

Glebe-St. James United Church

October 25, 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

"Processional for a Saint's day"

Welcome

Ruth Burnett-Cole

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 downtown Ottawa on Thanksgiving Sunday, October 11.

My name is Ruth Burnett-Cole and I am a Licensed Lay Worship Leader.

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, we hope you feel at home. Please remember to wear a name tag if you are here in person – it's so much easier to feel part of a community when we can greet each other by name. Name tags are available at the entrances to the sanctuary.

We are an Affirming Community of Faith in the United Church of Canada - a place of faith, love and community. You are welcome in our sanctuary. If you are looking for a place where your soul can breathe, sit back and listen to the inspirational music. If you are looking for community and connection, this is a place of acceptance, friendship and support. If you are looking for somewhere

where you can make a difference in your community, this is a place where you can help to feed those struggling to make ends meet. We are committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment where people of all ages, backgrounds, and identities feel loved and supported. Thank you for being here.

Announcements

Ottawa Public Foods Pop-Up Market is Wednesday, October 28th. We are looking for donations of canned goods, jams, soup, grains, rice, pasta, beans, legumes, cookies, sugar, sauces, and cooking oil. Please deliver to the Church office by tomorrow.

Tuesday, November 3rd – Our next **Congregational Conversation**. We will meet from 7 – 9 p.m. here at the church

Saturday, November 21st – **GSJ Bazaar!** See Liz Elton if you can help out or have donations!

GSJ Goes Out to Dinner returns in November 2026. More details on the program can be found in the e-update but a form for those interested in hosting or being a guest in our popular dinner program is attached. Please see David Brown or Margaret Ford for more information.

Land Acknowledgement

Ottawa is built on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe Nations. This land has been cared for and travelled across for thousands of years, especially along the Kichi Sibi, or Ottawa River. The name Ottawa itself comes from the Algonquin word *adawe*, meaning “to trade”—a reflection of the river’s long history as a meeting place and trade route. Today, the capital is home to a diverse and growing Indigenous population that includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people from across Turtle Island. It's also a place where generations have gathered to speak truth, stand up for rights, and shape the path toward reconciliation.

If you are out and about, exploring what the city has to offer, you'll find opportunities to engage with Indigenous cultures in meaningful ways. From festivals and food to artwork and ceremony, Indigenous presence is woven throughout the capital.

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 eleison.

Call to Worship

What draws us together as a community of faith?

We come seeking connection, hope, and the love of God.

What brings joy to our hearts?

We rejoice in friendship, in compassion, in music, and in the gifts we share.

How can we help make this joy possible for others?

By welcoming the stranger, caring for our neighbours, and working for a world where everyone belongs.

Jesus calls us to love God with all our hearts and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

May our worship deepen our love, strengthen our community, and send us out to share God's love with the world.

Let us worship God!

Hymn When I Needed A Neighbour

VU 600

1 When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?

2 I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?

3 I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there?

I was cold, I was naked, were you there?

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?

4 When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there?

When I needed a healer, were you there?

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, were you there?

5 Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,

wherever you travel I'll be there.

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter, I'll be there.

Opening Prayer

Loving God, you draw us together in many ways.

Some of us come seeking comfort, some come with questions, and some come simply grateful to be here. We bring our joys and sorrows, our hopes and uncertainties, and our longing to belong.

Open our hearts to your presence in one another. Help us recognize the gifts that make this community special and the opportunities we have to share those gifts with others.

May our worship renew our spirits, deepen our compassion, and remind us that love is at the heart of our faith.

In the name of Jesus, who calls us to love God and neighbour, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for Healing

Would you pray with me:

Gracious God, we know that love is at the heart of our faith, yet we do not always live as lovingly as we intend. Sometimes we become so busy that we overlook someone who needs our attention. Sometimes we hold back our welcome, make assumptions about others, or leave the work of caring to someone else. We may focus on what is wrong rather than noticing what is good. We may become discouraged and forget that even small acts of kindness can make a difference.

