

# Glebe-St. James United Church

**Pride Sunday**

**June 28, 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

Shout to the Lord

Peggy Betcher

### 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 Sunday, June 14.

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

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.

On June 10, 1925, The United Church of Canada was born after much consultation, compromise, and listening for the Spirit. In 1988, The United Church of Canada decided that sexual orientation would no longer be a barrier to membership in the United Church and hence to candidacy for ministry. In 2009, gender identity was added to that decision. Today we celebrate Pride in many United Churches across the country.

Some of us come today celebrating and knowing lots about Pride. Some come today celebrating and knowing a little about Pride. And some of us come today not sure what to expect but here to learn what we can. So, let's begin with a bit of background.

Pride is a positive stance against discrimination and violence toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and gender-fluid people. Pride is also a chance to promote self-affirmation, dignity, equality, and fundamental human rights, and to celebrate in a safe environment.

The Pride Parade has its roots in a 1970 march in New York City, which marked this LGBTQ community's first resistance to police brutality, oppression, and human rights violations that had resulted in the Stonewall riots a year earlier, in 1969. It was the transgendered folk who led the protest. Since the 1980s, this liberation movement has morphed into the Pride movement. Parades, festivities, and celebrations are held to mark improved rights for this marginalized community, supported by allies of all walks of life, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people.

## **Announcements**

Work on the roof starts this week. Please note there is no parking available in the parking lot until the roof work is finished.

**Summer services** – Once again, this summer we will join with St. Giles Presbyterian and Southminster United at 10 am over the summer. Services will be held here at Glebe-St. James on July 5, 12 and 19<sup>th</sup>. Southminster will host on July 26, August 2 & 9<sup>th</sup> and St. Giles on August 16, 23 & 30<sup>th</sup>. We are back at Glebe-St. James on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

Information on the church services and updates on the roofing work will be sent out periodically throughout the summer and can be found on the website

## **Land Acknowledgement**

Rebecca Dalton

My name is Rebecca and I am a settler on the unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. Today, Ottawa and the National Capital Region is a gathering place for First Nations, Inuit and Métis from across Canada and they contribute to our society and well-being.

As we take a summer pause, I note that in many Canadian Indigenous cultures, such as those of the Anishinaabe, Cree and Mi'Kmaq, there is no traditional word for 'good bye' because it implies a finality that contradicts the belief in eternal connection. Instead, partings are seen as temporary pauses, expressing hope that paths will cross again.

Some examples are:

In Ojibwe: Baamaapii (until later in time) Phonetic: Bah ma pee

Cree: Pitama (For now/until later) Phonetic: Pi Tah mah

Mi'Kmaq: wijei aq nmultes (I will see you again)

Phonetic: Wee -jay ahk n-mool des

## **Candle Lighting** Dance with the Spirit

MV 156

**Dance with the Spirit early in the mornin',  
walk with the Spirit throughout the long day.  
Work and hope for the new life a-born-in',  
listen to the Spirit to show you the way.**

## **Call to Worship/Opening Prayer**

Creating God—God beyond Gender,  
**who makes no mistakes,  
who surprises us always,  
who molded the first person both male and female,  
who molded the first non-gendered human  
who loves all creation.**

Help us love the diversity of your creation.

**Help us accept all varieties of gender in ourselves and in others.  
Help us celebrate those who are different from us  
that we may learn to love each other as you love us,  
we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, both human and divine. Amen.**

**Opening Hymn Let Us Build A House**

**MV 1**

**Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live,  
a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace;  
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew.  
Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat;  
a banquet hall on holy ground, where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space;  
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone  
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known.  
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face;  
let us bring an end to fear and danger:  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.**

**Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace;  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:  
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.**

## **Sign of Peace**

Family of faith, God's grace is good news.  
God's grace is worth celebrating!  
So in the spirit of joy and abundant gratitude,  
we are going to celebrate this gift by  
passing the peace with our neighbours.

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

**Hymn** Peace for the Children

MV 149

- 1. Peace for the children, peace, peace.  
Peace for the children we pray.  
Following the path of One of peace,  
we work for healing, we work for peace;  
peace for the children today.**
  
- 7. Peace for the planet, peace, peace.  
Peace for the planet, we pray.  
Following the path of One of peace,  
We work for healing, we work for peace,  
Peace for the children today.**

## **Listening for Wisdom**

**Theme Conversation** The Rainbow Sheep

Jem Maracle

### **Lighting of the Red Candle**

We light the red candle, symbolizing life in all its richness and passion.

### **Lighting of the Orange Candle**

We light the orange candle, symbolizing healing.

