

# LENTEN NEWSLETTER



Once again we are about to embark upon another Lenten season. As Christians we are reminded of the traditional focus of prayer, penance, and almsgiving. Lent calls us to take an intense look at our worldly and spiritual lives, and seek simplicity where there is clutter and chaos. By letting go of the many things in our lives that hold us back from personal and spiritual growth, we open ourselves to many new opportunities to live our discipleship in Jesus Christ.

A congregational member of a faith community I served in Ontario once wrote about her experience of decluttering her life. She wrote, “Fourteen inches of rain in twenty-four hours had left our basement—and everything in it—awash in water. As I viewed all my stuff floating in the muck, I realized that my years of hoarding had finally caught up with me. I am a clutter bug. Everything I own seems to have some emotional connection, so I have a hard time discarding or donating things that people have given me. My attic, my basement, my cabinets and even my inbox overflow with clutter. Every once in awhile I go on a tear, thinking, ‘My children will hate me when I die and leave this mess for them!’ But just as quickly another thought pops in my head about whatever it is I’m trying to throw out: ‘Wait...this was given to me by my niece, and if I give it away she may think I don’t value her.’ I know there are people who could really use my things, but still I hold on tight. The flood in the basement made the decision for me: everything had to go. And later, when it was all gone, I thought about how other stuff—unforgiveness, bad habits, gossip, impatience with my husband, jealousy toward a friend—clutters up my spiritual life and keeps me from focusing on the blessings God has for me now. If I am busy holding on to all of my stuff, then I am not looking at the glorious and free present and future God has for me.”

It is in the process of decluttering our lives that we can find peace. Stress melts away when we focus only on our own self, and the drive to have unnecessary material goods, in favor of a life focused on healthy relationships with God, our families, and the rest of humanity. This is why prayer is essential to the life of a disciple. Prayer enables us to turn our focus away from ourselves, and instead focus on God and the living out of God’s vision for our lives.

This Lent I have a “gift” to help in this process. During worship on the First Sunday in Lent we will engage in a process of declutter and you will receive this gift (if unable to attend worship this Sunday, the “gift” will also be found on the vestibule table during the 40 days of Lent).

Throughout Lent, I encourage you to place it by your bedside, in your coat pocket or anywhere that you will easily see or feel it, as a reminder that the Lenten journey can be one of purpose and “clutter” free.

Please hold the “gift” in your hand each day and make time for prayer and silence. Speak to God of your hopes and dreams, your struggles and failures, your successes and personal growth. Use this gift as a daily reminder that God loves you so much, that God longs for a beautiful and intimate relationship with you in prayer. Keep this gift as a daily personal reminder of your commitment to Christ. This is my personal gift to you, along with a prayer that this Lent will be a blessing in your life, in which you will come to know the love of Christ in ways you have never experienced before.

As a community of faith, we will also begin with the children and youth of Gower Learners to recognize the value both spiritual and mental of imposing silence in our daily lives. We will learn together to hold a period of prayerful silence during Circle Time in worship.

If you have been away from worship for a while, or have never been, perhaps this Lenten Season may be a time to gain peace and rest in the beauty of our sanctuary. We would welcome you with open minds, open hearts and open arms. There is life, hope, joy and peace found in the gathered community of believers. If the circumstances of your life enable you to view us online we do pray and hope that God’s love and spirit rests with you as a significant part our faith community wherever you are.

Blessings on the Lenten journey,  
Rev. Pamela

## LENTEN PRAYER

God of Love,  
as in Jesus Christ you gave yourself to us,  
so we may give ourselves to you,  
    living according to your grace, mercy and love.  
Keep our minds and hearts firmly in the way  
    where Jesus leads us,  
fill our bodies with the life  
    that is Christ within us.  
In his holy name we pray. Amen.



