

Sunday, May 17, 2026 - Order of Service

Light the Christ Candle, Welcome & Announcements

Acknowledgement of the Land *-by David Lander, Castleton-Grafton PC, Grafton, ON*

The United Church of Canada has begun the practice of starting each meeting and worship with an acknowledgement that the territory where we gather was once that of Indigenous Peoples who traditionally called it home for thousands of years. It is a way to continue to live out the church's Apologies to the First Peoples of North America. And it is one way we can work toward Right Relations, repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery that assumed the land was empty when European explorers, traders, and settlers first came. It is in that humble, thankful appreciation of our history and our nation that we gather here, on the traditional territory situated within the ancestral beaver hunting grounds of the Algonquin, Haudenosaunee, and Attawandaron peoples, the traditional and unceded lands of the Anishinaabe Peoples of the Thames, the settled peoples of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy at the Thames, and the Leni Lenape Delaware peoples at Moraviantown and of Muncey.

Litany of Naming In this Mental Health month, on this Sunday, we join in this Litany of Naming. As a congregation we are glad to lift up our voices and our spirits to break the silence that often happens when we are confronted with mental illness.

As a faith community, we name the gifts and the often-unnamed experiences which come to those who live with a mental illness such as major depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, schizophrenia, substance use, addiction, historic and generational trauma, racial trauma, grief and eating disorder. We name:

The HOPE which upholds our spirit through honest sharing;

The PAIN when people turn away because of fear *or discomfort*.

The COURAGE to speak in a safe place the way that Jesus spoke ... with truth with love.

The STRENGTH from being with others who listen compassionately;

The ISOLATION that comes when no one knows what to say.

The REALIZATION that mental illnesses and brain disorders can be managed;

The EXHAUSTION that comes with living with a mental illness as well as for those who are caregivers.

The WELCOME of mental health as part of our church's ministry and outreach. Comfort and relieve those who are troubled in mind and spirit. Bring them hope, peace, and the consolation of a loving community.

The WISDOM that comes when we become educated about mental health;

The SPIRITUALITY that comes when we walk alongside those who show both resilience and vulnerability in their lives affected by mental illness.

We receive these gifts that we have named, those which are welcomed and those that are challenges. We come before you, our God, knowing we are not alone and that You will show us a way to be and to live. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

Call to Worship *-by Rev. Amy Petre Hill*

L: We gather in the presence of the One who abandons no one.

P: Come Holy Spirit, our advocate and comforter.

L: All are welcome in this sacred place, made holy through your presence with us.

P: Open our hearts and minds this day, guide us into a loving relationship with all your children.

L: We gather as God's beloved people, leaving no one outside.

P: Spark us with a word of life and radical belonging – a message that we share with others as we seek to live out Christ's love.

L: We call on the name of God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us.

P: Amen.

Ministry of Music *God Will Take Care of You*

Gathering Prayer *-by Dr. Tom Reynolds*

L: O God, come into our place of worship this day and enliven us.

P: Come into each heart, each story, each prayer, each song, each life here today so that we may live and love with purpose, courage, and beauty.

L: O God, who has created each of us in your image and made us one body, each as holy vessels of your presence to one another, create in and among us a holy place.

P: Give us hearts and minds, we pray, to be open to human vulnerability.

L: To listen to each other with patient and thoughtful attention and support.

P: To perceive the grace of the differences in our embodied experience.

L: To resist what excludes and diminishes, and to dismantle what acts as barriers to flourishing together in love and justice.

P: O God, help us to trust your Spirit's work to make us whole, together in relationships of mutuality and partnership, in sacred rhythms of giving and receiving.

L: Gather us together to be your people in the world.

P: In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Gathering Hymn *In the Bulb There is a Flower*, VU # 703

In the bulb there is a flower,
in the seed, an apple tree,

in cocoons, a hidden promise:
butterflies will soon be free!

In the cold and snow of winter
there's a spring that waits to be,

unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence,
seeking word and melody;
there's a dawn in every darkness,
bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future;
what it holds, a mystery,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning,
in our time, infinity;
in our doubt there is believing;
in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection;
at the last, a victory,
unrevealed until its season,
something God alone can see.

