

Glebe-St. James United Church

World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation September 6, 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

Barcarolle

Dom Andrew Moore

Welcome

Liz Elton

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, September 6th.

My name is Liz Elton and I am Chair of the Worship Committee.

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.

Announcements

DID613	September 9 th , 6 pm
Celebration of Life: Bruce Taylor	September 12 th , 11 am
Queer Space Check the website (www.glebestjames.ca) for the next date	Every other Saturday
<i>Quilting Retreat</i>	<i>September 25-27th (Gracefield)</i>
<i>Men & Friends' Potluck</i>	<i>September 30th, 5:30 pm</i>
<i>Lunch & Learn: Tom Sherwood</i>	<i>October 4th, 12 Noon</i>
<i>Jeff Bird plays Hildegard von Bingen</i>	<i>October 24th</i>

Land Acknowledgement

Rebecca Dalton

Hello. My name is Rebecca.

We are on the unsundered territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. 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.

I so appreciate seeing the Lyon Street garden. Knowing the care, diligence and nurturing that has gone into creating and maintaining this space. I am reminded of the Three Sisters and agricultural harmony. A teaching from our Indigenous relations, this method honours the plants as living beings and caretakers.

The Three Sisters are an example of companion planting, where each plant helps the others thrive without the need for artificial fertilizers or supports:

- Corn grows tall and strong first, acting as a natural trellis for the beans to climb.
- Beans climb up the corn stalks for support and naturally pull nitrogen from the air into the soil, fertilizing the other two plants.

- Squash grows wide across the ground, its large prickly leaves acting as a living mulch that retains soil moisture and deters pests.

Living in harmony. In action through a beautiful garden.

Candle Lighting Our Tears, Falling Down Like Rain

TLUS 89

Our tears, falling down like rain to the ground
will water seeds of change.

Kyrie, kyrie, kyrie, kyrie, kyrie eleison.

Call to Worship

In the beginning, the Spirit of God hovered over the waters.
And God called them good.

Come Holy Spirit and cleanse the waters.

The prophet saw a river flowing from the Temple,
and wherever the river flowed, everything lived.

Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the Earth.

Jesus cried out, "Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...
Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water."

Come, Holy Spirit and heal your people.

Hymn River Running In You and Me

MV 163

- 1. River running in you and me,
Spirit of life, deep mystery,
dancing down to the holy sea,
River run deep, River run free.**
- 2. River laughed on my birthing day,
Wind and water joined in play
soaked my soul in a shining spray,
River run deep, River run free.**
- 3. River, cry my name to me,
lend me hope and memory,
sing me the story of the holy sea, River run deep, River run free.**

4. I stand on the edge, lookin' down,
too scared to swim, afraid I'll drown –
give me the courage to journey on,
River run deep, River run free.
5. Journey on far from my home,
River – break this heart of stone;
teach me to love, make me your own,
River run deep, River run free.
6. Hold me close on the day I die,
bear me up when my soul is tired,
carry me home on the rising tide,
River run deep, River run free.
7. River singin' in you and me,
Spirit of life – deep mystery –
catch us up in you melody
River run deep, River run free.

Blessing of Waters

Almighty and ever living God, we thank you for your love in all creation, and especially for your gift of water to sustain and cleanse all life. Christ is the living water, cleansing, refreshing, and making all things new. So now we offer our thanks for the waters that bring beauty to all that we enjoy, the wild places, the bush, the mountains, coast and the sea. We give thanks and praise for all good lands, for the trees and pastures, for our plentiful crops, and for the living water that quenches them. *(adapted from the Anglican Aotearoa NZ Prayer Book)*

We praise you for giving us life through water, and for all waters everywhere. We especially praise you for the waters who sustain us in this part of our common home.

We add the waters of the Ottawa, Rideau, and Gatineau Rivers that criss cross our city to the waters of baptism. Continue to bless these living waters and us by their use.

We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning you created us in your image and places us in a well-watered garden. In the desert, you promised pools of water for the parched, and you gave your people water from the rock. When we did not know the way, you sent the Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters. At the cross, you washed us from Jesus' wounded side, and on this day, you shower us again with the water of life.

You bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love. You satisfy all who thirst, and give us the life only you can give. (*adapted from All Creation Sings, ELCA*)

But we lament that we have neglected this gift, and taken the waters for granted.

Sign of Peace

Hymn May the Peace of God Be Your Peace

MV 222

May the peace of God be your peace.

May the love of God be the love you show.

May the joy of God be the joy you know,

and may the world that God would see be found in you.

Listening for Wisdom

Theme Conversation Hey, Water!

Antoinette Portis

Prayer

Dear God,
Water is a gift from you,
help us to care for it,
using only what we need,
keep it from being polluted. Amen.

