

Sunday, July 20, 2025 - Order of Service

Lighting Christ Candle We light the Christ candle this week, aware of the despair and sense of hopelessness that poverty brings to people and communities. And yet, the glimmers of hope that arise through our discipleship in caring for the vulnerable shine like this Christ Candle. The candle is lit.

Welcome Welcome to this place, just as you are. Welcome to this worship. May you take from it a tiny piece of something you need. We come here with all our stories, our lived experiences, our struggles. We carry the weight of discrimination, loss, worry, grief, and pain. We come weary, seeking rest from expectations. We also seek a holy presence to be with us. We come to this place, to be held in the resilient grace of God, to be embraced by the Love that never lets us go. Welcome.

Acknowledgement of the Land A territorial acknowledgement seeks to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples with historical ties to a particular territory. To that end, we would like to attach importance to the Anishinaabe, Chonnoton, Haudenosaunee, Huron, and Leni-Lenape Peoples. An acknowledgement also recognizes the treaty relationships between settler and Indigenous peoples that were entered into in respect of that land. We are on territory that is the subject of McKee Treaty #2. It was signed in 1790, by John McKee (for the Crown), and Village and War Chiefs of the Nations of the Ottawa, Chippawa, and Potawatomy and the Huron Indians Nations of Detroit. Did you know that Dutton did not officially become a town until nearly a century later, in 1885?

Announcements

Gathering Hymn **Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying**, VU # 400

Lord, listen to your children praying,	Lord, listen to your children praying,	Lord, listen to your children praying,	Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;	Lord, send your Spirit in this place;	Lord, send your Spirit in this place;	Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,	Lord, listen to your children praying,	Lord, listen to your children praying,	Lord, listen to your children praying,
Send us love, send us power, send us grace!	Send us understanding, send us grace!	Send all love, send all hope, send all grace!	Send compassion, send us grace!

Call to Worship **Bread not Stones**

L: What does the Lord require of us?

P: **To seek justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with our God.**

L: Who are we called to be?

P: **We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others.**

L: Why do we gather for worship?

P: **We gather as an outpouring of gratitude and awe and a practice of opening ourselves to God's still, small voice of comfort, and to God's rushing whirlwind of challenge.**

L: Let us worship God together!

Gathering Prayer *by Wanda Winfield, Blenheim UC, Blenheim, ON*

Loving God, we bring ourselves to this place of worship, celebrating being together as a gathered community, remembering those we love who are no longer with us, asking you to help us notice any who feel lost and forgotten and remind us of the times when we have felt lost and forgotten. Be with us, we pray, today and always. Amen.

Hymn **The Servant Song**, VU # 595

We are pilgrims on a journey,	Sister, let me be your servant,	I will hold the Christ-light for you	I will weep when you are weeping,	When we sing to God in heaven,	Brother, let me be your servant,
Fellow travellers on the road;	Let me be as Christ to you;	In the night-time of your fear;	When you laugh I'll laugh with you;	We shall find such harmony,	Let me be as Christ to you;
We are here to help each other	Pray that I may have the grace	I will hold my hand out to you,	I will share your joy and sorrow,	Born of all we've known together	Pray that I may have the grace
Walk the mile and bear the load.	To let you be my servant too.	Speak the peace you long to hear.	'til we've seen this journey through.	Of Christ's love and agony.	To let you be my servant too.

Prayer of Confession *by Carman McClelland, North Bramalea UC, Brampton, ON*

Inspired by Psalm 130

L: We come before you, holy, loving, and merciful God, giving you thanks for welcoming us to bring the deepest needs of our souls to you in prayer.

P: **We are reminded that the words that are shared in prayer, the feelings that we sometimes find too difficult to put into words, and even the moaning and groaning of our hearts are all received by you.**

L: And so, we come before you as a family of your people to seek and accept your forgiveness.

P: **There are many in our world, indeed in our community close to home, who need a touch of your love.**

L: We are sometimes so caught up in the demands of our own lives that we fail to notice those needs.

P: Forgive us for our lack of attentiveness. Help us to notice in the way that Jesus would notice.

L: There are things we could have done to help another person that we didn't do. Forgive us for our lack of action.

P: Help us to be the presence of Jesus.

L: There are thoughts felt, words shared, things done, and things left undone that we regret.