Prayer of Confession -by Deborah Ambridge Fisher, Forest Hill UC, Fredericton, NB

Loving Creator, we, your fragile children, we sometimes forget to find the quiet centre. Sometimes we are so busy with our jobs, children, grandchildren, and the thousands of tiny things we do each day that we forget to stop and abide with you awhile. We often allow life to rush on past without ever stopping to give thanks. For these things, we are sorry, and we come to you today in humble supplication. Amen.

Words of Assurance Children of God, know that, even in the times when the chaos of life sweeps you away from the peace of God, God is there, waiting patiently, peacefully, for you to come back to that quiet centre. Be filled with peace knowing that the Lord your God loves you just as you are, and you are forgiven. And, in that forgiveness, you are set free. Amen.

Offertory Prayer Let us not be discouraged. Let us embrace courage and strength for the journey. Let us give thanks to God, now and always. Amen.

Hymn Amazing Grace, VU # 266

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see.	'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved; How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.	Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.	The Lord has promised good to me, His Word my hope secures; God will my Shield and Portion be, As long as life endures.	When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright shining as the sun, We've no less days to sing God's praise, than when we'd first begun.
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Children's Ministry Just a Worm

Children's Prayer

Dear God. Thank you for making each of us special in our own way. We are glad we are not always the same . . . that would be boring. Each of us has talents that we can use to make our community stronger and healthier. Guide us as we use those talents. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Children leave for Sunday School

Scripture Reading

Psalm 23, A Psalm of David

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymn Come and Find the Quiet Centre, VU # 374

Come and find the quiet centre in the crowded life we lead, find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed: clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see all the things that really matter, be at peace and simply be.	Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace, God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, face to face; making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun, raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.	In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain. Let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain: there's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care, in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!
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Introduce Guest Speaker: David Burke

Our guest speaker today is David Burke. He started teaching Physical Education at WESS in 2004, and moved to Wallacetown the same year. He has been a Guidance Counsellor at WESS since 2011 and started teaching Physics around the same time. At the school, he spends a lot of his time helping kids work through credit attainment, course selection, post secondary planning, and social and emotional struggles. He gets to spend a lot of his time helping develop student leaders at the school and has coached

a variety of sports including Volleyball, Soccer, Football, Basketball, and Tennis. He and his wife Kasi currently run the West Elgin Warriors Volleyball club where they coach their two children, Reece and Kara.

Reflection Where Kids Stand and Where We Are

-what causes stress -at age 15? -at age 60? -kids say nausea, can't focus, see it every day at school -not expert on mental health but deal with it everyday -90% of students are in class, most not on cell phones, couple might be in a bathroom, a couple more might be wandering the halls, a small group might be sitting in the hall working on a group project -majority are paying attention -some need extra help, guidance office -maybe with the nurse or meeting with social worker -might be a couple of boys vaping in the bathroom, some girls sitting on the floor in the washroom to avoid class -always a student or two in the office, chatting with secretary or in the VP's office for discipline -except for the cell phones and vaping, little has changed in high school in 40 years

-there is a percentage of students who don't attend -can't get up in the morning, can't get on the bus or in the car, can't get out of the car, can't go through the door to the school -something is keeping them from attending -need a safe space -work with these kids to come to school then Christmas Break comes along and have to start all over -anxiety is heavily present -not parents' fault -breaks my heart but often not able to crack open the main reason for kids' anxiety -on-line learning does work for some but not all for education but does not allow socialization -some kids suffer with Obsessive Compulsive Behaviour (OCD), Attention Deficit Hyper Disorder (ADHD), phobias -some don't want labels, some parents don't want labels -frustration, depression, acting out to get sent home -marginalized students, LGBTQ, Black, Indigenous, -all need support

-56% LGBTQ students meet criteria for mental health -in 2019 12% of students rated their mental health as poor; in 2025 that jumped to 26%

-we aren't programmed to talk about our feelings -principal has a sign on door "Be curious, not furious" -one small conversation with my father changed way saw dad -pay attention to what kids are saying -ask open-ended questions, not ones that get a one-word answer

