

Glebe-St. James United Church

Orange Shirt Sunday

September 27, 2026

Please note: the livestream camera only captures the chairs at the front of the church. Sitting in the pews or at the back will keep you off camera. During the theme conversation, only the backs of children's heads are shown. – The Worship Team

Gathered by God

Preparing Our Hearts for Worship

"Jesus, The Very Thought Of Thee"

Welcome

Pam Fitch

In the name of the Holy Mystery,
who is Wholly Love,
we welcome you to Creator's House.
Thanks be to God!

Good morning and welcome, everyone, to our worship service at Glebe-St. James United Church in Ottawa on Sunday, September 27th.

My name is Pam Fitch and I'm a member of the Church Council.

We're so glad you're here today. Whether you're a first-time visitor or a longtime member, whether you are joining us in person or online, you are welcome and we hope you feel at home.

We are an Affirming Community of Faith in the United Church of Canada - a place of faith, love and community. We are committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where people of all ages, backgrounds, and identities feel loved and supported.

This means you are welcome here just as you are: no explanations, no needing to change yourself. **You** are welcome here – with all the complexities of who you are and where you've been. **You** are a beloved child of God and we thank you for joining us today.

Announcements

Men & Friends' – will be having their Potluck Dinner on September 30th, 5:30pm

Lunch & Learn with Tom Sherwood – will be happening on October 4th at 12 Noon, following worship. Bring your lunch and something to share or just join us at 1 pm in the Sanctuary for Tom's presentation.

Jeff Bird plays Hildegard von Bingen – Mark this concert in your calendar for October 24th. This ethereal performance is not to be missed.

Land Acknowledgement

David Brown

Candle Lighting Our Tears, Falling Down Like Rain

TLUS 89

Our tears, falling down like rain to the ground
will water seeds of change.
Kyrie, kyrie, kyrie, kyrie, kyrie eleison.

Call to Worship

We gather today remembering the children.

We remember the children who were taken from their families.

We remember the children who experienced loneliness, loss, and harm.

We remember those who did not come home.

We listen to the voices of Survivors and their families.

We listen with open hearts.

We gather as people who seek truth and reconciliation.

May we be willing to learn, to listen, and to change.

Jesus said, "Let the children come to me."

May every child know: You are loved. You belong. You matter.

In this Season of Creation, we remember that children inherit the world we create.

May we help create a world where every child—and all creation—can flourish.

Come, let us worship God, the giver of life and love.

We come with open hearts, ready to remember, learn, and live differently.

Come in, come in and sit down,
you are a part of the family.
We are lost and we are found,
and we are a part of the family.

- 1 You know the reason why you came,
yet no reason can explain;
so share in the laughter and cry in the pain,
for we are a part of the family. R
- 2 God is with us in this place,
like a mother's warm embrace.
We're all forgiven by God's grace,
for we are a part of the family. R
- 3 There's life to be shared in the bread and the wine;
we are the branches, Christ is the vine.
This is God's temple, it's not yours or mine,
but we are a part of the family. R
- 4 There's rest for the weary and health for us all;
there's a yoke that is easy, and a burden that's small.
So come in and worship and answer the call,
for we are a part of the family. R

Opening Prayer

Loving and compassionate God,
you are the God who welcomes children,
the God who hears the voices of those who have been silenced,
and the God who calls us into relationships of love, justice, and reconciliation.
Today we remember the children who were taken from their families
and sent to residential schools.
We remember the children who suffered.

We remember those who never returned home.
We remember the families and communities
who continue to carry the pain of that history.
And we give thanks for the courage of Survivors
who have told their stories and continue to teach us.

God, help us listen.
Help us listen without turning away when the truth is difficult.
Help us learn without becoming defensive.
Help us remember without allowing remembrance to become empty words.
And in this Season of Creation, remind us that we are connected—to one
another, to the land and waters, and to generations yet to come.
May the choices we make today help create a world where children can grow
surrounded by love, culture, family, community, clean air, clean water, and a
healthy Earth.
May this be a place where every child can hear:
You are welcome.
You are loved.
You belong.
You matter.
Amen.

Prayer for Healing

God of truth and reconciliation, we confess that there have been times when we
have looked away from painful truths.

Forgive us, God.

There have been times when we have known too little about the history of
residential schools and the experiences of Indigenous children and families.

