



Bethel United Church July 12 2026

- All **Bolded Text** indicates a congregational response

Welcome and Announcements

Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Bethel United Church in Rideau Ferry Ontario. Today is July 12 and the fifth Sunday after Pentecost. 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 in our Sanctuary.

This week, our service is being led by: Ruth Anne Johnson and our choir, Aidan Williamson, Kathleen Williamson, and Liz Hughes

Rev. Lynne's contact information is: Phone (613) 267-3855 or email pastor@bethelchurchrideauferry.ca

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 at 10am on Thursday.

The next Official Board meeting will be on Sunday, July 19th following the worship service.

Mark your calendars for Sunday August 16th for "*Let Them Eat Cake*" Sunday. All are invited for cake, coffee/tea after worship. We will have 12 cakes, each representing a month of the year. Six (6) months have already been spoken for, but we need your help for the remaining months. Please see the sign-up sheet on the fridge, in the kitchen.

A second Grief and Bereavement Drop-In Support Group will take place in the Bethel United Church Hall on Wednesday, July 29th from 1:30-3:30 p.m. If you would like to participate, please register with Brad Dowdall, Community Home Support Lanark County
Call 613 267- 6400 or email bradd@chslc.ca

From Session and the Stewardship Committee

- 2026 Bethel Outdoor Service and BBQ Picnic will take place at 11a.m. on Sunday, July 26, 2026
- Location: Sun shelter at Rideau Ferry Yacht Club Conservation Area
- Special morning of outdoor worship, shared food, warm friendship and a lot of fun!
- Parking passes from the RVCA are \$10.00 each. (Sandra and Ashley Walker will have the passes here at Bethel on the morning of the 26th (and each Sunday prior to July 26th))

- Meet at Bethel at 10:30a.m. on the 26th and carpool from the church to the Conservation Area to reduce the number of parking passes needed.
- Special saxophone music from Hugh Gardiner during the service.
- Please bring a lawn chair if you would find that more comfortable.
- Stewardship will provide the food and other supplies for the BBQ picnic and participants are invited to make a monetary donation into the basket towards costs.
- Looking forward to sharing this special morning with members of our Bethel Family!

Anne Dowie celebrates her birthday this week. Are there any other celebrations?

Please join in singing a brief song of celebration:

VU 179

Hallelujah, hallelujah. Give thanks to the risen Christ;

hallelujah, hallelujah! Give praise to God's name.

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Land Acknowledgment

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.

Mission and Service Story

Reverence and Service

We would like to share a blog written by Rev. Won Hur, who works as the Global Partnership Program Coordinator for Asia in the General Council's Church in Mission Unit:

One of the biggest challenges in my thirty years as a congregational minister was not knowing whether I was making any difference at all. Unlike bricklayers, butchers, or teachers, there were no concrete indicators to measure the impact of my ministry. This also holds true when we give, practice generosity, and support Mission and Service. We often want to know what difference it makes.

In reality, our offerings do make a difference in ways we cannot even imagine, and often in very concrete ways.

There are many partners of The United Church of Canada who do incredible work in Canada and around the world. One of them is Toyo Eiwa Jogakuin, a private Christian girls' school in Tokyo, Japan.

The school was founded in 1884 by Ms. Martha Cartmell (1845–1945), the first woman missionary of the Canadian Methodist Church, a predecessor of The United Church of Canada.

At a time when girls were often denied education, she started a school for them, beginning with just two students. Today, the school has grown to an enrollment of over 4,200, with students from kindergarten through high school and into graduate school. It has retained its core Christian identity—the school day begins with worship, and students take classes on Christianity while living into the school’s motto, “Reverence and Service.” Over its history, more than 140 members of the United Church have answered the call to serve this school.

