

# The Glebe-St. James United Church

Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 25, 2026

## Gathered by God

### PREPARING OUR HEARTS FOR WORSHIP

"Arsarnerit (Northern Lights): A Greenlandic Scherzo"

Adrian Vernon Fish

### WELCOME

Kelly Boehme

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 Sunday, January 25th.

My name is Kelly Boehme and I am a member of the choir. ***[What attracted you to GSJ and why do you stay?]***

We're so glad you're here today. Whether you're a first-time guest or a longtime member, whether you are joining us in person or online, we hope you feel at home. This is a place of faith, love, and community. Glebe-St. James is an Affirming Community of Faith in the United Church of Canada. 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.

Friends, note who is seated near you, introduce yourself and invite them to join us for a time of fellowship in Fraser Hall after the service. We also encourage everyone to wear a name tag – they are available at the entrances to the church. Our newer members have told us how important it is to feeling welcome to get to know each other by name. And as I get older, I find it useful for those “senior moments” when I can't recall the names of the people I already know!

If you are new to Glebe-St. James and want more information, just fill out one of the green cards that are available near the entrances, place it on the offering plate or give it to one of the greeters and they will pass it into the office.

Today's worship service bulletin can be found on the GSJ website, along with a link to this week's announcements and a "donate" button to make your offering. If you are here in person, you can share your offering in the service, either in the collection plate, by e-transfer or through our website – the QR code, found on the back of the pews, will take you to the website.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This is a busy community, and lots is going on. I will just highlight a few announcements, but you will find a more complete list on our website and scrolling on the screens here in the sanctuary before and after our service.

### **It's a new year and we need volunteers.**

Our leadership team seeks thoughtful people who want to contribute to the future of this church. If you are interested, please connect with Pam Fitch at coffee hour. We also need coffee hosts, welcome readers, scripture readers and people to offer land acknowledgements during our services. If you have never tried any of these jobs but think you might like to help, talk with Pam or Liz Elton or check out the volunteering section on the website. And if you are concerned that you won't know what to do, we will make sure you get support and mentoring from our more experienced members.

Today, after worship, we will gather for a brief presentation on our roofing project, costs and next steps as we begin our fundraising campaign

On Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, we will have a Congregational Conversation here in the sanctuary, immediately following our worship service. As a follow-up to our November conversation, we will begin discussing the building and its importance to our spiritual life. Before the meeting starts, we'll gather for our usual coffee hour in Fraser Hall. You may also wish to bring your lunch or something to share to supplement the usual coffee hour offerings before the meeting starts.

And now, let's acknowledge the land on which our sanctuary stands.

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Pam Fitch

Good morning friends. This beautiful sanctuary was designed and built in 1905 by architect, JHW Watts. He was engaged to create a formal Presbyterian church at the corner of First and Lyon, following the Glebe Mission's work at Third Avenue and O'Connor. When colonial settlers and town planners explored what we now know as "the Glebe", they saw scrub land, a great swamp and a river and claimed it for themselves. In fact, the lands of our neighbourhood

occupied unceded and unsundered lands of the Algonquin people who stewarded the rivers, hunted for food and grew crops here for many generations.

The month of January is significant for First Nations People because the deep cold of winter inspires spiritual grounding and reflection. There is even a National Ribbon Skirt Day on January 4th that honours Indigenous identity and resilience. We acknowledge that Glebe-St. James was built by people who knew nothing of or ignored the land's origins or teachings of the Algonquin People. It is our responsibility to rectify this wrong by learning about Indigenous history, culture and engaging deeply with and honouring those who were here first. We are grateful and we acknowledge that we have so much to learn.

### **LIGHTING OF CHRIST CANDLE**

The season of Epiphany begins with the Magi from a distant land following the star to the child Jesus. They were the first sign that Jesus was a gift for everyone.

**May we continue to seek Christ's enlightening spirit in the company of all people.**  
We gather in the light of Christ.

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Children of God, when fears press in on every side, we can proclaim with confidence:

**God is our light and salvation! Whom shall we fear?**

When our problems overwhelm us and we feel pressed in on every side,  
we can declare with confidence:

**God is the stronghold of our lives! Of whom shall we be afraid?**

No matter the troubles we face, we seek after God and to live in the house of God forever.

**God shelters and protects us in the day of trouble.**

Come, let us worship God with joy, for God is our light and salvation!

**We come to worship as bearers of the Light. Thanks be to God! Amen.**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

We come into your presence, God most holy, in awe and wonder at your great love for us all, no matter who we are, no matter what we've done. Open our hearts to your holy wisdom.

