



Easter 2026
BRITANNIA UNITED CHURCH
THE Britannian

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Editorial

I was struck by this morning's hymn #109 "*Now quit your care and anxious fear and worry/ For schemes are vain and fretting brings no gain.*" I find it easy to get upset about things - even more about things I can't affect. Social media didn't help: much of it seems designed to get you angry. (I have been using social media for decades and it was toxic even 40 years ago.) Things that affected me directly or that I could help, like work challenges, health concerns, or community issues, bothered me much less. I found routing my energies to the things where I can take action and be involved, and avoiding negative, un-constructive comments made me feel much better and able to handle the stress. We have a lot of challenges - some some beyond our control and other matters we can influence. The less we focus on the latter the more energy we have for the former.

Worry doesn't improve the future, it only ruins the present

Peter Bain

Minister's Message

Lent: A Season of Disruption, Practice, and Hope

As we approach the Lenten season, we are invited into a time of reflection, intention, and renewal. Lent has always been about more than simply giving something up. Lent is a period of holy disruption: a gentle but intentional interruption of our usual patterns so that we might see more clearly, live more faithfully, and become more fully the good news Christ calls us to be in the world.

This year, we will be journeying together through Lent using Christine Valters Paintner's [A Different Kind of Fast: Feeding our True Hungers for Lent](#). This resource offers a daily devotional of varied meditations and reflections, along with a structured discussion guide. We will gather for a weekly Lenten study and discussion on Thursday afternoons at 1:00 PM throughout the season, holding space for shared reflection, listening, and praying.

Traditionally, fasting is understood as giving something up, which is a meaningful practice. But the Christian tradition also understands fasting as taking on a practice. Lent can be a season for new practices such as weekly justice work, community service, intentional acts of care for neighbours and strangers alike, or even deeper involvement in the life of our church. These practices disrupt our routines to help us discover new ways of embodying compassion, justice, mercy, and hope in our lives.

Our cluster and area churches are also marking the sacred rhythms of this season through services for Shrove Tuesday (pancake dinner), Ash Wednesday (start of Lent), Maundy Thursday (commemoration of the Last Supper), and Good Friday. Here at Britannia United Church, we will be hosting a Good Friday Sensory Service as an accessible, early-evening worship experience at 6:00 PM. This service will offer an embodied way to engage with the meaning of Good Friday through sensory stations, storytelling, music, and prayer. Our Easter service will include communion as we gather to celebrate our resurrection hope.

We are also looking forward to several important gatherings this season: on March 1 we had a shorter café style worship service followed by a congregational workshop on community building and outreach. This will be a time to explore together how we as a congregation are being called to serve beyond our church walls. More details to follow.

March 15th is Affirming Sunday and we will gather again in a café style service. Everyone is encouraged to bring a pie to share, and we will enjoy pie together in an informal service celebrating our identity as an affirming congregation. A guest speaker is in the works, someone to inspire us in this important work. Pie, singing, and encouragement!

As Lent unfolds, more opportunities for worship, learning, and community development will continue to take shape. This season is not just about repentance and restraint, it is about transformation, attentiveness, and most of all hope.

May all of us experience a rich Lenten journey, opening us up to new ways of seeing, and new ways of being Christ's good news in our world.

Rev. Dr. Frank Emanuel

Flowerbeds for Spring

After our long, dragged-out, severe winter experience there is hope to continue floral beauty in Britannia's flowerbeds created by a small group of gardeners. Earth, mulch and a variety of flowers need to be purchased every year. We welcome your donations to offset these costs. Earmark your donation amount with your givings data or you may contact the office at [613-828-6018](tel:613-828-6018)

Thanks
Heather Wallace

A Circle Complete

You are invited to attend a new hour-long play by, about, and performed with Ottawa seniors on March 26 and 27, 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm, at the wheelchair accessible Rideau Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre, 815 St. Laurent Blvd., 2nd Floor Drama Room, K1K 3A7 . Parking is free, and the show is followed by a community talkback with the performers.

