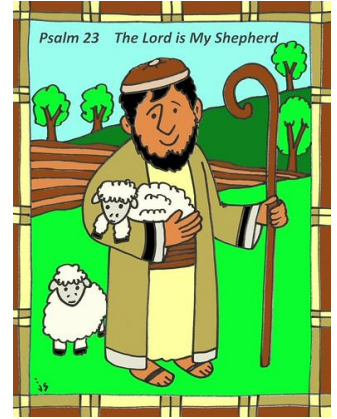


**Bethel United Church
April 26 2026**

Welcome and Announcements

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Bethel United Church in Rideau Ferry Ontario. Today is April 26 and the third Sunday of Easter. My name is Rev. Lynne Gardiner and I am pleased to welcome all of you into this place of worship, whether you are worshipping with us virtually, or in person.



This week, our service is being led by: Ruth Anne Johnson and our choir, Aidan Williamson, Kathleen Williamson, and Sandra Walker.

A quick reminder of our regularly scheduled Bethel activities: Chat and Chew, in person and in the hall on Tuesdays at 1:30 and our Zoom Prayer and Share on Thursdays at 10am.

Ashley Walker celebrates her birthday this coming week (May 1). Are there any other celebrations this week?

Please join in singing a brief song of celebration:

VU 958

"Halle, Halle, Halle"

Halle, halle, halle-lujah! Halle, halle, halle-lujah!

Halle, halle, halle-lujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

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Land Acknowledgment (Unison)

For thousands of years, First Nations people have walked on this land; their relationship with the land is at the centre of their lives and spirituality. We are gathered on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Peoples and acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages.

Minute for Mission

Room to Speak, Space to Listen

On Wednesday afternoons, a group of young people come together to do something simple and powerful. They talk. These gatherings are part of a mentorship and mental health program through the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). For many of the youth who take part, it's one of the few places where they feel safe enough to share what they're thinking and experiencing.

Christine now leads these conversations as a mentor, but her journey to this moment began in a similar circle, as someone seeking support herself.

In Kenya, young people are expected to grow up fast. By age 15, they may be seen as old enough to handle life on their own. But the reality is hard—youth may not get the encouragement or support they need. Some may leave school early, often because of teen pregnancy, the need to work, or lack of access to education in general. And showing emotion—crying, opening up—can be seen as weakness.

Christine knows this reality firsthand. When struggles go unspoken, young people can feel completely alone. Youth suicide is a real and painful reality. She once carried burdens in silence, feeling the weight of expectations without a safe space to share what she was experiencing.

Then she found the NCKC mentorship program.

In those Wednesday gatherings, Christine discovered something she had been missing: a place where she could speak freely, where her thoughts and feelings mattered. “Mental health means feeling safe enough to express your thoughts and feelings,” she now explains with the clarity of someone who has lived it. “Talking it out is the best way out.”

The support she received didn't just help her survive—it transformed her. “It's been one of my dreams to be there for someone,” she shares. That dream became her reality.

Today, Christine mentors 40 young people through the UCC youth mentorship program. She brings to each session the understanding of someone who has sat in their seats, who knows what it means to need someone to listen. As a mother, she practices intentional parenting—encouraging confidence, conversation, and honesty with her own daughter. She's become the person she once needed.

Her advice to the young people she mentors comes from experience: “Embrace the support if you have someone.”

Christine envisions building a community of young people who can support one another, breaking the cycles of silence that too often lead to isolation and despair. Through her journey from mentee to mentor, she's proving that healing isn't just personal—it multiplies.

Through Mission and Service partner the National Council of Churches of Kenya, Christine and her community are creating spaces for young people to be heard and reminding them that they matter.

When we support Mission and Service, we are helping make spaces like this possible—places where listening leads to hope, and where young people don't have to face everything alone.

Let's be the community that shows up. By giving to Mission and Service, we stand with young people in Kenya and around the world, helping ensure that safe circles continue, mentors are trained, and hope keeps multiplying.

Call to Worship (Responsive)

Jesus says, "I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."

**We come seeking that pasture—
a place of safety, of freedom, of abundant life.**

In a world of many voices, Christ calls us by name.

**We listen for the voice of love,
the voice that leads us toward justice, mercy, and peace.**

Come, let us enter this sacred time through Christ,
the gate who welcomes all.

Let us worship God, who leads us into life abundant.

Sung Call to Worship VU 409 (vs 1) "Morning has Broken"

**Morning has broken like the first morning,
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.**

Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!

Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

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Lighting of the Christ Candle and the World Candle

As we light our Christ candle and our World candle think about the voices that we listen to, and what it takes to hear God's voice in the cacophony of other (sometimes loud) voices.

A moment of silent reflection: How do you know when you God is calling you by name? Can you discern God's voice? How do you hear God's voice?

Listen to God's words for you this morning from John 10:

"The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice."

