



Planned Giving Office

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Dear Clergy and Worship Leaders:

At the 137th General Assembly in London, Ontario, the Assembly approved the following two recommendations:

That congregations be encouraged to designate one Sunday during the year to highlight the ministry of Planned Giving and the legacy of faith and hope it can provide for generations to come.

That clergy be encouraged to submit any sermons and worship materials they prepare on the theme of planned giving and the stewardship of accumulated assets to be shared with the larger church.

In order to help worship leaders in preparation for a service focusing on Planned Giving, the Planned Giving Office provides the attached worship resources. I would like to thank Joan Masterton for her help in preparing the enclosed materials. Many of you will remember that Joan formerly served as the Program Coordinator in the Planned Giving Office before resigning in order to pursue her theological studies at Knox College. I am delighted that Joan continues to have a real passion for planned giving and that she was willing to share that passion with the rest of the church.

Feel free to use the enclosed resources as they are or to adapt them to your own circumstances and style. If you would like the resources in electronic form, you may download them off the internet at www.presbyterian.ca/plannedgiving.

The stewardship of accumulated resources has been a neglected aspect of our denomination's teaching and preaching. As a result, most congregations have not caught a vision of how planned gifts can expand the life and mission of the church far into the future, and most of our members have never even considered the many ways they can leave a vital legacy to the church from their accumulated assets.

If your congregation has a stewardship committee or a team of people responsible for promoting planned giving, this service would be a wonderful opportunity to use them in the leadership of the worship service. You could also invite someone who has made a planned gift (e.g. included the church in their will, acquired a gift annuity, etc.) to talk about why they have made such a planned gift and what it means to them. It would also be appropriate for someone who has been the beneficiary of a planned gift (e.g. someone who has received funding for a mission trip from a congregational endowment fund, etc.) to talk about what the gift has meant to them.

Finally, Sheryl Sutton, the Program Coordinator in the Planned Giving Office, and I would love to hear how your Planned Giving Sunday went. If you prepare original prayers, sermons, etc., please pass them on to us. We want to develop a library of worship resources on Planned Giving that congregations can use in worship throughout the year. And may God bless you as you seek to share this important aspect of the gospel with your people!


Yours in Christ,

Rev. Herb Gale,
Associate Secretary for Planned Giving





Introductory Words



The worship service is focused on the theme of hope, for without hope we are tempted to shrink back into our selves and become afraid to share the little bit we have. If we don't believe that the church has a future, it is hard to give planned gifts to help sustain that future. But the good news of the gospel is that God's grace sustains us through all the twists and turns of our lives, both as individuals and as a church. God never abandons us; we can never be orphaned or forgotten by the Creator. The good news is that just as we have received the heritage of faith from past generations of followers of Jesus, so too we can provide those who follow us with the awareness that we are all connected – the people of God, past, present and future. Like the apostle Paul, we remain “convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38 – 39).

The hope that we experience as followers of Jesus is a living hope. Jesus loves us, just as we proclaim in the children's story suggested for the service. We have received such hope as the result of the faith of past generations. Are there specific examples you can identify that are relevant to your congregation? For example, when and with what resources was your congregation founded? Are there “founding mothers and fathers” whose vision for their community of faith included significant gifts? Was the support of programs and funds from the national denomination (which come from Presbyterians with vision from all over Canada) helpful in renovating the church or establishing a healthy youth program or ensuring that some financial support could be provided to young people who felt called to ordained ministry? What is your own personal experience of having received gifts that were planned for you by those whom you never met? Personal stories of generosity, faith and a vision for the future will personalize the sermon.

In a recent survey (see “poll” at www.cbc.ca/change/vote2) of Canadians who volunteer their time, energy and expertise at some non-profit endeavour, over 80% stated that they volunteer because they want to “give back” to society. People do care and want to share, and we are born with an instinct to express gratitude for grace received. Planned giving provides opportunities for people at all levels of the socio-economic spectrum to become benefactors to future generations of believers in God's love. All you have to do is give them the opportunity, ask them to consider the possibilities, and help them complete their deep-rooted desire to “make a difference.”

As congregations, we can craft a vision for the future that allows us to express our faith today and build an even stronger foundation for the future. We can plant seeds of hope for generations to come!

Joan Masterton



Call to Worship

Our call to worship is taken from the opening verses of Hebrews 12:

Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

As we gather for worship, let us remember that we are not alone.

We gather in the presence of God and in the presence of one another.