A Circle Complete, written by Burning Passions Theatre Artistic Producer and director Laurel Smith, is the last in a trilogy of works produced by the company's Seniors Sharing Stories project, an arts in the community training initiative which since 2024 has produced works based on input from and featuring community elders who represent Ottawa's fastest growing demographic. The play asks universal questions: What happens when our parents are reaching end of life? How do we cope when powerful feelings of love, anger, denial and grief arise? How do we get through it with compassion, and even - dare we say it - a sense of humour and joy?

A Circle Complete



*Part 3 of the
Seniors Sharing
Stories Trilogy*

Tickets are pay what you can (no one turned away for lack of funds). Learn more and reserve tickets at <https://bptheatre.ca/new-play-highlights-challenges-and-joys-of-ottawa-seniors-2/>

Matthew Behrens
Associate Producer
Burning Passions Theatre bptheatre.ca



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Can you help us reach our fundraising goals?



We get up to 30% back in fundraising profit, and you get chocolates made in Canada with premium quality ingredients, and sustainable cocoa.



Thank you for your support!

TEAM NAME

FAMILY HARMONIES FAMILIALES

CAMPAIGN NAME

2026 FHF Spring Fundraiser

ORDER ONLINE:

1. Join our group by **typing in this link:**
<https://fundraising.purdys.com/campaign/000020936>
2. Please type your email into the box on the webpage. If you have already registered, you will automatically join the campaign. If you haven't, you will need to register before joining the campaign.
3. Click "Shop Online" to start shopping!
4. Invite your friends and family to help! They can simply follow the same steps as above.

CAMPAIGN NAME:

2026 FHF Spring Fundraiser



PLACE & PAY FOR ORDERS BY:

March 8th 2026

DATE

PICK UP ORDERS ON:

March 28th 2026

DATE

AT:

Dymon Storage, 2583 Carling Ave (Ottawa

LOCATION

If you have any questions, please contact your coordinator:

Angèle Jodouin

COORDINATOR NAME

PHONE

fhf@rogers.com

EMAIL

Children's Choir

Thank you!

Thank you to all the children and their families who participated in the children's choir at Knox United Church on Sunday February 28, to the Sunday School teachers and leaders who helped them learn the songs, and to Beth and Bruce from Woodroffe United who helped lead!



We love welcoming friends from Woodroffe and Britannia United Church, and we look forward to singing together again in the future.

If you weren't able to hear them in person, or if you would like to enjoy the music and fun again, you can hear them on Knox United Church's weekly podcast, which you can access from knoxnepean.ca.

Tales from Retail

Customer: "You know, you really do make things confusing for Christians during Lent."

Me: "Uh, may I ask how, ma'am?"

Customer: "I'm only allowed to eat fish, no red meat or birds, but you've moved this all the way over with the chickens!" She waves a pack of duck breast around.

Me: "They were shelved correctly, ma'am. Ducks are poultry."

Customer: "No, they swim so they should go with the fish! You should put them back there!"

Me: "They've never been there, ma'am, because ducks are birds, not fish, so they go with—"

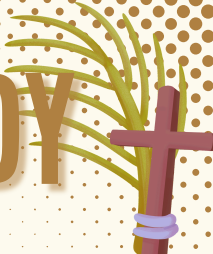
Customer: "—ducks... are... fish, got it?! I'm going to tell my husband I only shopped in the fish section today and I expect your store to help me abide by that... got it?!"

She storms off, and I'm left wondering how many other loopholes this customer is about to invent for herself to get out of committing to Lent.

•••••

LENTEN STUDY

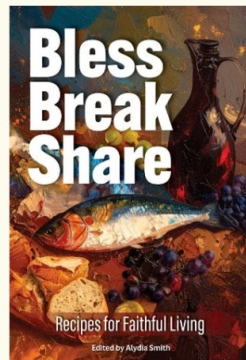
Group



Give us this day our daily bread...




