

Glebe-St. James United Church

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 15, 2026

Gathered by God

Preparing Our Hearts for Worship

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

Welcome

Susan Palmai

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, March 15th.

My name is Susan and I have been attending Glebe-St. James for ____years. I continue to worship here because _____.

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 feel welcome to get to know each other by name.

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.

Women of all ages are invited for a potluck and discussion following this morning's worship service. There is always plenty of lunch to share so please drop by. This month's topic is Contemplative art prayer practice and will be led by Linda Posthuma. The **labyrinth** will open up at 1:30 for those who would like to walk after WIGS.

Men and Friends will gather for their monthly potluck on March 25th. Dinner starts at 6 pm.

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

Land Acknowledgement

Zoë Fortier

We acknowledge that we are gathered here today on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinabe nation. The Algonquin Anishinabe have lived on and cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial.

Today also marks International Day against Police Brutality, an occasion that was first begun as an initiative of the Montreal-based Collective Opposed to Police Brutality in collaboration with an autonomous collective based in Switzerland in 1997. It has since then spread internationally as a day of recognition, protest and activism, including into multiple cities within Canada outside of Montreal.

When we talk about and give land acknowledgments, and the relationship of the Algonquin Anishinabe to this land on which our sanctuary stands, it's important that we understand it's just that: a relationship, one that lives and breathes and often clashes with colonial settler conceptions of property and policing in this country.

Indigenous peoples on this land have been, and remain, disproportionately subject to both direct and structural violence from settler policing institutions that do not fully recognize or value the lands and waters, and their inhabitants, as standing in a relationship of mutual belonging and stewardship, but rather as property to be owned and exploited.

An average of 22.7 people died in association with police use of force from 2000 to 2010; from 2011 to 2022, an average of 37.8 people died each year, representing a 66.5 percent increase. More specifically, where Black Canadians make up only about 3.8 percent of the total population, they are represented in 8.1 percent of police-involved deaths; and where Indigenous peoples comprise about 5.1 percent of the total population, they are represented in 16.2 percent of police-involved deaths. Black Canadians and Indigenous peoples on this land die at almost six and eight times, respectively, the rate of police use of force-involved deaths compared to white settlers.

These patterns of police surveillance and racialized criminalization, and the use of force that they are used to justify, have their roots in slavery and displacement of Black Canadians and Indigenous peoples to open the land for settlement and Canadian expansion. These are populations that to this day are both over-policed and under-policed, in that they are often targeted by police but also often neglected when assistance is needed, leading many in these communities to feel a deep lack of trust and safety with police officers and organizations.

When we take the time to not just acknowledge but learn about this land and its stewards, though, we are being drawn into a process of both recognizing a past and imagining a future, where accountability for the harm we cause to each other is practiced in relationship. Not to things. Not to structures, or property, but to the living people, lands and waters that surround us. The reality for many of us is that we are actively cut off from imagining futures and relationships that could look different – and when invited to imagine, we get scared and look away. The road to true justice begins with having the courage to imagine – and to learn from those who have been doing that work for longer than us, not as individuals, but communally, in relationship.

**Still my soul, calm my roaming mind.
Give me peace, may my heart unwind.
Let me stay, your beloved guest.
Take my fear, make my worry rest.**

**What I hold, let me give to you.
Aid my strength when my storms drive through.
When my thoughts won't let me go,
I'll sing to you: oh, still my soul.**

Call to Worship

God loves the field mouse.
God loves the crows that take flight when church bells ring.
God loves the baby, cooing in the back pew.
God loves the child who rocks and claps.

God loves the one with wrinkled hands and soft eyes.
God loves the bumblebees and the tabby cats.
God loves those who walk, crawl, and roll.
**God loves the giant oaks and the evergreens,
standing strong over all of us.**

God loves the young, the impressionable. And the earnest.
There is no bit of creation that God does not love,
so let us worship this good-news God!
Amen.