We also gather in the presence of that great cloud of witnesses who have run the race before us and who even now surround us with their love and encouragement.

We are the heirs of the faith and generosity of those who have gone before us. May we recognize the extraordinary wealth of our inheritance and may we leave a lasting legacy of faith and hope for those who follow after us.

Prayer of Approach and Confession

Gracious God, we give you thanks that you remain forever faithful, always searching for us, your wayward children. Even when we hide from you, you continue to seek us out, and you will not rest until we finally find our rest in you. We ask that during our worship this morning you would give us a sense of your presence and that you would draw us into closer relationship with you. We confess that, even though we often pretend that we can make it on our own, in our better moments we realize that we cannot be complete without you. Lead us out of those times and places of stubborn pride and fearful distrust. Show us the path to your promises of burdens lifted and new freedom to grow and fulfill our destiny as your beloved children. Be with us in our words and actions as we share our stories of you with our families and friends. It is you, O God, who changes hearts. We ask that you would make us open us to the movement of your transforming Spirit. Help us to find new and exciting ways to serve your people today and tomorrow, near and far. Guide us in our planning for new and renewed programs and facilities that will help the children of the future grow in wisdom and faith in you. Help us to reach out and touch those who will follow after us. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, our risen Lord and our Living Hope. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon (based on Romans 8:34)

Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ. And Christ died for us. Christ rose in power for us. Christ reigns with God for us. Christ prays for us. Friends believe the gospel; in Jesus Christ we are forgiven, and we are made more than conquerors through him who loves us. Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Litany



Words of Christ, Our Living Hope

Hear now the words of Christ, our Living Hope, spoken to each of us and to all of us:

Voice 1:

I am the Bread of Life, whoever comes to me will never be hungry.

I have come to give you life, life in all its abundance.

I will not leave you orphaned.

It is I. Do not be afraid.

My peace I leave with you.

Let not your hearts be troubled.

I am the Door. Whoever enters by me will be saved.

You are my sheep. I have called you by name. You are mine.

I do not call you servants any longer; I have called you friends.

Abide in me.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Ask.

Ask and you will receive.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

I have said this to you so that you may have peace.

Amen!

Voice 2:

Whoever believes in my will never be thirsty.

Come to me and I will give you rest.

I will come to you.

Because I live, you will live also.

My peace I give to you.

And do not let them be afraid.

I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down my life for the sheep.

You are my friends.

Abide in me.

Abide in me.

What do you want me to do for you?

Ask.

Seek and you will find.

Give, and it will be given to you.

In the world you face persecution. But fear not! I have overcome the world!

Amen!

Amen!

(voices 1 and 2)

Charge and Benediction

Go forth in the assurance that we have an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading in Christ our Living Hope. Go forth in the sure and certain hope that we are more than conquerors through his undying love.

And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Suggested hymns

- #20 The steadfast love of the Lord
- #330 O God, our help in ages past (#87 in 1972 edition)
- #774 Will your anchor hold? (#515 in 1972 edition)
- #462 All my hope on God is founded (#104 in 1972 edition)
- #373 Jesus loves me, this I know (#378 in 1972 edition)
- #685 How firm a foundation (#425 in 1972 edition)
- #368 Let Christian faith and hope dispel (#530 in 1972 edition)
- #585 Christ, you call us all to service
- #680 Christ, of all my hopes the ground (#416 in 1972 edition)
- #726 May the God of hope go with us every day



Sermon



Planned Giving Sunday

“A Living Hope”

I Peter 1:3 – 9

An inheritance that is imperishable

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice,* even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Although you have not seen* him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

How many times have I decided to watch the evening news on television and have sat down before the screen and then glanced over at the array of remote controls sitting on the coffee table? There’s a remote control from the cable company to which we subscribe, one for the television itself, and one for the sound system that controls not only the volume but also the quality of the sound emerging from the speakers, depending

upon whether you're watching a hockey game or a talk show or a musical. Of course there are also remote controls for our son's game system, one for the DVD player and even one for the old VCR that we don't use much anymore. Where to begin? Which controller to use? What buttons to push?