-kids who lack confidence are more likely to be trafficked -need to give safe spaces, along with food and shelter -at WESS, Wildcat Café -a safe space for students -grandparents' homes may be safe space -listen to them, be open minded, supportive -those most vulnerable are trans, from struggling families, no safe space -make sure support offered -big cities are not scariest places for kids -lots to do, places to go -rural, small towns not so much, lack support network -lucky to have West Elgin Community Health Centre (WECHC) -all services free -kids need support, coping strategies -Kids' Help Phone 988 -add that number to kid's cell phone -let them call -don't hesitate to get kid assessed -can get referral to WECHC through social worker at school -may be covered by benefit plan -don't shy away from talking about feelings, suicide, abuse, self harm

-don't panic, start conversation, don't guilt-trip -if not comfortable with conversation get them to talk to professionals at school -find ways to support -need food banks, need recreation programs here in rural areas, service groups contribute -be open, listen, support

Prayers of the People -adapted, by Bishop A.Abrams, PhD, Rev. Alan Johnson, Rev. Dr. Sarah Lund

God of love, we celebrate that today you are still speaking a word of acceptance, wholeness, and inclusion of all your differently abled people. In this Mental Health month, we pray for people who live with untreated mental illness and who are unable to find help or cannot afford medical care.

We pray for those who are hesitant to accept available help, allow them to take your hand and trust you to guide them to a place of help and healing. Out of the many of our own vulnerabilities, we offer you our prayer for hope and compassion for those who are living with a mental health disease. We place before you the illnesses of major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar and anxiety disorders, eating and post-traumatic stress disorders, and alcoholism and drug addiction. Be with those who live with these conditions and their loved ones, so we all know that you are our sustainer and our guide.

We pray for an end to the stigma of mental illness. Cover those who feel different and those differences have separated them from their communities. We pray for children, teens, and young adults learning how to live with newly diagnosed brain diseases. We pray for people who are victims of bullying and discrimination because of their disability.

Help us to embrace those who look different, those who think differently, those who process differently, and those who see the world through a different lens. We pray for those who have lost a loved one to suicide. We pray for mental health caregivers, for scientific researchers, and for professionals who seek to bring compassion, treatment, and healing to those who suffer from brain diseases.

We give thanks for the many gifts that people with mental health disease bring into the world and celebrate the creative genius of artists, scientists, authors, scholars, business leaders, actors, musicians, inventors, and presidents who live with mental illness.

God, as the mysteries of the human brain unfold, we remain in awe of the intricate ways in which we are created in your image. May we be reflections of your love in this world. Amen.

Parting Hymn On Eagle's Wings, VU # 808

You who dwell in the
shelter of our God,
Who abides in this
shadow for life,
Say to the Lord: "My
refuge,
my rock in whom I trust!"

Refrain
And I will raise you up
on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath
of dawn,
make you to shine like
the sun,
and hold you in the palm
of my hand."

The snare of the fowler
will
never capture you,
and famine will bring
you no fear:
under God's wings your
refuge,
God's faithfulness your
shield.
Refrain

You need not fear the
terror of the night,
Nor the arrow that flies
by day.
Though thousands fall
about you,
Near it shall not come.
Refrain

For to God's angels is
given a command
To guard you in all of
your ways,
Upon their hands they
will bear you up,
Lest you dash your foot
against a stone.
Refrain

Benediction

L: God, we thank you for the hope of a new day and a fresh start.

P: We give thanks for the reminder that "it's ok to not be ok," and that it's better to tell the truth about what's really going on for us, get support and help, than to suffer in silence and alone.

L: We thank you God that you never give up on us even when we feel like giving up on ourselves.

P: We thank you that we can hold onto hope one day at a time. We are grateful for this faith community where we can experience sacred welcome, inclusion, support, and engagement for mental health.

L: Bless us with the power of your Spirit that is holy as we share your love with others in our mission to end the stigma and shame of mental illness.

P: On behalf of the differently abled and Neurodiverse, God we pray.

Choral Amen

Extinguish the Christ Candle