

GOWER STREET UNITED CHURCH FALL NEWSLETTER 2025

Message from Ministry Team

Dear Friends of Gower,

As the leaves turn and the air grows crisp, we are reminded once again of the sacred rhythm of creation. Fall is a season of transition—of harvest and gratitude, of letting go and preparing for what lies ahead. In church, it is also a time when we return to familiar patterns: Gower Learners, Service and Social Club, Prayer Shawl Ministry, Gower Youth, United Church Women, Ministry Team Book Study (an opportunity to explore our faith in fresh and new ways), choirs gather in harmony, community meals are shared, and we prepare for Advent not far off.

This season, we are reminded of the theme “Rooted in Faith, Growing in Community.” Just as trees deepen their roots in autumn to withstand the winter, we are invited to deepen our faith and relationships, trusting that God is at work even in times of change.

Over the past month, we have witnessed signs of renewal and resilience across our ministry. Whether through the quiet joy of pastoral care visits, the energy of community outreach projects, or the simple gathering of folks over coffee after worship, the Spirit continues to move among us. We give thanks for every volunteer, every prayer, every gesture of kindness that knits us closer together.

We have just celebrated Worldwide Communion Sunday – a reminder of our place in a global church, celebrating unity amid diversity.

We look forward to sharing in Thanksgiving Worship – a chance to name our blessings and offer our gratitude to God.

Fall also encourages us to reflect. What are we being called to release, like the trees shedding their leaves? What spiritual practices ground us as the days grow shorter? Who in our community needs to know they are not alone?

We invite you to journey with us this fall—to worship, to serve, to grow, and to rest in the knowledge that we are held by a God who does not change, even as the seasons do.

With gratitude and peace,
Rev. Rebecca and Rev. Pamela



A Century Commemorated

The United Church of Canada was formed by an Act of Parliament on June 10, 1925, bringing together Methodist, Congregational, and many Presbyterian congregations.

The centennial celebrations in 2025, therefore, mark a century of shared faith, witness, mission, and change.

On June 8, a service of national commemoration was held a couple of days before the actual anniversary day and was broadcast live for congregations across Canada to participate.

Gower Street United Church was chosen as the venue, in part because of its historical and symbolic importance: our deep Methodist heritage predating union with Canada, and because Newfoundland joined the United Church more than two decades before it entered Canadian confederation.

By hosting the centennial worship in Gower, organizers recognized Newfoundland's integral role in the broader story of Canadian Methodism and the United Church.

Thus, the event was not merely celebratory, but also an opportunity for reflection, gratitude, and recommitment. From early evening, worshipers and guests converged on our beautiful sanctuary, known for its architectural beauty and heritage, which provided a fitting and solemn setting.

A mass choir, drawing voices from churches across Newfoundland and Labrador, gave the evening a powerful musical foundation. Their voices, harmonizing in congregational and choral parts, elevated hymns, anthems, and liturgical elements throughout the service.

The service commenced at 7:00 p.m. Newfoundland Daylight Time. As is customary in such landmark services, there were elements of liturgy, prayer, scripture readings, thanksgiving, and reflection. A central feature of the evening was the special address given by Rev. Prof. Dr. Jerry Pillay, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.

A Century Commemorated

In his remarks, he spoke to the themes of unity, justice, reconciliation, and the ongoing call of the church in an evolving world. Other participants included representatives from regional and national church bodies, guest preachers or liturgical leaders, and local clergy from Newfoundland and Labrador. (Many congregations participated either in person or via livestream, and church communities across Canada organized local watch parties tied to the national service.)

Music played a central role — not only via the mass choir, but also through congregational singing, instrumental accompaniment, and possibly special pieces drawn from the centennial “Then Let Us Sing!” celebration package. The worship elements included prayers of confession, assurance, pastoral prayer, scripture, the sacrament of holy communion and the proclamation of the Word.

Symbolic acts included acknowledgments of Indigenous land, interfaith or ecumenical elements, and commemorations of past church milestones. Yet the overall tone was one of thanksgiving, forward vision, and humble recommitment.

The service closed with benediction, concluding music, and a moment of unity.