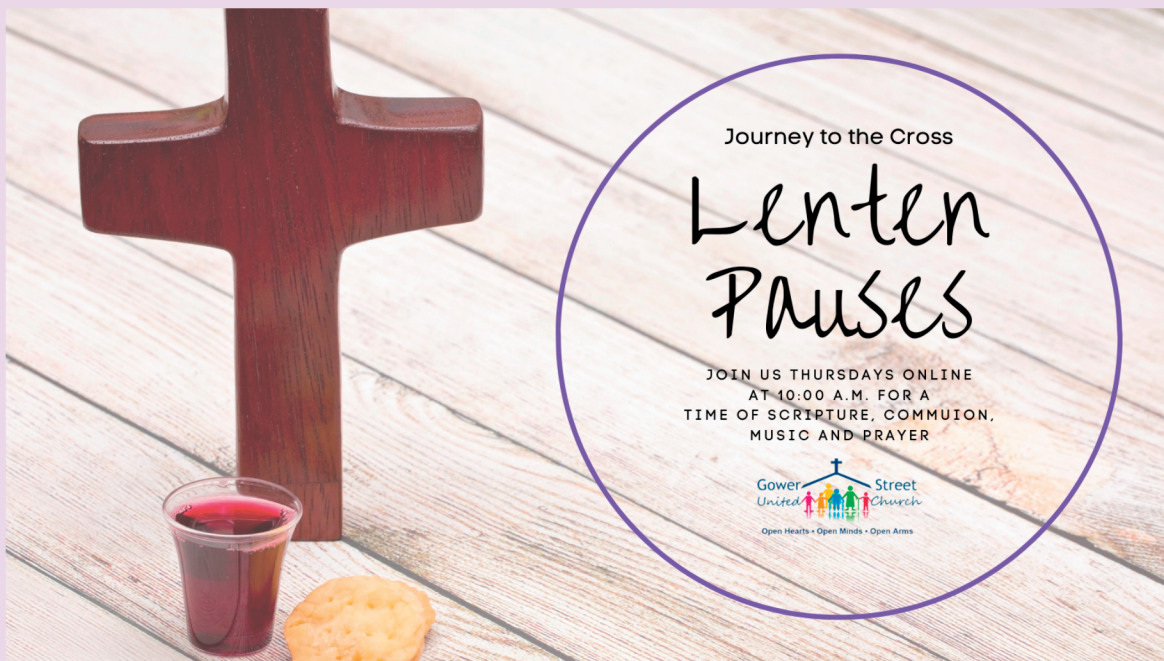
Hello, Friends and Companions,

It is nearing that time of year when, as followers of the Way of Jesus and seekers for deeper insights into what we believe, we prepare our hearts and minds for the Lenten Season – the season in which we begin our annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem – a pilgrimage that allows us to symbolically enter wilderness time with Jesus – engage in soul searching – always emerging with notions that lead to new beginning places.

...It is that time in our spiritual calendar when we become not observers but participants in the part of our story that leads to the defining moment of what we believe: the resurrection of Jesus. We journey together and individually, through Lent's ritual, the words of our sacred story, and reflection, towards the fulfillment of our hope for eternal life...

My prayer for you this Lenten season is that as you participate in ritual, story, and reflection, in communion with others or alone, may the Spirit, who accompanied Jesus into the wilderness, inspire you to find resolutions for what you are seeking – even when it leads to more questions...

Blessings for the journey,  
Ettie



Join the Gower Ministry Team online weekly for a time scripture, music, prayer and communion.

Thursdays throughout Lent at at 10:00 a.m.

Dates: March 2, March 9, March 16, March 23, March 30

On Maundy Thursday, April 6, we will gather together at noon in the Sanctuary for a time of scripture, music, prayer, and communion.



As I reflect on how to journey through Lent this year, I have been inspired by Kate Bowler's resource, *Bless the Lent we Actually Have*. We are using this for our weekly discussion group. It has sparked an openness to resist controlling the journey and be open to whatever may come, to seek times of reflection both as an individual and in the community.

I believe that Lent invites us to open our eyes and hearts to others.

As I reflect on approaching Lent with this openness this year, I am reminded of the Parable of the Good Samaritan. We all know this Parable from Luke 10: 25-37. We know that three people passed by our young man and saw three different things, and Jesus asks the question, who was the one that helped his neighbour?

This is the question I am carrying as I head into Lent this season, who is my neighbour? Most of us living in cities don't even know our neighbours! So how can we love them? What do these words mean, to love our neighbour?

To me loving my neighbour means loving more than just those who live near me. I am called to spread love and kindness and work for justice. In this Parable, Jesus is not just asking us to help one person. We are being called to offer all creation compassion, love, and respect.

So, as I enter this Lenten season, I am beginning the journey with an openness to uncertainty, knowing that I am called to walk intentionally in places that are uncomfortable from time to time, to wander in the wilderness, to have an open heart to take this time to train my eyes to see the love of God in creation.

Blessings for your journey,  
Rev. Rebecca



## *Bless This Lent*

WEEKLY DISCUSSION GROUP  
MONDAYS AT 6:30 P.M. ON ZOOM

This weekly group discussion group is your invitation to join others in community and bless whatever this season is actually bringing you all.



Join Rev. Rebecca and the Children, Education and Families committee on zoom for our weekly discussion group during Lent. Using *Bless the Lent we Actually Have* from Kate Bowler, explore what this season is bringing you—the lovely, the garbage, the difficult, the heartbreaking. Let's bless it all this Lent.

