

Sunday, May 3, 2026 – Order of Service

Light the Christ Candle

Welcome

P: In the peace of Christ, fear is overcome; in the peace of Christ, doubts are cast away. In the peace of Christ, there is love.

L: Let us exchange the sign of peace.

Announcements

A Prayer for Leaders in Faith Communities

-by The Very Rev. Dr. Richard Bott, Past Moderator, United Church of Canada

We recognize, God of all life, all people, all places; that many of us continue to not understand issues of mental health - our own, and that of others'. For so many broken reasons stigma is placed upon folks living with mental health difficulties, building walls of isolation, rather than the support and love of beloved community; the support and love of radical belonging; the support and love that Jesus exemplified, over and over and over again. Open our hearts, open our arms, open the ways to knowledge and comprehension - that all your beloved children would find safe home, here. Now. Always. We ask this in the name of the One whose hands and heart always reach out, Jesus, the Christ. Amen.

Call to Worship *-by Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund*

L: Come, let us worship God who is creating a new heaven and a new earth. Today is a new day, a fresh start, and a day of new beginnings.

P: Come, let us worship God who creates peace out of chaos, calm out of anxiety, and hope out of despair. Even when we are depressed, we trust God is with us.

L: Come, let us praise God who chooses to be among us, one of us.

P: Come, let us praise God who says to each one of us, "no matter who we are, or what medications we take, or our diagnoses, or where we are on life's journey: I will be your God."

L: Come, let us give thanks to God who promises to wipe away every tear from our eyes.

All: Come, let us give thanks to God who loves us so much that death, mourning, crying, and pain cannot stop God from loving us. This is our greatest hope: we are held in God's love. Come, let us rejoice, for God, the Alpha and Omega is making all things new!

Opening Prayer

-by Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ, National Ministries

Uphold me. Sustain me. Renew me. In seasons of grief and trauma, through times of toil and tribulation, during days of long-suffering and sleepless nights, be thou my vision. Let me see with new eyes what hope speaks of: the new day of our awakening to a season in which every tear shall be wiped away, every sorrow erased, every evil overcome, every death become a resurrection. Amen.

Gathering Hymn *Spirit, Open My Heart*, MVU # 79

Refrain	God, replace my stony	Write your love upon my	May I weep with those
Spirit, open my heart	heart	heart	who weep,
To the joy and pain of	With a heart that's kind	As my law, my goal, my	Share Your grace
living.	and tender.	story.	with my sisters and
As you love, may I love,	All my coldness and fear	In each thought, word,	brothers.
In receiving and in giving,	To your grace I now	and deed,	In welcoming Christ
Spirit, open my heart.	surrender.	May my living bring you	May we welcome one
	Refrain	glory.	another.
		Refrain	Refrain

Ministry of Music *Rejoice in the Lord*

Prayer of Confession -by Rev. Shernell J. Edney Stilley

Creator God, You are full of grace and justice. You are Holy and Wholly present with us every moment of our lives. In our rush to compartmentalize and create control in our lives, we have sometimes, ironically, allowed seeds of chaos to be planted in our relationships with others. We have sought to put people and their illnesses, struggles, and complexities at bay while we justify ourselves as “normal” or “quirky.” Yet in your Righteousness, Lord, You have seen fit to be steadfastly patient and divinely compassionate with all of your Creation - including us. We confess both our subconscious and willful othering that provides us false protection from our own inner battles. You said that if we confess, you will draw us close and wrap us in your forgiveness that provides both truth and love. We come before you with humble hearts and contrite spirits asking for your pardon. Continue to grant us the invaluable gift of the ability to know one another and walk together in an intimacy that only you can manifest. Into Your care we commit our collective weakness, assured by Your omniscient strength and love. Amen.

Words of Assurance -by Rev. Dr. Rachael Keefe, based on Ezekiel 37

L: Hear the Good News: No valley is too despairing, broken, or dusty for God to enter in. No fear, no chaos, no hopelessness is beyond the reach of the One whose breath gives us life.

P: Through Christ, God sees only our wholeness. Through Christ, forgiveness, love, and new life are always possible.

L: Come, Holy Spirit, come. Make all things new.

P: We are reclaimed and remade by the Spirit of Life. In our brokenness and in our wholeness we are God’s beloved. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Offertory Prayer -by Jim McKean, while at Severn Shores UC, Port Severn, ON

Jesus, you have called across the ages in a strong yet tender voice, asking us to bless and care for any who are in need. We bring these gifts of time, talent, and money before you so they may be a blessing for a hurting world. May they find the shadowed corners within all creation and, with their love, shine light and hope where most needed. Amen.

