

Glebe-St. James United Church

Palm Sunday

March 22, 2026

Gathered by God

Preparing Our Hearts for Worship

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

Welcome

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

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.

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

Land Acknowledgement

Each Sunday, prior to our worship service, we formally recognize that all spaces in which we gather—whether for worship, work, or recreation—are situated on unceded and unsurrendered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe peoples. As part of Glebe-St. James' ongoing mission, we are committed to furthering our understanding of reconciliation and developing relationships with Indigenous Peoples founded on mutual respect and awareness.

Call to Worship

Will you follow?

Will you lay down your coat?

Will you lay down something important?

Will you shout "Hosanna"?

Will you join the parade?

Will you sing, even if your throat is hoarse?

Will you cut down a palm branch?

Will you wave it in the air?

Will you follow the one riding on a donkey?
Will you let this good news inspire you to act?
We will. We will sing. We will pay close attention.
We will worship. We will follow.
Hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna in the highest!

The Parade into Jerusalem Sanna, Sannanina (An African Hosanna)

VU 128

Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna,
Sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna,
Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna,
Sanna, sanna, sanna, sannanina, sanna, sanna, sanna.

Call to Healing

The very first Palm Sunday was a day of action.
It was a day of movement, of crowded city streets,
and cries of “Hosanna!”
It was a day of peaceful protest and dreams for a better world.
The first Palm Sunday was a day of peaceful, hopeful action.

So friends, on this Palm Sunday, let us join the saints before us in an act of faith.
Let us begin with an act of prayer, an act of honesty, an act of transformation.
Let us begin by drawing close to God and sharing the truth of our lives.

Let us begin with a prayer of reconciliation.
Join me in prayer.

Prayer for Healing

Jesus of Nazareth, we know that you spent your days teaching and healing.
You marched through the streets and walked on water.
You laid hands on the sick and broke bread at crowded dinner tables.
Your good news was not confined to conversation.
It was not confined to the Temple.
Your good news was an act of love, alive in the world.
Holy God, we long for a faith like that.

**Forgive us the times when we confine our faith
to something we think about, as opposed to something we act upon.
Inspire us to love as you loved.
Inspire us to act.
With hope for tomorrow we pray, amen.**

Assurance of God's Love

Holy One,
if we've heard this story before,
the story of Jesus entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey,
then help us to hear it again.
And if we've never heard the story of Palm Sunday
or the cries of "Hosanna,"
then give us the wisdom to follow along.

Give us the wisdom to hear these words,
take them into our hearts,
and act on their truth.

Gift of Music

Lift Your Voices, Wave the Palms

Stan Pethel

*Lift your voices, wave the palms, Hosanna, Hosanna.
Sing God's praises loud and long, Hosanna, we sing.
To the King of Glory coming triumphantly into Jerusalem,
To the Lamb most holy riding in majesty,
For all the world to see.*

*Lift your voices, wave the palms, Hosanna, Hosanna.
Sing God's praises loud and long, Hosanna, we sing.
Praises to our Saviour, bringing salvation free,
Come join us one and all.
Christ is our Redeemer for all eternity,
Now at his feet we fall.*

*Let the children join the song,
Let the old and young come along;
For to Christ we all belong, sing Hosanna!
Lift your voices, wave the palms,
Hosanna, Hosanna.
Sing God's praises loud and long,
Hosanna, we sing. Sing Hosanna!
Lift up your voice and sing, Hosanna we sing.*

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 "Hosanna"

Good morning, friends!
I need your help today—can you make a cheering sound like you're really excited?
(Invite them: "Yay!" or clap)

Great! Now pretend you're welcoming someone special. Wave your hands in the air like this!

In our Bible story, Jesus was coming into the city, and people were SO excited. They waved branches and shouted a special word. I'm going to teach it to you:

Hosanna!

Can you say it?

Hosanna!

Let's try it louder!

HOSANNA!

Awesome!

Now—what does *Hosanna* mean?

It's a word that means two things at the same time:

“Help us!”

and “Yay, God is saving us!”

Let's practice that together.

When I say: “**Help us!**”

You say: “**Hosanna!**”

Ready?

