

## Bethel United Church September 27 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 September 27 and Orange Shirt Sunday. Orange Shirt Day is an invitation to everyone to wear an orange shirt to show their compassion for the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools and to say that all children matter. My name is Rev. Lynne Gardiner and I am pleased to welcome all of you into this place of worship, whether you're worshipping with us virtually, or in person in our Sanctuary.

Our liturgy today has been written by Tony Snow, and our Reflection is a blog written by *Honarine Scott from the Omushkego Cree from Fort Albany First Nation. She is the Healing Programs Coordinator in the Indigenous Ministries Circle.* Our service is being led by: Paula Grenke and our choir, Aidan Williamson, Kathleen Williamson, and Barb Joynt.

Rev. Lynne's contact information is: Phone (613) 267-3855 or email [pastor@bethelchurchrideauferry.ca](mailto: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 on Thursdays at 10am. If you would like the link, for our Zoom Prayer and Share, please speak with Rev. Lynne.

### **From the Stewardship Committee**

October is traditionally Stewardship Month at Bethel and for 2026 the Stewardship Committee has decided to focus on the Alzheimer's Society.

The Alzheimer's Society Lanark Leeds Grenville is a non-profit, registered charity that supports neighbours in our communities on their journey through dementia and mild cognitive impairment. They offer free dementia-friendly care, partner support groups, education, social recreation and system navigation.

They have offices located throughout Lanark Leeds and Grenville to better serve the local communities.

Although they receive some funding from the Ontario Government, the Alzheimer's Society also depends on donations and volunteer support.

During October, donations for the Lanark, Leeds and Grenville Alzheimer's Society will be gratefully received here at Bethel. Donations will be received



as loose change/undesignated funds during the Offering Time on all October Sundays.

Contributions can also be made by cheque or through an e-transfer to [treasurer@bethelchurchrideauferry.ca](mailto:treasurer@bethelchurchrideauferry.ca) marking Alzheimer's in the memo line.

Robin Hull, Education Coordinator for the Alzheimer's Society in Lanark County will join us during our Bethel Service on Sunday, October 18<sup>th</sup> to tell us more about this important agency. She will welcome your questions.

Robin will also make available a number of handouts about Alzheimer's and other dementias. You can find them on the table at the back of the church hall.

Thank you members of our Bethel Family for your support of this important undertaking.

If you have any questions, please speak to any member of the Stewardship Committee.

Are there any celebrations this week?

Please join in me singing our celebration song:

**VU 179 "Hallelujah, hallelujah, give thanks"**

**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**

#### ***Restoring Sacred Connections***

Traditional teachings, the Medicine Wheel, and the importance of relationships create a foundation for emotional, spiritual, and cultural healing. Here is the Mission and Service Story for September 27, 2026.

In Wiikwemkoong Unceded Territory, healing happens in many forms. The Healing with Horses program brings people together to connect with one another, the land, and the gentle and powerful strength of horses. Among them are four Ojibwe Spirit Horses, a rare and sacred breed with a powerful connection to the community. Their story is one of survival and return.

At one point in history, the Ojibwe Spirit Horses were stolen from the community. Their return to the land and the people who have always known and cherished them is an act of resilience and reconciliation.

Today, their presence offers a living reminder that what has been disrupted can be restored, and that healing can begin with reconnecting to what has been lost.

That spirit is at the heart of Healing with Horses. Supported by our Mission and Service gifts, the program brings equine therapy together with Indigenous and Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being. Traditional teachings, the Medicine Wheel, and the importance of relationships create a foundation for emotional, spiritual, and cultural healing.

Over the winter, participants ride through the snowy bush, sketched horses outdoors, and learned about emotional regulation, boundaries, and self-compassion. Some walked beside the horses or brushed their coats. Others gathered in circle and found a place to listen and be heard.

For some participants, sharing feelings was difficult. Through the program, they began to find their voices. Children learned ways to understand and manage their emotions, adults reconnected with their inner strength, and together, participants discovered that healing doesn't have to happen alone.

The horses help create that space. Their calming presence invites people to slow down, pay attention, and connect in a different way.

There's growing interest in expanding Healing with Horses so more people can take part throughout the year. Plans for a barn or indoor structure would allow this work to continue in every season.

Our Mission and Service gifts help make this possible. Our gifts support Indigenous-led programs that create opportunities for cultural reconnection, community, and healing. The Ojibwe Spirit Horses have found their way home. Through Healing with Horses, they are helping others find their way, too. Let's give generously.

### **Call to Worship**

By way of beginning we hold two truths together: One fixed to a narrative of Creator and Creation.

The other, bound to a diversity of knowings that express Creator in all its forms, bound to the people's experiences of Creation as a divine being. A Mother Earth: a caregiver and doting parent.

Both these truths teach us that to be blessed is to be loved, and that all of Creation is God's prayer.