Hunger is inevitable in this world. Christ knows that his followers will always remain hungry until all are fed. Perhaps this is why Christ comes to us as the bread of life, and Christ's followers gather around a table.


This devotional invites you to reflect on food and hunger as a spiritual practice. What do you hunger for? What feeds your soul? How do you feed others? Every meal and every table can provide an opportunity to grow in faith



Bless Break Share
Recipes for Faithful Living
Edited by Alydia Smith

For more information contact
Grant Gilliland
6138091399 or
email: gruntg@hotmail.com

-  Tuesdays, Feb 24th to March 26th
-  1 PM - 2:30 PM
-  **Trinity United Church**
Friendship Room



Seeing Is No Longer Believing

We have all become aware that AI or Artificial Intelligence is becoming more prevalent. Did you know that it is estimated that 50% -90% of on-line content may be synthetically generated or AI assisted. Expert opinion varies but all agree that the percentage of AI involvement is quickly growing. On social media 71% of shared images are either AI generated or AI edited. AI is used in marketing, journalism, film and television and Youtube videos, political parties, and by propagandists.

My attempt at researching this subject produced an ethical and technical tsunami of information. Full disclosure: I used the AI platform Gemini for my research. AI is a powerful tool for finding and making sense of information, but it can lead to ethical dilemmas. Do not just copy and paste. You are the editor: rewrite in your own words and draw your own conclusions. Also be creative in the questions you ask, and AI becomes a wonderful learning experience. Be careful and check facts before using AI because AI can make mistakes.

My hobby is photography and I am interested in how I could use AI.

I took the bottom photo at Britannia Park on 13 Feb. 2026. I selected Create Image in Google Gemini, uploaded my photo and then asked that the photo be rendered as summer with grass and trees. Next came the dogs and airplane with sign. Total time about 5 minutes.

In the top right corner, I placed the text #AIArt. Always clearly label AI generated images as #AIArt or Synthetic Media.



My basic version of Gemini uses Nano Banana to create images. Pro versions of image creator AIs are available, for a price.

Creating images using AI is fun and another way to be creative, but to be ethical such art should always be labeled but often is not. So how can we know what is real? Some images will have a barely visible "cr" or content credentials symbol in the top or bottom corner. Other images will contain a SynthID or Metadata but these are invisible and need special apps to be revealed.



Basically, if an image looks too good to be true, it's probably a fake. Here are a few obvious things to look for. Is the perspective correct? For example, does the road or rail line have a vanishing point? Do the light and shadows or reflections ring true, or are they in the wrong place? AI images have trouble creating small objects. Look at small text or jewelry and see if it is garbled or melting. If the image is of a person look at the skin. Does it look too perfect or pore less? If the image pretends to be a news item, can it be found on legitimate news sites?

When you come across an image that you immediately want to share, take 10 seconds and think. Is this real? Where can I check it out?

Think about all the cute animal videos we love to share. Harmless right. Maybe not because even here there is a moral quagmire. Videos of cute wild animals fuel the exotic pet trade. Videos that show staged animal rescues can put animal lives in danger. Videos of silly bears being cute can make people forget how dangerous wild animals can be and may endanger human life in a real wild animal encounter.

Think about political deception used for propaganda and to sway public opinion. There are even AI Swarms that are automated accounts that generate endless versions of a political view so that in time people are fooled into thinking it is a grassroots idea.

I subscribe to Broadview magazine and receive their email newsletter. A recent post is entitled Remember it lies to you: People of faith using AI. Used as a tool AI is helpful in ministry. Unfortunately, some people are also using AI as spiritual support which can lead to unhealthy attachment and misguided and possibly even dangerous advice. Mentioned on the morning CBC news was an article on robot monks in Japan that could give spiritual advice if an actual monk was not available!