Well, one could experiment forever with the myriad of remote controls and the multitude of buttons on them but by then the news would be all over. So most times I call to the nearest child – my son or one of my daughters – and ask them not only to set up the right channel and the sound, but to show me, again, how to do it. Many times we have had this same conversation! And my kids roll their eyes and say, “Mom, you're **hopeless!**” And I guess I am, when it comes to knowing my way around a 21st century television system. I must confess that repeated failures have left me feeling inadequate, incompetent, dreading the next time I want to watch television and annoyed that I have to ask my kids for help. **Hopeless.**

Hope is a strange thing; it combines both expectation and desire. We tend to invest a lot of emotion in hope. Even if we are feeling hope-**less** and are “hoping against hope” – in other words, even when we doubt that our hope will be realized – we still keep opening ourselves to the possibility that what we hope for might just happen after all. And in so doing, we are opening ourselves to experience significant emotion and mood swings. Life becomes a kind of emotional roller coaster. Sometimes we are “up” and feel hope-**full**; sometimes we are “down” and feel hope-**less**. We might experience surprise and delight when what we hope for actually comes to pass, or dismay and regret and deep disappointment when our hopes are dashed and our deep desire is finally crushed and we realize that what we had hoped for will not happen.

We hope for so many things. We hope for things big and small, monumental in importance for us or trivial and hardly missed. We hope it will be a nice day for the picnic or that we've picked the quickest line in the checkout. We buy a lottery ticket, hoping to win big; Oh, what we'd do with that money! We'd give most of it to the church, wouldn't we?! Or, I hope the Toronto Maple Leafs win the Stanley Cup! When they don't, we may (or may not!) be disappointed, but it is not the end of the world. Or, we choose a career path and study and work for it, hoping it will lead to a secure future for ourselves and our families. In times of desperation we, as humans, often place our

hopes and fears before God. “God, don’t let me get fired; I need this job!” When the crises of life loom before us, as they do from time to time for all of us, we place our hope, however tenuous, before God. We might even try to bolster it by trying to negotiate with God or bribe God. “God, my child is choking! Save her! I promise I’ll never miss Sunday worship again for the rest of my life!” “God, destroy this cancer! Don’t take my spouse; take me!” Ah, yes, we hope for so many things in life!

Christian hope, on the other hand, is quite different from the kind of hope I’ve just been describing and has some unique characteristics. It is not simply strong, wishful thinking. It is more than a verb with us as the subject, as if we could somehow manufacture more hope by thinking more positively. Christian hope is more than an outward expression of what we are wishing for or dreaming about, no matter how hard we wish or how hard we dream. No, Christian hope is not so much a verb as a noun, a personal noun with a name: Jesus Christ. He is our Living Hope. Even when our own personal hopes are dashed, Christ remains our Living Hope, and therefore we can continue to hope in any and all circumstances. The text we read from 1st Peter attempts to remind readers then and now that our hope rests in the goodness of God and in God’s unceasing love for each and every individual. Ours is a **living** hope – a present reality, who accompanies us through thick and thin.

That was what the two disciples discovered as they were walking to Emmaus the Sunday after Jesus’ crucifixion. Confused and discouraged after their beloved Rabbi had died, they were commiserating with each other when they were joined by a stranger walking in the same direction as they were. “What are you talking about as you walk along?” the stranger asked. They then tell their travel companion about Jesus of Nazareth – how they had thought that he was the long awaited messiah and how their expectations were crushed when he was condemned to death by the religious leaders. Then they sum up their feelings with these discouraging words filled with so much pathos: “But we had hoped he was the one to redeem Israel.” Little did they know that their Living Hope was walking along with them. He was the one asking the probing questions. He was the one teaching them along the way and opening the scriptures to them. He was the one infusing them with a new, more certain hope.

The good news of the gospel is that the one who walked with the two dejected disciples on the road to Emmaus also walks with us in our own life journeys, whether we are on the mountain top or in the valley, even when we have lost our way. Christian hope is rooted in the deep-seated awareness that God travels with us through **every** experience of our lives; God is always present to and with us. Even when we go through periods of intense suffering and despair, whether physical or emotional, we know that God in Christ walks with us. We are not alone, even in our darkest moments. Author Joyce Rupp, in her book entitled, *Praying our Goodbyes*, puts it this way: “God’s love is such a powerful companion for us that no matter how searing or how intense the hurt of a loss is we know that our spirit need not be destroyed by it; we know that God will help us to recover our hope, our courage, and our direction in life.” Even when we think all hope has been extinguished within us, our Living Hope whispers from somewhere deep inside that with God’s healing touch, hope can and will surface again.