The centennial service offered a chance to look back over 100 years of ministry, mission, social witness, and transformation. In doing so, it recognized the saints, leaders, and communities who built the United Church’s foundations — from early Methodist roots, through union, to contemporary challenges and opportunities.

At the same time, the service was not nostalgic alone: it also invited congregants and viewers to consider where the church is now, and how it might respond faithfully to changing social, cultural, ecological, and spiritual landscapes.

One of the enduring tensions and aspirations of The United Church is to hold unity in diversity — to bring together different traditions, theological perspectives, cultural identities, and social commitments. The centennial service, with its mass choir, regional representation, and central address, was a public embodiment of that aspiration.

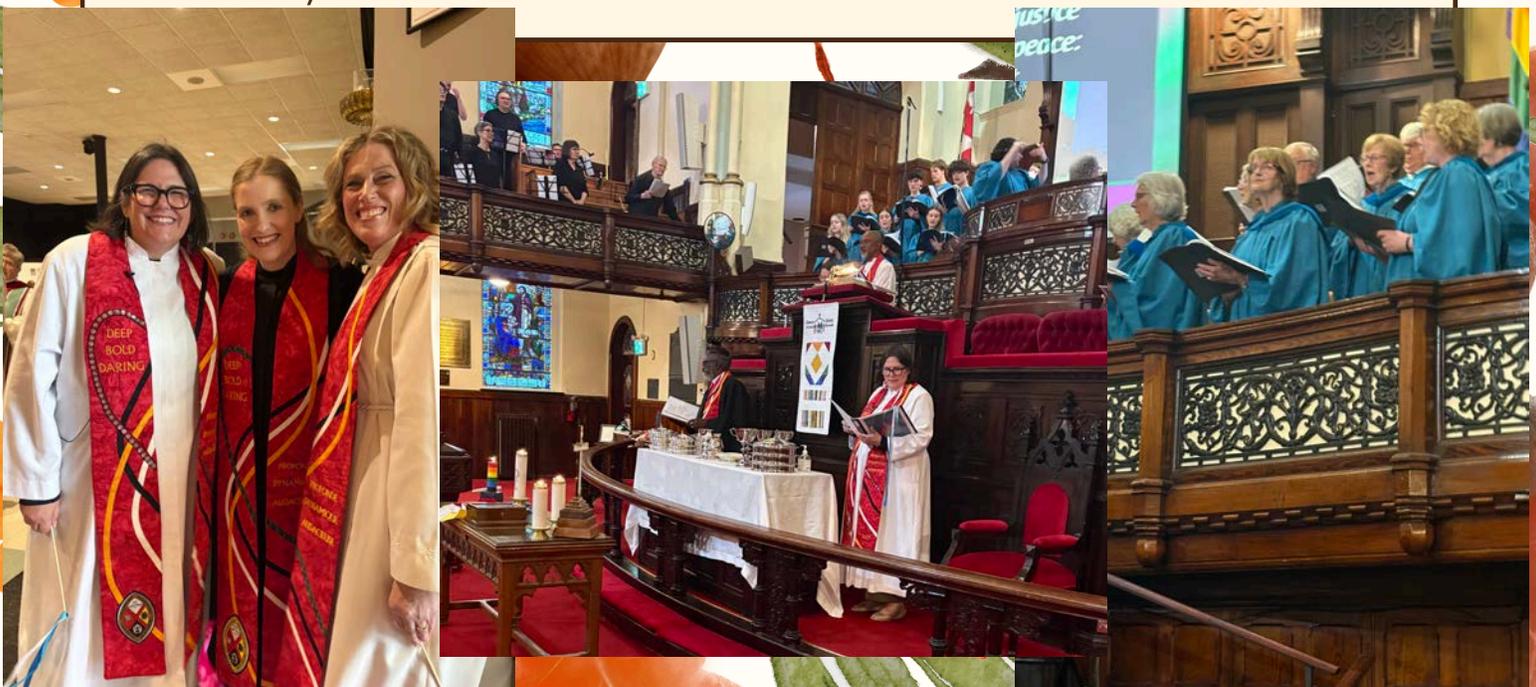
A Century Commemorated

Another key theme in contemporary United Church life is reconciliation with Indigenous peoples, and the ongoing work of justice, inclusion, equity, and ecological care. The centennial moment invited congregations to reflect on these calls, to acknowledge past shortcomings, and to renew commitment to a more faithful, reconciled future.