### **Lighting of the Yellow Candle**

We light the yellow candle, symbolizing sunlight.

### **Lighting of the Green Candle**

We light the green candle, symbolizing nature.

### **Lighting of the Blue Candle**

We light the blue candle, symbolizing harmony.

### **Lighting of the Purple Candle**

We light the blue candle, symbolizing Spirit.

### **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.**

**Habits of peace and justice,  
habits of peace and justice,  
habits of 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.

When they got to Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas were graciously received by the whole church, including the apostles and leaders. They reported on their recent journey and how God had used them to open things up to the outsiders. Some Pharisees stood up to say their piece. They had become believers, but continued to hold to the hard party line of the Pharisees. “You have to circumcise the pagan converts,” they said. “You must make them keep the Law of Moses.”

The apostles and leaders called a special meeting to consider the matter. The arguments went on and on, back and forth, getting more and more heated. Then Peter took the floor: “Friends, you well know that from early on God made it quite plain that he wanted the pagans to hear the Message of this good news and embrace it—and not in any secondhand or roundabout way, but firsthand, straight from my mouth. And God, who can’t be fooled by any pretense on our part but always knows a person’s thoughts, gave them the Holy Spirit exactly as he gave him to us. He treated the outsiders exactly as he treated us, beginning at the very center of who they were and working from that center outward, cleaning up their lives as they trusted and believed him.

“So why are you now trying to out-god God, loading these new believers down with rules that crushed our ancestors and crushed us, too? Don’t we believe that we are saved because the Master Jesus amazingly and out of sheer generosity moved to save us just as he did those from beyond our nation? So what are we arguing about?”

There was dead silence. No one said a word. With the room quiet, Barnabas and Paul reported matter-of-factly on the miracles and wonders God had done among the other nations through their ministry. The silence deepened; you could hear a pin drop.

James broke the silence. “Friends, listen. Simeon has told us the story of how God at the very outset made sure that racial outsiders were included. This is in perfect agreement with the words of the prophets:

After this, I’m coming back;  
I’ll rebuild David’s ruined house;

I'll put all the pieces together again;  
I'll make it look like new  
So outsiders who seek will find,  
so they'll have a place to come to,  
All the pagan peoples  
included in what I'm doing.

"God said it and now he's doing it. It's no afterthought; he's always known he would do this.

This is wisdom from the Acts of the Apostles.

### **Gift of Music**

Land of Rest (*piano solo*)

Joseph Martin

### **Reflection** The Next Circle

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

The story from Acts 15 is one of those moments when the church had to decide whether it would follow its fears or follow the Spirit.

The question before the leaders in Jerusalem seemed straightforward enough. Some believers were insisting that Gentile converts should first adopt the customs and practices of Judaism before being welcomed fully into the church. Others disagreed.

But beneath the theological arguments lay a deeper question:

#### **Who belongs?**

Who belongs exactly as they are?

Who gets a place at the table?

Who is included in the "we" when we talk about the people of God?

For the earliest followers of Jesus, these were not abstract questions. They touched the very heart of their identity. For centuries, Jewish law and tradition had shaped their understanding of who they were. The boundaries mattered. They provided coherence, meaning, and belonging.

Then along came the Holy Spirit.

And the Spirit had a habit of crossing boundaries.

The Spirit showed up among Samaritans.

The Spirit showed up among foreigners.

The Spirit showed up among Gentiles.

And every time it happened, the church was forced to ask itself whether its boundaries were too small for God's love.

Peter's argument is strikingly simple. He doesn't say, "I've won the theological debate." He doesn't say, "The scriptures are perfectly clear."

Instead, he points to what he has witnessed.

God has given the Holy Spirit to these people.

God has blessed them.

God has worked through them.

God has claimed them.

And if that is true, Peter asks, who are we to stand in the way?

The church decides that Gentiles belong.

Today, we celebrate that decision because most of us are beneficiaries of it. We are the people who would once have been considered outsiders. We are here because the church eventually recognized that God's grace was larger than its assumptions.

That pattern repeats throughout Christian history.

Again and again, the church encounters people whom it struggles to accept.

Again and again, the church draws lines.

Again and again, the Spirit steps across them.

And eventually, often reluctantly, the church follows.

On Pride Sunday, we remember one of those struggles.

For generations, LGBTQ+ people were told they did not belong. They were welcomed conditionally, if at all. Many were told that their relationships, identities, or very existence placed them outside God's love.

Yet LGBTQ+ Christians continued to pray, worship, serve, and testify to God's presence in their lives.

Many churches began to see what Peter saw among the Gentiles: evidence of the Holy Spirit.

Gifts of leadership.

Deep faith.

Compassion.

Wisdom.