Forgive us, God.

There have been times when we have listened only when the truth was
comfortable.

Forgive us, God.

There have been times when we have wanted reconciliation without doing the
work that reconciliation requires.

Forgive us, God.

There have been times when we have forgotten that our actions today shape the world our children will inherit.

Forgive us, God.

Help us not to remain stuck in guilt or shame, but to turn toward a different way.

Give us courage to learn, to listen, and to act.

Help us become people who make room for every child.

Help us become people of welcome, justice, healing, and love.

May our remembering lead to relationship.

May our listening lead to action.

May our repentance lead to change.

And may our hope lead us toward reconciliation.

Amen.

Assurance of God's Love

What do we believe about every child?

Every child is precious.

What do we believe about belonging?

Every child deserves to know, "You belong."

What do we believe about reconciliation?

Reconciliation calls us to truth, listening, relationship, and action.

What do we believe about creation?

We are part of God's creation, and we have responsibilities to one another and to the Earth.

And what do we commit ourselves to?

To remember.

To listen.

To learn.

To make room.

To seek justice.

And to help create a world where every child can flourish.

Amen.

Sign of Peace

**May the peace of God be your peace.
May the love of God be the love you show.
May the joy of God be the joy you know,
and may the world that God would see be found in you.**

Listening for Wisdom

Theme Conversation Orange Shirt Day

Good morning, friends!
Look at all of you!
I am so happy to see you here today.
And I have a question for you.
What colour am I wearing today?
[Let children answer.]
Yes! Orange!
Can you show me something orange?
Maybe you are wearing orange.
Maybe you can point to something orange in the church.
[Pause and let them look around.]
Orange is a very special colour today.
Today is Orange Shirt Day.
And Orange Shirt Day helps us remember something very important:
Every child matters.
Can you say that with me?
Every child matters.
Let's try it again, a little louder:
EVERY CHILD MATTERS!

There was a little girl named Phyllis.
When Phyllis was about your age, she got a beautiful new orange shirt.
She was very happy about her shirt.
But when she went away to school,
her orange shirt was taken away from her.

That was a very sad thing.

And Phyllis remembered that orange shirt for a very long time.

Now orange shirts help us remember children who were taken away from their families and sent to residential schools.

We remember those children.

We remember their families.

And we remember that every child deserves to be loved, safe, and cared for.

Everyone, put your hands over your heart.

[Model.]

Can you feel your heart?

[Pause.]

Your heart is beating.

And every one of you has a heart that is precious.

Now put your arms out wide like this.

[Stretch arms wide.]

Can you make a big hug?

[Pause.]

Let's give ourselves a gentle hug.

[Hug yourself.]

And now let's say:

"I matter."

[Children repeat.]

Now let's say:

"You matter."

[Children repeat.]

And one more:

"Every child matters."

[Children repeat.]

In our Bible story today, people brought children to Jesus.

But some of Jesus' friends tried to send the children away.

And Jesus said:

"Let the children come to me."

Jesus wanted the children to know:

You belong here.
You are welcome here.
You matter.
And that's an important message for us today.
Every child should have people who say:
"You are loved."
"You are safe."
"You belong."
And "You matter."

Let's make our hands into a heart.
[Make a heart shape with hands.]
When you see an orange shirt today, I want you to remember:
Children matter.
And when you see a child, you can remember:
This child is precious.
Because every child is part of God's beautiful creation.
Let's pray.

Loving God,
Thank you for all your children.
Thank you for each one of these children here today.
Help us remember children who were hurt.
Help us listen.
Help us learn.
And help us make a world where every child is safe, loved,
welcomed, and free to be who they are.
Thank you for reminding us:
Every child matters. Amen.

Hymn Little by Little (*Verses 1 and 2*)

TLUS 134

**Little by little by little.
Little by little by little.
Little by little by little I know,
The tiniest seed will grow.**

**Watered by peace and justice,
watered by peace and justice,
watered by peace and justice:
tools to change our world.**

**Little by little by little.
Little by little by little.
Little by little by little I know,
The tiniest seed will grow.**

Prayer for Wisdom

Be with us, Loving Spirit,
inspire our hearts as we lean into Scripture,
that we might understand
in a new and fresh way,
your Word of Life. Amen.