P: We bring all of that to you and thank you for the promise that in our confession, we find forgiveness. Amen.

Words of Assurance

L: Today, we leave our burdens at the foot of the cross.

P: By Your grace, we may leave them there and not return to pick them up and carry them again.

Offering Prayer by Gill Le Fevre, Walton Memorial UC, Oakville, ON

Caring God, as you receive our offering, remind us how to share your love with the world. Make us aware of the opportunities to be angels in the lives of another. Inspire us to seek the needs of our community and to act, that we might lessen the struggle and challenges for each other. Encourage us to use the ways you've blessed our lives that we might be a blessing for others. In the name of Jesus, himself poor, we pray. Amen.

Presentation of cheque to WE Daffodil Auxiliary-Welfare -represents Coffee & Conversation collection January-June 2025

Offering & Dedication Prayer from bread/stones, Carolyn Pogue

God of all children: We come before you bewildered by the fact of poverty. We come in frustration and that people are hungry. We come to you in shame that the homeless sleep in cars and in church basements, because we don't build enough affordable housing. Strengthen us to honour and care for the people in our communities. Help us to place the best interests of others first. In the name of your child, Jesus. Amen.

Hymn When Pain of the World, VU # 598

When pain of the world surrounds us With darkness and despair, When searching just confounds us With false hopes everywhere, When lives are starved for meaning And destiny is bare, We are called to follow Jesus And let God's healing flow through us.	We see with fear and trembling Our aching world in need, Confessing to each other Our wastefulness and greed. May we, with steadfast caring The hungry children feed. We are called to follow Jesus And let God's justice flow through us.	The church is a holy vessel The living waters fill To nourish all its people, God's purpose to fulfill. May we, with humble courage, Be open to God's will. We are called to follow Jesus And let God's spirit flow through us.	We praise you for our journey And your abundant grace, Your saving word that guided A struggling human race. O God, with all creation, Your future we embrace. We are called to follow Jesus And let God's changes flow through us.
--	--	---	---

Children's Ministry

Story Those Shoes by Maribeth Boelts

Prayer **Dear God. Thank you for our family who give us food and clothes and a nice place to sleep. Thank you for our Church and our community because they help people who, like Jeremy's gramma, sometimes can't afford things for their families. We ask that you help us not make fun of or laugh at someone for any reason like Jeremy's classmates did. We pray that you will help us become kind like Antonio and Jeremy and that you will provide guidance to us to help a friend or someone in need. Thank you, we love you. Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer (sung)

Scripture This is a powerful warning in Amos about the consequences of injustice, false worship, and the lack of God's Word. It highlights the importance of social justice, righteousness, and true worship in the relationship with God. It talks about the oppression of the poor. The passage condemns the leaders for exploiting the poor by buying their loyalty with silver and silencing the objections of the needy with sandals.

Amos 8:1-12 NIV: A Basket of Ripe Fruit

This is what the Sovereign LORD showed me: a basket of ripe fruit. "What do you see, Amos?" he asked. "A basket of ripe fruit," I answered. Then the LORD said to me, "The time is ripe for my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "the songs in the temple will turn to wailing. Many, many bodies - flung everywhere! Silence!" Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, "When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?" Skimping on the measure, boosting the price, and cheating with dishonest scales. Buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat. The LORD has sworn by himself, the Pride of Jacob: "I will never forget anything they have done. "Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt. "In that day," declares the Sovereign LORD, "I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your religious festivals into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day. "The days are coming," declares the Sovereign

LORD, “when I will send a famine through the land, not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. People will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.

Message

Well! How do you like them apples? The Old Testament, well, it had its own style, didn't it? And Amos, was not well liked for his harsh messages. But Amos really only wanted the people in power at the time to administer fair justice, honour the Sabbath, and follow the Word of God.

I have a cat. His name is Wyatt. Which rhymes with Quiet, which he isn't. If you call my house, invariably, he is having a cat nap on my lap. The phone wakes him up and he makes his displeasure known by meowing loudly and continues to voice his annoyance until I get off the phone. Some people like dogs, some people favour cats, I happen to like both, but I can't take dogs for long walks, so, I adopt cats. I have strong beliefs about both, though many are based on misconceptions and myths, and I realize this, but my beliefs are, well, my beliefs. For example, dogs are loyal, friendly, and always want to be near you. Cats are aloof, indifferent, not affectionate, and can last for days with you being absent – if you've left food and water for them. These character traits I believe to my very soul, even though all my cats have been warm and welcoming, affectionate, and loyal. Even though my experiences with cats disprove my views about them, still the conviction of their character lingers.