By centering the national celebration in Newfoundland and Labrador, the organizers at Gower underscored a distinctive dimension: Newfoundland's Methodist history, its early embrace of denominational union, and its role in Canada's ecclesiastical tapestry. The choice of venue affirmed that the story of the United Church is not uniform, but plural – shaped by regional distinctives as well as national identity.

The centennial service was a milestone, but not an endpoint. The service encouraged congregations to look ahead: to new forms of ministry, deeper service, creative witness, and faithful adaptation in a rapidly changing world. It called God's people to continue the journey – not as preservationists only, but as pilgrims moving toward justice, reconciliation, and deeper discipleship.

Our building itself, with its stained-glass windows, vintage architecture, and history as a heritage structure – served as a living symbol of continuity.



St. John's Pride Worship July 20, 2025

Gower Street United Church and St. James United Church joined in worship and solidarity of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community on Sunday, July 20th, 2025, followed by participation in the annual Pride Parade and Pride in the Park.

The worship service was officiated by Rev. Rebecca Pike-Winter and Rev. James Ravenscroft. The music, gospel reading and meditation emphasized the importance of showing up in the spirit of Pride, with love, joy and inclusion, and being present with God and one another in acceptance and love of all creation.

On this day of celebration, the offering prayer gave thanks for the lives and diverse gifts of 2SLGBTQIA+ people. As stated,

“Beloved One, we offer our thanks for the holy witness in the lives of 2SLGBTQIA+ people. In the practices of community, of love that takes risks, and of telling the truth—even when it’s costly—Jesus lives on. In appreciation of all the sacred gifts of the 2SLGBTQIA+community, we give thanks for these gifts. Amen.”

The worship concluded with an invitation for fellowship and a light lunch in the lecture hall, followed by participation in the pride parade and sharing Gower’s public, intentional and explicit message of affirmation for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

The parade began at City Hall and finished at Bannerman Park, where music and celebration continued. A United Church table was in place with literature and the opportunity for people to leave written messages of hope, love, acceptance, inclusion etc., and take a written message as they departed. The parade was diverse, joyous, colorful and celebratory. Many people along the route were pleased to see and often acknowledged the United Church for our presence.

The Affirm Committee would like to thank all those who helped or participated in any way to make this day a success.

Gail Wideman, Jill Handrigan, Rev. Pamela Jones Fitzgerald, Rev. Rebecca Pike-Winter, Katie Doyle, Larry Kelly



Participating in the 45th General Council of the United Church of Canada



Pictured: Bri (Winsor ON), Bill (Bridgewater, NS), Wayne (Ottawa, ON), Francie (Alberta), Yvonne (Brampton, ON), Rev. Hanna (Victoria, BC), Rev. Pamela, Sarah (Barrie, ON).

This year, I had the honour of participating in the 45th General Council of the United Church of Canada, a gathering that brought together commissioners, staff, and guests from across the country to discern, decide, and dream together about the future of our church. The General Council is the highest court of the United Church, and it meets every three years to make decisions on matters of theology, governance, policy, and public witness.

This council was particularly historic in its format and its spirit. It took place both virtually and in person. The in-person part of General Council was held in Calgary this past August. There was a powerful sense of connection, community, and shared purpose throughout the gathering.

As a commissioner, I took part in worship, listened to diverse voices, contributed to discussion, elected our new Moderator, The Right Rev. Dr. Kimberly Heath and helped make decisions that shape the direction of the United Church in the coming years. Some of the key topics we engaged with included:

Participating in the 45th General Council of the United Church of Canada

- Affirming our commitment to anti-racism and equity;
- Supporting Indigenous justice and truth-telling in line with the Calls to the Church and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP);
- Strengthening our church's response to the climate crisis;
- Exploring new models of ministry and community engagement;
- Discernment around global partnerships, financial sustainability, and how we live out our faith in a changing world.