AI is not a person, it is not your friend, it is a tool that relies on data it has been taught, and it can make mistakes. What the AI knows is what has been input into its database. It can contain errors and human bias. AIs are trained to answer questions; if they do not know they may make up an answer. This is called hallucination.

Go ahead and use AI, learn what it can and cannot do, always acknowledge when you have used AI, do have fun, and remember to think before you post.

Dee McEwen

Family Harmonies Familiales Fundraiser

Hi everyone!

We've decided to launch another Purdys Fundraising campaign, this time for Spring/Easter! Here are the details: We're taking orders until Sunday March 8th and they will be ready to be picked up at the end of March. Family Harmonies Familiales can earn up to 30% of sales, towards our programs! Here's the link to our online fundraiser - they've updated their website and it's easier to navigate now! <https://fundraising.purdys.com/campaign/000020936>

Please share our social media posts and the poster with your friends and family, and let me know if you have any questions or concerns!

Thanks!

Angèle Jodouin (she/her/elle)
Developmental Services Worker
Owner, Family Harmonies Familiales
613.302.5943 www.familyharmoniesfamiliales.ca

Update from the Property Redevelopment Discernment Committee

The Property Redevelopment Discernment Committee began its work in early 2023 with a mandate to explore options for maximizing the use of the church property. The committee includes Helen Hutcheson, Colleen Chambers, Rev. Jen Power (initially), and now Rev. Dr. Frank Emanuel as advisor, along with Leigh Bain. Diane Houston contributed research and investigative work but did not participate in meetings.

The primary goal of this initiative has been to identify ways to generate new revenue to reduce or eliminate the church's annual deficit and, ideally, move toward a sustainable surplus.

Early in the process, the committee met with Kindred Works (KW), the development arm of the United Church of Canada. KW gathered information from us, including a property survey and our initial hopes and needs. They later presented several high-level redevelopment concepts. These included townhouses around the perimeter of the property, or a mid-rise building in the centre with varying storeys and a community hall for worship under the church's full control.

All KW concepts required demolition of the current church building and relocation of the congregation for up to five years during construction. The committee concluded this was not viable, as the loss of rental income and potential loss of congregants during relocation posed significant financial and community risks. We were also concerned about KW's limited redevelopment track record and the inflexibility of their Letter of Intent. As a result, KW chose not to proceed.

The committee met with churches in Ottawa, Toronto, and the Maritimes that were exploring or undertaking redevelopment. Many shared similar challenges: financial deficits, declining membership, aging demographics, and volunteer fatigue. These conversations also fostered collaboration among local congregations, including work that is currently being led by Helen and other church leaders.

We have remained in regular contact with Kathy Vandergrift, former Chair of the Queensway Terrace North Community Association. She presented the City's proposed Secondary Plan to the congregation following a worship service. The plan, approved by City Council in early February 2026, allows for zoning changes including potential six-storey buildings on church property (subject to conditions), and significantly taller buildings along the Queensway corridor.

Through Kathy, we connected with Peter Giles, the City's Senior Planner, who has been generous with information and supportive of our work. Informal conversations have also taken place with Councillor Theresa Kavanagh, who expressed support, particularly for concepts that would include affordable housing.

The committee also met with Barry Hobin, an Ottawa architect and member of Parkdale United Church, which is engaged in its own discernment process. Barry shared a concept that would allow partial development while retaining the existing church building. He recommended several potential partners, including Multifaith Housing, Cahdco, Centretown

Citizens Ottawa Corporation (CCOC), and Theia Partners. After meeting with several groups, we determined that only Theia Partners aligned with our goal of generating a revenue stream, as the others operate as non-profits.

In December 2023, two congregational meetings were held to present ideas from Kindred Works and to outline four possible options for the property. At that time, a majority of those present expressed interest in redevelopment.