For centuries people believed that Aristotle was right when he said that the heavier an object, the faster it would fall to earth. Aristotle was regarded as the greatest thinker of all time, and surely, he would not be wrong. Anyone, of course, could have taken two objects, one heavy and one light, and dropped them from a great height to see whether or not the heavier object landed first. But no one did until nearly 2,000 years after Aristotle's death. In 1589, Galileo summoned learned professors to the base of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Then he went to the top and pushed off a ten-pound and a one-pound weight. Both landed at the same instant. The power of belief was so strong, however, that the professors denied their eyesight. They continued to say Aristotle was right. (*Bits & Pieces, January 9, 1992, pp. 22-23.*)

I think that's how we form our opinions on certain subjects too. When we are confronted with the facts about a situation or person, like the scientists and Galileo (or me and my dog and cat theories), often our opinions do not change with the new information. Take for example the homeless or impoverished segment of society. Even though I've worked with the homeless at a shelter in London for five years, even though I think I have an open mind, and even though I've tried to educate myself on poverty in Canadian society, I am ashamed to say I am still judgmental. When I am at the corner of Richmond and Oxford in London and I see a person, often disheveled, with a sign that says, “homeless, please help, God bless”, I must admit that I've not often given them a dime.

When the Worship Team had the meeting about this week's Scripture Readings and the corresponding Message about poverty, a member said what most of us have thought about the poor, that if you give them money, they'll just go to the nearest LCBO or street drug dealer and feed their addiction. I had a different experience with the homeless when I lived in Ottawa. I used to give this one homeless person money when I saw him outside my place of work, maybe two or three times a week. Not much, but it was enough for a simple meal. I would watch him as he thanked me and then go across the street to a diner for something to eat. That was every time I gave him money.

Wow. When Darlene told that story, it really invited me to think and think hard.

The poor are “just us” after a “hardship”. We are not immune from poverty. You've heard the expression, “there but for the grace of God am I”? Our society too often depicts wealth as “success,” viewing people who live with poverty as “failures.” But we fail to appreciate the depth of poverty - not only on the other side of the world, but also on the other side of the street.

We resort to sayings like:

- “Pull up your bootstraps,”
- “You're lazy,”
- “You made your bed, now lie in it!” or
- “We are all in tough times, so it has to be each for their own.”

We may patronizingly add,

- “Offer a hand-up rather than a handout.”

Did you know that most of those who are living in poverty here in Canada are working? So, the traditional response to poverty of “get a job” just doesn't apply; most impoverished people already have one, or likely two.

An employee from an organization in Calgary, called Hunger for Justice, interviewed some of their clients.

Q: Can you tell us something about poverty we might not know?

A: “When, because you are living in poverty, you become “the other” and are invisible, that's when you don't get treated as a fully human individual, by systems and people. Example: when you try to get help, agencies and people assume that you are trying to cheat the system. They don't even try to learn about what happened to get me here.” End quote.

Poverty is not a personal choice. People do not end up hungry and homeless because they choose to. As a child, they did not dream of being scared, desperate, cold, and alone. And speaking of children, the innocents, the impacts of poverty on a child is immense. Did you know that 14% of children in Canada are living in poverty? It not only affects their health with lack of food and shelter, but emotionally and spiritually too. It affects their education, which has a huge impact on their future and whether the poverty will be generational.

There are 14 paper dolls up here. These represent the 14% of children in Canada who are living in poverty. Some of you were given post it notes before the Service began. Could I ask who has #1? Could you read it out? *Go and get the note and attach it to a doll.*

These statements are based on the 14 measurements of Quality of Life from UNICEF. Who has #2?..

1. *I don't eat three meals a day.*
2. *I don't eat protein every day.*

3. *I don't eat fresh fruits or vegetables every day.*
4. *I don't have any appropriate books to read.*
5. *I have nothing to play with outside.*
6. *I don't get to join after-school activities with my friends.*
7. *I don't have anything to play with.*
8. *I am not able to participate in school trips that cost money.*
9. *I don't have a quiet place to do my homework.*
10. *I do not have access to the Internet.*
11. *I never get new clothes.*
12. *If my shoes get wet, I don't have a second pair.*
13. *I can't invite friends over to my house to play.*
14. *I don't get to celebrate special occasions like my birthday.*

We would like you to silently think about these next few questions.