Scripture

Matthew 19:13-15

Liz Elton

Then children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs." And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

This is wisdom from our ancestors in faith.

Gift of Music

"Song of Life"

Sandy Scofield

Reflection Every Child Matters

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

There is something wonderfully simple about the Gospel story
we have heard this morning.
People bring children to Jesus.

And Jesus welcomes them.
That is really all that happens.
There is no great theological argument.
No miracle.
No complicated teaching.
Just children being brought forward—and Jesus saying, in effect:
Let them come.

And yet, when we place these few verses beside Orange Shirt Day, they become anything but simple.
Because we know that in our own country there was a time when children were taken away from their families, their communities, their languages, their cultures, and their homes.
And we know that many of those children were not treated as though they mattered.

Today, September 30, we remember that history.
We remember Survivors.
We remember the children who never returned home.
We remember families and communities who continue to live with the consequences.

And we listen especially to the voices of Survivors.
One of those voices belongs to **Phyllis Webstad**.
In 1973, when Phyllis was six years old, she was excited about going to school. Her grandmother had managed to buy her a new outfit. Phyllis chose a shiny orange shirt. She remembered being excited about how bright and special it was.
But when she arrived at St. Joseph Mission Residential School in British Columbia, her clothing was taken away—including that orange shirt. She never wore it again.
Phyllis has described how the colour orange came to remind her of the experience of feeling that her feelings did not matter, that she did not matter.

And so one orange shirt became a symbol.
A symbol of what was taken.

A symbol of the children who were separated from their families.

A symbol of cultures and languages that the residential school system tried to suppress.

And, most importantly, a symbol of a truth that must never again be forgotten:

Every Child Matters.

Orange Shirt Day began in 2013 as an Indigenous-led, Survivor-founded movement. September 30 has since also become Canada's National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

And that brings us back to Jesus.

Because when the disciples try to keep the children away, Jesus does something remarkable.

He stops them.

“Let the little children come to me.”

It is easy for us to hear those words as sentimental.

Jesus loves children.

Of course he does.

But that is not quite what is happening.

In the world of Jesus, children occupied a very different social position from the one they occupy in much of our society today. They had little power and little social status.

So when Jesus says, “**Let the little children come,**” he is doing more than being kind.

He is making space for people who might otherwise be pushed aside.

He is saying:

These children belong here.

They are part of the community.

They are worthy of attention.

They are worthy of blessing.

They matter.

And that is why this Gospel passage belongs on Orange Shirt Day.

Because reconciliation begins with telling the truth about what happened when a society failed to see that children mattered.

It begins with listening to Survivors.

It begins with learning the history that many of us were not taught adequately.

It begins with recognizing that residential schools were not simply a collection of unfortunate events. They were part of a deliberate colonial system intended to assimilate Indigenous children and separate them from their families, cultures, languages, and communities. More than 150,000 First Nations, Inuit and Métis children attended residential schools, and the effects of that system continue across generations.

And for Christians, there is another truth we need to face.

Churches were involved in administering residential schools.

So Orange Shirt Day cannot simply be about something that happened *to other people*.

For Christian communities, truth and reconciliation require us to acknowledge our own history.

That can be uncomfortable.

But discomfort is not the same thing as repentance.

And repentance, at its best, is not about feeling guilty forever.

It is about turning around.

It is about seeing differently.

It is about changing the way we live.

It is about becoming a different kind of community.

And this is where the Season of Creation speaks to us.

During this season, we are invited to remember that creation is not simply a collection of resources placed here for human use.

Creation is relationship.

Land.

Water.

Plants.

Animals.

People.

Children.

Ancestors.
Future generations.
All of us are woven into one living community.

Indigenous traditions have long carried profound teachings about relationship, responsibility, reciprocity, and the sacredness of land and water. And as Christians seeking reconciliation, we have much to learn when we listen respectfully to Indigenous voices and teachings.

The residential school system damaged more than individual children.
It damaged relationships.
Relationships between children and parents.
Between generations.
Between communities and their languages.
Between people and culture.
And, because colonialism is also a story about land and power, between people and the land itself.

So perhaps one of the questions the Season of Creation asks us this year is:

What kind of relationships are we creating?

What kind of relationship are we creating with the Earth?

What kind of relationship are we creating with Indigenous Peoples?

What kind of relationship are we creating between generations?

And perhaps most simply:

What kind of world are we creating for children?