Help us! → (*Kids: Hosanna!*)

Help us! → (*Hosanna!*)

Now the second part:

When I say: “**Jesus is here!**”

You say: “**Hosanna!**”

Jesus is here! → (*Hosanna!*)

Jesus is here! → (*Hosanna!*)

That's exactly what the people were doing. They were calling for help AND celebrating because Jesus had come.

So anytime you feel:

- happy
- or you need help

You can say:

Hosanna!

Let's do it one last time—all together, big voices, waving your hands:
HOSANNA!

Short Prayer

**Dear Jesus,
Thank you for coming to help us.
Help us remember
we can call to you anytime
Hosanna!
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 ... Ottawa Public Foods

Greg Hill

Prayer for Wisdom

Holy One,
if we've heard this story before,
The story of Jesus entering Jerusalem riding on a donkey,
then help us to hear it again.

And if we've heard this story before,
If we've never heard the story of Palm Sunday or the cries of "Hosanna,"
then give us the wisdom to follow along.

Give us the wisdom to hear these words.
Give us the wisdom to take them into our hearts.
Give us the wisdom to act on their truth.
We are listening.
Amen.

Gospel Matthew 21:1-11

Ruth Burnett-Cole

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

“Say to Daughter Zion,
‘See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’”

The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted,

“Hosanna to the Son of David!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

“Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.”

This is wisdom from the gospel of Matthew.

Special Music

The Holy City
Soloist: Frank Duern

Stephen Adams

From Palms in Jerusalem to War in the Middle East

Jesus was a Jewish man who was keenly aware of the political context of his day. Jesus and his followers were entering Jerusalem in their parade that was rooted in scriptural imagery. Meanwhile, another political parade was arriving in Jerusalem from another direction: Caesar and his troops were marching into Jerusalem intent on quelling the political unrest of the Passover crowds. It was not a surprise that these groups would end up in conflict. Today, as was true then, the Middle East was a hotbed with the potential of conflict. We would be remiss if, during this period of heightened spiritual sensitivity, we failed to pay attention to the crisis of war as it is currently unfolding.

Introduction of Guest Speaker Diana Ralph

Diana Ralph is a devout Jew, a member of Or Haneshamah synagogue, and a life-long activist on a broad range of social justice issues. She founded Independent Jewish Voices Canada in 2008 and coordinated it for 10 years. She was a member of Reconstructing Judaism's Joint Israel Task Force, and currently helps to coordinate Reconstructionists Expanding the Conversation on Israel-Palestine, which reaches over 2,300 North American Jews. Diana is a retired Carleton University social work professor, the author of two books and many articles, and a former therapist.

Reflection

Diana Ralph

All or none: Christians, Jews, and Muslims support Justice, Love, and Peace

Thank you for this warm welcome. I am pleased to join you all today. As a devout Jew, I want to reflect on our shared spiritual values and to recommit to our holy purpose of building a more loving, peaceful world.

Christians, Muslims, and Jew all believe that because we were created in God's image, we each carry a divine soul. We all strive to understand and model our lives to reflect God's demands of us and to be accountable to our covenants.

This is a particularly holy time for Christians, Muslims, and Jews. As you know, Christians are now in the Lenten season. Muslims completed celebrating Ramadan on March 19th. And Jews are preparing for Passover starting on the evening of April 1st. How are these holidays relevant for our peoples today, at this time of war and genocide?

Let's start with Christianity. The Lenten season is a time of deep soul-searching, when Christians honour and imitate the 40 days following Jesus's baptism by engaging in fasting and self-denial. I'd like to highlight two aspects of Jesus's life. First, Jesus was Palestinian, the Indigenous people of the region. And like the Palestinian people now, Jesus organized to resist the brutal oppression of his people. And secondly, Jesus was a devout Jew. He drew His inspiration from the core Jewish values of love and compassion, of welcoming the stranger, and of justice.