In spring 2025, Rodney Wilts of Theia Partners presented information about their company and answered questions following a worship service. Theia is an Ottawa-based private developer with significant redevelopment experience and several completed projects, including work with First Unitarian Church. The proposed process would involve developing a high-level concept. If the congregation wished to proceed, a Letter of Intent (LOI) would be signed, after which Theia would prepare a detailed master concept plan at their cost. However, the LOI specifies that if the church decided not to proceed after the master plan was completed, the church would reimburse Theia up to \$75,000 for those costs.

Throughout the discernment process, redevelopment concepts have generally included:

- A potential rental revenue stream (exact figures dependent on signing an LOI)
- A mix of market and below-market rental units (often approximately 70% market / 30% below market, though definitions vary)
- Recognition of Indigenous presence, possibly through naming, sacred space, or memorial elements
- Adequate parking for both church use and residents
- Attractive, community-sensitive design
- Inclusion of community space within a new development
- Environmentally responsible design elements such as geothermal systems, solar panels, EV charging, passive heating and cooling, and green roofs

The committee has identified two broad options:

Option 1: Sell a portion of the property and invest the net proceeds to support church operations. A high-level concept from the City suggests that approximately 1/4 of the parking lot would need to be included to create a viable lot, likely for stacked townhouses. City requirements may include a driveway from Pinewood Crescent and a pedestrian pathway connecting Pinewood Crescent and Pinecrest Road. The committee would explore whether existing or alternative pathways could satisfy this requirement. Property valuation estimates are being obtained, and a planning consultant would likely be needed to assist with severance and approvals.

Option 2: Partner with an organization such as Theia to redevelop part or all of the property. Theia has indicated interest in a development of approximately 80 units. Construction could potentially occur while retaining the existing church building for a period of 3–5 years, after which it would be demolished. Temporary parking arrangements would be required during construction. Full financial and design details would only be available after signing an LOI.

At its most recent meeting, the committee expressed significant concern about whether it has the expertise and capacity required to oversee a complex redevelopment project in partnership

with a private developer. As a result, the committee is currently leaning toward Option 2: selling a portion of the property and investing the proceeds.

On January 27, 2026, Kelvin met with Phyllis MacRae of Eastern Ontario Outaouais Regional Council's Future Through Property Committee (FTPC) to review our progress and discuss how sale proceeds would be managed.

Any sale would require Regional approval and alignment with church values. From the gross proceeds, legal fees, commissions, and other sale-related costs would be deducted. Ten percent of the remaining amount would be directed to the United Church's Truth and Reconciliation Fund. The balance would be invested, with up to 5% per year available for withdrawal. Larger withdrawals may be approved by the Region for major capital needs.

The committee recommends holding a meeting for questions and a discussion on April 26 after the service with plans to hold a congregational vote to decide which option the congregation votes on on Sunday June 7 after the service. A two-thirds majority of those present and voting would be required.

This summary reflects where the committee's work currently stands.

Kelvin Stanke

Boardgame Night
Come connect, relax, and play

Wednesday, March 11th 7-9PM
Britannia United Church
985 Pinecrest Road



We'll provide tables, snacks, and a selection of boardgames (party, casual, strategic, and card)

Bring your favourite game, or just bring yourself.

Don't lose hope--When it gets dark, the stars come out.

When nobody around you seems to measure up, it's time to check your yardstick.

A pessimist is someone who can look at the land of milk and honey, and see only calories and cholesterol.

Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found not in finishing an activity, but in doing it.

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the greatest intention

What good is having someone who can walk on water if you don't follow in his footsteps?

Strength doesn't come from what you can do. It comes from overcoming the things you once thought you couldn't.

