

April 12, 2026 - Order of Service - Volunteer Week

Lighting of the Christ Candle When You Call for Me, MVU # 96 (spoken)

And when you call for me,
I have already answered.

And when you call for me,
I am already there.

The Christ Candle is lit.

Welcome -by Tammy Ferguson, Grace UC, Gananoque, ON, Gathering, L/E 2024, p. 41

No matter what kind of believers we may be, let us all feel comfortable here at church and among our church family. There is a place for each of us here.

Announcements

Introduction of Theme

Today we celebrate volunteerism and discipleship. We will pose the question: are we volunteers or disciples?

- The dictionary definition of “volunteer” is a person who freely offers their time, skills, and efforts to support causes, organizations, or individuals without expecting compensation. A volunteer is a person who is driven by the desire to make a positive impact, benefiting both the community and the volunteer’s own well-being.
- Disciple: The word means “student”. Discipleship is as simple as sharing life with others and modelling Christ. Discipleship is speaking truly, offering encouragement, and inviting others into what God is doing in your own heart.

No matter what we call ourselves, we think it is safe to say members of this congregation belong in both categories.

Call to Worship -by David Sparks, Summerland, BC

L: This is the place of joy.

P: Christ is risen!

L: This is the time of new hope.

P: Christ is risen!

L: This is the way of freedom.

P: Christ is risen!

L: Gathered with faithful friends,

P: Christ is risen!

L: Everything is possible now.

P: Christ is risen!

L: Christ is risen indeed.

P: Hallelujah!

Ministry of Music

Gathering Prayer Tanna Edwards, Bridgenorth UC, Bridgenorth, ON

L: Come, Holy Spirit, to teach and inspire us. Direct us back to your way when we’re on the wrong path. Bring us to our senses.

P: Spirit as Truth, knock us over. Get our attention.

L: Anoint us and send us forth, even when it seems the world tunes us out.

P: Spirit as Nerve, Hold us up. Steady us,

L: As we try to figure out where you are most needed in our communities.

P: Spirit as Discernment, show us your truth.

L: Though it be more than we think we can handle, grow our faith and lead us when we can’t find a plan or a way forward.

P: Spirit as Breath, blow around us. Nudge us on.

L: Send us teachers who guide us to the way of your love, that we may show others the way.

P: Spirit as Advocate, you know us. Be our champion.

L: Remind us, when we forget, to have heart and to not give up, for you have overcome the world,

P: Spirit as Energy, light us up. Empower us for God’s work in the world. Amen.

Gathering Hymn It Only Takes a Spark, VU # 289

It only takes a spark to get a fire going, And soon all those around Can warm up in its glowing; That's how it is with God's love, Once you've experienced it: You spread God's love to everyone, You want to pass it on.	What a wondrous time is spring When all the trees are dubbing, The birds begin to sing, The flowers start their blooming; That's how it is with God's love, Once you've experienced it: You want to sing, it's fresh like spring, You want to pass it on.	I wish for you, my friend, This happiness that I've found On God you can depend, It matters not where you're bound; I'll shout it from the mountain top; I want my world to know: The Lord of love has come to me, I want to pass it on!
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Offering Invitation -by Sheryl McLeod, Admaston PC, Renfrew, ON

Today we remember we are brought together through God's grace and Jesus' love. Wow! We are the beneficiaries of abundant blessings. In grateful response, we gather our offering.

Offertory Prayer -adapted from Sheryl Spencer, Mount Forest PC, Mount Forest, ON

Jesus: you gave all you had and you continued to give even beyond the grave. You just couldn't help it. Bless these gifts with that extraordinary love. Amen.

Hymn Will You Come and Follow Me, VU # 567

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?	Will you leave yourself behind If I but call your name?	Will you let the blinded see If I but call your name?	Will you live the "you" you hide If I but call your name?	Christ, your summons echoes true When you but call my name.
Will go where you don't know and never be the same?	Will you care for cruel and kind And never be the same?	Will you set the prisoners free And never be the same?	Will you quell thee fear inside And never be the same?	Let me turn and follow you And never be the same.
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known, Will you let my love be grown in you and you in me?	Will you risk the hostile stare Should your life attract or scare? Will you let me answer prayer in you and you in me?	Will you kiss the leper clean, And do such as this unseen, And admit to what I mean in you and you in me?	Will you use the faith you've found To re-shape the world around, Through my sight and touch and sound in you and you in me?	In your company I'll go Where your love and footsteps show. Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

Children's Ministry Thanking people is a good thing.

Children's Prayer:

Dear loving God: Thank you for all the people who help other people. They make life here in the world you created . . . well . . . better. Please help us be one of these helper people. Please help these helpers continue to lend their hands, minds, and spirits to others. We thank you for our teachers, church and community members, and our families and friends. We love them and we love you. Amen.

Lord's Prayer (spoken)

Children leave for Sunday School

Scripture Readings

1 Peter 1:3-9, Praise to God for a Living Hope (NIV)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith - of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire - may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

John 20:19-31, Jesus Appears to His Disciples (NIV)

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.

Again, Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Jesus Appears to Thomas

Now Thomas (also known as Didymus which means "the twin"), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The Purpose of John's Gospel

Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

Hymn **O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee**, VU # 560

O Master, let me walk with Thee	Help me the slow of heart to move	Teach me thy patience, still with thee,	In hope that sends a shining ray
In lowly paths of service free;	With some clear, winning word of love;	In closer, dearer company, In work that keeps faith sure and strong,	Far down the future's broadening way,
Teach me thy secret, help me bear	Teach me the wayward feet to stay,	In trust that triumphs over wrong,	In peace that only thou canst give,
The strain of toil, the fret of care.	And guide them in the homeward way.		With the, O Master, let me live.

