



**Bethel United Church
April 5 2026**

**He is Risen!!!
He is Risen, indeed!!!**

Welcome and Announcements

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Bethel United Church in Rideau Ferry Ontario. Today is Easter Sunday, and I'm so delighted that all of you could join me in worship on this sacred occasion. Today has often been described as the 'pinnacle' of the church year. Whatever it is, it is the day that we affirm together that in death there is no sting, and in grave there is no victory (1st Corinthians 15:55 paraphrased). 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: Paula Grenke and our choir, Aidan Williamson, Kathleen Williamson, and Karen Hunt.

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.

The Annual Congregational meeting will be held on Sunday, April 19th following the worship service.

The UCW will meet on Tuesday, April 14th at 11am.

Are there any 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

Rooted and Rising

The stone was rolled away in a small, overlooked place. Not in the centre of power, or a crowded city. Across Canada, in small towns and rural communities, churches continue to be places of discovery and renewed life.

In Fort Nelson, British Columbia, Hillcrest United Church has stood on the northern landscape for more than 60 years. In a place shaped by distance and long winters, the church gathers neighbours in prayer, in song, and in everyday acts of care. Traditions are honoured, new life is welcomed, and everyone is invited in.

In Chipman, New Brunswick, volunteers at Chipman United Church prepare meals for neighbours who need them. Young people help lead worship. When some members could no longer attend in person, the church carried worship online—and discovered thousands of people joining to be part of that circle of prayer.

At Tobermory United Church, the building hums with life throughout the week. Community groups gather and space is shared with neighbouring congregations. Down the road, their thrift shop offers affordable goods—and when someone needs help, those items are tenderly given.

This is rural ministry. Creative, determined, and deeply rooted in community. These churches are not fading away. They are adapting, experimenting, and opening their doors in new ways so faith and community can continue to flourish.

At Easter, we proclaim that new life can break through even when the future feels uncertain.

Through Mission and Service, we help make that possible. Together, we strengthen communities that continue to serve, welcome, and care in places across this country.

This Easter, please give generously to Mission and Service. We are helping to ensure that hope continues to rise—in rural communities across Canada, and around the world.

Call to Worship (Responsive)

In the deep shadows of the early morning, we come seeking. Like the Marys before us, we carry the weight of the world's grief and the memory of what has been lost.

We come to the garden, wondering if the stones of injustice and despair can ever be moved.

Look up! The earth shakes with the power of love. The heavy stones of our lives—fear, exclusion, and silence—are rolled away by the hand of the Holy.

The messenger speaks to us as to them: "Do not be afraid!"

Do not look for the Living among the dead. Christ is not bound by the tomb, nor is the Spirit confined by the past. The Holy One goes before us into the world, into our streets, and into our hearts.

We leave the empty tombs of our own making. We run with great joy to share the news of a love that cannot be contained.

Jesus meets us on the way and greets us with peace.

Hallelujah! The Christ is risen in us and through us.

Let us worship God!

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 on this Easter Sunday morning, we consider the tombs of our lives and the rocks that are trapping us in those tombs. What needs to be 'rolled away' or shifted so that we can fully live?

Listen to God's words for you this morning from Matthew 28:

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning and his clothing white as snow. For fear of him the guards shook and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.

Opening Prayer

God of the Morning and the Empty Tomb, we gather today in the light of a new day, still trembling from the earthquakes of our lives. Like the women who walked to the garden while it was yet dark, we often carry the spices of our grief and the heavy stones of our anxieties.

We thank you for the messengers in our lives who startle us with the truth: that you are not found among the dead, but are always going ahead of us. Forgive us when we cling to the safety of the tomb because we are afraid of the wild freedom of the Resurrection.

Roll away the stones that keep us from one another—the stones of prejudice, the walls of indifference, and the silence of complicity. Shake the foundations of our hearts until only love remains.

