

**April 18, 2025
Good Friday Worship**

The people of Gower Street United Church are committed to doing right by Jesus' teachings: loving, serving, giving generously in our local, regional, and global communities. We envision a vibrant and evolving community where tradition is honoured, change is embraced, and injustice is challenged. We are dedicated to being welcoming and affirming, engaging participation of all, including people of any age, colour, race, ethnicity, faith, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, marital status, family composition, and social or economic circumstances.



We respectfully acknowledge the land on which we live, work and worship as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, whose culture has been lost forever and can never be recovered. We also acknowledge the island of Kaimuki (Newfoundland) as the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq. And we acknowledge Labrador as the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Inuit of NunatuKavut. We recognize all First Peoples who were here before us, those who live with us now, and the seven generations to come. As First Peoples have done since time immemorial, we strive to be responsible stewards of the land and respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call it home. As we open our hearts and minds to the past, we commit ourselves to working in a spirit of truth and reconciliation to make a better future for all.

99 Queen's Road – A1C 6M6 Tel: 753-7286 – Fax: 383-0145
E-Mail: office@gowerunited.com Website: <https://gowerunited.com>

Bold indicates unison.
Rise in body and spirit as you prefer.
The projected text in white is a communal response.

THE SPIRIT GATHERS US IN

Voluntary: Christ Lag In Todesbanden, BWV 625

J S Bach

We sing: VU 152 There is a Green Hill Far Away

Horsley

Words of Welcome:

No matter who you are, where you come from, how you come to be here, what you believe or what you are questioning, you are welcome in fullness.

Gathering Words:

Come to the place of crucifixion, where Jesus is hanging on the cross. Beside Jesus hang those who are crucified today by society: by racism, by abuse, by injustice, by complacency.

We are aware of them, yet we keep our distance.

We do not want to come too close.

We do not want to get involved.

The place of crucifixion horrifies us, repels us, but will we turn and engage with its reality, as it was then and as it is now?

Gathering Prayer:

We come here today, O God, because we do not know what else to do. It is a holy day, because it is the day your son Jesus died on a cross.

It is a day that is hard to approach because brokenness and death are still hard to accept in our lives and our world.

Give us strength to be here with you today, O God,

so, we might come to know that, as you were with Jesus then, so you are with us still in our brokenness and the brokenness in the world. Amen.

Lenten Candle Liturgy: *The Christ candle is lit.*

On Christmas Eve, we lit a candle to celebrate the birth of Christ and the renewal it symbolized for the world. We rest in the glow of that candle now.

(a moment of silence)

As we relive and reflect upon the events of Jesus' death this day, we extinguish the Christ candle, just for today, to remind us that even in shadowed times such as this, death will not have the last word, these hard times will not last forever, there will be a new dawn.

We sing: VU 135 Beneath the Cross of Jesus

St. Christopher

Prayer Of Transformation:

God of infinite and vulnerable love whose body broken on the cross continues to confront us, today is Good Friday.

What is good about this day?

Jesus dies in agony because people reject his vision of your love for all of creation.

Jesus reaches out an open hand to all in need, yet we are threatened by his invitation to love one another as he loves us.

We experience his cry of anguish to you, his loving Parent.

So, what is good about this day?

Loving God, receive our question and open our hearts to your presence.

Reveal to us how an instrument of terror becomes a revelation of your love through the willingness of your son Jesus to embrace the anguish of suffering, to become fully one of us.

Free us from the bondage of our sin through Jesus' willingness to show such love through death on a cross.

Despite what we do to ourselves and one another, you, O God, are always with us, reaching out in love, showing us the way toward a deeper relationship with you, because today we know that we are worthy of being loved.

On this Good Friday, as we enter into the mystery of the cross, we remember that we are worthy of your love and we are worthy of being loved.

We commit to continue the path of faith, which leads to you, as together we pray: "Our Father, who art in heaven..."

Words of Assurance:

As Jesus said, "Forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Amidst the suffering of the world, God always notices us and holds us close. Whatever we have done, willingly or unwillingly, through the gift of love that is grace, God forgives us.

And as a forgiven people, let us celebrate in prayer our witness to the reign of Christ.

LISTENING TO THE STORY

Responsive Psalm: VU p. 744 Psalm 22

My God, why have you forsaken me?