For centuries, Christians downplayed these aspects of His life. He was often portrayed as blond and blue-eyed. During Lent, Medieval European Christian leaders used false claims that "the Jews" killed Christ to launch violent pogroms against Jews, killing many and expelling whole communities. In the name of defending and spreading the loving Christian faith, Christian leaders have also committed many other genocides not just against Jews, but also against Muslims, pagans, and Indigenous peoples around the globe. Christian antisemitism led directly to the Holocaust. It is now again on the rise. The Christian evangelical movement is powerfully influential in promoting Israel's current genocide against Palestinians. During this Lenten season, it may be appropriate to meditate on how to bring Christianity back to the values that Jesus exemplified.

What about Islam? Ramadan is the month which celebrates when the Quran was revealed to Muhammad. Like Christians during Lent, the world's two billion Muslims observe Ramadan by fasting, prayer, self-reflection, charity, and mutual support. Mohammed respected Christians and Jews as *People of the Book* and he considered Jesus and Moses prophets.

We have been led to equate Islam with violence and terrorism. But Islam, like Christianity and Judaism, is all about love and peace. The word "Islam" means the voluntary, total submission and obedience to the will of God. And the word "jihad" primarily refers to the spiritual struggle against sin within oneself. During the 700 years of the Ottoman empire, Muslim rulers welcomed Jewish survivors of Christian

oppression and collaborated with Christians and Jews to create profound spiritual, cultural, and scientific achievements. Under Ottoman rule, Palestinian Muslims, Jews and Christians had always lived in harmony. During the Holocaust, Muslim countries, including Palestine, gave refuge to Jews.

And now to Judaism. Passover is the Jewish holiday which celebrates the Exodus, our liberation from slavery. It is the core story defining Judaism. Each year, the Torah (what Christians call the Old Testament) requires Jews to re-tell the stirring mythical Exodus tale. We revere Moses, who, like Jesus, worked to free not only his own, but all people. Here's the Exodus story: After Hebrew people and others were enslaved for centuries in Mizrahim (Egypt), Moses demands that the Pharaoh "let my people go." The Pharaoh refuses and further oppresses the slaves. But with God's support, ultimately a "mixed multitude" (not just the Hebrews) escape. Pharaoh's army chases them to the edge of the Reed Sea, where they are trapped. But one man, Nahshon trusts in God and dares to jump into the swirling water. His faith prompts God to miraculously divide the sea, and the multitude cross to safely as Pharaoh's army drowns.

Throughout the Torah, God repeatedly orders us to remember that we were slaves and, therefore, that we are obligated to stand up against all forms of oppression. This tale also has inspired many other liberation movements.

I believe we are now witnessing a *real* Exodus struggle. This time, it is the Israeli state which occupies the Pharaoh's role, and the Palestinians, who act like the Hebrew slaves. Israel's founders had always planned to appropriate all the land from the river to the sea and to expel or subjugate Palestinians. For over 75 years, Israel has subjected the Palestinian people to increasingly brutal political, economic, and military control.

Since October 7, 2023, Israel has directly killed over 75,000 people in Gaza. The British medical journal, Lancet estimates that the real death toll is higher than 186, 000, if we count the many more who lie crushed under bombed buildings or dead of starvation, cold, and disease. Israel has destroyed virtually all of Gaza's homes, hospitals, universities, and essential infrastructure. It intentionally starves the survivors, blocking virtually all humanitarian aid from entering Gaza. It is also rapidly expanding its ethnic cleansing of the West Bank. And now Israel (with US and

Canadian support) has launched an unprovoked war on Iran which threatens to destabilize the entire world.

Of course, all of this violates core Jewish values. Realizing this has shocked many Jews who had equated Israel with Judaism. Like many Jews, I grew up viewing Israel as a democratic “light unto the nations,” and, in the wake of the Holocaust, believing Jews deserve and need a state to protect us against antisemitism. Many of us were unaware of how oppressively Israel has treated Palestinian people. Some thought the Palestinians were inherently violent terrorists and that Israel has had no choice but to defend itself. And some bought the claim that Hamas is the enemy and that if it can be destroyed, we will finally have peace. But these are all lies.