As we hear the story of the empty grave, may we also hear the voice of the Risen One greeting us on the road. Transform our fear into great joy, and our hesitation into a holy race toward justice. May our worship today be a rehearsal for the world you are bringing to birth—a world where death has no sting and love has no end. Amen.

Opening Hymn VU 155 “Jesus Christ is Risen Today”

- ¹ Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!
our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!
who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!
suffer to redeem our loss. Hallelujah!**
- ² Hymns of praise then let us sing hallelujah!
unto Christ, our heavenly King, hallelujah!
who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah!
sinners to redeem and save. Hallelujah!**
- ³ But the pains which he endured, hallelujah!
our salvation have procured; hallelujah!
now above the sky he's King, hallelujah!
where the angels ever sing. Hallelujah!**
- ⁴ Sing we to our God above, hallelujah!
praise eternal as God's love; hallelujah!
praise our God, ye heavenly host, hallelujah!
praise the Son and Holy Ghost. Hallelujah!**

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Passing of the Peace

Prayer for Reconciliation

God of the Living, we confess that we are often more at home in the graveyard than in the garden. We cling to the stones of our old habits, our comfortable prejudices, and our safe certainties. We confess that we have sometimes preferred the silence of the tomb to the disruptive joy of your Resurrection.

We have allowed fear to dictate our actions and silence our voices. We have looked for you only in the past, forgetting that you are always going ahead of us into the Galilee of our daily lives—into the places of struggle, the margins of society, and the hearts of our neighbours.

Forgive us for the times we have stood still when you called us to run with great joy. Shake the foundations of our complacency. Roll away the heavy stones of our indifference, and lead us out into the bright light of your transformative grace. (A moment of silent reflection)

Assurance of Love

Hear the good news! The tomb is empty, and the stone is rolled away. The messenger declares to us today, as to the women then: "He is not here; he has risen!"

The power of death, hate, and exclusion has been broken by a love that will not let us go. In the name of the Risen Christ, you are forgiven, you are seen, and you are called to a new life of purpose and peace. Amen

Theme Conversation

Stones that need to shift

Our Scriptures Today

Matthew 28: 1-10

Reflection

Hymn

VU 185

"You Tell Me That the Lord is Risen"

- ¹ You tell me that the Lord is risen, that you have seen his face.
Then tell me why you crouch in fear and hide within this place.
You say that he spoke words of peace and stood just as before.
But 'til I touch his very flesh I will not trust your joy.**
- ² You claim a resurrection here, that God has broken death.
No easy words like these will soothe
the pain that tears my breath.
How well do I recall his face, compassion, strength in fear.
How deep my grief that he should die.
Spare me your words of cheer!**
- ³ 'Now peace be with you. Come, my friend, my wounded body see.
Let the rich courage of your doubt bring you to fresh belief.
Fear not to wonder at the Word, to search the depths of grace.
Reach out and touch, here is my hand. Receive the gift of faith.'**
- ⁴ 'How blest are they, how fortunate who know without the sight.
But Thomas, you are favoured too, for searching yields its light.'
So may each pilgrim in the Way, each road to Christ be blest,
'til lips declare, 'My Lord and God!', Christ's body one at last.**

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Invitation to the Offering

Offering Music

Abby	Kim	Amanda &	James
Janet	Dianne	Wayne T.	Bob
Carol	Rae	Serge	Brynnley
Rev. Myra	Fran	Wayne P.	
Jim	Chris O.	Grace	
Bev	Leah	Lainey	

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

Our Father....

Closing Hymn

VU 173

"Thine is the Glory"

**¹ Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.
Angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded grave-clothes where the body lay.**

***Refrain* Thine is the glory, risen, conquering Son:
endless is the victory thou o'er death hast won.**

**² Lo, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb!
Lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom.
Let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord now liveth: death hath lost its sting. *Refrain***

**³ No more we doubt thee, glorious Prince of life;
life is nought without thee: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors, through thy deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to thy home above. *Refrain***

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Living our Faith this Week

What do you need to roll away the stone that is trapping you? What do you need to trust that God can do this work in you?

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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