Opening Prayer

Holy and welcoming God,
You gather us here as your people—young and old, questioning and believing,
each one beloved in your sight.
In Jesus, you show us that your kin-dom belongs to those
who come with the openness and trust of a child.

Open our hearts this morning.
Help us to set aside pride, hurry, and distraction,
so that we may receive your Spirit with curiosity, humility, and joy.

You call your people to live with justice and generosity—
to remember the stranger, the widow, the orphan,
and all who are pushed aside or forgotten.
Teach us not to cling tightly to what we have,
but to share freely so that all may live with dignity and hope.
Shape us into a community of welcome:
where children are honoured and listened to,
where those who struggle find compassion,
and where your wide love makes room for everyone.
As we sing, pray, listen, and learn together,
renew us with your Spirit.

May this time of worship deepen our faith, widen our love,
and send us out to follow the way of Jesus in the world.
We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus,
who welcomed the children and blessed them.
Amen.

Hymn like a child

VU 366

like a child love would send
to reveal and to mend,
like a child and a friend,
Jesus comes
like a child we may find
claiming heart soul and mind,
like a child strong and kind,
Jesus comes

like a child we will meet,
ragged clothes, dirty feet,
like a child on the street,
Jesus comes

like a child we once knew
coming back into view,
like a child born anew,
Jesus comes

like a child born to pray
and to show us the way,
like a child here to stay,
Jesus comes
like a child we receive
all that love can conceive,
like a child we believe
Jesus comes

Call to Healing

Family of Faith,
every week we pray the Prayer for Healing,
because every week we need to be reminded of God's abundant grace.
Every week we need to be reminded of God's love.
Every week we need to be reminded that we too can grow and change.
So join me in this moment of honesty as we seek transformation. Friends, let us pray.

Prayer for Healing & Assurance of Blessing *Based on Leviticus 19:33, Matthew 5:9, Deuteronomy 24:21, Matthew 18:14, and Isaiah 43:1.*

God said, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them."
Holy God, we confess, we have mistreated the immigrants in our land.

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God."

We confess, we have clung to our guns and war more than we have pursued peace.

God said, "When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left. It shall be for the alien, orphan, and the widow."

We regret, we have hoarded our resources and failed to care for our neighbours.

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them."

We confess, we have gatekept the good news in unfair ways.

Fortunately for all of us, God also said, "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine,"

By God's grace, despite our failings and shortcomings,

We are redeemed, claimed, forgiven, and loved.

May this good news change our lives!

Amen.

Sign of Peace

Friends, the peace of Christ be with you!

And also with you.

Hymn Put Peace into Each Other's Hands

MV 173

1. Put peace into each other's hands

**and like a treasure hold it,
protect it like a candle flame,
with tenderness enfold it.**

5. Reach out in friendship,

**stay with faith in touch with those around you.
Put peace into each other's hands;
the Peace that sought and found you.**

Listening for Wisdom

Theme Conversation

Good morning everyone!

Today I brought something with me.

(Hold up a **basket with a few apples or pieces of bread.**)

If I picked all the apples from a tree, do you think I should take **every single one** for myself?

In the Bible, God told farmers something interesting. God said when they gathered their crops, they shouldn't take everything. They should **leave some behind** for people who didn't have enough—like strangers, widows, or families who needed help.

So if I had these apples, maybe I would leave a few behind so someone else could have some too.

(Take one or two apples out and set them aside.)

God wants us to remember that what we have can help other people.

And there's another story about Jesus. People were bringing children to Jesus so he could bless them, but some grown-ups tried to send the children away.

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

Jesus wanted everyone to know that children are important and belong with him. So today we remember two things:

Jesus **welcomes children,**

and God asks us to **share what we have.**

That's something children and grown-ups can both do.

Let's pray.

Dear God,

**thank you for welcoming children
and loving everyone.**

**Help us to share what we have
and make sure no one is left out.**

Amen.