One of the more famous graduates of Toyo Eiwa is Hanako Muraoka, who graduated in 1913. During her time at the school, she enjoyed the library and read many books in English; she became a writer and translator. Later in life a Canadian friend, Loretta Leonard Shaw, gave her a copy of *Anne of Green Gables*, by Lucy Maud Montgomery. Hanako fell in love with the book and its main character, Anne, and went on to translate it into Japanese. The translation became a bestseller and has since become a cultural phenomenon—Japanese tourists regularly visit Prince Edward Island to see the *Anne of Green Gables* Museum, as Toyo Eiwa students each year do.

Another notable graduate is Rev. Shoko Aminaka, General Secretary of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ), who attended the school from grade one through grade 12. Having grown up in this environment and been immersed in Christian faith, she began to think deeply about life and she found freedom in entrusting herself to God. After being baptized in grade nine, she discerned her call, was ordained, and eventually rose to the highest office in the UCCJ. Currently, four ordained women clergy in the United Church of Christ in Japan are graduates of Toyo Eiwa.

It is often difficult to see or fully understand the impacts of our faith at work in the world. Like fruit trees in an orchard, they take time to grow, blossom, and bear fruit for all to enjoy. Such is the work of ministry and service—it is often hidden from our eyes, yet it is growing and flourishing.

Among Toyo Eiwa students and alumni, there is immense gratitude toward Ms. Martha Cartmell and The United Church of Canada. They raised funds to plant about 100 cherry blossom trees in Centennial Park in Dundas, near Hamilton, Ontario, and in Lakeview Cemetery in Thorold, Ontario—Ms. Cartmell’s hometown. In 2014, for the school’s 130th anniversary, they visited Dundas to celebrate the tree-planting ceremony.

Thanks to your contributions to Mission and Service, The United Church of Canada continues to support partners around the world in ways that are not always visible. Yet those partners—and God—appreciate our generosity and our shared commitment to a more just and peaceful world.

Call to Worship

God has called us here today; we've chosen to come.

God calls us to come closer;

God invites us to recognize God's presence.

May we choose to say 'Yes' to God today.

Sung Call to Worship VU 662

"Lead Me God"

**Lead me, God, lead me in your righteousness;
make your way plain before my face.**

**For it is you, and you, God only,
who makes me to dwell in safety.**

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Lighting of the Christ Candle and the World Candle

As we light our candles this morning, we all ponder what it means to be 'good soil' that can receive the seeds of God's good news.

A moment of silent reflection: What is God's good news for our world? Can you hear it? Can you tell others about it?

Listen to God's words for you this morning from Matthew 13:

"But the seed falling on good soil refers to someone who hears the word and understands it. This is the one who produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown."

Opening Prayer

Holy God, we come before you today just as we are, grateful that you meet us in the messy, complicated, and very human parts of our lives. We recognize ourselves in the old stories of families struggling for a sense of belonging and making difficult choices along the way. Be with us in our own searching, and remind us that your grace is an inheritance we don't have to fight for, but one that is already ours because we are yours.

Lord, we know your love is like seeds scattered everywhere, landing on the hard paths and the fertile soil of our hearts alike. We ask that your Spirit move among us now, softening the places where we've become discouraged and clearing away the distractions that crowd out our compassion. Help us to be good ground for your word, so that your dreams for justice and peace can take root in us and grow into something beautiful for the world. Amen.

Opening Hymn

VU 678

"For the Healing of the Nations"

- ¹ For the healing of the nations, God, we pray with one accord;
for a just and equal sharing of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action help us rise and pledge our word.**
- ² Lead us forward into freedom, from despair your world release;
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.**
- ³ All that kills abundant living, let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling, dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice may we hallow life's brief span.**
- ⁴ You, Creator-God, have written your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness bring the life of Christ to mind;
that, by our response and service, earth its destiny may find.**

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Passing of the Peace

Prayer for Reconciliation

Gracious and loving God, we confess that we don't always choose what truly gives life. Like Esau, we can settle for what satisfies us in the moment and lose sight of the deeper gifts you offer. Like the seed that falls among rocks or thorns, we allow fear, worry, busyness, and self-interest to keep your love from taking root in our lives.