Mondays at 6:30 p.m.  
Dates: March 6, March 13, March 20, March 27, April 3



# JOURNEY TO THE CROSS LENTEN EVENTS

## Sunday Worship During Lent

**February 26**  
First Sunday in Lent  
Communion

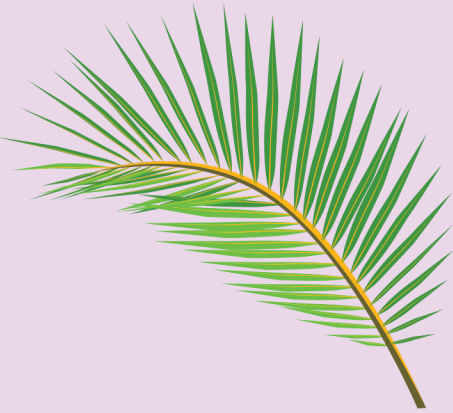
**March 5**  
Second Sunday in Lent

**March 12**  
Third Sunday in Lent  
PIE Day Worship  
Guest Speaker: Rob McLennan  
Guest Choir: Stella's Circle Inclusion Choir

**March 19**  
Fourth Sunday in Lent

**March 26**  
Fifth Sunday in Lent  
Baptism

**April 2**  
Palm Sunday with Gower Community Band



## Holy Week Worship Services

Monday, April 5 at 7:30 p.m.  
George Street United Church

Tuesday, April 6 at 7:30 p.m.  
Gower Street United Church

Wednesday, April 5 at 7:30 p.m.  
Wesley United Church

Maundy Thursday, April 6 at 7:30 p.m.  
Cowan Heights United Church

Good Friday, April 7 at Noon  
Cochrane Street United Church

Holy Saturday Easter Vigil, April 8 at 7:30 p.m.  
St. James' United Church



# GOWER AFFIRM UPDATE

Gower's Affirm Committee is excited to share an update about our work so far this year. We have two ongoing projects as well as our annual P.I.E. Day events happening.

Over the last several months, Gower Affirm has been researching grants and funding opportunities to renovate the washrooms in the lecture hall to make them fully accessible and inclusive. In our investigation, it came to our attention that Music NL has also identified the washrooms as a priority. So now we are working together to make this a reality. Pending estimates and permits, we hope to see changes happening later this spring or summer. Renovations in this space will be an explicit, concrete expression of our commitment to live out our mission and values as an Affirming Congregation

The Affirm Committee recently met Rev. James Ravenscroft (St. James UC) to discuss ongoing issues for LGBTQ+ individuals newly arriving in Canada. Many are facing unique challenges to bring their partners and spouses from their home countries where same-gender relationships are not recognized. Gower and St. James are working together on informational outreach to help share the stories of these individuals and bring more awareness to this important social justice issue.

Finally, Gower Affirm is finalizing plans for this year's P.I.E. Day events at Gower. We will have a P.I.E. Day liturgy with special guests on Sunday, March 12. We are also building on last year's outreach of donated pies – in partnership with Quadrangle NL we are creating pie-making kits for clients of Bridges to Hope. Gower's challenge this year is to donate the ingredients for the kits. Our goal is 100 kits for outreach donations. Help us make P.I.E. Day 2023 amazing!

## THE YEAR OF INTENTION P.I.E DAY 2023

There are two options for supporting this year:

1. Buy all of the ingredients for a pie kit. You get to choose which pie kit you want to shop for, including the flavour of the pie. (Recipes can be found on the next page)
2. Donate money for us to buy a pie kit on your behalf. A pie kit ranges from \$5 (pie without cream cheese) to \$10.50 (pie with cream cheese and chocolate hazelnut filling). To donate money, you can send an e-transfer, cash, or cheque and note on the donation that it is for P.I.E Day.



If you choose option one, to buy all of the ingredients for a pie kit please choose one of these two recipes and buy all the needed items. When it comes to flavour, you can choose! We ask that you place the items into a bag together and drop them to the church during office hours or bring them to worship!

You do not need to make the pie. The kit will be given to Bridges to Hope and other community groups so their clients can make the pies!



### **Pie Option #1: Cream Cheese Pie**

- 8 oz package cream cheese
- 1 litre container (larger size) Cool Whip (or other non-dairy whipped topping)
- 1 prepared graham cracker crust

Choose a Flavor Option

- 13 oz/375g jar chocolate-hazelnut spread
- 3 oz/85g jello package (lemon, strawberry, cherry, etc.)