And so our deeply rooted hope reassures us that there is nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ and that the way of life Jesus demonstrated to us can be ours. The book of Hebrews describes Christian hope as an “anchor for the soul, firm and secure” (Hebrews 6:19). A familiar hymn states this truth in poetry and song:

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the rock that cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Saviour’s love!

Such hope sets us free to live in a whole new kind of way. Securely anchored in the love of Christ, we discover a new freedom to let go of a lot of the baggage we sometimes insist on carrying with us through life. We can be free of needless worrying about what might happen, because however life turns out, we know that God remains with us. We can let go of being so focused on ourselves and can become increasingly more outwardly oriented, looking to the wellbeing of others. Our Christian hope allows us to let go of self and embrace those around us, and to do so in confidence and love. We can let go of the negative and embrace the positive, and still be grounded in the realities of life. That inner sense of restlessness and mental or emotional fatigue begins to dissolve away, and

is replaced with a peace that really does surpass all understanding. The confidence that Christian hope gives us sets of free to hear more clearly God's call to us to live our lives responsibly and responsively. Because we have hope, our hearts are changed and we can see around us with new eyes.

Our response to experiencing such hope is often thankfulness and **gratitude**, and a great desire to **express** our gratitude by "giving back" or sharing. Hopeful people are therefore grateful and sharing people, and this congregation and the church as a whole is filled with them. In our life together here, we talk about stewardship as being a calling and a command from God, but also as a way in which we can say "Thank you!" to God for blessings received, especially for the hope we have because of God's love for us. We share with others within our own congregation, but each of us has family and friends and work colleagues and neighbours and others with whom we also interact, and we can share with all of them. What can we share? What can we give? How about love, laughter, knowledge, leadership, life, skills, health, touch, attention, advice, balance, **hope itself**. We can give all of these and so much more. We can give of our time and share the gifts with which God has blessed us. We can provide financial support where it is most desperately needed. We can do all this today – right now – by continuing to give to the missions and ministries of this congregation and the denomination through our weekly offerings.

The money we put in our offering plates can literally reach around the world through our mission partners, bringing hope to an AIDS victim in Malawi or a disaster victim in Japan. Amazing! But did you know that there are also ways that we can reach people, not just on the other side of the world, but on the other side of the grave? Oh, I'm not talking about séances or the latest episode of the TV series *Ghost Whisperer*. I'm talking about something much more down to earth but no less amazing. I am talking about planned giving, and how the gifts we give from our accumulated assets can go on giving and giving and giving for generations to come. Senator Norm Paterson died in 1983, but the Fund for Ministerial Assistance he established in 1951, continues to provide clergy families year after year with the extra money they need to keep hope alive.

Another example of a fund that keeps on giving is the Experimental Fund launched by George and Evelyn van Beek back in 1981. The fund was designed as a permanent endowment with the annual income earned from the invested capital to be used to

provide grants to encourage congregations, presbyteries and other agencies in the church to launch out in creative, new ministries. George and Evelyn's initial gift was \$5,000 worth of stock, but the couple continued to contribute to the fund over the years. When Evelyn died, the Experimental Fund received a generous bequest through her estate; and George, who died just this past January at the age of 92, also designated the Experimental Fund as the primary beneficiary of his estate. Since its inception in 1981, the fund has provided nearly \$250,000 for over 100 projects. And after having given nearly a quarter of a million away, there is still more than half a million dollars invested and growing in the fund itself, money that will keep generating more money and keep generating new ministries year after year after year.

And here in our congregation, we are the beneficiaries of previous generations, whose generosity continues to bear witness to their love and faith years after they died.

List one or two examples...

If your congregation has an endowment fund, describe how the fund has enhanced the life and ministry of your congregation...

Perhaps your congregation is singing from hymnbooks given in memory of someone, or the sun is shining through a stained glass window given in memory of someone, etc.

As members of the Christian community of the 21st century, however, we are not just the beneficiaries of generations who have gone before us; we also know that generations will follow **us**, and that we can pass on to them gifts to remind them of our love for them and of God's love for them. Through our estates, we can bequeath a legacy of hope for generations yet unborn. Through your will, you could provide camping scholarships for children and young people to experience Christian community that will change their lives forever. Through a gift annuity, you could provide tax-free income for you and your spouse year after year while you are living and provide new music for our choir to sing God's praise year after year after you have passed away. Indeed, the gifts we give can become a kind of "living hope" for future generations and an enduring witness to him who is our Living Hope. Yes, the good news of planned giving is that we can provide

tangible expressions of our love and encouragement for future generations as we take our place among that “great... cloud of witnesses” mentioned in Hebrews 12:1.