I, along with many other Jews, have had to face the fact that Israel’s policies and actions violate everything we value about Judaism. Before Israel was founded, all three faiths lived in harmony in Palestine. Israel was founded and continues to act as a colonial settler nation, funded and militarily backed by British, US, and Canadian antisemitic politicians for their own geopolitical interests in the oil-rich Middle East. Oppression enslaves not only the victims, but also their oppressors, dehumanizing them and keeping them constantly afraid of retribution. Like the ancient Hebrew people, the Palestinians have always resisted their enslavement. And like the mythical Egyptians of Exodus, Israeli Jews are ensnared in a trap of escalating fear and violence. The entire country is built on a preoccupation with “security”. Far from promoting love, peace, or justice, Israel has engaged in seven major wars with neighbouring countries since it was founded. It has flouted international law and supported oppressive regimes. Its economy depends on exporting weapons and spy equipment which have been “field-tested” on Palestinians. It has become a pariah state.

And far from making Jews safe, Israel is the least safe place in the world for us. The October 7th massacre was a horrific, but predictable outcome of Israel’s tightening noose around Gaza. The ensuing violence has left over 2,000 Israelis dead, over 12,000 wounded, and over 200,000 displaced. The economy is shattered, the government is in disarray, and bombs are raining down on terrified Israeli civilians, with no end in sight. Because Israel claims to act on behalf of the world’s Jews, its oppression is also fueling antisemitic attacks on synagogues and Jews here in Canada and everywhere else.

So, what is the path to peace there? What do we even mean by “peace”? Is peace merely the absence of resistance? Israel has tried to impose “peace” by outlawing and punishing all forms of Palestinian resistance. It segregates, discriminates against, displaces, assassinates, imprisons, tortures, shoots and bombs Palestinians. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and B’Tselem (the Israeli human rights organization) argue that Israel has become an apartheid state, worse even than South Africa. All this has failed to produce peace. There will be no “peace” without ending the oppression.

Christians often tell me that they are reluctant to get involved in a conflict between Muslims and Jews. But this is not about religion. The real conflict is between justice and injustice. Jesus and Moses both put their lives on the line to oppose oppression. At this holy time, we too can and should risk acting for justice and real peace. What keeps you from speaking out? Are you afraid of being called antisemitic? Of course, we all oppose real hatred and discrimination against Jews. But criticizing Israeli oppression is not antisemitic. Many Jews, like me, also get attacked for being critical of Israel. When you speak out, you may be called antisemitic. But please don’t fall for this bullying tactic. The enemy is not Jews or Muslims or Hamas or you or me. I believe, the enemy is capitalism, a godless, vicious, greedy system, that fuels war, divides and hurts us all, and which is making our precious Earth uninhabitable.

Let us recall the words of the prophet Isaiah. Rejecting words without meaningful action, he called on us “to unlock the fetters of wickedness and untie the cords of the yoke to let the oppressed go free; to break off every yoke.” So, for Lent this year, I’ll invite you to give up your fears and to risk standing up for justice. We all have a stake in resisting Israel’s genocide, because it violates everything our three faiths cherish and because it is threatening to drag us into a World War III Armageddon.

The United Church has been at the vanguard of this struggle since the 1960s, when Rev. A.C. Forrest published *The Unholy Land*. He faced massive attacks from pro-Israel lobby groups. But that didn’t stop him. Since 2006, I have worked with United Church leaders who stand in solidarity with Palestinians. In October 2024, the United Church General Council took a major step forward, adopting a Principle-Based Approach to Israel-Palestine which includes support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and which rejects “Israel's apartheid system of laws and legal procedures towards the Palestinian people”. Last year, the United Church issued another courageous statement along with other ecumenical partners urging

“the Canadian Government to support a ceasefire and a negotiated resolution to this violence.” And this month, March 2026, the United Church joined the World Council of Churches in launching a month-long campaign entitled “From Condemnation to Consequences” which calls on us all to take concrete steps to end Israel’s illegal occupation and promote peace. I look forward to supporting Glebe St. James in finding ways you can do this.