One of the most meaningful parts of the experience for me was hearing powerful testimonies from Indigenous leaders joining in spirited worship from across the country, realizing how deeply connected we are despite our distances, and getting to know my table group whose membership spanned from St. John's, NL to Victoria, B.C.

Throughout the council, we were reminded repeatedly that we are not alone—we are part of a national and global community of faith that is seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God.

As I return to our local faith community, Gower Street United, I carry with me a renewed sense of hope, a deeper understanding of the work ahead, and a commitment to continue engaging with the wider church. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served, to have learned, and to have shared in this important chapter in the life of the United Church of Canada.

If you would like to learn more about what happened at General Council 45, I would be happy to share more or point you to some of the public resources and recordings available online.

In faith and gratitude,
Rev. Pamela



**Visions
and
Dreams**

A Message from Stewardship

The Stewardship team has scheduled a series of fundraising events over the coming months. We appreciate your ongoing support in ensuring their success and also invite volunteers to assist with event delivery.

Event Details:

Mugs and Music – Sunday, October 19, 2025

This evening will feature musical performances by artists from the Music Studio of Etcetera Productions, accompanied by coffee, tea, and sweets. Admission is \$20.

Online Auction – November, 2025

The Online Auction will be conducted via Bartlett's Auction Site following last year's format. Further information will be provided in the coming weeks.

Lessons and Carols – Sunday, December 7, 2025

The traditional Christmas Festival of Lessons and Carols will be held in the sanctuary at 6:30 pm. The mass choir will feature vocalists from the performance groups at the Music Studios of Etcetera Productions, including the Junior Show Choir, the Show Choir, and the Ensemble. Admission is \$20.

Hymn Sing – Sunday, February 1, 2026

This gathering offers an opportunity to join together in song. Donors may request their favourite hymns. The event will also be streamed live on YouTube.

Combined Church – Spirit NL Dinner Theatre – Thursday, February 26, 2026 (date to be confirmed)

In partnership with St. James and Cowan Heights United Churches, we will host our second annual combined fundraiser.

Dessert Auction – April 11, 2026 (date to be confirmed)

Details are pending; however, planning is underway for an event similar to last year's, to be held in the Lecture Hall with entertainment provided by Spirit NL. We encourage dessert donations and invite you to assemble a group to attend what promises to be an enjoyable evening.

If you are available to provide assistance for any of these events, please contact a member of our team.

A Message from Stewardship

Gower Revenues for the First Six Months:

The Stewardship team remains focused on the contributions portion of revenue. As illustrated in the table comparing the first six months of this year to last, overall performance is comparable. However, last year concluded with a significant deficit. Total contributions have remained stable, with analysis showing 28 donors decreased contributions by 50%, 15 by 10%, 49 maintained previous levels, and 47 increased their contributions by an average of 16%. The total number of donors is consistent: Envelope and PAR—147, Pllenty—14, Canada Helps—9, for a total of 170. In summary, while contributions have been sustained, escalating expenses require consideration; even a modest increase in contributions would be greatly beneficial.

Gower Revenue Comparison			
Jan 1 - June 30			
	2024	2025	Difference
Envelope & PAR	\$ 77,390.48	\$ 77,270.38	-\$120.10
Loose Collection	\$ 5,861.40	\$ 8,138.00	\$2,276.60
In Memoriam	\$ 295.00	\$ 425.00	\$130.00
Miscellaneous Donations	\$ 41,287.68	\$ 57,034.18	\$15,746.50
Total	\$ 124,834.56	\$ 142,867.56	\$18,033.00
Pllenty	\$ 3,655.68	\$ 5,078.91	\$1,423.23
Canada Helps	\$ 2,070.00	\$ 3,222.18	\$1,152.18
Total	\$ 5,725.68	\$ 8,301.09	\$2,575.41
Rentals	\$ 37,525.00	\$ 41,748.76	\$4,223.76
TOTAL	\$ 168,085.24	\$ 192,917.41	\$24,832.17

We encourage you to continue supporting our fundraising initiatives and, if possible and you have not yet done so, to consider increasing your contributions.

Thank you.