Reader: Bert Riggs

A reading from the Gospel: John 18:1-19:42

Jesus is arrested, tried, and crucified.

Response: VU 148 Jesus, Remember Me

Remember Me

Solo: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Rockingham
Soloist: Tony Chadwick

Organ Meditation: O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde GroB

JS Bach

We sing: VU 133 Go to Dark Gethsemane

Redhead No.76

COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND SHARING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH OUR MINISTRY

You can offer your financial gifts to Gower Street United Church in many ways. As you enter/leave the sanctuary, there are offering plates where you may lay your offerings. You can also continue to drop off offerings in the secure mailbox outside the church office or you can donate via E-Transfer, using the email address gsuc@nl.rogers.com. You can also scan the QR code on your mobile device to be brought directly to our website page.



Gathering our Gifts:

We Sing: VU 142 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross (V.4)

Near the Cross

Offering Prayer:

We offer ourselves, O God, just as Jesus offered himself.

We offer these gifts that you may bless them for your purposes in this world. May they—and we—be transformed for justice, for kindness, and for humble love, fostering relationships that make a difference in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers for the World and the Prayer of Jesus

We sing: VU 948 O God, Hear My Prayer
(bells then silence)

There are days when we feel like crying out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Yet, even on those days, we can still express our heart's longing in prayer.

So, we pray to our God of love and hope by offering,
O God, receive our prayer.

We sing: VU 948 O God, Hear My Prayer
(bells then silence)

Loving God, you are the creator and the ruler of the universe, and yet you have chosen to appear in Jesus and suffer and die on the cross. **In Jesus, you experienced the sorrow and pain of living a human life here on earth.**

When we experience all the hardships of life, you are with us.
When we grieve at the injustices, you cry with us.

When we lose courage in the presence of hopelessness, you despair with us.
Remind us that you are indeed with us even as we want to cry in the nighttime of our fear:
"Why have you forsaken me?" O God, receive our prayer.

We sing: VU 948 O God, Hear My Prayer
(bells then silence)

O Jesus, we mourn with you as we witness you being crucified even to this day. We notice you sacrificed on the high altar of mighty profit. We notice you hanging on a tree of racism.
We witness you nailed to the cross of hatred. We witness you sleeping on the concrete pavement in the city of affluence. We notice your wounded body in the crowded emergency wards and desolate alleys. We notice you wounded and dying in war-torn countries.

O God, who suffered on the cross, how much longer will you simply cry with us? Instill in us a sense of hope and enough courage to act with compassion.
O God, receive our prayer.

We sing: VU 948 O God, Hear My Prayer
(bells then silence)

O Holy Spirit, comfort our hearts as they mourn for the world that is not what we would like it to be. Nourish those who are hungry for food, for love, and for justice. Comfort those who are having a hard time with life.

Bring healing to those who are suffering from ill health and mental anguish, as well as those who live in spiritual emptiness.

May your indomitable spirit of life penetrate our hearts, our bodies, and our souls.

By our living, may we proclaim with confidence that you are alive and well in the universe. O God, receive our prayer.

We sing: VU 948 O God, Hear My Prayer
(bells then silence)

Trusting in your goodness and your unfailing love for all of us, we pray in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

WE GO OUT INTO THE WORLD

We sing: VU 145 O Sacred Head Passion Chorale

We go out into the world: *(A lantern is lit.)*

The shadows of Golgotha and a cold stone tomb will forever be lit by a light that will never be extinguished.

We light this lantern today, a lamp on a stand placed so all can know that there is a light that shines to guide, direct, and love us daily.

A light that can never be put out, even on this day.

Amen.

We depart in silence.

Worship today was inspired by Gathering, Lent/Easter 2025, Year C.

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Minister: The Rev. Pamela Jones-Fitzgerald

Youth & Family Minister: The Rev. Rebecca Pike-Winter

Minister Emeritus: The Very Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy

Organist & Music Ministry: R. Carl Goulding

Custodian: David Noseworthy

Board Chair: Patrick Griffin

Holy Week Worship

You are invited to join members of the United Church from across the Northeast Avalon for Holy Week Worships.

Following this worship service at 2:00 p.m., Gower will also host a Good Friday Prayer Walk. Following the walk, there will be coffee and community time at Gower.

St. James United Church will host an Easter Vigil at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 19. The preacher will be Rev. Kathy Brett.