FUNDRAISER FOR THE
METCALFE ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH
IRISH NIGHT

Come out and enjoy a fun evening

AT THE METCALFE UNITED CHURCH

2677 8TH LINE ROAD, METCALFE

THURSDAY MARCH 12, 2026

Roast Beef Dinner & Entertainment

Dinner from 5:30 to 6:30

Followed by: Entertainment by 'The Gallaghers',

Tickets \$35 *Pre-paid*

Children 6 to 12 \$15

5 and under Free

Draw

Takeout Available

Tickets Available from:

Martha Robertson 613-821-1708

Bev Patterson 613-445-3575

Nelda Isaac 613-821-2075

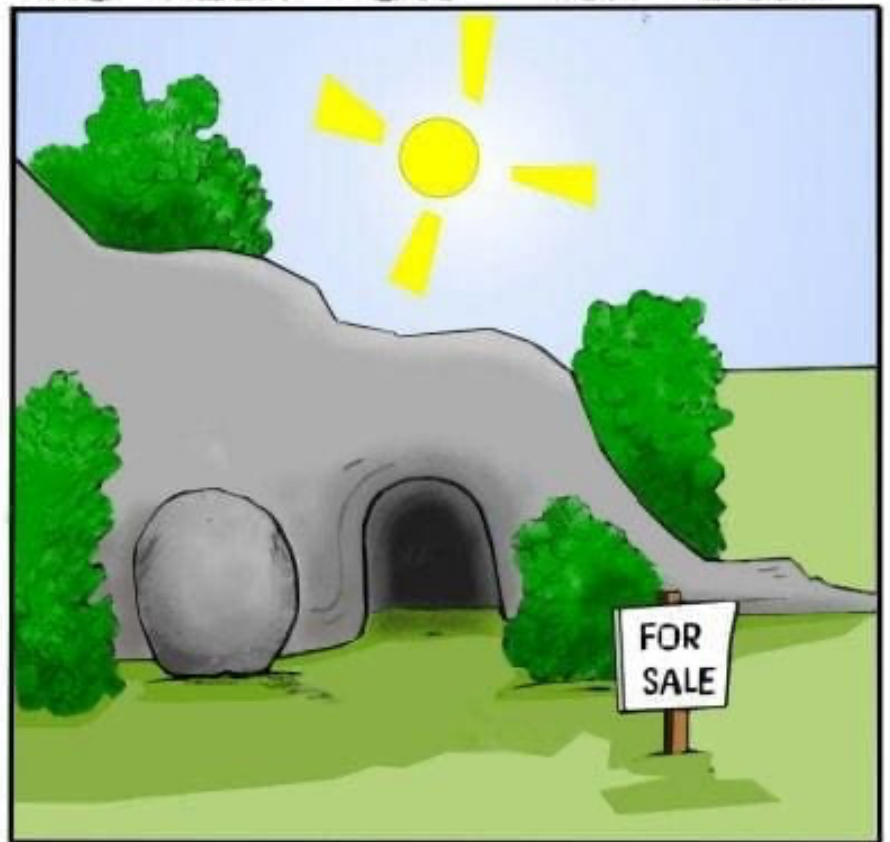


Events

- Lenten Coffee, Conversation and Study continues at 1:00 PM-2:00 PM in the Little Chapel at Britannia United Church with the book “A Different Kind of Fast” by Christine Valters Paintner. Britannia (Small Chapel)
- Trinity United is hosting a Lenten Study group on Tuesdays from February 24th until March 26th. and members of Britannia are welcome to attend. For more information contact Grant Gilliland, [613-809-1399](tel:613-809-1399), gruntg@hotmail.com.
- Next Boardgame night – March 11th 7:00-9:00 PM
- Irish Night Roast Beef Dinner with Entertainment Thursday March 12, 2026 at Metcalfe St. Andrews United, [2677 8th Line Road, Metcalfe](#).
- A Circle Complete - a new hour-long play by, about, and performed with Ottawa seniors on March 26 and 27, 2:00 PM and 7:00 PM, at the wheelchair accessible Rideau Rockcliffe Community Resource Centre, 815 St. Laurent Blvd., 2nd Floor Drama Room, K1K 3A7. Parking is free, and the show is followed by a community talkback with the performers.
- Puzzles – leave a puzzle and/or take a puzzle can be found in the Library!
- Palm Sunday - March 29, 10:15AM Britannia United Church
- Maundy Thursday - March 2, 7:00 PM, Knox United Church
- Good Friday Sensory Service - April 3, 6:00 PM Britannia United Church
- Easter Sunday Community Egg Hunt - Lauren is planning this with the community association: stay tuned for details
- Easter Sunday Celebration - April 5, 10:15AM Britannia United Church