Heal us when we have fallen short. Open our eyes to those who feel unseen, our hearts to those who need compassion, and our hands to the work of building a more inclusive and caring community. Help us begin again, trusting that your love continues to call us toward greater kindness, courage, and joy. We pray in the spirit of Jesus, who taught us to love. Amen.

Assurance of God's Love

Hear the good news:

God's love is not a reward for getting everything right. It is a gift that meets us in our struggles, forgives our shortcomings, and invites us to begin again.

We are loved as we are, and we are always invited to grow in love.

May we receive this grace with grateful hearts and extend that same grace to one another. Thanks be to God.

Sign of Peace

Hymn May the Peace of God Be Your Peace

MV 222

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.

Theme Conversation Love Is What Matters Most

Good morning, everyone!

I have a question for you today. Can you show me what love looks like?

(Invite responses. Children might give a hug, smile, or wave.)

Those are wonderful ways to show love! We can show love by giving someone a hug, if they want one. We can smile at someone, share a toy, or help someone who is sad.

Let's try a few together!

Can you give me your biggest, happiest smile? (Smile together.)

Can you wave hello to someone? (Wave.)

Can you pretend to help someone who has fallen down? (Reach out a hand.)

Look at all the ways we can show love!

One day, someone asked Jesus, "What is the most important thing we should do?" Jesus said that we should love God and love other people.

Jesus wanted people to know that love is very important.

Now, we can't always give someone a hug, and sometimes we don't feel like sharing our favourite toy. That's okay! But we can keep finding little ways to be kind.

Let's imagine that a friend is sitting all alone. What could we do?

(Encourage answers: sit beside them, invite them to play, say hello.)

Yes! We could say, "Would you like to play with me?"

And if someone is sad, we might ask, "Are you okay? Can I help?"

When we do these things, we are sharing love.

Let's make a love promise!

Let's put our hands over our hearts.

(Model the action.)

Can you repeat after me?

I can show love!

I can be kind!

I can help my friends!

I can share God's love!

Wonderful! Imagine what our church could be like if we all looked for ways to show love. Everyone would have someone to welcome them, play with them, and care for them. And remember, God loves you, too—not because you are perfect, but simply because you are you!

Dear God,

Thank you for loving us.

Help us to be kind, to share, to help our friends, and to welcome others.

Help us show your love wherever we go. 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.

Listening for Wisdom

Prayer for Wisdom

Loving God, open our hearts and minds to your Word. As we listen to the teachings of Jesus, help us hear anew your call to love you with all that we are and to love our neighbours as ourselves.

May your wisdom challenge us, your grace encourage us, and your Spirit help us discover what draws us together, what brings us joy, and how we can share that joy with others.

May your Word take root in us and guide us toward lives shaped by compassion, justice, and love. Amen.

Scripture Matthew 22:34-46
Maillhot

Donna-Fay

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, an expert in the law, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: "What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They said to him, "The son of David." He said to them, "How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

'The Lord said to my Lord,
"Sit at my right hand,
until I put your enemies under your feet" '?

"If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?" No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

This is wisdom from our ancestors in faith.

Gift of Music "Put Peace into Each Other's Hands"

--- Words by Fred Kaan, music by John Purifoy
--- Tune: ST. COLUMBA (Traditional Irish melody)

Put peace into each other's hands, and like a treasure hold it.

Protect it like a candle flame, with tenderness enfold it.

*Put peace into each other's hands with loving expectation.
Be gentle in your words and ways, in touch with God's creation.*

*Put Christ into each other's hands, He is love's deepest measure.
In love make peace, give peace a chance and share it like a treasure.*

Put peace into each other's hands.

Reflection What Draws Us Together?

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

There is something rather wonderful about the question at the heart of today's Gospel reading. A religious leader asks Jesus which commandment is the greatest. Out of all the teachings, all the laws, all the expectations about how people should live faithfully, which one matters most?