I’ll close by offering an excerpt from the 2002 poem “Red Sea” by Aurora Levins Morales, a Puerto Rican Jewish poet which I read at all my Passover seders. It is particularly relevant this year:

This Passover, who reclines?
Only the dead, their cupped hands filling slowly
with the red wine of war. We are not free.
The blood on the doorposts does not protect anyone.
They say that other country over there
dim blue in the twilight
farther than the orange stars exploding over our roofs
is called peace....
Back then, one man's faith opened the way.
He stepped in, we were released, our enemies drowned.
This time we're tied at the ankles.
We cannot cross until we carry each other,
all of us refugees, all of us prophets.
No more taking turns on history's wheel,
trying to collect old debts no-one can pay.
The sea will not open that way.
This time that country
is what we promise each other,
our rage pressed cheek to cheek
until tears flood the space between,
until there are no enemies left,
because this time no one will be left to drown
and all of us must be chosen.
This time it's all of us or none.

Responding in Thanksgiving

Hymn When Will People Cease Their Fighting?

VU 687

- 1** When will people cease their fighting?
When will armies wage no war,
nations conquer not their neighbour,
weapons idle, used no more?
When will guns and bombs be silent?
When will captives be set free?
All creation groans in longing
for the world's true liberty.

- 2** Floods and earthquakes, drought and famine
plague the world with awesome ill,
but far greater is war's horror
caused by human, stubborn will.
Blest are those who, working, praying,
purpose in their hearts to be
instruments of peace, committed
to the nations' harmony.

- 3** As we strive for peace with vigour,
hoping to be shown the way,
we are strengthened in the knowledge
of a future, perfect day;
for we know that deeper, richer
peace is ours when Christ shall reign;
then will all our swords be plowshares
and God's children free from pain.

Invitation to Give

**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

Peace is not the product of terror or fear.
Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.
Peace is not the silence of violent repression.
Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution
of all to the good of all.
Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity.

Beloved One,
take our offerings of time, talent, and money
and use them to create peace
by meeting the needs of the suffering.
We each have a little but together as a congregation,
what we offer you here in love becomes more.
We ask you to bless our gifts
and with the addition of your blessing,
we believe that there could be enough for all.
Amen

Prayers of the People In the presence of your Holy Silence

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 O for a World

VU 697

- 1 O for a world where everyone
respects each other's ways,
where love is lived and all is done
with justice and with praise.
- 2 O for a world where goods are shared
and misery relieved,
where truth is spoken, children spared,
equality achieved.
- 3 We welcome one world family
and struggle with each choice
that opens us to unity
and gives our vision voice.
- 4 The poor are rich, the weak are strong,
the foolish ones are wise.
Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong,
who perishes will rise.
- 5 O for a world preparing for
God's glorious reign of peace,
where time and tears will be no more,
and all but love will cease.

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?

Sung Amen

VU 969 (Kriewald)

Music to Send Us Forth

All Glory, Laud, and Honour

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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Glebe-St James: March 22 – March 28th

Monday		
9 am – Noon	GMS: cooking with Chef Scott	GSJ Kitchen
1 pm	Monday Crafts	Judy Wolanski's
1 – 3 pm	GMS: Art Class	Art Room
3:30 – 7 pm	GNAG: after school programming	Art Room & Lounge
6 – 7:30 pm	Embers	Fraser Hall
8 pm	Monday Meditation	Zoom
Tuesday		
10 am	Chess	Sanctuary
1:30 pm	Knitting	Lounge
3:30 – 7 pm	GNAG: after school programming	Art Room, Lounge & Sanctuary
6:30 – 7:30 pm	Beavers	Fraser Hall
Wednesday		
3:30 – 5:30 pm	GNAG: after school programming	Art Room & Lounge
6:00 pm	Czech Community	Art Room
Thursday		
3:30 – 6:15pm	GNAG: after school programming	Art Room & Lounge
7 pm	Writing Group	Art Room
7 pm	Maundy Thursday service	Sanctuary
GSJ Choir follows the service		
7:30 pm	Venturers	Lounge
Friday		
10:30 am	Good Friday service	Sanctuary
Saturday		
9 am – 1 pm	Exercise with Cate (2 sessions)	Fraser Hall

If you are interested in any of the above events, please contact Jennifer (admin@glebestjames.ca) and she will provide you with contact info.