Hymn Peace for the Children

MV 149

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.**

**Peace in the soul, peace, peace.
Peace in the soul we pray.
Following the path of One of peace,
peace for the children today.**

Introducing ... Centretown Emergency Food centre

Greg Hill

Prayer for Insight

Holy One,
sometimes the simplest of your commands
are the hardest for us to hear.
You say, "Love your enemy,"
"Turn the other cheek."
"Care for the widow and orphans."
And we want to know: How? When? Where?
Today as we turn to your word, open up space in us to simply hear your truth for what
it is. Open up space in our hearts to dream new dreams, to imagine new realities, to
draw closer to you and closer to love.
With hope for a better tomorrow,
we listen, we pray, Amen.

Torah Deuteronomy 24:17-22

Kelly Boehme

"You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a
widow's garment in pledge. Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and
the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.
"When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not
go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that
the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat your olive
trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.
"When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for
the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of
Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

This is wisdom from the Book of Deuteronomy.

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 the gospel of Matthew.

Gift of Music

"I Believe in the Sun"

arr: Mark Miller

Solo: Julia Barry

I believe in the sun
I believe in the sun
Even when, even when it's not shining

I believe in the sun
I believe in the sun
Even when, even when it's not shining

I believe in love
I believe in love

Even when, even when I don't feel it

I believe in love
I believe in love
Even when, even when I don't feel it
(I believe in love)

I believe in love
I believe in love
Even when, even when I don't feel it
(I believe in love)

I believe in love
I believe in love
Even when, even when I don't feel it

I believe in God
I believe in God
Even when, even when God is silent

Ooo...

Reflection Let the Little Ones Come

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

For children, we would do almost anything.

Children are among the closest things to miracles that many of us experience in our everyday lives. They arrive in our families and communities with wonder and possibility. We rearrange our schedules for them. We spend our energy protecting them, teaching them, cheering them on.

We watch them grow.

We listen carefully to their stories.

We marvel at their curiosity.

In many ways, we place children at the center of our attention.

But in Jesus' time, it was very different.

In the first-century world, children were not the cherished center of family life that they often are today. In fact, children occupied one of the lowest rungs of society. They had little status, little voice, and little protection.

According to scholars like Michael Joseph Bowen, childhood in the ancient world was incredibly difficult. Half of all children died before the age of five. Many lost one or both parents before adulthood. Children were fed last. They received the smallest portions of food. In times of famine or war, they were often the first to suffer.

Children were considered weak, dependent, and socially insignificant.

So when parents brought their children to Jesus, the disciples responded exactly the way society expected them to. They tried to push the children away.

“Don't bother the teacher.”

“Jesus has important work to do.”

“This is sacred space for serious people.”

The disciples were acting like bodyguards, protecting Jesus from interruption.

But Jesus sees what they cannot.

And he rebukes them.

“Let the little children come to me,” he says. “Do not stop them. For it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

In that moment, Jesus completely turns the social order upside down.

Earlier in Matthew’s gospel, the disciples had asked Jesus a question that reveals their mindset. “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

You can almost hear the ambition behind the question.

Maybe they were hoping Jesus would say, “You are.”

Maybe they were hoping to be recognized, elevated, praised.

Instead, Jesus calls a child into the center of the room.

Imagine that moment. The disciples—grown men, respected followers, people who believed they were close to the center of God’s work—suddenly watching as Jesus lifts up a child.

“Unless you change and become like children,” Jesus says, “you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

And then he says something even more radical:

“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.”

Think about what that means.

To welcome the one with the least status...

is to welcome Christ himself.

Jesus isn’t lifting up children because childhood is always sweet and easy. As history shows, childhood in that time was often harsh and vulnerable. Jesus lifts up children precisely because they represent those who have no status, no power, no voice in society.

Children become a living symbol for everyone whom society pushes to the margins.