Opening Prayer

Loving God,

We gather here today as sheep of your fold, listening for the voice of the Good Shepherd. In a world often filled with noise, confusion, and voices that seek to divide or diminish, we thank you for the voice of Christ that calls us each by name.

We thank you for the "gate" that Jesus provides—not a door that shuts others out, but a passage that opens us up to a life of meaning, justice, and connection.

Open our hearts this morning to receive the abundance you promise. May this time of worship be a green pasture for our souls, where we are refreshed by your Spirit and emboldened to follow where you lead.

Amen.

Opening Hymn VU 271 "There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

**¹ There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice
which is more than liberty.**

**² There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heaven;
there is no place where earth's failings
have such gracious judgement given.**

**³ There is plentiful redemption
in the blood that Christ has shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the Head.**

**⁴ Troubled souls, why will you scatter
like a crowd of frightened sheep?
Foolish hearts, why will you wander
from a love so true and deep?**

**⁵ For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind,
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.**

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Passing of the Peace

Prayer for Reconciliation

Holy One, our Shepherd and our Guide,
we confess that we often stray from the paths of peace and lose our way in
the scrub bush of our own making. You call us by name, but we frequently
listen to voices that stir up fear, judgment, and scarcity. We have sought
comfort in gates that exclude and walls that divide, rather than entering the
openness of your grace.

Forgive us for the times we have hindered the "abundant life" for others, and for the times we have failed to recognize your image in our neighbours. In our silence, we reflect on the ways we have turned away from your call to justice and mercy...

A moment of silence is kept.

Help us to trust your voice once more. Lead us back to the fold of your love, where there is room for everyone and life for every soul. Amen.

Assurance of Love

Hear the good news: Jesus came so that we might have life, and have it abundantly. God does not call us by our mistakes, but calls us by our names. In the grace of Jesus Christ, the gate is always open. We are forgiven, we are loved, and we are set free to begin again.

Theme Conversation

Barb and Jeffrey Joynt

Our Scriptures Today

John 10:1-10 Jesus the Good Shepherd

Psalm 23 (Unison)

¹ *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

² *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*

³ *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*

⁴ *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

⁵ *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*

⁶ *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

Reflection

Hymn

VU 747

"The Lord's My Shepherd"

**¹ The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me,
the quiet waters by.**

**² My soul he doth restore again;
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
even for his own name's sake.**

**3 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for thou art with me; and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.**

**4 My table thou has furnished
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.**

**5 Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me,
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling-place shall be.**

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Invitation to the Offering

Offering Music

Offering Response VU 542 "We Give You But Your Own"
**We give you but your own, whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is yours alone, we give it gratefully.**

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Offering Prayer

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

God of the journey, you walk with us through valley and over mountain, meeting us in our questions and our deepest longings. As we travel the roads of this life together, we bring before you the prayers of our hearts and the needs of our world.

We pray for your church throughout the world, that it may be a community of the open table and the burning heart. Grant us the courage to welcome the stranger as Christ welcomed the disciples on the road, listening deeply to one another's stories and seeking the truth that sets us free.

We pray for our world and its leaders. In places where hope has grown cold and roads are blocked by conflict or injustice, we ask for the rekindling of your peace. Guide us to be people of the resurrection who work for the restoration of all things, seeking dignity for every person and care for your creation.

We pray for those in our own community who are walking through shadows of grief, illness, or loneliness. We remember those whose eyes are heavy with tears and those who feel they are walking alone.

May they feel your companioning presence beside them, warming their hearts and offering a peace that passes all understanding.

We pray for ourselves, that we might have eyes to see you in the ordinary moments of our week. Help us to recognize you in the breaking of bread, in the kindness of a neighbour, and in the quiet whispers of the Spirit. Empower us to run back to the world with joy, sharing the news that love is stronger than death.

Today, we have special prayers for:

Joy	Rev. Myra	Fran	James
Liam	Jim	Chris O.	Bob
Shirley	Bev	Leah	Brynnley
Abby	Kim	Serge	Kim P.
Janet	Dianne	Grace	Sandy
Carol	Rae	Lainey	Ellen & Art

And as a community we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying:

Our Father....

Closing Hymn

VU 559

"Come, O Fount of Every Blessing"

**¹ Come, O Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing
call for songs of endless praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unfailing love.**

**² Here I pause in my sojourning,
giving thanks for having come,
come to trust, at every turning,
God will guide me safely home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God,
came to rescue me from danger,
precious presence, precious blood.**

3 O, to grace how great a debt
or daily I am drawn anew!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, I can feel it,
wander from the love I've known:
here's my heart, O, take and seal it,
seal it for your very own.

Living our Faith this Week

This week consider the habits and routines in your life. Are there habits that allow people to see God when they are with you? What can you cultivate in your life so that people can trust your way of being?

Commissioning and Benediction

Sung Benediction

**Go now in peace, never be afraid,
God will go with you each hour of everyday.
Go now in faith, steadfast strong and true,
Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching us in love.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love. Amen. Amen. Amen**

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