**Little by little by little.
Little by little by little.
Little by little by little I know,
The tiniest seed will grow.**

**Watered by peace and justice,
watered by peace and justice,
watered by peace and justice:
tools to change our world.**

**Little by little by little.
Little by little by little.
Little by little by little I know,
The tiniest seed will grow.**

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.

Scripture Ezekiel 47:9-12

Geoff McGuire

Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish once these waters reach there. It will become fresh, and everything will live where the river goes. People will stand fishing beside the sea from En-gedi to En-eglaim; it will be a place for the spreading of nets; its fish will be of a great many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea. But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they are to be left for salt. On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the

water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.”

This is wisdom from the prophet Ezekiel.

Gift of Music When Hands Reach Out Beyond Divides

MV 169

Scripture Revelation 22:1-7

Geoff McGuire

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there anymore. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

And he said to me, “These words are trustworthy and true, for the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place.”

“See, I am coming soon! Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

This is wisdom from the writings of John.

Reflection The River That Gives Life

Rev. Dr. Teresa Burnett-Cole

Water is so ordinary that we often don't notice it.

We turn on a tap. We make coffee. We water the garden. We flush a toilet. We fill a kettle for tea after worship.

Until something goes wrong.

Until there's a boil-water advisory.

Until a river floods a community.

Until a drought turns fields brown.

Until a child somewhere in the world walks kilometres every day carrying a bucket of water that isn't even safe to drink.

Then suddenly we remember: water is not ordinary. Water is life.

Today, on this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, our scriptures invite us to see water not simply as a resource but as one of God's greatest gifts—a gift entrusted to us, not owned by us.

Both Ezekiel and Revelation imagine a river unlike any river we know.

Ezekiel's vision begins with a tiny trickle flowing out from the Temple. As it travels, the water grows deeper and wider until it becomes a mighty river impossible to cross. Wherever it flows, life appears.

The salty waters of the Dead Sea become fresh.

Fish teem in abundance.

Fruit trees flourish along both banks.

Their leaves become medicine.

Their fruit becomes food.

It is a beautiful vision of healing.

Then, centuries later, the Book of Revelation ends the Bible with another river.

This one flows from the throne of God through the middle of the holy city. Along its banks grows the Tree of Life, yielding fruit every month. Again, the leaves are "for the healing of the nations."

The Bible begins in a garden watered by rivers.

It ends in a city nourished by a river.

From beginning to end, water is a sign of God's life flowing into creation.

Notice something important about both visions.

The river isn't bottled.

It isn't bought or sold.

It isn't controlled by the powerful.

It flows freely.

God's grace is like that.

Life itself is like that.

The river belongs to everyone.

That image challenges us today.

Because in our world, access to clean water is far from equal.

Here in Canada—a country blessed with an abundance of freshwater—we sometimes assume that clean water is guaranteed.

Yet many Indigenous communities have lived for years, even decades, under long-term drinking water advisories. While progress has been made, some communities still do not enjoy the reliable access to safe drinking water that many of us take for granted. That reality is not simply an environmental concern; it is a matter of justice, reconciliation, and human dignity.

Around the world, climate change is disrupting rainfall, melting glaciers, drying rivers, and intensifying floods.

Pollution poisons streams and lakes.

Plastic finds its way into oceans.

Species disappear as wetlands are drained.

Water, the very source of life, is increasingly under threat.

As people of faith, we cannot separate care for people from care for the waters that sustain them.

The prophet Ezekiel would not understand that separation.

Neither would John, the visionary of Revelation.

In both scriptures, the health of creation and the flourishing of humanity are woven together.

When the river lives, everything lives.

That truth echoes throughout the Bible.

The Hebrew word *shalom* means much more than peace. It means wholeness, flourishing, right relationship.

Shalom includes healthy communities.

It includes justice.

It includes restored relationships.

And it includes healthy rivers, healthy forests, healthy oceans, healthy wetlands.

Creation itself participates in God's vision of shalom.

This understanding has become increasingly important within the United Church of Canada.

For many years we have spoken about ecological justice—not simply protecting nature because it is useful to us, but honouring creation because it belongs to God.

We are not owners of the earth.

We are participants within it.

Caretakers.

Stewards.

Partners in God's ongoing work of healing.

Perhaps that is one reason Jesus so often chose water as the setting for transformation.

People were baptized in rivers.

Storms became moments of revelation.

Wells became places of conversation.

Feet were washed.

Water became wine.

Living water became a metaphor for abundant life.

Water carries God's promise throughout scripture.

So perhaps we should ask ourselves:

If Ezekiel walked along our rivers today, what would he see?

Would he find rivers filled with life?

Or rivers struggling under pollution?