We live in light of divine mystery. A great unknowing.

We live in light of our connectedness, to each other, to all beings, to all things. We are born interdependent.

It is here that we begin this cycle of life by offering prayers of humility, prayers of gratitude, prayers of humility and prayers of remembrance.

From the fixed point of where we stand, we are centered, and all is prayer in every direction around us.

### **Let us pray**

*Great Mystery, Wakan Tanka, creator of all, to you we give thanks for this life. To you we are grateful that we are here learning all things. In this place, we are blessed.*

### **Lighting of the Christ Candle and the World Candle**

#### **Round 1 - Fire**

Aidan Williamson



## **II. Candle Lighting**

We light our candle of illumination, reminded of God's own divine instruction: "Let there be light" and there was, and it was good. Creation is blessed with goodness.

Our religion further teaches us of the path of Christ, his divinity and his purpose. We remember Christ's words: "I am the light of the world."

Light is a beacon of hope that ends the dark and brings a new dawn. For my people the morning star pierces the gloom and welcomes new life into the world. For my people, the star is a harbinger of new life and new beginnings: it is said a star falling is a newborn being received on Earth.

For centuries, our Elders woke each day bringing smudge and prayer in thanksgiving to do their part to reciprocate God's blessing with humble acceptance.

### **Hymn**

**VU 87**

***"I Am the Light of the World"***

#### ***Refrain***

**'I am the light of the world!**

**You people come and follow me!'**

**If you follow and love you'll learn the mystery  
of what you were meant to do and be.**

- <sup>1</sup> When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and the shepherds have found their way home,  
the work of Christmas is begun: *Refrain***
- <sup>2</sup> To find the lost and lonely one,  
to heal the broken soul with love,  
to feed the hungry children with warmth and good food,  
to feel the earth below, the sky above! *Refrain***
- <sup>3</sup> To free the prisoner from all chains,  
to make the powerful care,  
to rebuild the nations with strength of good will,  
to see God's children everywhere! *Refrain***
- <sup>4</sup> To bring hope to every task you do,  
to dance at a baby's new birth,  
to make music in an old person's heart,  
and sing to the colours of the earth! *Refrain***

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## Round 2 - Wind

Kathleen Williamson

Our scripture teaches us that God fashioned each of us out of clay and breathed life into us. The breath of life is in us. It fills us and animates us. It connects us to one another with language. It gives us instruction and a means to share our thoughts, our internal world. By communication we discern the divine. My uncle said, "When you hear people talking about God, go and listen. You will always learn something."

The act of sharing leads us to recognizing many opportunities and protocols: we receive with grace; we accept an act of sharing with respect and goodwill; we learn that sharing is a practice we can also engage.

The Elders teach us that we are learning by doing and experiencing God's world. That each of us must travel the good road that God has placed before us. And along the way we will develop into human being who contribute to the harmony in Creation. We do our part, just as the winged and the four-legged and the water-bound. My grandmother instructed my father: "Listen to the birds singing. The robin is praying."

**Hymn****VU 625****"I Feel the Winds of God"**

- <sup>1</sup> I feel the winds of God today; today my sail I lift,  
though heavy oft with drenching spray and torn with many a rift;  
if hope but light the water's crest, and Christ my bark will use,  
I'll seek the seas at his behest, and brave another cruise.**
- <sup>2</sup> It is the wind of God that dries my vain regretful tears,  
until with braver thoughts shall rise the purer, brighter years;  
if cast on shores of selfish ease or pleasure I should be,  
O let me feel your freshening breeze, and I'll put back to sea.**
- <sup>3</sup> If ever I forget your love and how that love was shown,  
lift high the blood-red flag above; it bears your name alone.  
Great pilot of my onward way, you will not let me drift.  
I feel the winds of God today; today my sail I lift.**

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**Round 3 - Water****Karen Hunt**

Water is the sustainer of life. We cannot live without it. We are born into it. It cleanses us and sanctifies us. It blesses us and holds us in our most sacred ceremonies. Water is the renewer and purifier at our baptism. It is the quencher of our bodily need after fasting in the sundance. It is our instrument of prayer in the sweatlodge. Water surrounds us, lifts us up and delivers us to new shores.

Our Elders note that all life connects to water, and that the water that nurtures us year after year is the same water that nurtured and quenched our ancestors. It fed the same plants and flowed through the same streams and aquifers. In a closed system like Earth's, the water recycles and is made pure. So the same water we drink today is the same water that all living beings have used to sustain themselves. We are blessed by this connectedness.