Help us, we pray, to share your love with the world, just as the Wise Ones shared their gifts with the Christ at the first Epiphany. Jesus you are the Light of Revelation, share that gift of light with us that we too might shine with God's light.

In his name, and in your love, we pray. Amen!

1. **God of the Bible, God in the Gospel,  
hope seen in Jesus, hope yet to come,  
you are our centre, daylight or darkness,  
freedom or prison, you are our home.**

*Refrain: (repeat 2 times)*

**Fresh as the morning, sure as the sunrise,  
God always faithful, you do not change.**

2. **God in our struggles, God in our hunger,  
suffering with us, taking our part,  
still you empow'r us, mothering Spirit,  
feeding, sustaining, from your own heart.**
3. **Those without status, those who are nothing,  
you have made royal, gifted with rights,  
chosen as partners, midwives of justice,  
birthing new systems, lighting new lights.**
4. **Not by your finger, not by your anger  
will our world order change in a day,  
but by your people, fearless and faithful,  
small paper lanterns, lighting the way.**
5. **Hope we must carry, shining and certain  
through all our turmoil, terror and loss,  
bonding us gladly one to the other,  
till our world changes facing the Cross.**

## **CALL TO HEALING**

Friends, every day we are given choices –  
the choice to be a friend, to be an ally, to extend a welcoming hand.  
Some days we choose wisely, but from time to time, we inevitably get it wrong.

That is one of the many reasons we need the Prayer for Healing.  
In this moment of prayer, we can practice the art of forgiving ourselves and others,  
and being forgiven by one greater than ourselves.  
So join me in this transformative moment.  
Join me in receiving grace. Let us pray.

## PRAYER FOR HEALING

Holy Christ,  
we come to You knowing that sometimes we wander away  
from your dreams for us.  
We have followed the paths of convenience,  
turned away from our brothers and sisters in need  
in order to satisfy our own needs.  
You gave your life for us,  
and yet we are willing to give so little at times.  
Forgive us for not recognizing your sacrifice of love,  
to live for others instead of ourselves.  
Call us back to your Way.  
In your precious name, we pray. Amen.

## ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE

Christ continues to lay down his life for us,  
so that we might have life.  
Christ continues to show us the way,  
so that we might live into the truth and the life.  
Christ continues to love us,  
so that we might love God and love our neighbors as ourselves.  
Know that you are healed, loved, and given new life. Amen.

## SIGN OF PEACE

One of the ways we are recognized as followers of the Way of Christ,  
is by the light and love we share with one another.  
It is in remembering this light and love that I say to you:

Friends, the peace of Christ be with you!  
**And also with you.**

**HYMN** Hope Shines as the Solitary Star

MV 220

**Hope shines as the solitary star,  
faith is the inner light,  
You and I together mirror the Light of Lights,  
and illumines the pathway home**

# Listening for Wisdom

## THEME CONVERSATION

## PRAYER FOR INSIGHT

Breathe on us, Breath of God, and enlighten us with understanding. May these words take root and grow within our spirits. Amen.

## EPISTLE 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Donna-Fay Mailhot

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you but that you be knit together in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been made clear to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name. I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel—and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

This is God's wisdom from our ancestors in faith.

## GIFT OF MUSIC

"There Is a Saviour"

Greg Nelson, Bob Farrell and Sandi Patty  
arranged by Mary MacDonald

There is a Saviour, what joys express;  
His eyes are mercy, his Word is rest.  
For each tomorrow, for yesterday,  
There is a Saviour who lights our way.

Are there burdens in your heart, is your past a mem'ry that binds you?  
Is there some pain that you've carried far too long?

Then strengthen your heart with good news:  
There is a Saviour and he's forgiven you!

How marvelous! How wonderful!  
And my song shall ever be;  
How marvelous! How wonderful! is my Saviour's love for me!

There is a Saviour, what joys express;  
His eyes are mercy, his Word is rest.  
For each tomorrow, for yesterday,  
There is a Saviour who lights my way.  
There is a Saviour who lights my way.

**GOSPEL**      Matthew 4:12-23

Donna-Fay Mailhot

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,  
on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—  
the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death  
light has dawned.”

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

This is God’s wisdom from our ancestors in faith.

The calling of the first disciples in the Gospel of Matthew can seem unrealistic or even fantastical. Jesus walks along the Sea of Galilee and calls two sets of brothers, Peter and Andrew, James and John, as they go about their daily routine as fishermen. In both instances, the response to Jesus' call is immediate. All four men "immediately" drop what they are doing, leave their previous lives behind, and follow after Jesus. James and John make such a quick and hasty departure that they leave behind their no doubt dumbstruck father Zebedee without even saying goodbye. The whole scene can feel intimidating to most who have come to their faith in Christ in a far more gradual and halting way.