Because children inherit what we create.
They inherit the climate.
They inherit our communities.
They inherit our attitudes toward difference.
They inherit our understanding of history.
They inherit the consequences of our choices.
They inherit both our wounds and our hopes.
The question is not simply whether we love children.
The question is whether our actions create a world in which children can flourish.

Jesus says:

Let them come.

And perhaps today we can hear that invitation in a new way.

Let the children come.

Let them come with their languages.

Let them come with their cultures.

Let them come with their questions.

Let them come with their gifts.

Let them come with their Indigenous identities and traditions.

Let them come without being told that they must become someone else in order to belong.

Let them come to communities where they are safe.

Let them come to churches where they are heard.

Let them come to a future where the Earth is still capable of sustaining life.

Let them come to a world where they do not have to fight simply to be recognized as fully human.

Let them come.

There is something else worth noticing in this Gospel.

Jesus doesn't say:

“Let the children come when they are old enough.”

He doesn't say:

“Let them come when they understand theology.”

He doesn't say:

“Let them come when they have something useful to contribute.”

He simply says:

Let them come.

Their worth does not have to be earned.

And that may be one of the deepest theological truths behind **Every Child Matters**.

Every child matters—not because of what that child will accomplish someday.

Not because of the grades they will get.

Not because of the job they will have.

Not because of how productive they will be.
Not because they will become a “good citizen.”

They matter because they are human beings.
They matter because they are part of God's creation.
They matter because they are beloved.
And if every child matters, then we must ask what it means to build
communities where that truth is visible.
Not just printed on an orange shirt.
Not just spoken once a year.
But lived.
Every day.

Orange Shirt Day asks something of us.

It asks us to remember.
But remembering is not enough.
It asks us to listen.
But listening is not enough.
It asks us to learn.
But learning is not enough.
Truth and reconciliation require action.
The Government of Canada describes September 30 as an opportunity to
honour Survivors, remember the children who never returned home, and
recognize the continuing impacts of residential schools.
And Phyllis Webstad herself has emphasized that the work of truth and
reconciliation is ongoing. **Every Child Matters** is not simply a slogan. It is a
commitment to continue telling the truth and to work so that such harm does
not happen again.

So perhaps today, as we wear orange, we might ask ourselves:
What truth do I still need to learn?
Whose story do I need to listen to?
What assumption do I need to reconsider?
What relationship needs attention?
What action might move us another step toward reconciliation?

And perhaps we might also ask:

What will the children of the future say about the choices we made today?

Will they say that we finally listened?

Will they say that we learned?

Will they say that we protected the land and water?

Will they say that we honoured Indigenous Peoples and their rights and cultures?

Will they say that we created communities where every child could belong?

We cannot change what happened in the past.

But we can change what we do with the truth of the past.

And that is where hope lives.

Not in pretending that everything is fine.

Not in forgetting.

Not in rushing past painful history.

Hope lives in the possibility of a different future.

A future we create together.

A future where children are welcomed rather than removed.

Where cultures are celebrated rather than erased.

Where relationships are repaired rather than broken.

Where the Earth is cherished rather than exploited.

Where the church becomes a place where people hear, not just with words but through our actions:

You belong here.

You are loved.

You matter.

And perhaps, above all, we hear Jesus saying to us today:

Let the children come.

Let them come to the centre.

Let them teach us.

Let them remind us what matters.

Let them help us imagine a different future.

And may the orange we wear today remind us that reconciliation is not something we simply remember once a year.

It is something we practise.

In our relationships.
In our churches.
In our communities.
In the way we care for creation.
And in the way we make room for the generations who will come after us.
Because every child matters.
Every child belongs.
Every child is part of God's beloved creation.
And every child deserves a future in which they can know that truth—not merely
because we say it,
but because the world we build tells them so.
Amen.

Responding in Thanksgiving

Hymn Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

VU 375

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing:
wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings. R

You swept thro' the desert, you stung with the sand,
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with their idols and lies,
then you spoke thro' your prophets to open their eyes. R

You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;
and down in the city you called once again,
when you blew through your people on the rush of the wind. R

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,
with bold new decisions your people arise. R

Invitation to Give

As we come to our offering, we remember
that our faith is not only something we speak.
It is something we live.

Our gifts help make our congregation a community where people can find
welcome, care, friendship, and belonging.