Joy.

Love.

The question became impossible to ignore: if God is already present here, who are we to stand in the way?

The United Church of Canada wrestled with those questions for decades. The journey was not easy. It involved disagreement, pain, and loss. But many congregations eventually came to understand that LGBTQ+ inclusion was not about lowering standards or abandoning faith.

It was about recognizing God's work in people's lives.

It was about widening the circle.

But Pride Sunday presents us with another question.

If the church in Acts struggled to welcome Gentiles, and if many churches have struggled to welcome LGBTQ+ people, then we should ask ourselves:

**Who do we struggle with now?**

Because history suggests that every generation has its outsiders.

Every generation has people whom it finds difficult to understand.

Every generation has people whom it would rather keep at a distance.

And every generation is tempted to believe that this time, unlike all the previous times, the boundaries are justified.

That is the uncomfortable question of Acts 15.

Not who our ancestors excluded.

Not who other churches exclude.

Who do we struggle with?

Who makes us uncomfortable?

Who do we find difficult to welcome?

Who would we rather not sit beside?

Who causes us to quietly wonder whether they really belong?

Perhaps it is people whose politics differ dramatically from our own.

That may be especially challenging in our current moment. We live in a time of profound polarization. It is easy to sort people into camps and dismiss those on the other side.

Many progressive Christians rightly feel alarmed by political movements that threaten human rights, democratic institutions, or vulnerable communities.

Those concerns are real.

Yet even while resisting harmful ideas, we face a spiritual challenge: can we still recognize the humanity of those with whom we disagree?

Can we remember that God's image remains present even in people whose views we oppose?

That does not mean abandoning our convictions.

It means refusing to abandon our compassion.

Or perhaps the people we struggle with are those living with addictions.

Too often our society treats addiction as a moral failure rather than a complex human reality. People become defined by their struggles rather than their dignity.

Yet Jesus consistently moved toward those whom society had written off.

Perhaps the Spirit is calling us to do the same.

Perhaps we struggle with unhoused people.

Or people living with severe mental illness.

Or refugees.

Or newcomers whose languages and customs differ from our own.

Or people whose experiences of faith look very different from ours.

Or people whose anger, pain, or fear make them difficult to love.

The list could be long.

The specifics will differ from person to person.

What matters is not identifying a single group.

What matters is recognizing the tendency within ourselves.

The tendency to divide the world into insiders and outsiders.

The tendency to create categories of belonging.

The tendency to imagine that God's grace has limits.

Jesus spent much of his ministry challenging exactly that tendency.

Again and again, he ate with people others rejected.

Again and again, he crossed social boundaries.

Again and again, he extended dignity where others extended judgment.

Not because everyone was right.

Not because harmful behaviour did not matter.

But because every person mattered.

The gospel consistently places human dignity before social categories.

That does not mean every idea is equally valid.

It does not mean we stop working for justice.

It does not mean abandoning accountability.

The church's commitment to LGBTQ+ inclusion, racial justice, Indigenous reconciliation, and economic justice remains essential.

But justice and exclusion are not the same thing.

The goal is not to create new outsiders.

The goal is to build communities where dignity, compassion, and accountability can coexist.

The challenge of Acts 15 is not simply that the church welcomed Gentiles.

The challenge is that the church allowed itself to be changed by the encounter.

The leaders listened.

They learned.

They paid attention to the evidence of grace.

They discovered that God was already at work where they least expected.

And that discovery transformed them.

Perhaps that is what the Spirit continues to do today.

Perhaps the Spirit is always inviting us toward the next circle.

The next widening of the table.

The next expansion of our understanding.

The next opportunity to discover God's presence where we had not thought to look.

That does not happen by abandoning discernment.

It happens by practicing humility.

Humility allows us to ask difficult questions.

Humility allows us to acknowledge that we do not see everything clearly.

Humility allows us to remain open to surprise.

And the God of scripture is always surprising people.

On this Pride Sunday, we celebrate how the church has grown in its understanding of LGBTQ+ inclusion. We celebrate lives lived openly and authentically. We celebrate communities that have become more welcoming and more just.

But perhaps the deeper invitation of Acts 15 is not to congratulate ourselves for the circles we have already widened.

It is to ask where the Spirit is leading us next.

Who are today's outsiders?

Whose stories have we not yet heard?

Whose gifts have we not yet recognized?

Whose humanity have we overlooked?

And what might happen if we paid attention to where God is already at work?

Because the story of the church is not ultimately about who gets included.

It is about a God whose love is always larger than our imagination.

A God who keeps pulling up extra chairs.

A God who keeps extending the table.

A God who keeps reminding us that there is more room than we thought.