If John looked upon our oceans, what would he say?

Would he recognize the healing of the nations?

Or would he grieve the harm we have done?

These are not questions meant to leave us feeling guilty.

They are questions meant to awaken hope.

Because Ezekiel's vision begins with something remarkably small.

Not a mighty river.

A trickle.

A tiny stream emerging from the Temple.

Healing begins with what seems insignificant.

Perhaps that is how God's Spirit often works.

One congregation decides to eliminate single-use plastics.

Another restores native plants to church property.

Someone joins a watershed cleanup.

Someone else advocates for stronger protection of wetlands.

A family chooses to reduce chemical use in their garden.

Citizens support Indigenous leadership in protecting rivers and lakes.

None of these actions alone changes the whole world.

But rivers begin with small streams.

Hope often begins with small acts of faithfulness.

There is another lesson in today's readings.

The river is always moving.

It does not stand still.

Healthy water flows.

Faith also flows.

Sometimes Christians have imagined stewardship as simply preserving what we have.

But biblical stewardship is more dynamic than that.

It means participating in God's ongoing renewal of creation.

It means asking not only, "How do we protect what exists?" but also, "How do we help life flourish?"

That question changes everything.

Instead of seeing environmental action as merely preventing disaster, we begin seeing it as joining God's work of healing.

Planting becomes holy work.

Conserving becomes spiritual practice.

Advocating for clean water becomes an act of discipleship.

Standing with communities whose water has been polluted becomes an expression of love for our neighbour.

Every glass of clean water becomes a reminder of God's generosity.

Every river becomes worthy of reverence.

Every raindrop becomes a blessing.

On this World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, perhaps our prayer is simply this:

May we learn to see water again.

Not merely as something that comes from a tap.
But as a sacred gift flowing through every living thing.
May we remember that we ourselves are mostly water.
The rivers run through us as surely as they run through the land.
Our lives are inseparable from the waters of creation.
And may we become people who protect what God has declared good.
So that future generations will inherit rivers that still sing.
Lakes that still sparkle.
Wetlands alive with birds.
Streams where salmon return.
Oceans filled with life.
Not because we accomplished this alone.
But because, by God's grace, we joined the River of Life that has been flowing since the beginning of creation.
The final words of Revelation are words of promise:
"See, I am coming soon."
The River of Life is already flowing.
God's healing is already at work.
Our calling is to step into that river and let its current carry us toward justice, compassion, and care for all creation.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Responding in Thanksgiving

Hymn River

MV 3

1. River, rush-a-down to the ocean blue,
River from a mountain high.
River, as you do what rivers do,
River, draw the Spirit nigh.
2. Spirit, come-a-down to the riverside,
Spirit, spark of wondrous thought.
Spirit, I am free for you to guide,
Spirit, pray that I be taught!
3. Water, let me drink of your healing pow'r,
Water, strength and life you give.
Water, as I travel with each hour,
Water, help my body live.
4. River, flow-a-down where you ran before,
River, source of clearer view.
River, as I walk your rocky shore,
River, see my journey through.

See my journey through.

Invitation to Give

One of the ways we demonstrate our courage 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.

**Who will speak a word of warning to a world whose wealth expands,
as the growing wealth is gathered into ever fewer hands?
Christ, you speak a word of warning for the church to know and tell:
greed is death and life is giving; hands that give receive as well.**

Offering Prayer

God, whose Spirit moved over the deep: We thank you for the gift of water – the waters on the Earth, and under the Earth, the waters above us, and within us. Make us mindful of the care of all the planet’s waters, that it may richly sustain life for us and for those who come after us. Accept the first fruits we offer here. Bless and multiply these gifts to our nurture and the care of your creation; for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. (*All Creation Sings, Augsburg Fortress, 2026*)

Prayers of the People Give Peace to Ev’ry Heart

MV 86

**Give peace to ev’ry heart.
Give peace to ev’ry heart.
Give peace, God. Give peace, God.**

Prayer of Jesus

**Our Mother and Father
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Sent by the Spirit

Hymn 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 the God who sprung water from a rock, quenching the thirst of those who wandered in fear, spare us from the drought of a senseless life. May the God who flows from the wells of salvation, and who is in peace. May the God who rolls on like a river, changing the course of the world with streams of righteousness that guide the Church's vessel in this world, empower us to work for transformation. And may the blessing of our merciful God, the Source, the

Son, and the Holy Spirit, keep us and preserve us in eternal life. (*Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil*)

Go in peace, as people of God made Christ's own through the waters of baptism. In the power of the Holy Spirit. Alleluia! Alleluia And let the people sing,

Sung Amen

VU 974

Music for the Journey

Postlude

Richard Lloyd

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.

Musical Acknowledgements

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