- Which paper-doll do you think has it really bad?
- If this was one of your neighbour's children, how would they and their child be feeling?
- How would you be feeling if it was one of your neighbours' children?
- Do you think some people living with poverty and other people having too much of everything is fair?
- Our church gives money, canned food, and other things to the Daffodil Society. What else can we do?

Poverty is not a lack of character; it's a lack of money. Poverty is created by systemic vulnerabilities for example discrimination and racism, stagnant or low wages, lack of employment, unequal funding to or cutting of essential programs, lack of culturally appropriate programs and services, remote community life, historical trauma, lack of housing or poor housing, unequal access to security and justice, lack of clean drinking water, and flooding or other climate crisis-driven factors. Disruptive events such as job loss and family breakdown. Personal vulnerabilities including education level, language barriers, and the marginalization of an identifiable group (e.g.: race, religion, gender identity).

Another question posed to the homeless client: What is the greatest misconception you've heard from those not living in poverty?

A: People tend to exaggerate my "deficiencies" or "mistakes" or "bad decisions" and assume that is why I am poor. In other words, my own fault. Poverty can come in the form of a sudden illness or accident, the sickness of a child, the breakdown of a marriage, the loss of a job, or a job that doesn't pay very well, has no benefits, and no pension plan."

Poverty does not define a person's character or value. The village of Oakville was known for its beauty, but many of its residents lived in modest homes, working tirelessly to make ends meet. The Miller family, though not particularly wealthy, was known for their generosity and kindness. One day, a new family arrived in the village. They were the Robinsons and were visibly impoverished. They had lost everything in a recent storm and were struggling to find their feet.

Wait! Stop! That last sentence, the one that provided a reason for the family's poverty. Are we really deciding whether we want to help them or not based on how they became homeless? Are we going to be the judge of who is or is not "worthy" of our help? Does the reason for their poverty have to be "acceptable" to us? If it does, do we use sliding scale? Do we give a value of "10" to a woman and child fleeing violence in their home? What do we give to the man who had surgery, became addicted to drugs, became divorced, and lost his job? I mean, that's got to be at least an "8".

Ok, that was a bit sarcastic, but the point is that we should help them, just because they are people, made in God's image.

Yes, we are created in the image of God, scripture reminds us to be fair and act justly, and we are asked by God to care for those in need, for those who are on the margins. In fact, in the Bible, there are over 2,000 verses that address poverty. These verses highlight themes of compassion, justice, and the call to action on behalf of the vulnerable. In the Old Testament, for example, *Leviticus 19:9-10* says that farmers should leave the edges of their fields unharvested so the poor can gather food. The New Testament continues this theme, with Jesus himself often associating with the poor and marginalized. Verses like *Luke 12:33-34* encouraged the disciples to sell their possessions and give the funds to the poor. These verses emphasize that caring for the poor is not optional, but a fundamental aspect of Christian faith and practice. God's heart is clearly for the vulnerable, and we are called to reflect that love through acts of generosity and justice. To God, everyone is valuable.

A well-known speaker started his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the room of 200, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?" Hands started going up. He said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you but first, let me do this." He proceeded to crumple the dollar bill up. He then asked, "Who still wants it?" Still the hands were up in the air. "Well," he replied, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe. He picked it up, now all crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Still the hands went into the air. Then he said, "My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It was still worth \$20. Many times, in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way. We feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value in God's eyes. To Him, dirty or clean, crumpled or finely creased, you are still priceless to Him." (Source: unknown)

James 2:14-18 says, "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled, without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." Today's reading of *Amos 8:1-12* is a powerful warning about the consequences of injustice. It highlights the importance of social justice and righteousness. It focusses on the oppression of the poor and condemns the leaders for exploiting the poor. *Matthew 5:14-16* says, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven". This passage means you are called to display integrity and goodness in all that you do so that your actions can influence others.