Hymn **When We Are Tested**, MVU # 65

When we are tested and wrestle alone, Famished for bread when the world offers stone, Nourish us, God, by your word and your way, Food that sustains us by night and by day.	When in the desert we cry for relief, Pleading for paths marked by certain belief, Lift us to love you beyond sign and test, Trusting your presence, our only true rest.	When we are tempted to barter our souls, Trading the truth for the pow’r to control, Teach us to worship and praise only you, Seeking your will in the work that we do.	When we have struggled and searched through the night, Sorting and sifting the wrong from the right, Saviour, surround us with circles of care, Angels of healing, of hope, and of prayer.
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Children's Ministry -based on an idea by Dr. Sarah Lund

Video Eeyore’s low self-esteem: https://youtu.be/f_bD5SysAMk?feature=shared

We talk about how when we have big feelings that don’t have words, they come out as tears. What are some big feelings that people might have?? What to do when you feel overwhelmed?
When we are sick and have a runny nose, a bad cold or a sinus infection. Sometimes when we are very sick, we go to the doctor and get medicine. Our brains, just like our hearts and our lungs, need to be healthy. Mental health means taking care of our whole body; including our brain. When our brain is healthy, we feel better. Sometimes we cry when we are feeling sad. And when we cry, God is with us. When we are sick and not feeling good, God is with us. We are never alone because God is always with us. God loves us even when we cry and when we feel sick even when we feel happy and healthy.

Children's Prayer

Thank you God for tears that express how we are feeling. Thank you, God, for our brains that help us know your love. Thank you, God, for mental health and for people who help us feel better when we are sick. We love you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

Children Leave for Sunday School

Scripture Readings

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16 NIV A psalm of David

In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me. Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God.

My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me. Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

John 14:1-14 NIV: Jesus Comforts His Disciples

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Jesus the Way to the Father

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you I do not speak on my own authority. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the works themselves. Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Hymn *When Painful Memories*, MVU # 74, (Tune VU # 625)

When painful mem'ries haunt each day
and dreams disturb the night,
When life is washed with shades of grey
and phantoms fill our sight.
Christ, stay beside us and embrace
the child who dwells within.
Come, Healer, touch our lives with grace,
Restore our lives again.

When dreams at last bring peace and rest,
and fear has lost control,
When tried by struggle, we are blessed
with rightful mind and soul.
Stay close beside us as before,
to guide us all our days.
Christ, take the lives that you restore,
and fit them for your praise.

Reflection

We all know our physical health is incredibly important. When we're sick with a flu bug or chronic illness and can't get ourselves out of bed, it's frustrating, we're drained and feeling lost and unproductive, on top of being ill. Our emotional and mental health is equally important, vital to having a rich and fulfilling life, the way God intended us to. The United Church of Canada recognizes May as a month focusing on mental health awareness.

When confronted with mental health challenges, the first step and often most difficult is being able to acknowledge that's what is happening.

I have a friend who always felt 'off' but never knew what was wrong. Her doctor suggested anti-depressants. She took a pass, not understanding that she actually had a medical condition. Finally, one day, she relented and began taking the medication. She couldn't believe how much better she felt. She didn't realize that she had been sick, until she started feeling better.

The best advice I have heard is three-fold:

Number one is self-care: It may seem ridiculous to suggest a regular routine; concentrating on personal hygiene, an eating and exercise regimen and mindfulness, limiting social media interactions and building real life connection. Surprisingly, getting back to basics is a wonderful way to get yourself back on track. Never discredit the value of a daily shower or bath. A little pampering goes a long way. Make meals more of a process. Try new recipes, learn to make bread. The simple act of kneading is a wonderful meditation. Live in the here and now. We don't need to carry the weight of the world. Crisis and tragedy happen regardless of what we're doing. We need to keep those things in our prayers, but they don't need to weigh us down. The same is true of the drama of social media. Meditation and prayer help us to slow down, calm down and find inner peace. Create a support system. It may be helpful to join a group, perhaps at the health centre or even in coming to church or a book club or a community service group. Take a class or join a walking group. Human connection is vital to better mental health.

Number Two: Seek medical guidance if you feel that you need it. Doctors may prescribe medications to help alleviate some of the feelings you have. You could search for holistic practitioners or discover the therapy you need to help yourself feel better and more connected. Personally, I always suggest people explore the arts. Take a painting class, keep a journal, learn to sew or crochet. Find release in exploring new opportunities and in turn, learning more about yourself in growth and creativity. You can make new friends and that always makes us feel better.