Jesus answers simply: love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. And the second is like it: love your neighbour as yourself.

Love God. Love your neighbour. Everything else hangs on these two commandments.

It sounds straightforward enough. And yet, as we know, love is not always straightforward. It asks something of us. It challenges us. It calls us beyond our own comfort and convenience. And sometimes, it surprises us by showing us that the people we thought were different from us have more in common with us than we imagined.

But today, I want us to approach Jesus' answer from a slightly different direction.

Rather than asking only, How well are we loving God and our neighbours? I invite us to consider three questions: What draws you into this community of

faith? What brings you joy? And how can you help make that joy possible for others?

These are important questions for a congregation, because a community of faith is not simply a building, an organization, or a collection of people who happen to gather on Sunday mornings.

A community of faith is something we create together. It is something we nurture through our relationships, our commitments, our worship, our laughter, our questions, and our care for one another and the wider world. And at its heart, it is meant to be a place where love takes shape.

What draws you into this community of faith?

Perhaps you come because the music lifts your spirits. There is something about singing together that touches a place in us that ordinary conversation cannot always reach.

Perhaps you come because you find meaning in scripture, prayer, and worship. You appreciate the opportunity to pause in the middle of a busy week and consider what matters most.

Perhaps you come because of the people. Someone remembers your name. Someone asks how you are doing and genuinely wants to know the answer. Someone notices when you have been absent and reaches out to see whether you are all right.

Perhaps you come because this is a place where you can bring your questions and doubts without having to hide them. A place where faith is not about having all the answers, but about being willing to explore the questions together.

Perhaps you come because this congregation tries to live out its faith in the world: caring for people who are hungry, welcoming people who have too often been excluded, standing alongside Indigenous peoples in the work of reconciliation, affirming people of every sexual orientation and gender identity, and caring for the Earth that sustains us all.

Or perhaps you come for reasons that are difficult to put into words. Something here feels like home. Something here reminds you that you belong to something larger than yourself.

Whatever draws you here, it matters.

Because these are not merely pleasant extras in the life of a congregation. They are ways that love becomes visible.

When we welcome someone who feels uncertain about whether they will be accepted, we are loving our neighbour.

When we listen to someone who is struggling, without rushing to offer advice or easy answers, we are loving our neighbour.

When we sing, pray, laugh, learn, and share our lives, we are creating opportunities to experience something of the sacred in the midst of ordinary life.

And when we work together for justice, inclusion, and the well-being of our community, we are expressing our love for God through our love for the world God loves.

Jesus brings the commandments together. Love of God and love of neighbour are not competing priorities. They belong together.

Our worship should shape how we live. And the love we practice in our daily lives should find its way back into our worship.

What brings you joy?

This is the second question, and I think it deserves more attention than we sometimes give it.

Church life can easily become a list of responsibilities. There are services to prepare, committees to organize, bills to pay, people to contact, meals to

prepare, and projects that need volunteers. All these things matter. A congregation needs people who are willing to roll up their sleeves and help. But if our life together becomes only a series of tasks, we can lose sight of why we do them in the first place.

Jesus does not say, "The greatest commandment is to keep the institution running." He says, "Love." And love, even when it asks much of us, can bring joy.

There is joy in watching children discover something new about the world and their place in it.

There is joy in hearing a congregation sing with enthusiasm, even when not every note lands exactly where it should.

There is joy in a conversation over coffee that continues long after the service has ended.

There is joy in knowing that someone who was grieving found comfort because you took the time to sit with them.

There is joy in collecting food for the local food bank and knowing that our generosity will help put meals on someone's table.

There is joy in discovering that a person who once felt like an outsider now knows that this is a place where they can be themselves.

And there is joy in working together toward a more compassionate and just world, even when the work is difficult and the results take time.

Not every act of love feels joyful in the moment. Sometimes love requires patience, sacrifice, courage, or difficult conversations. Sometimes the work of justice leaves us tired and discouraged. But there is a deep and sustaining joy in knowing that our lives are contributing to something worthwhile.