The Stewardship Team

Tony Chadwick, Ken Peters and Jonathan Stevenson and Lorne LeDrew

The Growing Table

As Thanksgiving approaches, I find myself drawn to the image of a table again and again. For many of us, this is the season of gathering around tables—tables laden with food, laughter, stories, and sometimes even tears. Tables are where we tell our stories and pass on our traditions. They are where we welcome friends and strangers alike, where we remember the blessings of the past year, and where we look forward with hope to the seasons to come.

One of the beautiful things about a Thanksgiving table is that it almost always seems to stretch. Somehow there's always room for one more chair, one more plate, one more guest. We shuffle the place settings, squeeze in just a little closer, and the meal becomes richer because of it. That image of a table that expands, a table that welcomes, has stayed with me this fall as my family prepares to welcome our baby in November. Just as there is always room for one more at the Thanksgiving feast, so too there is always room in our hearts for the gift of new life.

I am filled with gratitude as I anticipate the joy of holding our child for the first time. I am also deeply aware that this season of waiting and preparation is not one I walk through alone. The love and prayers you have already offered to me and my family remind me of the generous spirit of this community, a community that knows how to set a wide table and extend a warm welcome.

As I prepare to step away for maternity leave, I take comfort in knowing that the table of ministry here at Gower will remain full. Each of you brings your own gifts, your own faith, your own willingness to share in the feast of God's love. Ministry was never meant to be the work of one person alone—it is the shared work of God's people. While I will miss being present with you week by week, I know you will continue to create a place of belonging for one another, for neighbours, and for all who come through our doors.

This Thanksgiving, whether you gather around a table with family, friends, or the community of our church, I invite you to pause and notice: Who is at the table with you? Who might God be inviting you to make room for? And how does your presence at that table remind you that you are always welcome at God's greater table, the one where grace is abundant and love never runs out?

May this season of gratitude remind us that God's table is never too small, never too full, never too crowded. It is a table with room for you, for me, for the stranger, for the beloved community—and for the new life that God is always bringing forth.

May your Thanksgiving be blessed with gratitude, with joy, and with the assurance that God's love is already making space for one more.

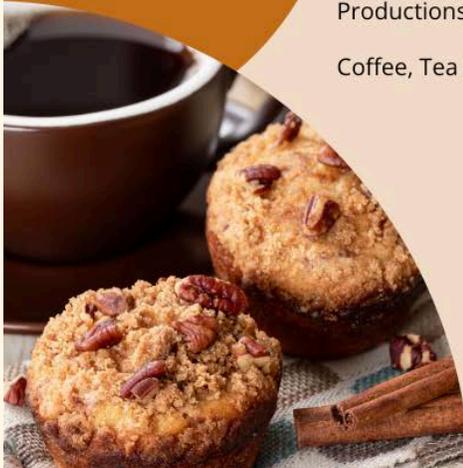
With love and thanksgiving,
Rev. Rebecca

Coming up at Gower

Mugs and Music

Join us for an evening of wonderful music with performers from the Music Studio of Etcetera Productions.

Coffee, Tea and Sweets included.



October 19

Gower Lecture Hall
(Gower Street Entrances)
7:00 PM. (Doors Open 6:30p.m.)
Tickets \$20.00

Purchase tickets via Gower Office
99 Queens Rd. 709-753-7286.
Office Hours

Tuesday, Wednesday: 10:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.
Friday: 10:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.
Payment (cash, cheque or e-transfer)
due on ticket distribution



Gower UCW Invite all to join them in



CELEBRATING BABY PIKE-WINTER



Oct. 19 During Coffee Time following
Sunday worship Rev. Rebecca and
Kyle will be with us as we
celebrate their growing family

SENIORS' CHRISTMAS GALA

Save the date! Our traditional Seniors Christmas Gala will take place on Tuesday, the 25th of November, in the Lecture Hall at Gower Street United Church.

Musical entertainment by the Walsh Family.

Tickets \$25.00 may be ordered from the Church office after November 9.

A slight change from previous years: Doors will open at 4:30, and the traditional meal will be served starting at 5:00 p.m.