*"Come!" Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes to take the free gift of the water of life. (Revelation 22: 17)*

**Hymn****VU 710****"Shall We Gather at the River"**

- <sup>1</sup> Shall we gather at the river, where bright angel feet have trod;  
with its crystal tide for ever flowing by the throne of God?**

**Refrain Yes, we'll gather at the river,  
the beautiful, the beautiful river;  
gather with the saints at the river  
that flows by the throne of God.**

- <sup>2</sup> Ere we reach the shining river, lay we every burden down;  
grace our spirits will deliver, and provide a robe and crown.  
Refrain**
- <sup>3</sup> Soon we'll reach the shining river, soon our pilgrimage will cease,  
soon our happy hearts will quiver with the melody of peace.  
Refrain**

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## Round 4 - Earth

Heather Thompson

### An Acknowledgement of Land

The gifts from God are for all. In this Creation we each have our home. Good theology teaches us to make room and space for everyone—though the reason we have an Orange Shirt Day today is because exclusion has ruled our way of life in the past. We recognize that discrimination and hardship across the land shows the unjust treatment of the original inhabitants. This continued displacement and denialism are a way of life today. This is one of our original sins.

To confront this sin means atoning for our past misdeeds and abuses. It means recognizing that throughout the land the same story of assimilation and genocide occurs. It is the same denigration and exclusion that holds together our Canadian national narrative of only two founding nations.

This land has many more beginnings, many more voices, many more teachings than are dreamed of in our philosophies. If we are to move forward, our acts of reconciliation require a change in all our behaviour.

Our prayer today is we begin to understand our task before us on the road to reconciliation.

### Hymn

**VU 295**

***"The Earth and All Who Breathe"***

- <sup>1</sup> The earth and all who breathe exist through love divine,  
who formed the sea, the flowering tree,  
the wren, the fragrant pine.  
Each woman, man, and child created from the dust  
is called to share creation's care, a sacred, living trust.**
- <sup>2</sup> The good, abundant earth is ours to tend and keep;  
yet land lies waste, consumed in haste,  
and hungry children weep.  
The nations proudly build new Babels to the sky.  
Their bombs destroy creation's joy; their missiles terrify!**

**3 Creation now awaits humanity's rebirth  
at last to claim one common aim: to nurture life on earth.  
Awake, all humankind, the challenge now embrace;  
apply your strength, your voice, your means,  
as stewards of God's grace.**

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### III. Confession

Linda Hamon

#### **1986 Apology to Indigenous Peoples**

Long before my people journeyed to this land your people were here, and you received from your Elders an understanding of Creation and of the Mystery that surrounds us all that was deep, and rich, and to be treasured.



We did not hear you when you shared your vision. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.

We confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ.

We imposed our civilization as a condition of accepting the gospel.

We tried to make you be like us and in so doing we helped to destroy the vision that made you what you were. As a result, you, and we, are poorer and the image of the Creator in us is twisted, blurred, and we are not what we are meant by God to be.

We ask you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God's Creation healed.

*—The Right Rev. Bob Smith, General Council 1986, The United Church of Canada*

*O Great Spirit, deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, for you are my Creator, who set me free and makes me whole. (Psalm 51: 14 FNV)*

#### **The 1988 Response**

*In 1988, at the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Council, the Indigenous church acknowledged the apology, expressing its hope that the church would live into its words. Mrs. Edith Memnook, a representative of the All Native Circle Conference, said:*

The Apology made to the Native People of Canada by The United Church of Canada in Sudbury in August 1986 has been a very important step forward. It is heartening to see that The United Church of Canada is a forerunner in making this Apology to Native People. The All Native Circle Conference has now acknowledged your Apology. Our people have continued to affirm the teachings of the Native way of life. Our spiritual teachings and values have taught us to uphold the Sacred Fire; to be guardians of Mother Earth and strive to maintain harmony and peaceful coexistence with all peoples.

We only ask of you to respect our Sacred Fire, the Creation, and to live in peaceful coexistence with us. We recognize the hurts and feelings will continue amongst our people, but through partnership and walking hand in hand, the Indian spirit will eventually heal. Through our love, understanding, and sincerity the brotherhood and sisterhood of unity, strength, and respect can be achieved.

The Native People of The All Native Circle Conference hope and pray that the Apology is not symbolic but that these are the words of action and sincerity. We appreciate the freedom for culture and religious expression. In the new spirit this Apology has created, let us unite our hearts and minds in the wholeness of life that the Great Spirit has given us.

*O Maker of Life, show your great kindness and blessing to us. Speak blessing words over us and make your face shine on us. That your good road will be made known to those who walk the earth. (Psalm 67: 1–2 FNV)*

### ***The 1998 Apology***

*To former students of United Church Indian Residential Schools, and to their families and communities:*

From the deepest reaches of your memories, you have shared with us your stories of suffering from our church's involvement in the operation of Indian Residential Schools. You have shared the personal and historic pain that you still bear, and you have been vulnerable yet again. You have also shared with us your strength and wisdom born of the life-giving dignity of your communities and traditions and your stories of survival.