We'll close with this story that reflects that sentiment. *"The boat is coming to take me home because I have failed in my studies here at the monastery," said the boy. "What can I say to my family?" "Say that you did your best and that is as much as anyone can do," answered the teacher. "But I wanted to be a famous monk and teach others." "You can." "How?" asked the sad boy. "Live from your heart. I will show you. Do you see that boat making its way across the lake with the sun setting behind it?" "Yes." "Do you see its wake spreading across the lake? See how the boat looks like the apex of a golden triangle as the wake fans out from its bow." "Sort of." "Squint," said the teacher. "That boat is you as you leave the monastery. The lake is your life. The wake is the effect that you will have on the world. Each ripple triggers another ripple, which triggers another. By constantly striving to live as wise and loving a life as you can, you can teach the path of love to everyone you meet simply by being yourself; a few of these people will pass on your good example to others. Thus, the expanding golden wake of good works begets other good works. Most important, notice how each ripple catches the sun and bounces its light back to heaven..."*

Sometimes we are so blinded to the truth that, even when presented with the evidence, we refuse to believe otherwise. Some cats are independent while others aren't. Some dogs are trustworthy and others not. When Jesus preached to His hometown of Nazareth, they heard His words and saw His miracles. Yet, since they "knew" that carpenters don't speak like this or do miracles (and Jesus was a carpenter), he could not be the Son of God he claimed to be. Their preconceived notions about Him were enough to blind them to the truth. If we believe things about people just because we happen to believe in the notion rather than the truth, we are no better. It is so easy to hide from the truth in our prejudices. That last story illustrates that when you live a wise and loving life and dispel stereotypes, untruths, and myths, and when you are an example to others of kind deeds done well, those words and actions will inspire them ... and they'll pass it on ... and they'll pass it on ... Amen.

Prayers of the People Holy God: You speak to us words of comfort and of challenge. You call the meek, the physically weak, and the downtrodden fortunate. You promise that the hungry will be fed, and the thirsty will be given something to drink. Yet we are surrounded by stories of people who are living in poverty.

We pray for people, especially those unknown to us, as we gather our prayers of concerns for ourselves and for the world. We offer them to you now ... [allow for a time of silent prayer].

With the help and support of each other, and by your grace, we trust in the promise that has been given to us through Jesus ... that he is with us always; that we are never alone. With this assurance, God, we pray for the people living in poverty in Canada and the families who struggle to support them. In their suffering, may they be soothed by the words of Christ, the assurance of the coming Kin-dom, and by our actions here, now, and in the future.

We pray also, God, for those who are actively working toward eliminating poverty in Canada such as the Daffodil Society in Dutton and the Caring Cupboard in St. Thomas. In their work, may they be encouraged and supported by the witness of Christ's followers. We pray that your kin-dom comes to earth as it is in heaven.

And ask that you help us all to be good stewards of our unique and individual gifts by responding to the needs around us with your vision, so that one day: the poor in spirit may know the kingdom of God, those who mourn may be comforted, the meek may inherit what is theirs, and no person will live in poverty. Amen.

Parting Hymn *When I Needed a Neighbour*, VU # 600

When I needed a neighbour,	I was hungry and thirsty, Were you there, were you there?	I was cold, I was naked, Were you there, were you there?	When I needed a healer,	Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
Were you there, were you there?	I was hungry and thirsty, where you there?	I was cold, I was naked, where you there?	Were you there, were you there?	Wherever you travel I'll be there.
When I needed a neighbour, where you there?	And the creed and the colour	And the creed and the colour	When I needed a healer, where you there?	And the creed and the colour
And the creed and the colour	and the name won't matter, were you there?	and the name won't matter, were you there?	And the creed and the colour	and the name won't matter, I'll be there.
and the name won't matter, were you there?			and the name won't matter, were you there?	

Benediction -by William J. Kervin, *Gathered for Worship*, UCPH, 2010

Friends, what does God require of us? To seek justice, To love kindness, And to walk humbly with our God. And if Christ's disciples keep silent? The stones will shout out! May God bless our witness, life and work, And may the Spirit guide us in the Way. Amen

Choral Amen

Extinguishing the Christ Candle We came seeking the light of Christ, yet we too often faltered on the path. We came stumbling and tripping, and reached out for your steadying light. As we reached for you, we touched one another, discovering strength in each other's faith. The Christ candle is extinguished. The light flickers, vulnerable and small, and then dies out. We carry it in our hearts. Amen.