Our giving can also become part of the wider work of justice, reconciliation,
compassion, and care for creation.

So as we offer our gifts today, let us remember the children—and ask ourselves
what kind of world our generosity can help create for them.

Let us give with grateful and hopeful hearts.

Offering Hymn Who Will Speak A Word of Warning (*Verse 1*)

TLUS 130

**Who will speak a word of warning to a world whose wealth expands,
as the growing wealth is gathered into ever fewer hands?**

**Christ, you speak a word of warning for the church to know and tell:
greed is death and life is giving; hands that give receive as well.**

Offering Prayer

Generous God,
receive these gifts we offer today.

Use them to strengthen communities of welcome and belonging.

Use them to support those who are vulnerable.

Use them to nurture reconciliation and justice.

Use them to care for your creation—
the land, the waters, the creatures, and the people with whom we share this
Earth.

And help us remember that our greatest offering is not simply what we place in
the offering plate.

It is the way we live.

May our lives become offerings of love, truth, courage, and hope.

In the spirit of Jesus, who welcomed the children,
may we help create a world where every child can say:

I am loved.

I belong.

I matter.

Amen.

Prayers of the People Give Peace to Ev'ry Heart

MV 86

Give peace to ev'ry heart.

Give peace to ev'ry heart.

Give peace, God. Give peace, God.

Prayer of Jesus

Our Mother and Father

who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our trespasses

as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power,

and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Sent by the Spirit

Hymn We Are Marching In the Light of God

VU 646

**We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God,
we are marching in the light of God.
 (the light of God.)
We are marching, (marching, we are marching,)
 oo-oo, (marching,)
we are marching in the light of God.
 (the light of God.)
We are marching, (marching, we are marching,)
 oo-oo, (marching,)
we are marching in the light of God.**

**Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.
Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
 (khanyen' kwenkhos'.)
Siyahamba, (hamba siyahamba,)
 oo-oo, (hamba,)
siyahamb', ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.
 (khanyen' kwenkhos'.)
Siyahamba, (hamba siyahamba,)
 oo-oo, (hamba,)
siyahamb', ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.**

Sending Forth

Go now remembering the children.
Go listening to the stories of Survivors.
Go willing to learn what you may not yet know.
Go ready to build relationships rooted in respect and justice.

And as you go into God's creation,
look at the world through the eyes of the children who will inherit it.
Ask what kind of Earth we are leaving them.
Ask what kind of community we are creating for them.
And then, with courage and hope,
do what you can to make that world more loving, more just,
and more welcoming.

May the God who loves every child
hold us in truth and compassion.
May Christ, who said,
“Let the children come,”
teach us to make room,
to listen, and to welcome.
May the Spirit move among us,
turning remembrance into action,
sorrow into compassion,
and hope into courage.
And may we go from this place
committed to a world where every child can grow in safety,
every culture can flourish,
every person can belong,
and all creation can breathe and thrive.
Go in peace.
Go in hope.
**And remember:
Every child matters.**

Sung Amen

VU 968

Music for the Journey

"Paean"

End of Worship | Beginning of Service

Welcome to Glebe-St. James United Church.
Thank you for joining with us for our morning worship.

Please join us in Fraser Hall, following the service
for a time of fellowship and refreshments.

Musical Acknowledgements

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This week's organ prelude, "Jesus, The Very Thought Of Thee," is based on the traditional hymn tune ST. AGNES by John Dykes. The setting is by Eleanor Whitsett (1931-2026), an organist and university professor from Oklahoma, U.S.A.

The organ postlude, "Paean," is by Christopher Tambling (1964-2015), a British composer, organist and school choirmaster.

The anthem, "Song of Life," is by Sandy Scofield, a Métis, Saulteaux/Cree First Nations composer.

This week @ Glebe-St. James United

Walk for the Centre happens on October 4th (centretownchurches.org)

Eleven years ago, Centretown Churches Social Action Committee started a small walkathon to raise much-needed funds for the Centretown Community Food Centre. Each year, the walk has grown in size and in participation to become a beloved community event.

October 4th is also our Lunch & Learn with Tom Sherwood but for those who would like to make a donation or prefer to walk, please check out the link below or speak with Margo Williams.

[Glebe-St.James United Church walkers](#)

Glebe-St. James United Church

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