Earlier in the sermon I mentioned George and Evelyn van Beek and the endowment fund they established. As I mentioned, George died this past January 2011; his body was laid beside the body of his beloved wife. The inscription on their gravestone reads, “Quietly they lived; quietly they served,” an epitaph that their former minister, Fred Rennie, describes as a “silent tribute to this generous, humble servant of God and his wife.” It is indeed a simple, fitting tribute to the van Beeks. But I must admit that I take issue with the epitaph on their tombstone – not the sentiment expressed, but the tense of the verbs used – the past tense: Quietly they lived... quietly they served. For the truth is – the gospel truth – is that the verbs should be in the present tense: Quietly they *live*... Quietly the *serve*...

Yes, quietly they *live*, for the good news of the gospel is that in and through God’s undying love in Jesus Christ, our Living Hope, their life goes on even in and through death. For they, like all who put their trust in Christ, have an “inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept for them in heaven” (1st Peter 1:4). They have entered into the eternal home that God in Christ has prepared for them and are now among the great cloud of witnesses mentioned in the book of Hebrews.

Likewise, the verb, served, should be in the present tense, not the past tense; for the truth is – the gospel truth – is that they continue to serve through the endowment fund they established, and they will continue to serve for generations to come. In September 2011, vulnerable girls in Picton, Ontario, began attending an after school program called “Reaching for Rainbows.” The program was initiated by the members of St. Andrew’s Church in Picton, and it is partially funded by the Experimental Fund. Thus, in a very real way, the van Beeks, are still quietly serving through the Reaching for Rainbows program, offering new opportunities and new hope to a whole new generation of young girls. In a very tangible way, George and Evelyn are part of the great cloud of witnesses silently cheering for the girls seeking to overcome the challenges they face and become the young women God created them to be. And to that all I can say is Amen! Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Living Hope. And who gives us the opportunity to keep on serving long after we have died!



Children's Story



Sing the hymn, "Jesus Loves Me." After the hymn ask the children if they have heard the hymn before (most if not all will say yes). Ask the children if they think that the song is old song or a new song. (They will probably answer "old."). In response say, "Yes, the song is very old. It was written over a hundred and fifty years ago by Anna Bartlette, who wrote it as a song that was sung to comfort a sick child in a novel written by her sister, Susan. (Perhaps your own mother or father sang this song to you when you were growing up. Share that story if that is the case.) "Jesus Loves Me' is one of the best known songs in the world and has been translated into more languages than any other song ever written! The song reminds us that Jesus loves every single one of us, and that includes you and me."

"Yes, the song is very old, but in another sense the song is new. What do you think I mean by that?" (The children may not be able to answer this question. Give the children time to answer. If they can't figure out why the song is new, you may want to ask the adults in the congregation. Someone may come up with the answer. Then continue...) "That's right. The song is new in the sense that we just sang it anew this morning. It becomes fresh and new every time we sing it! That is the way it is with God's love. God's love is older than the world itself, for God created the world and us in love. But God's love is also as new as each new day. In fact, God gives us each new day as a gift for us to open and enjoy."

"Like God's love in Jesus, Anna Bartlette's song is her gift of love to the world. And the amazing thing about her gift is that she keeps on giving it to us every time we sing her song. It's a song that comes alive in us every time we sing it."

(If the hymnbooks in your congregation were gifts to the church in memory or in honour of someone, you may go on as follows. Otherwise, simply end the story with the concluding prayer.) Holding up a hymnbook, tell the children that you want to show them something else. Turn to the inside cover page if it has a name plate and show them the bookplate. Read the name of the person who gave the hymnbook to the church and the name of whom it was given to remember or honour. Explain that the hymnbook was given as a gift to the church. "Like Anna Bartlette, _____ died many years ago, yet his/her love inspired _____ to give this hymnbook to the church in his/her memory. Isn't it amazing how the gifts we give can go on giving and making people happy for many, many years?"

Let us pray...

"Dear God, we thank you for your love, which is older than the world and as new as each new day. We thank you for Anna Bartlette and the gift of her song, 'Jesus Loves Me'. We thank you for the many people who have given these hymnbooks from which we sang her song today. We thank you that the gifts we give, like Anna Bartlette's song, can keep on giving and giving and giving for many years to come. Amen."