Reflection-by Susan Lukey, Editor, 2024 Gathering, ACE 2024-2025

I was caught off guard by a question on this year's annual statistical forms for The United Church of Canada: "How many volunteer hours are contributed by people in your congregation?"

This question led to an interesting discussion by our church council. Are we volunteers at church, or do we understand what we offer in this context as something different? The unanimous agreement was that we don't volunteer at church in the way we might volunteer for another organization. Our contributions to our community of faith - of time, energy, skills, and resources - are about living a call to discipleship. It is about vocation, not volunteering. As one council member declared, "Jesus didn't call volunteers. Jesus called disciples."

Indeed, Jesus didn't call volunteers to give a bit of time to his cause. He didn't say, "Simon Peter and Andrew, do you have a few hours to spare?" Rather the call was clear: "Come and follow me and I will make you fishers of people." The response was equally clear. It is reported that Simon Peter and Andrew abandoned their nets and followed him.

The scene is played out again when Jesus approaches the Zebedee brothers, John and James. Jesus invites them to join in his band of disciples, and they too abandon everything, including their father, who is left alone to mend the nets.

Jesus called disciples to devote themselves fully, body, mind, and spirit, to living the Way he taught. This was no partial or occasional responsibility. Being disciples of Jesus was about a total commitment. It was giving one's whole self over to learning from Jesus and later preaching the Good News he shared.

The word volunteer comes to us from Latin through French and into English. The Latin word "voluntaris" meant that one was willing, doing something by one's own choice.

In some ways, modern definitions of the word fit with what we offer as disciples of Jesus. We offer our time, skills, energy, and resources of our own free will. Yet, naming ourselves as volunteers at church and counting the hours we volunteer reduces discipleship to time and numbers. The organizational strictness of planning and tracking the hours spent volunteering in the church is a mammoth task, creating unnecessary busy work and taking people away from the sense of vocation with which they devote themselves, body, mind, and spirit, to living their faith through their participation in the community of faith.

Being disciples of Jesus means total commitment. We aren't just disciples for a couple of hours on Sunday morning or when we drop by the church to participate in some ministry or church activity during the week. When we choose to follow the Way of Jesus, we shape all of our lives around that choice and commitment. Every aspect of our lives is carried out from the perspective of being a disciple of Jesus. Body, mind, and spirit, we seek to be attuned with the spirit of Jesus.

Then, when we volunteer for other organizations, we do so out of our belief that Jesus calls us to love and serve others. In our paid labour and professions, we work with the excellence, care, and compassion called out of us as disciples of Jesus. When we have a difficult interaction with another person, we seek to respond with clarity and respect, doing as much as we can to bridge and build relationships, just as Jesus did. When we spend time with someone who is grieving or celebrate with a family who has welcomed a new child, we live out the call to share one another's joys and sorrows.

Our rising and our sleeping, our working and our playing, our living and our dying are all reflections of our commitment to following the Way of Jesus. We are disciples, not volunteers. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Holy One, we thank you for letting us be your body on earth. None of us can do it individually, but together, we minister with you. We pray for the hands that cook meals, and create, and write. Human hands becoming your hands. We pray for the feet that bring church bulletins and that root themselves in protests for justice. Human feet becoming your feet. We pray for the shoulders that offer a place to cry and a comforting foundation for generation after generation. Human shoulders becoming your shoulders.

We pray for the eyes that notice those who are forgotten or ignored and situations that need addressing among us, and that bring attention to where you are active, now. Human eyes becoming your eyes. We pray for the arms that lift others in and out of bed and carry box after box of groceries. Human arms becoming your arms. We pray for the hearts that weep over injustice and suffering, over loneliness and destruction of the earth. Human hearts becoming your heart. We pray for the minds that calculate how to use resources in the most loving way and that create new ways of thinking about the world. Human minds being guided by your mind.

We pray for volunteers of all ages and genders, all races and sexualities, all nations and legal statuses. We pray for people; people loving each other, loving the earth, loving you. We pray for the people noticed at volunteer events and we pray for people not noticed for what they offer to others. We pray for volunteers inside this church and outside this church. Human people becoming your body.

We pray to thank you, God, for letting us be your body on earth. As your body, we sign and breathe, speak or type or gesture, and communicate these personal prayers we add to our collective prayer.

(a time of silent prayer)

All these prayers we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Parting Hymn A New Wellspring, by Doris Hollingsworth, Maynooth Madawaska PC, Maynooth, ON (Tune: VU # 559 Nettleton)

Now then, let us lift our voices In this hymn of hope and grace. We have listened to words spoken, Now we know the tasks we face. Let us go forth with a strong heart, Seeking how we now can bring, Acts of courage, acts of caring, Acts that make our spirits sing.	Boldly now, we join our voices, As we sing and as we say, words that make us ponder deeply how to put these words in play. Let us go forth with a strong heart, Seeking how we now can bring Acts of justice, acts of daring, Acts that make our hearts take wing.	As disciples, now, we're willing To act boldly, when we dare, Hear the many who are helpless, Those whose lives are in despair. Let us go forth with a strong heart Seeking how we now can bring, Acts of sowing, acts of tending, Acts that birth a new wellspring.
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Commissioning -by Karen Boivin, Bells Corners UC, Ottawa, ON

Let us go to love as Peter loved, drawing more and more people into the circle of our embrace. Let us go to love as Jesus loved, and by this, be known as his disciples.

Choral Amen

Extinguish the Christ Candle