Forgive us when we fail to love our neighbours, when we ignore the cries for justice, or when we hold back kindness because it feels inconvenient or costly. Keep working in us, O God. Break up the hard places in our hearts, nurture what is growing, and help us become people who bear the fruit of your love, your peace, and your hope in the world. Amen.

Assurance of Love

Friends, hear the good news: God's grace is never in short supply. The One who scatters seeds of love so generously does not give up on us when we stumble or fall short. Again and again, God meets us with mercy, offering new beginnings and the chance to grow into the people we are created to be.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven, loved, and set free to live with courage, compassion, and hope. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Theme Conversation

Marshmallow Tests and other tests of delayed gratification.

Our Scriptures Today

Genesis 25: 19–34

- Esau gives up his birthright for Jacob's stew.

Matthew 13: 1–9, 18–23

- The parable of the sower and the seed.

Reflection

Hymn

VU 672

"Take Time To Be Holy"

- ¹ Take time to be holy, speak oft with your Lord;
abide in him always, and feed on his word.
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,
forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.**
- ² Take time to be holy, let him be your guide,
and run not before him, whatever betide.
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,
and, looking to Jesus, still trust in his word.**
- ³ Take time to be holy, be calm in your soul,
each thought and each motive beneath his control.
Thus led by his spirit to fountains of love,
you soon shall be fitted for service above.**

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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

Loving God, you scatter the seeds of your love with generosity, trusting that hope can take root in every time and place. We thank you for your patience with us, for your grace that never gives up, and for the ways you continue to call us into lives of compassion, justice, and peace.

We pray for your world. Where there is war, bring peace. Where there is hunger, bring nourishment. Where there is fear, bring courage. Where people are pushed aside because of who they are, remind us that every person is created in your image and worthy of dignity, belonging, and love. Help us to be part of the work of healing the divisions that separate your children from one another.

We pray for your church, that we may be good soil for your Spirit. Give us hearts that are open to learning, willing to change, and ready to serve. May our congregation be a place where all are welcomed, questions are honoured, gifts are shared, and your love is made visible in our community.

We pray for those who are carrying heavy burdens today: those who are grieving, those who are ill, those who are anxious, lonely, or overwhelmed, and those facing uncertainty about the future. Surround them with your comfort and strength. We especially lift up those we name before you now, either aloud or in the silence of our hearts...

(Silent prayer)

God of hope, help us not only to hear your word but to live it. Plant in us the seeds of generosity, forgiveness, courage, and joy. As we leave this place, may our lives bear fruit that blesses our neighbors and reflects your dream for the world.

Today we have special prayers for:

Joy	Serge	Chris	Dave
Leah	Lainey	Ellen Jane	Helen
Liam	James	Jennifer	Lynda
Janet	Brynnley	Sandy	Sarah
Carol	Kim P.	Ellen & Art	Jason
Kim H.	Haley	Robin	Lianne
Fran	Bill	Grace	

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

Our Father....

Closing Hymn

VU 660

"How Firm a Foundation"

- ¹ How firm a foundation, you servants of God,
is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!
What more can be said than to you has been said,
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?**
- ² 'Fear not, I am with you; O be not dismayed!
For I am your God and will still give you aid;
I'll strengthen and help you, and cause you to stand,
upheld by my righteous omnipotent hand.**

- 3 'When through the deep waters I call you to go,
the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless,
and sanctify to you your deepest distress.**
- 4 'When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,
my grace, all-sufficient, shall be your supply:
the flame shall not hurt you; I only design
your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.**
- 5 'The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose
I will not - I will not desert to his foes;
that soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never - no, never - no, never forsake!'**

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Living our Faith this Week

This week I would like all of you to consider what it would mean to be people that can hear and receive God's good news for our world. Does it change how you approach the people around 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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