The immigrant.

The migrant worker.

The unhoused neighbour.

The undocumented family.
The powerless.

The people polite society often finds inconvenient or uncomfortable.
When Jesus says the kingdom belongs to the children, he is saying something much bigger. God's reign belongs to those whom the world pushes aside.

And this idea isn't new in scripture.
Long before Jesus, in the book of Deuteronomy, God gave instructions to the people about how to live together in community. The people are told: when you harvest your fields, don't take everything. Leave some behind.

Leave the gleanings for the immigrant.
Leave them for the orphan.
Leave them for the widow.

Why?

Because you once knew what it was like to be powerless.
"You were slaves in Egypt," God reminds them.
In other words: remember where you came from. Remember what it feels like to need mercy. The people of God are called to build a society where the most vulnerable are not forgotten.

Jesus carries that same vision forward.
The church—the ekklesia—is meant to be a place of radical welcome.
Not a place where the powerful gather to protect their status.
Not a place where insiders guard the doors.
But a refuge.

A community where those the world overlooks are welcomed with joy.
A place where the smallest are seen.
Where the forgotten are remembered.
Where the vulnerable are protected.

Now here is where this message becomes personal.
Because Lent is a season of honesty.

A season where we remember that we are not as self-sufficient or as righteous as we sometimes imagine ourselves to be.

The truth is: in God's eyes, we are all a little like those children.

Dependent.

Fragile.

In need of grace.

None of us earns our place in God's kingdom through status or success.

We don't get there by climbing higher than others.

We get there because God opens the door.

Because God welcomes us.

Because God says: you belong here.

That is the good news of Lent.

Even in our brokenness, even in our mistakes, even in the parts of our lives we would rather hide, God welcomes us as if heaven is already our home.

But if God welcomes us like that, then the church is called to do the same.

Jesus doesn't simply bless the children.

He tells his followers to learn from them.

Children are not status-seeking.

They are curious.

They are trusting.

They are open to wonder.

Children ask questions adults sometimes forget to ask.

Why is the sky blue?

Why are some people hungry?

Why don't people share?

Children have a way of cutting through the complicated systems we build and reminding us what really matters.

Kindness.

Fairness.

Belonging.

Maybe that is why Jesus says we must become like them.

Because somewhere along the way, adults learn to chase status.

We measure success by titles, achievements, influence.

But the kingdom of God runs on a completely different set of values.
In God's world, greatness looks like humility.
Power looks like compassion.
Leadership looks like service.

So perhaps the question for us this morning is not simply: how do we care for children?

But also: what can children teach us about the kingdom of God?

They teach us to trust.

They teach us to ask honest questions.

They teach us to see people before status.

They remind us that belonging matters more than prestige.

And then comes the final challenge.

If the church is meant to be a refuge of radical welcome, who are the "little ones" in our community today?

Who are the people society pushes to the margins?

Who needs protection, dignity, and care?

In our own communities we might think of
people struggling with housing,
newcomers trying to build a life in a new country,
families facing food insecurity,
young people searching for belonging,
those who feel invisible or unheard.

The gospel invites us not simply to feel compassion, but to act.

To build communities where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

To make space at the table.

To protect the vulnerable.

To practice generosity, like the farmers in Deuteronomy leaving grain in the field.

To open the doors wide.

Because when we welcome the "little ones," Jesus says something astonishing happens. We welcome Christ himself. Every act of kindness becomes sacred.

Every moment of hospitality becomes holy.

Every open door becomes a glimpse of God's kingdom.

And perhaps that is the hope of Lent. That as we walk toward the cross, we also walk toward a deeper understanding of grace.

The God who welcomes children...
welcomes us.

And the church that follows Jesus...
is called to do the same.

May we become a people who welcome boldly, love generously, and learn again the humble wisdom of the little ones. Amen.