— P.I.E Day 2023 —



### **Pie Option #2: Cool Whip Pie**

- 1 litre container (larger size) Cool Whip (or other non-dairy whipped topping)
- 1 prepared graham cracker crust
- 3 oz/85g jello package (lemon, strawberry, cherry, etc.)

— P.I.E Day 2023 —



# WORKING WITH NATIONAL UNITED CHURCH BOARDS

By Marie-Beth Wright

Since September 2022, I have been a member of the Admissions Board of our National Church. However, my first foray into this connection began after the General Council meetings of 2019, when I accepted an appointment to the Standards Committee that was due to run for a 3-year term ending in 2021. COVID-19 extended our work until 2022.

Standards is very much about setting standards of accreditation for ministry personnel, especially concerning academic curriculum, ethical conduct, cultural change, and providing educational updates in area of concern. This means keeping personnel abreast of initial or refresher courses in areas of Racial Justice, Ethical Conduct, Leadership, and Continuing Education. This extends to part-time and Interim ministry as well. Compared to my present committee, we were a small group of about 6-7 members, a mixture of laity and ordained ministry personnel.

Currently I am in Year One of a trimester appointment to the Admissions Committee. The Office of Vocation, regional candidacy boards, Admission Board and the supporting committees met at orientation meetings in Toronto in late September, which was a great help in establishing cohesiveness and a strong comfort level for committee interaction. All boards and committees work under the auspices of the Office of Vocation. As you can see from the enclosed photos, we are a very diverse group with a rich variety of experiences to bring to the table. We have a staff representative assigned to liaise with us and the Office of Vocation, along with administrative support. Again, we have both laity and ordained ministers among our members.



Much of our work during the 3-year term will be virtual.

I quickly realized that Rev. Limon Daka, a member of our Board, is the current United Church minister in the Valleyfield-Wesleyville Charge of NewWesValley. As this is my home area, we found lots to chat about in social time. Our committee members come from all parts of the nation and include a number of well established and recent immigrants. The same goes for its linguistic diversity. Having served in previous Pan-Canadian organizations, I enjoy working with this broad spectrum of Canadian society who are members of our full United Church community.

While the candidacy boards linked to the various regional levels (for us, First Dawn Eastern Edge) are concerned with Canadian candidates for ministry, the Admissions Board oversees and welcomes candidates coming from outside Canadian borders. It is totally international in scope and the United Church has select denominations throughout the world whose ministers are accepted directly into its service, examples being Christian denominations in Korea and the Philippines.

Sadly, far more international candidates come forward than can be placed; so much so, that there is a pause right now in accepting additional candidates for ministry.

Immigration regulations, lack of full-time positions, and difficulty matching those approved to a congregation who can support and ease newcomers and their families into Canadian life, mean a heavy backlog has developed. We are, however, still interviewing those who are halfway through their admission process.

The emphasis now is the work of our Minister Matching Program Pilot which will smooth the way for international candidates to find suitable church charges. Accompaniers, coaches, and mentors on the journey are essential. The Christian church is very vibrant in Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia, so we are drawing many ministers from these regions interested in serving Canadian congregations, both urban and rural.

The paradox is this: there are Communities of Faith unable to find a minister, while there are qualified ministers from outside Canada, approved for admission and appointment, who are unable to find a church to serve.



# NEW NAME FOR GOWER MEN'S CLUB

The Gower Street United Church Men's Club has a long history of fellowship and fun with a mandate of contributing their time and talents to support the values and goals of Gower Street United Church. To be more equitable and inclusive we have changed our name to **Gower Service and Social Club** and truly welcome new members regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, faith, marital status or social and economic circumstances. Membership shall be open to any member of, or adherent to, or supporter of Gower Street United Church, or to any other interested person who desires to participate and to help support the Club.

If you are interested in good food, lively discussion of current affairs, fellowship and service is invited to contact the office to be connected with the president of the club.



## PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY



Sara Moore's Gower Prayer Bear on her bed at her new residence at Harlow. Her Grandmother, Dorothy Moore, knit it for her. They bring comfort to all ages everywhere!

Prayer Shawls and Prayer Bears are always in the Sanctuary and free for anyone to take or share with others.

Thanks to our Prayer Shawl Ministry Team for their ongoing work.



# BEAUTY & THE BEAST WEEKEND

We had our Beauty and Beast weekend on Saturday, February 11, and Sunday, February 12. It was a fantastic weekend of community and love! Thanks to all those who helped in worship leadership and to the Board for hosting the lunch after worship! Stay Tuned for more events like this! If you have a movie suggestion, please share it with the ministry team!

