to thee”

## September 1 – Fifteenth after Pentecost

### *Proper 17*

**Song of Solomon 2:8–13**

Arise my love and come away!

**Psalm 45:1–2, 6–9 (VU p. 769)**

Praise for the anointed hero!

**James 1:17–27**

Be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger.

**Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23**

Not from outside but from within is a person defiled.

### Creation Connection

The God of Creation starts us off on a new year this Labour Day Sunday. Where are you noticing new beginnings at the start of September?

### Spark

Show or describe scenes of people relating to each other (going back to school and work, at picnics, beach days, and barbecues). Our God is a relational God. God wants to be in relationship with us. The God of love comes in many forms.

### With Children

Consider various forms of love in a kid-friendly way: the love of friends, love of caring adults (e.g., parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents), love between partners. Be aware that not every child has the same kind of family or a loving family. How do we know someone loves us? God is the Creator of love in its many forms. How do we know God loves us? How can we show God’s love to each other? There is a good opportunity to include some affirming language and images of different kinds of families.

### Sermon Starter

This might be an opportunity to explore love and its many forms: agape, erotic, family, church family, friendship, compassion, and caring. Labour Day might be an opportunity to talk about loving work or not loving work or being too devoted to work. What is your relationship to work?

Mary Oliver poses many questions about daily life in “Poem 133: The Summer Day” (House of Light [Beacon Press, 1990]; available online). Invite the congregation to answer the questions and reflect on her words.

The epistle invites us to consider what do with anger in our loving relationships. When we become angry with one another, do we always know what our anger is about? Are we really angry with the other person or is something else moving us to anger? The key theme of James’s epistle is that love is faith in action. We are to listen deeply to one another, with an open heart, even when we are experiencing anger.

The gospel reading points to the rules that are sometimes needed to allow people to live together well. Following the rules is important and necessary for healthy relationships and a healthy society, but Jesus says that sometimes what matters more is loving one another, treating one another with respect, and living together the Creator’s peace and justice for all.

### Hymns

*Song of Solomon 2:8–13*

VU 333 “Love divine, all loves excelling”

VU 658 “O Love that wilt not let me go”

MV 138 “My love colours outside the lines”

MV 190 “Laughter lit the stars of morning”

*Psalm 45*

MV 182 “Grateful”

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

*James 1:17–27*

VU 165 “Come, you faithful, raise the strain”

VU 231 “I sing the mighty power”

VU 520 “We plough the fields”

VU 592 “Come, now, you blessed”

VU 660 “How firm a foundation”

*Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23*

VU 373 “As comes the breath of spring”

VU 508 “Just as I am”

VU 594 “O Christian, love”