Perhaps that is one of the gifts of a community of faith: we remind one another of that joy when it becomes difficult to see it for ourselves.

We celebrate together. We grieve together. We encourage one another when hope feels fragile. We remind each other that even small acts of kindness can make a difference. And sometimes, when one of us has lost sight of the light, someone else carries it for a while. That, too, is love.

How can you help make this happen? This is the third question, and perhaps the most challenging one. It is easy to think of a congregation as something that other people create for us. We arrive, participate in worship, enjoy the music, have a conversation, and then return to our lives. There is nothing wrong with receiving the gifts of community. We all need places where we can be cared for, supported, and nourished.

But Jesus' commandments invite us to consider another possibility.

What if we are not simply recipients of love, but its everyday practitioners? What if the community we cherish depends, in part, on the love we are willing to offer?

We do not all have the same gifts, the same abilities, the same energy, or the same amount of time. Nor should we expect everyone to contribute in the same way.

Some people are gifted at welcoming newcomers. Others are good listeners. Some enjoy working with children; others find meaning in pastoral care, music, outreach, administration, or the practical tasks that keep a congregation functioning.

Some can give many hours. Others, because of age, health, work, family responsibilities, or other circumstances, have much less to offer in practical ways.

And some people are in a season of life when what they most need is to receive care rather than provide it.

There is room for all of this in a loving community.

Our worth is not measured by how many committees we serve on or how much work we accomplish. We do not earn our place here through usefulness. We belong because we are human beings, worthy of dignity, care, and love. But each of us, in whatever way is possible, can help create the kind of community that draws people in and brings them joy. Perhaps you could learn the name of someone you have not met before.

Perhaps you could make a phone call to someone who has been away for a while.

Perhaps you could offer to help with a task you enjoy, rather than taking on another responsibility out of obligation.

Perhaps you could share an idea for making our worship more meaningful, our welcome more genuine, or our outreach more effective.

Perhaps you could be the person who notices when someone is standing alone, or who makes room at the table for someone who is unsure whether they belong.

Perhaps you could encourage someone else to share a gift they have been hesitant to offer.

Or perhaps your contribution right now is simply to show up, to be present, to allow yourself to be known, and to receive the care that others offer.

These may seem like small things. But communities are built through small things, repeated with care.

Love is rarely an abstract idea. More often, it is a series of ordinary choices: to listen, to welcome, to forgive, to speak up, to share, to include, to try again. And when enough people make those choices, something extraordinary can happen.

A congregation becomes more than the sum of its activities. It becomes a community where people can discover that they matter, that their gifts are valued, and that they do not have to face life's challenges alone.

In the second part of today's Gospel reading, Jesus asks the Pharisees a question about the Messiah. The conversation becomes complicated, and the passage ends without a simple resolution. Perhaps that is fitting.

Faith does not always give us easy answers. Our communities will not always agree. We will sometimes disappoint one another. We will make mistakes, fall short of our intentions, and need to begin again.

Loving God and loving our neighbours does not mean that we will always get everything right.

It means that love remains our guiding commitment. When we lose our way, we return to it. When we hurt one another, we seek repair. When we discover that our welcome has not been as wide as we imagined, we make room for more people. When injustice is present, we do not simply pray for a better world; we work toward one.

And when we become discouraged, we remember that we do not do this work alone. We are part of a community of people who are learning, growing, questioning, serving, and hoping together.

So I invite you to carry three questions with you this week.

What draws you into this community of faith? Take a moment to recognize the gifts you receive here, the people who have touched your life, and the experiences that help you feel connected to something sacred.

What brings you joy? Notice the moments when you feel most alive, most connected, most aware that love is making a difference. Let those moments guide you toward the things that matter most.

And how can you help make this happen? Not by doing everything. Not by taking on every responsibility. Not by trying to be someone you are not. But by offering, in your own way, what you can offer.

A kind word.

