

December 21, 2025 Blue Christmas Service

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. This province of Newfoundland and Labrador is home to diverse populations of Indigenous and other peoples who have contributed to 9,000 years of history. We acknowledge with respect the deep histories and cultures of the Mi'kmaq, Innu, and Inuit. 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 seekers of justice, 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.



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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

The Life and Work of Gower

Voluntary:

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: Words of Blessing from Jan Richardson

Gathering Prayer:

We come to celebrate and give thanks, O God, but there is a shadow even shadows on our hearts.

We need your help to balance our grief, sorrow, anger, hurt, and depression with the love and beauty and excitement of the season.

We reach out for your help, O God of love, as we have done in the past, asking for strength and fellowship along with your loving and calming presence, and trusting in your grace, your blessing, and your peace.

Relieve us, we pray, of anxiety, and be with us to uplift and strengthen and comfort us now and throughout this Christmas Season and beyond.

We give thanks for your blessed comforting presence, as we wonder and as we open our hearts to the joy, to the peace of Christmas. **Amen.**

Advent Candle Lighting:

Hope is a star.

Winter starts to shine for us, pointing the way to something new, something true.

A way of trust.

Hope is a star of possibility.

We sing: A Candle is Burning VU6

Prayer of Transformation:

Trusting on God who is love, trusting in God's grace, confident in the never-ending, overwhelming, reckless love of God, let us share in prayerful conversation with God, revealing all the emotions that are swirling in our hearts:

(a time of silent prayer)

We are assured of God's forgiveness

You know when you just wish you had someone you could trust completely, someone who created the space just to listen?

Someone who took you seriously and truly cared how things are going?

Someone who would ask, "How are you doing?" and really want to know.

Someone who never thought less of you for any reason?

Someone who comforted you when you didn't feel the best version of yourself?

Someone who travelled with you each moment in your grieving?

This is God's gift of grace revealed in Jesus and powered by the Spirit.

The good news isn't just that God loves us, but that God is Love, a love that never lets us go.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

LISTENING TO THE STORY

Prayer for Illumination: O God, help us to sense your message as we receive the words of scripture. **Help us especially to carry your hope and peace forward in our hearts and into our daily life. Amen**

A reading from Psalm (spoken response): VU807

A reading from the Gospels: Matthew 3:1-10

Musical Meditation

Lighting a Candle for Hope

In the quiet of this night, we come as we are—carrying sorrow, weariness, and longing.

We come seeking the light that does not fade when life is heavy.

Tonight we light the Candle of Hope, a small flame that speaks into the darkness.

May its light remind us that hope can begin as a spark, even when we cannot yet see the dawn.

When our hearts ache, when memories stir, when grief feels near—

O Holy One, meet us with gentle presence and steady love.

As this candle is lit, we honor our hurts and our healing.

We welcome hope—not as pressure to be cheerful, but as the promise that we are not alone.

(Candle is lit.)

Let this flame shine for all who need comfort this season.

May hope take root in us, grow within us, and guide our steps in the days to come. Amen.

Musical Meditation: I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day

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 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.

Prayers for the World and the Prayer of Jesus

GO OUT INTO THE WORLD

We sing: Silent Night VU67

We go out into the world:

Trusting in God, who is love, trusting in God's grace, confident in the never-ending, overwhelming, reckless love of God;

We go forth from this holy space, acknowledging that our fragile hearts have been comforted in prayerful conversation with God.

Acknowledging that our grieving, swirling hearts have been touched by God's healing hand, we go from this holy space assured that our God cares, especially in times of trial.

God's grace is revealed in Jesus and powered by the Spirit.

The good news isn't just that God loves us, yet that God is Love, a love that never lets us go.

A love that transforms lives by hope and peace.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Postlude

Worship today was inspired by Gathering,

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

Interim Youth & Family Minister: The Rev. Karen Thorne

Minister Emeritus: The Very Rev. Dr. Marion Pardy

Organist & Music Ministry: R. Carl Goulding

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