It does not take a reader long, however, to come to understand that the immediacy with which these four fishermen answer the call does not mean that life as a disciple of Jesus is any easier for them. James and John—sometimes dubbed "the sons of thunder"—are frequently quarrelsome and routinely vie for prominence amongst the disciples. Jesus, tired of their ambitions, chastises them for their request to sit at his side in glory. And Peter denies Jesus three times when he needs him the most. The gospels repeatedly testify to the fact that, however readily the disciples initially respond to the call of Jesus, they are just as flawed, fallible, and full of fear as anyone else. They struggle to follow Jesus and struggle to live in community with one another. There are frequent moments of division and discord.

This dynamic is also lifted up in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth, as he writes to an early Christian community rife with division. Paul writes to these Corinthians with deep concern of reports he has heard of the community quarrelling with one another and separating themselves into factions. In Paul's absence, the faith in Christ has devolved into a battle for control, as one group seeks supremacy over the others or tries to elevate one leader over another. Petty squabbles increasingly dominate the landscape. This, for Paul, diminishes not only the unity of the body of Christ but also the proclamation of the gospel of Christ crucified. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

It is an understatement to say that the present times challenge the whole church with deep divisions. Political polarization, social media echo chambers, and constant distrust in the world not only challenge the church to respond beyond its walls but also continue to challenge it from within. The church is always called to unity if not uniformity so that, as Paul puts it, the church may remain of the same mind and purpose. And yet, divisions and disagreements of all sorts persist.

The witness and work of the church are all too often diminished by such divisions that can reflect the same kinds of quarrels the early church experienced in Corinth. Even with shrinking



numbers, decaying properties, and threats to viability, the witness to the Gospel is continually hindered by posturing for power; by the temptation to act out of a loss of control; and by internal tensions of every shape and flavour.

Amid these divisions within the church and the world, the answer must lie in the persistent call of the seemingly “foolish” message of the cross of Christ. What might it look like to embrace this cruciform faith amid the divisive landscape of today? How might a reassertion of the centrality of the cross help guide the way to resurrection and new life? And where is the good news to be found in the challenges of this present moment?

Pope Francis seems to have responded to such queries when he made a “poor church for the poor” a central theme at the outset of his papacy. Inspired by the life and witness of his namesake, the 13<sup>th</sup>-century saint, Francis of Assisi, Pope Francis’ thematic focus was grounded upon a call for a humble and austere church that focuses itself on ministry to those on the margins, following in the footsteps of Jesus. As Pope Francis quickly ruffled feathers with this focal point, embodying this call for a church that is poor invites a way of life radically different from the ways of this world.

A “poor church” is a church that does not exist to assert itself—not the grandeur of its sacred spaces, not the pomp and circumstance of its cherished ways of worship, not the authority it believes it should have in society—but rather exists “to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might be emptied of its power.” For Pope Francis, this meant laying down some of the trappings of papal ceremonial authority. It meant repurposing church property or financial resources for ministry to the poor, and it meant a willingness to sometimes even transgress long-held assumptions of who was welcome into the household of God. To some, such actions seemed foolish, but they bear witness to the power of God made perfect in weakness.

Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee during a dark and difficult time. His cousin, John the Baptist, had been arrested. Many of the impoverished and oppressed people around him occupied a land that seemed shrouded in darkness and despair.

In that context, Jesus begins his ministry by promising a great light through the inbreaking kingdom of God. The church exists to carry forward that ministry by, as Matthew’s gospel puts it, being “salt” and “light” for the world. The church exists to illuminate the darkest of places by proclaiming the good news of the gospel and following in the footsteps of Jesus. In other words, the church exists for just such a time of this; a time full of division, doubt, and despair.

The invitation is to repeatedly embody the good news of the gospels by claiming this calling not for our own sakes, but for the welfare and well-being of the world that God has made and

loves so very much. This requires a way of life that may look and feel foolish, given the ways of this world. This great and wondrous calling demands the church remain united in prayer and worship, grounded in love, and ever committed to the cruciform way of Jesus.

A “poor church for the poor” offers a way when it may seem like there is no way. The way of humility, austerity, and simplicity of life—embodied by that poor man from Assisi—may just be the key for the church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, amid all the darkness and divisions of our world. The cruciform way may not only offer a path to transcend our divisions, but also to guide all God’s people—and indeed the whole human family—towards resurrection and new life.

How shall we answer this call? What shall we do? Will we throw down our nets and follow?  
Food for thought.