"When in doubt, make a fool of yourself. There is a microscopically thin line between being brilliantly creative, and acting like the most gigantic idiot on earth. So, what the heck-leap"

The Back Pew – Jeff Larson



FOR SALE – Single owner tomb. Only used three days, and still has that new tomb smell. Reason for sale.. resident was resurrected.

Clustering so that All Our Churches can Thrive

In 2003, I served as one of two provincial representatives on a national task force proposing a new structure for the Canadian Vineyard denomination. At that time, our churches were in pockets, scattered across the country. Our centralized governance model, located in British Columbia, was no longer able to serve the Vineyard churches efficiently or effectively.

So our team proposed turning the structure upside down.

Instead of centring everything through one national office, we placed clusters at the heart of a new model. Clusters were groups of geographically connected congregations that committed to walking together as congregations and as ministers. This provided accountability, mutual support, and a way of defining our denominational family through intentional relationships.

We pitched the idea like this: Each church would find one or two others who would walk with them in such close contact and commitment that they would not be alone. “Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not easily broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

In the places where clustering was embraced, congregations felt less isolated and ministers felt better supported.

My own cluster connected our congregation in Ottawa with Montreal and a newly adopted congregation in Kanata. When we functioned as a cluster, things went well. But I often lamented that this model did not catch on as well as our restructuring task force had hoped. I suspect that part of the problem lay in the pastor-led leadership structure that relied on a single person buying into the model.

That experience has shaped how I think about clustering today in the context of the United Church of Canada.

When I arrived at Southminster United, there had already been an earlier attempt at clustering among the Ottawa South churches. Clustering had a rocky start there due to the original intention to promote connections for amalgamation – something none of the Ottawa South churches were interested in.

And yet, despite this rocky beginning, meaningful connections formed: a monthly ministers’ gathering and an annual potluck. Both of these continued because of a common desire to be part of something bigger than any one congregation.

Over time, the Ottawa South ministers began exploring what deeper collaboration might look like. We planned a shared Lenten programme as well as a joint service in Epiphany. The joint service was spectacular with a massive multi-congregation choir. One church hosted and the other did not have services that Sunday but encouraged their people to attend the joint service. It is so encouraging to see a church full, to deepen relationships, and know that we are not in this work alone.

There are three guiding ideas I believe will help us develop our West End cluster.

We cannot do it all: if we try, we risk burning out our most valuable asset – our great people.

The cluster becomes a place to seek support for initiatives that are difficult to sustain on our own. This Lenten season, I've encouraged our congregation to attend one special service at each cluster church. A small group of us attended Woodroffe's Shrove Tuesday meal. I attended a meaningful Ash Wednesday service at City View. And I'm looking forward to Maundy Thursday at Knox. Our congregation will host a unique Good Friday service in the evening at Britannia. And we all should enjoy Easter Sunday in our own congregations.

This is not about leaving our home churches, but about strengthening them. We are not here to compete, but to build each other up.

A healthy cluster is one that is committed to seeing all its churches thrive. Each of our congregations offers unique gifts to the neighbourhoods where they are planted. As people of faith, we have the audacity to believe that we were placed in those neighbourhoods for a reason.

In the Ottawa South cluster, one of our churches has a strong letter writing campaign and rather than duplicate that effort in all our churches, we supported that important ministry by joining in their letter writing events. Doing work like this together strengthens all of us – because we can do more together than alone. And each church has its own gifts to grow and share.

Clusters help us to amplify one another's strengths; hosting cluster events builds momentum.