And perhaps the truest sign of faithfulness is not that we have finally arrived, but that we remain willing to move when the Spirit does.

For every generation has its Acts 15 moment.

Every generation must decide whether it will defend its boundaries or follow God's expansive love.

May we have the courage to keep widening the circle.

May we have the humility to recognize the Spirit at work in unexpected places.

And may we never forget that, more often than not, the people we call outsiders are already at home in the heart of God.

Amen.

# Responding in Thanksgiving

**Hymn** I Am a Child of God

MV 157

1. I am a child of God,  
I am a glimpse of God's new creation.  
I am a child of God,  
I am a child of God.
  
2. I am an endless prayer,  
I am a yearning for contemplation,  
I am an endless prayer,  
I am an endless prayer.
  
3. I am an angry voice,  
I am compassion and consternation,  
I am an angry voice,  
I am an angry voice.
  
4. I am a cry for peace,  
I am commitment and dedication,  
I am a cry for peace,  
I am a cry for peace.
  
5. I am a song of joy,  
I am the moment of jubilation,  
I am a song of joy,  
I am a song of joy.

## Invitation to Give

One of the ways we demonstrate our love in responding is through our collection. To say we are a community that supports flourishing life, means we must create space in our community for difference, for healing, for generosity. The ushers may now come forward to collect our tithes and offerings. Thank you.

- 1 Your work, O God, needs many hands  
to help you everywhere,  
and some there are who cannot serve  
unless our gifts we share.**
  
- 2 Because we love you and your work,  
our offering now we make:  
be pleased to use it as your own,  
we ask for Jesus' sake.**

**Offering Prayer**

Compassionate God,  
You have looked upon the world with love and entrusted us with the work of sharing that love with others.

We bring these gifts, grateful for all that we have received. Bless them, and bless us, that together they may become signs of your healing presence in the world.

Use these offerings to feed the hungry, comfort the lonely, support the vulnerable, and strengthen the work of justice and reconciliation. May they help build communities where all are welcomed, where diversity is celebrated, and where every person is treated with dignity and respect. As Jesus sent the disciples to share good news, send us also. May we offer not only our money, but our compassion, our courage, our voices, and our hands in service to your kin-dom of love and peace.

In the spirit of Christ, who freely gave and freely loved, we pray.  
Amen.

**Prayers of the People** O Holy

Pat Mayberry

**O Holy, O Blessed, O God, hear our prayer.  
O Holy, O Blessed, O God, hear our prayer.**

## **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 My Love Colors Outside the Lines**

**MV 138**

- 1. My love colours outside the lines,  
exploring paths that few could ever find.  
and takes me into places  
where I've never been before,  
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.**
- 2. My Lord colours outside the lines,  
turns wounds to blessings, water into wine;  
and takes me into places  
where I've never been before  
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.**

**We'll never walk on water  
if we're not prepared to drown,  
body and soul need a soaking  
from time to time.  
And we'll never move the gravestones  
if we're not prepared to die,  
and realize there are worlds outside the lines.**

**3 My soul longs to colour outside the lines,  
tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;  
I want to walk beyond the boundaries  
where I've never been before,  
throw open doors to worlds outside the lines.**

**We'll never walk on water  
if we're not prepared to drown,  
body and soul need a soaking  
from time to time.  
And we'll never move the gravestones  
if we're not prepared to die,  
and realize there are worlds outside the lines.**

**4 My soul longs to colour outside the lines,  
tear back the curtains, sun, come in and shine;  
I want to walk beyond the boundaries  
where I've never been before,  
throw open doors to worlds outside the lines.**

**Sending Forth**

**Sung Amen**

VU 974

**Music for the Journey**

Jubilation

Jason D. Payne

## ***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.

### **This week's music:**

- ♪ This week's organ prelude is Peggy Betcher's organ setting of Darlene Zschech's 1993 praise song "Shout to the Lord."
- ♪ The choir is on summer break. In place of an anthem, Paul is playing "Land of Rest," a piano arrangement by Joseph Martin of an Appalachian folk tune with roots in the ballads of northern England and Scotland. The tune is most often paired with the hymn, "O Land of Rest, for Thee I Sigh."
- ♪ The organ postlude, "Jubilation," is an original composition by Jason D. Payne (b. 1980) inspired by Psalm 98:4: "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a joyful noise and rejoice, and sing praises."

### **Summer Services: 10 am**

Glebe-St. James: July 5, 12, 19<sup>th</sup>  
Southminster: July 26, August 2, 9<sup>th</sup>  
St. Giles: August 16, 23, 30<sup>th</sup>

### **Musical Acknowledgements**

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