Number Three: The power of Faith in our personal lives and community assures us of two things: We are not alone and we are loved. On a personal level, meditation and prayer steer us in the direction of inner peace, of letting go of our worries and our anxiety, giving them up to God. We can choose to study the Bible or other spiritual guides, at home, on our own or as part of a Bible study. Spiritual care is important to our well being. The church community, whether the pastor or the congregants, can offer connection in times of feelings of isolation, and belonging when feeling alone. The church is a busy place. If people need more, they can help at funerals, making beef pies or with fundraising projects. Committees always welcome volunteers. You could contact shut-ins, visit the lonely and in turn, lift your own spirits.

I don't discount the importance of medical attention. If in crisis, there are emergency rooms and hotlines. On a longer, more permanent basis, you might want to try the self-care approach and your faith community. There can be long waits to see specialists and that doesn't help with a more immediate need. It's amazing what positive changes self-care can bring. We share hope for those living with mental health challenges.

Famous people have faced mental health struggles:

- Abraham Lincoln suffered with depression, then called melancholy which I think sounds much better.
- Virginia Woolf, Vincent Van Gogh, Beethoven and Sir Isaac Newton
- Entertainers such as Johnny Dep, struggles with depression and anxiety
- Ryan Reynolds, Jim Carrey, Pete Davidson, Catharine Zeta-Jones
- Musicians like Kurt Cobain and Lady Gaga
- Athletes like Simone Biles and Michael Phelps

They are inspirational in their courage to face personal challenges, while living under public scrutiny and continuing to pursue successful, rewarding lives. Simone Biles is a recent example of how taking some personal time to regroup, brought her back, stronger than ever. Public figures have helped normalize conversations about mental health.

COVID changed the world. Don't get me wrong; people have suffered from mental illness since the beginning of time. The difference is that now we're bringing awareness to how we feel and how we can feel better. We had a collective experience with COVID. No one knew what was happening. We were forced to isolate. People had to work from home. We were limited to how we shopped, how many people could be in a store at a time, follow the lines, do not interact. Our social contact became almost nil and when we did connect, it was virtual. Let's face it, the fear gave us all a collective anxiety. Now we have to deal with the mental health challenges that have multiplied since.

As people of faith, we need to hold fast to the simplest of Biblical texts. Let's look at the 23rd Psalm. There is a strong message in its simplicity.

The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. We can take comfort in that line alone. What does the Shepherd do? Look after the flock. We're in good hands.

He maketh me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name sake. These lines talk about finding peace in rest and restoration.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and staff comfort me. We are not alone in facing adversity.

You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. We can take comfort in knowing we will be showered with blessings and experience an eternal life with God walking beside us, leading us and protecting us.

In times of crisis, frustration, loss or loneliness, any time our mental health is shaken or threatened we need to trust in our Faith. God has laid a hand on each one of us and guided our journey to this point. Trust that he still walks beside you. Most importantly, trust in yourself. It's okay to slow down, to live a simpler life. The world will still be there tomorrow, when you're feeling a little stronger.

Prayers of the People -by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine PC, Kincardine, ON

One of the practices of prayer is to listen carefully to God in the midst of silence. We take our worries, our concerns, our hopes, and our dreams into those deep silences, knowing that God is there – always. In the long silences of today's prayer, listen for and be open to God as you lift what fills your heart today. Make yourself into a tuning fork that resonates with the Spirit's sighs.

Let us pray together.

It seems quiet, God. In this quiet, our thoughts rush in to fill the space. "Be still and know that I am God." Your words echo in the silence. In this silence, we listen within the depth of our hearts, putting ourselves in your hands that you may speak. *(a long time of silent prayer)*

We are overwhelmed by your holy silence. What words might express our desire for healing and for wholeness? What passion, what frequency, what length, what immediacy ought properly tune us to your will?

We've got nothing. Except ... Longing, hopes, dreams, worries, Fears, joys, loves – we've got them all. No words, though. Just sighs. Sighs too deep for words. Sighs into the silence of your heart. *(a time of silent prayer)*

Thank you for searching our hearts, for knowing our Spirit-woven minds, for interceding on our behalf, Spirit of God. We gather our words, our sighs, and our silence as we pray. *(silent prayer) Amen*

Parting Hymn *Love Us Into Fullness*, MVU # 81 (Tune: 396)

Love us into fullness,
touch us with your grace;
Jesus, in your mercy,
draw us to your face.

Love us into fullness,
hold us to your care,
cheer us with your presence
here and everywhere.

Love us into fullness,
and we will be strong;
Jesus, walk beside us,
fill our hearts with song.

Benediction *Go Now In Peace*

Go now in peace,
never be afraid.
God will go with you
each hour of ev'ry day.
Go now in faith,
steadfast, strong, and true.
Know He will guide you
in all you do.

Go, now in love,
and show you believe.
Reach out to others
so all the world can see.
God will be there,
watching from above.
Go now in peace,
in faith, and in love.

Choral Amen

Extinguish the Christ Candle