In response to our church's commitment to repentance, I spoke these words of apology on behalf of the General Council Executive on Tuesday, October 27, 1998:

"As Moderator of The United Church of Canada, I wish to speak the words that many people have wanted to hear for a very long time. On behalf of The United Church of Canada, I apologize for the pain and suffering that our

church's involvement in the Indian Residential School system has caused. We are aware of some of the damage that this cruel and ill-conceived system of assimilation has perpetrated on Canada's First Nations peoples. For this we are truly and most humbly sorry.

"To those individuals who were physically, sexually, and mentally abused as students of the Indian Residential Schools in which The United Church of Canada was involved, I offer you our most sincere apology.

You did nothing wrong. You were and are the victims of evil acts that cannot under any circumstances be justified or excused.

"We know that many within our church will still not understand why each of us must bear the scar, the blame for this horrendous period in Canadian history. But the truth is, we are the bearers of many blessings from our ancestors, and therefore, we must also bear their burdens.

"Our burdens include dishonouring the depths of the struggles of First Nations peoples and the richness of your gifts. We seek God's forgiveness and healing grace as we take steps toward building respectful, compassionate, and loving relationships with First Nations peoples.

"We are in the midst of a long and painful journey as we reflect on the cries that we did not or would not hear, and how we have behaved as a church. As we travel this difficult road of repentance, reconciliation, and healing, we commit ourselves to work toward ensuring that we will never again use our power as a church to hurt others with attitudes of racial and spiritual superiority.

"We pray that you will hear the sincerity of our words today and that you will witness the living out of our apology in our actions in the future."

—The Right Rev. Bill Phipps General Council Executive 1998 The United Church of Canada

*O Great Spirit, Create a Pure Heart in me and renew my spirit that keeps me looking at you. (Psalm 51: 10 FNV)*



#### IV. A Commitment to Reconciliation

Paul Coutts

In March 2025, TRC commissioner Marie Wilson visited Calgary.

She spoke of her reconciliation journey and the Oath to Reconciliation she developed for officials and dignitaries to commit themselves to effective reconciliation actions. In the spirit of her initiative, we developed the following oath that we invited participants to take to

commit themselves to acts of reconciliation. It is shared here in the same spirit for participants to commit themselves collectively in this service.

## Oath to Become a Witness to ReconciliACTION

*(Please repeat after the speaker)*

We stand as Witnesses to ReconciliACTION

***With humility and resolve, we pledge:***

### ***1. To Learn***

We will seek understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, and perspectives.

We will educate ourselves on the truths of colonization and its ongoing impacts.

### ***2. To Listen***

We will centre and amplify Indigenous voices, stories, and teachings.

We will approach these with respect and an open heart.

### ***3. To Act***

We will respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ Calls for Justice.

We will advocate for systemic change and work toward decolonization.

We will support Indigenous-led initiatives.

### ***4. To Acknowledge and Reflect***

We will recognize our roles in these processes—past, present, and future.

We will strive to be good ancestors, leaving a legacy of justice and equity.

### ***5. To Stay Accountable***

We will welcome discomfort as part of growth and accountability.

We will hold ourselves and others to the principles of ReconciliACTION.

We make this commitment as witnesses to Truth, supporters of ReconciliACTION, and guardians of future generations.

***So it is, and so we will strive.***

## **Reflection**

***Rev. Lynne***

### ***V. Closing Prayer***

Creator and Sustainer of Life, Grant us Grace and Mercy for the difficult journey ahead.

We seek to repair our past, going forward on a shared road of blessing and goodwill.

***Lord Hear Our Prayer***



Grant us Peace and Knowledge to know your ways  
We seek a new path that supports those in need and those who struggle in these times.

***Lord Hear Our Prayer***

Grant us Purpose and Commitment to make collective choices  
We seek to act for the care of our neighbours, and for the wellbeing of our communities.

***Lord Hear Our Prayer***

May we contend with our history in healing ways.  
May we seek a new unity and the promise of a new beginning.

***Lord Hear Our Prayer***

**Closing Hymn VU 308 "Many and Great, O God, Are Your Works"**

**<sup>1</sup> Many and great, O God, are your works, Maker of earth and sky.  
Your hands have set the heavens with stars,  
your fingers spread the mountains and plains.  
Lo, at your word the waters were formed;  
deep seas obey your voice.**

**<sup>2</sup> Grant unto us communion with you, O star-abiding one.  
Come unto us and dwell with us,  
with you are found the gifts of life.  
Bless us with life that has no end,  
eternal life with you.**

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## VI Benediction

*—This service was prepared by Rev Tony Snow, a member of the Goodstoney First Nation (Stoney Tribe). He serves as the Indigenous Minister for Chinook Winds Region and the Toward 2035 Vision Coordinator for Indigenous Ministries and Justice.*