Coming up at Gower

Gower Street United Celebrates: 100th anniversary of “Women’s Right To Vote”; 100th Anniversary of The United Church of Canada, October 26, 2025:

100 years ago, women won the right to vote on the island of Newfoundland (Labrador, later in 1946). Rose Emma Peters of Gower and other church and community women were key leaders in this ‘suffragist’ movement.

100 years ago, The United Church of Canada came into being (with the National 100th Anniversary Worship Service at Gower Street United, June 8th – an historic event for Gower, our Province and for The United Church of Canada).

Circle the date of Sunday, October 26th, 11 a.m. now!

Through a ‘worship, lunch and learn’, we are celebrating ‘women’s right to vote’ within our United Church 100th Anniversary year. As guest speaker we are privileged to have Dr. Margot Duley with us on Sunday, October 26th (historian; author of “From Silence to Suffrage: Women’s Path to Citizenship in Newfoundland, 1803 – 1949”; forthcoming Boulder Books, Oct./Nov., 2025). Our Minister Emeritus, The Very Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy, also, will provide leadership. You will not want to miss this engaging, informative and celebrative event.

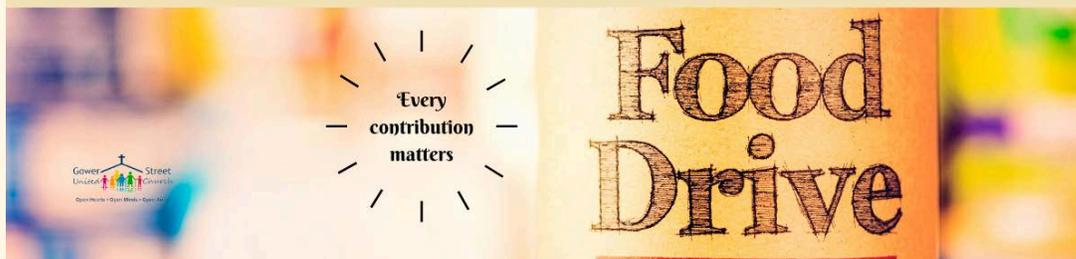
We gratefully acknowledge the generous support from The Centennial Granting Fund at The United Church of Canada Foundation, which helped bring this event to life.



THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
FOUNDATION

ALL OCTOBER FOOD DRIVE FOR BRIDGES TO HOPE

TO MAKE A DONATION
BRING A NON-PERISABLE FOOD ITEM OR MONETARY GIFT TO CHURCH
ON SUNDAY MORNING OR DROP IT OFF DURING OFFICE



Coming up at Gower

Lunch and Learn with Karl Wells

Save the date: November 16, 2025 for *Openly Karl* a Lunch and Learn with Karl Wells, a time for our community to gather with local writer, broadcaster, actor, and long-time Gower member, Karl Wells and learn about his new memoir and life.

A poster for Christmas Eve at Gower. The background is a dark blue night sky with a bright, multi-pointed star in the upper left. The text is centered and reads: "CHRISTMAS EVE AT GOWER" in large, white, serif capital letters. Below that, "Worship at 5:00 P.M." is written in a smaller, white, serif font. Underneath, "with communion and special music from Gower Young People's Choir, Gower Senior Choir & Gower Handbell Choir" is written in a white, serif font. At the bottom, "Worship will be in person and livestreamed on YouTube" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. The bottom half of the poster features a photograph of a nativity scene with a wooden manger containing a baby wrapped in white cloth, surrounded by several sheep and a cow. In the bottom right corner, there is a logo for Gower Street United Church, which includes a stylized cross and the text "Gower Street United Church" and "Open Hearts • Open Minds • Open Arms".

CHRISTMAS EVE
AT GOWER

Worship at 5:00 P.M.

with communion and special music from Gower Young
People's Choir, Gower Senior Choir & Gower Handbell Choir

Worship will be in person and livestreamed on YouTube

Gower Street
United Church
Open Hearts • Open Minds • Open Arms

Summer Worship Time

Following review of the summer worship services and input from community members the Worship and Sacraments Team have decided that from June 14 to September 4, 2026, summer services at Gower begin at 10:00 a.m. with a review in September 2026.