## **Responding in Thanksgiving**

**HYMN** Blessed Are You Who Are Poor

TLUS 128

**Blessed are you who are poor –  
yours is the kingdom of God.  
Blessed are you who are hungry  
for you will be filled.**

**Blessed are you who now weep –  
laughter will surely come.  
Blessed are you who are hated –  
hated for my sake.**

**One day you will rejoice,  
you will leap for joy.  
Blessings abundant will follow  
as you dwell in God.**

**Woe unto you who are rich –  
for you possess your reward.  
Woe unto you who have plenty –  
you will feel your want.**

**Woe unto you who rejoice –  
soon you will weep and mourn.  
Woe unto you who are followed –  
popular, but false.**

**Give your whole heart to God,  
love and serve the poor.  
Always treat one another  
kindly and with grace.**

#### **INVITATION TO GIVE**

We are called to be the embodiment of God's Word. We are called to use our whole selves to care for creation, community, and the church. You are invited to share your financial gifts for the ministry and work of both this community of faith and Mission and Service. Together we will speak God's kin-dom into being.

#### **OFFERING HYMN    All Is Given for the Glory of God**

(Verse 4) MV 34

**All is giv'n for the glory of God.  
Amen! Amen!  
All depends upon our glorious God.  
Amen! Amen!  
Amen! Amen! Amen!  
All is giv'n for the glory of God.  
Amen! Amen!**

#### **OFFERING PRAYER**

There is so much that needs doing, O God, and we have no magic wand to get it done without effort, and no gold, frankincense, and myrrh to finance our efforts.

Here is our offering, but we also present our lives so that, in your grace, all of our offerings may meet the needs to which they are directed. Give us wisdom and courage as we seek to offer all that we are in your work. Amen.

#### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE    Light of Christ**

*Gathering*

**Light of Christ shine in and through me,  
Light of Love be with me now.  
Take these hands, healing hands.  
Light of Christ flow through me now.**

## **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.**

## **Sent by the Spirit**

**HYMN** Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah

VU 651

- 1. Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but thou art mighty,  
hold me with thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
feed me till I want no more,  
feed me till I want no more.**
- 2. Open now the crystal fountain,  
whence the healing stream doth flow;  
let the fire and cloudy pillar  
lead me all my journey through.  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,  
be thou still my strength and shield,  
be thou still my strength and shield.**
- 3. When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
bid my anxious fears subside;  
death of death, and hell's destruction,  
land me safe on Canaan's side:**

**songs of praises, songs of praises  
I will ever give to thee,  
I will ever give to thee.**

#### **SENDING FORTH**

May blessings abound around you this day.  
Feeling God's loving presence among us, let us go forth into the world,  
allowing our light to shine on all we meet.

#### **MUSIC TO SEND US FORTH**

"Go Forth With Purpose"

James Mansfield

## ***End of Worship – Beginning of Service***

#### **MUSICAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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**We welcome you and thank you for joining us this morning.  
Please join us in Fraser Hall following the service for coffee and fellowship.**

#### **Entering 2026 on a Solid Footing!**

Congratulations, GSJ has successfully balanced their 2025 budget with a small surplus! You are amazing. We are well positioned to face whatever 2026 has in store for us.

#### **Roofing Project Information Session**

Join us after worship for a brief presentation on the roofing project, costs and next steps as we begin our fundraising campaign.

#### **Name tags:**

If you ordered a name tag before Christmas, please check with Alex in the office. They are in.  
Cost is \$ 25.00

## **Congregational Conversation**

Sunday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, after Coffee Hour.

As a follow-up to our November conversation, we will be starting to talk about the building and its importance to our spiritual life.



Shrove Tuesday  
February 17<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 to 7 pm  
Admission: Donation at the Door

Ash Wednesday will follow the Pancake Supper

## ***Our Ministry Team...***

Coordinating Minister: Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole, ex 24; [Revtbc.gsj@gmail.com](mailto:Revtbc.gsj@gmail.com)

Children's Church Leader: Kayla Cseh, ex 22; [Childrenchurch.gsj@gmail.com](mailto:Childrenchurch.gsj@gmail.com)

Minister of Music: Paul Grose, ex 25; [min.music.gsj@gmail.com](mailto:min.music.gsj@gmail.com)

Accounts: Lori Stinson, ex 23; [accts.glebestjames@gmail.com](mailto:accts.glebestjames@gmail.com)

Church Administrator: Jennifer Reid, ex 21; [admin@glebestjames.ca](mailto:admin@glebestjames.ca)

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**Glebe-St. James United Church**  
**650 Lyon St. S., Ottawa, ON K1S 3Z7**

**[admin@glebestjames.ca](mailto:admin@glebestjames.ca)**

**[www.glebestjames.ca](http://www.glebestjames.ca)**

**613-236-0617, x 21**