One cluster initiative I led was a study series on A Song of Faith. Participating cluster churches took turns hosting the lunch time sessions following a simple, easy to prepare model and providing coffee and tea. As these groups moved from church to church, we would see people come out because it was in their church – but then some would start to follow the group as it moved from church to church each week. A core group emerged which sustained the momentum and allowed others to come and join when they could.

This is what I call a pattern of cooperation, a way for us to work together to do something bigger than we might be able to do and maintain on our own. And when you come out to an event that has a solid core of people, it is encouraging for everyone who comes.

Clustering is not about dissolving our identities. It is about strengthening our individual congregations. Clustering is about recognizing that we need each other. Simply because ministry was never meant to be done alone. The cluster exists to serve our congregations so that each of our churches can flourish in their own callings.

My hope is that we will continue opening our doors to one another, building patterns of cooperation, and returning to our own congregations renewed, knowing we are part of something much bigger than our individual congregations.

My heart is that in clustering we will see all of our churches thrive.

Rev. Dr. Frank Emanuel

People of the Resurrection: An Easter Message

From a sermon I preached in 2024.

During the Holy Week we will walk the way of sorrows, stand in the silence of Holy Saturday, and arrive at the tomb to find the stone rolled away. It is easy for us, reading the story from a distance from the events, to assume that it is how the story was always meant to end. But the gospels are careful to show us otherwise. The women who came to the tomb expected to find a body. They came in grief, prepared to honour the one they loved. Resurrection was not on the horizon.

Even though Jesus spoke of what was coming, his death was more than his followers could bear to imagine. And while his ministry was extraordinary, it still fit within familiar expectations for a prophet of God. Healings, exorcisms, even calling Lazarus from the grave all belonged within Israel's story. But when Jesus died, there was no prophet left to call him back. If the story had ended there, he might have been remembered as another, another mystic.

It did not end there.

The theologian George Ladd once argued that resurrection is not a historical possibility. He did not mean that it did not happen; he meant that resurrection does not arise from the normal possibilities of history. It is God's future breaking into the present. It is promise made visible. Something only God can do.

That is why the resurrection changes everything. As Paul insists in First Corinthians, if Christ has not been raised from the dead, our faith is in vain. But because Christ is raised, "death is swallowed up in victory." The final word does not belong to death, nor to human failure, nor to despair.

The resurrection becomes the new foundation of our faith. In the exodus, God led a people out of captivity. In Jesus, God steps into our humanity and takes upon himself the worst we do to one another: mockery, violence, cruelty. In Jesus, God says, "this is where it ends." The promise of God is not to escape from the world, but the renewal of it.

This matters deeply in our own time. As I studied eco-theology, I often felt the weight of despair. Some will place their hope in technological fixes; others speak of stewardship while still imagining the earth as a resource to manage. Some assume that there is simply nothing we can do. Without resurrection, we might echo Paul's bleak summary: "Eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

But faith in resurrection tells a different story. God is committed to creation. Resurrection is not only about individual destiny; it is the promise of renewal for all of creation. God promises a just future and then, in raising Jesus, displays the first fruits of this promise.

This is where hope is born. Not in naïve optimism about human progress, but in trust that God's promise exceeds our limitations. Promise invited participation. God does not coerce; God invites us to join in the work already underway.

And that invitation takes shape as love.

“For God so love the world” hardly captures the breadth of what is meant; the whole created order is embraced in that love. Love overcomes the evils of this age. Love is what carried Jesus through suffering. Love is what makes resurrection meaningful for us now.

A friend shared with me a photo of her embracing a cedar tree, and someone commented, “two of nature’s beauties hugging.” I found that image hopeful. Ecological awareness can easily lead to discouragement. But if God loves creation, then to follow God is to join in that love.

Love refuses indifference. When we love, we act.

As people of the resurrection, we live with faith that the last word is not the worst that humanity can do, not the damage we see all around us. The last word is God’s promise. Spoken to us in love, fulfilled in Christ, and still unfolding.

Faith, hope, and love remain. And the greatest of these is love.



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