A listening ear.

A generous spirit.

A willingness to learn.

A commitment to justice.

A hand extended in welcome.

A heart open to the possibility that we might become a little more loving than we were yesterday.

Jesus tells us that all the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments: love God, and love your neighbour as yourself.

May these commandments be more than words we hear on a Sunday morning.

May they shape the community we create, the joy we share, the welcome we extend, and the world we help to build.

And may those who enter our doors discover something of God's love here—not because we are perfect, but because we are willing to practice love together.

Responding in Thanksgiving

Hymn Spirit, Open My Heart

MV 79

Refrain:

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.

As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,

Spirit, open my heart.

1. God, replace my stony heart
with a heart that's kind and tender.

All my coldness and fear
to your grace I now surrender.

2. Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
may my living bring you glory.
3. May I weep with those who weep,
share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ,
may we welcome one another.

Invitation to Give

Jesus reminds us that the greatest commandments are to love God and to love our neighbours as ourselves. We live out that love in many ways: through a welcoming smile, a listening ear, a meal shared, a commitment to justice, and care for those who are struggling. Our offerings are another way we put love into action. Through our gifts of money, time, energy, and ability, we help nurture this community of faith and extend its care into the wider world. Let us give with grateful hearts, trusting that what we share can help create a community where love is experienced, hope is nurtured, and everyone is invited to belong.

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 and loving God, we offer these gifts in gratitude for all that draws us together: the friendships we cherish, the faith that sustains us, the music that lifts our spirits, and the opportunities we have to make a difference.

Bless these offerings and the many gifts of service that accompany them. May they support those in need, strengthen our congregation's ministry, promote justice and inclusion, and help care for the Earth we share.

May our giving be an expression of our love for you and our neighbours, and may everything we offer help create a world where compassion flourishes and all people know they belong. In gratitude and hope, we pray. 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

Who Is My Mother?

MV 178

1. Who is my mother, who is my brother?
All those who gather round Jesus Christ:
Spirit blown people born from the Gospel
sit at the table, round Jesus Christ.
2. Differently abled, differently labelled,
widen the circle round Jesus Christ:
crutches and stigmas, culture's enigmas,
all come together round Jesus Christ.
3. Love will relate us colour or status
can't segregate us round Jesus Christ:
family failings, human derailings
all are accepted round Jesus Christ.
4. Bound by one vision, met for one mission
we claim each other, round Jesus Christ:
here is my mother, here is my brother,
kindred in Spirit, through Jesus Christ. Amen!

Sending Forth

Go now with hearts renewed by worship and strengthened by love.
Remember what draws you into this community of faith. Cherish what brings
you joy. And look for the ways you can help make that joy possible for others.

Welcome someone who feels uncertain. Listen to someone who needs to be
heard. Offer your gifts in ways that bring life and hope. Stand alongside those
who seek justice, dignity, and belonging.

You do not have to do everything. You need only be willing to let love guide
the next step.

Go in peace, trusting that God's love goes with you, Christ's example inspires you, and the Spirit continues to work through you and through this community.

May we love generously, serve joyfully, and make room for everyone.

Sung Amen

VU 968

Music for the Journey

"Festival March"

End of Worship / Beginning of Service

Thank you to those who have joined us this morning for worship.

We invite those here to join us in Fraser Hall, follow the service, for a time of fellowship & refreshments.

Musical Acknowledgements

- This Sunday's organ prelude is by Colin Mawby (1936-2019), an English organist, choral conductor and composer.
- The postlude is by Norman Warren (1942-2021), an English composer of many hymns and organ pieces as well as the author of "Journey Into Life."
- The lyrics of today's choir anthem are by Fred Kaan (1929-2009), a hymn writer who frequently collaborated with Ron Klusmeier, former music director of Glebe-St. James.

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SAVE THE DATE – Tuesday, November 3rd
Our next Congregational Conversation –
Tuesday, November 3rd, 7pm to 9pm at the church.
More details to follow.

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