Responding in Thanksgiving

Hymn Christ Has No Body Now but Yours

MV 171

Refrain:

**Christ has no body now but yours,
no hands but yours.
Here on this earth, yours is the work,
to serve with the joy of compassion.**

- 1. No hands but yours to heal the wounded world,
no hands but yours to soothe all its suffering,
no touch but yours to bind the broken hope
of the people of God.**
- 2. No eyes but yours to see as Christ would see,
to find the lost, to gaze with compassion;
no eyes but yours to glimpse the holy joy
of the city of God.**
- 3. No feet but yours to journey with the poor,
to walk this world with mercy and justice.
Yours are the steps to build a lasting peace
for the children of God.**

**4. Through ev'ry gift, give back to those in need;
as Christ has blessed, so now be his blessing,
with ev'ry gift a benediction, be
to the people of God.**

Invitation to Give

Offering Hymn Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving

VU 540

**Grant us, God, the grace of giving,
with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.**

Offering Prayer

On my own
what I have to give
doesn't amount to much
in the light of all you have given to me
and in the face of so much need.
But together as a congregation,
what we offer you here in love
becomes more,
not simply added together,
but somehow multiplied in its usefulness.
We ask you to bless our gifts
and with the addition of your blessing,
just as it was with the loaves and fish,
there is enough for all.
Amen

Prayers of the People In the presence of your Holy Silence

TLUS 71

In the presence of your Holy Silence, silence, silence,
We remember most deeply who we are. Humming...

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 Go Make a Diff'rence

MV 209

Refrain:

**Go make a diff'rence.
We can make a diff'rence.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.
(Repeat 2 times)**

- 1. We are the salt of the earth,
called to let the people see
the love of God for you and me.
We are the light of the world,
not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a diff'rence in the world.**
- 2. We are the hands of Christ
reaching out to those in need,
the face of God for all to see.**

**We are the spirit of hope;
we are the voice of peace.
Go make a difference in the world.**

- 3. So let your love shine on,
let it shine for all to see.
Go make a difference in the world.
And the spirit of Christ
will be with us as we go.
Go make a difference in the world.**

Sending Forth

As you leave this place,
when you meet anger, speak with love.
When you meet fear, speak with hope.
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.
But no matter what, speak this good news.
For the good news of the gospel is:
love and justice for all.
It is joy that surprises,
and nonviolence that transforms.
The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,
so go forth speaking.
For if you won't, then who will?
Thanks be to God
for this good, good news.

Sung Amen

VU 969 (Kriewald)

Music to Send Us Forth

“What Wondrous Love is This”

End of Worship, Beginning of Service

**Thank you for joining with us this morning.
Please join us, following the service for a time of refreshments and fellowship.**

Musical Acknowledgements

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Today's Instrumental Music

- ♪ "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" is an arrangement by Dale Wood (1934-2003) of American hymn writer and public music education founder Lowell Mason's 1820s hymn tune "HAMBURG." Wood, a Californian, called his compositions "Wood works for organ."
- ♪ "I Believe In the Sun" is arranged by Mark Miller (b. 1967), a Massachusetts-based African-American United Methodist Church composer. The words are attributed to a message scratched on a cellar wall by Jewish prisoners hiding during the Holocaust.
- ♪ "What Wondrous Love Is This" is an arrangement by Nashville-based Baptist hymn writer John E. Carter of the American folk hymn "WONDROUS LOVE" that emerged from the Appalachian shape-note tradition in the early 1800s.

Lenten Book Study @ Glebe-St. James United

Tuesdays at 7:30 pm on Zoom.

Bless Break Share: Recipes for Faithful Living is a United Church publication that offers a daily reading for each day of Lent. The Study Guide in the back of the book offers different conversation questions to share as a group.

We do have a few copies on hand - \$ 20. See Rev. Teresa or check in at the office.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83910341363?pwd=Xdeuq5JjbFnguJHpJFnmVDuxHcR9jr.1>

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