

Sunday, August 23, 2026 - Order of Service - Words are Powerful

Light candle & Welcome In the name of the God of Promise, Jesus Christ the gentle Truth-Speaker, and the Mysterious Holy Spirit, I welcome you to this worship service.

Announcements -see the weekly bulletin

Call to Worship by Rt. Rev. Richard Bott, Grace UC, Burlington, ON

Did you know that the Call to Worship is written to simply gather us to the present, call our whole presence into this place of worship, and guide us to settle into the act of worship? It is used to centre us, invite peace, and set a common purpose for worship. It unites our hearts and minds before we begin our shared time together. This Call to Worship was written by the Rt. Rev. Richard Bott, Grace UC, Burlington, ON

L: Why are we called to this place?

P: To be God's people.

L: What is required of us?

P: To seek justice, to love kindness, to live humbly with God.

L: And how shall we do this?

P: With our prayers, with our thoughts, with our actions, and with our love.

L: Then, as people who are both blessed and blessing:

P: Let us worship God!

Ministry of Music

Gathering Prayer Holy God, there are so many different reasons we have come to worship. Yet your call remains the same. Whether this is our first time in worship after a long absence or part of a long streak of attendance, your welcome remains the same. Remind us again today that it is not all about us. Worship is about you, O God. Living is about serving you. Receive us. Forgive us. Turn our attention away from ourselves, toward you, your world, and your people. It does not all depend on us. It all hinges on you, O God. All praise to you forever! Amen.

Gathering Hymn *It's a Song of Praise to the Maker*, MVU # 30

It's a song of praise to the Maker, The thrush sings high in the tree. It's a song of praise to the Maker, The gray whale sings in the sea,	Refrain And by the Spirit you and I Can join our voice to the holy cry And sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.	It's a call of life to the Giver When waves and waterfalls roar. It's a call of life to the Giver When high tides break on the shore, Refrain	It's a hymn of love to the Lover; The bumblebees hum along. It's a hymn of love to the Lover; The summer breeze joins the song, Refrain	It's the chorus of all creation; It's sung by all living things. It's the chorus of all creation; A song the universe sings,
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Children's Ministry *Taste Your Words*

Children's Prayer Dear Loving God: We know our words can make people feel bad or good. Please help us only use the good words. We want other people to feel good about themselves and know that if we help them do that with our words and actions, we will feel good about ourselves too. We love the example Jesus gives us ... please help us follow His Way. We love you. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Confession -by Gord Dunbar, Kincardine PC, Kincardine, ON

Sometimes, Loving God, we feel defeated and downcast. Sometimes the choices we make hurt and wound others, more often than not also wounding ourselves in the process. Forgive us, Risen Christ, that we may start anew, learning from our mistakes in order to grow more fully into Your Way. Inspire us, Holy Spirit, that we may know we are not alone, that new life is ours for the asking in humility, in hope, and in trust.

(Silent prayer)

Words of Assurance Forgiveness is ours for the asking when we confess, repent, and reconcile. The Spirit of Truth will guide and sustain us on that journey of forgiveness. In companionship with the Spirit, we are made whole. Thanks be to God!

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

As we have received, so may we give. Your offering will now be received.

Let us pray: God of the harvest and God of the soil, we bring our talents and our tithes to you for distribution to those places where your creation needs healing, and to the neighbours who are in need. All these things we bring for the building of your kin-dom on Earth. Amen.

Offertory Hymn **Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow**, VU # 541

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures high and low;

Give thanks to God in love made known:
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

Scripture Readings

Matthew 15:10-20 - What Defiles a Person (English Standard Version)

And he called the people to him and said to them, "Hear and understand it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person."

Then the disciples came and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit."

But Peter said to him, "Explain the parable to us." And he said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."

Psalms 19 - A psalm of David (NIV)

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech; they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth. The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb. By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward. But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression. May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Reflection **Words Matter**

I read that the Ten Commandments contain 297 words, Psalm 23 has 118 words, and the Lord's Prayer is 56 words long. Yet, in a report, the US's Department of Agriculture needed 15,629 words to discuss the pricing of cabbage. It's not the ability to use a lot of words that makes a difference, it's being able to use the right words.

A woman went to the doctor's office, where she was seen by one of the new doctors, but after about 4 minutes in the examination room, she burst out, screaming as she ran down the hall. An older doctor stopped her and asked what the problem was, and she told him her story. After listening, he had her sit down and told her to go relax in another room. The older doctor marched down hallway to the back where the first doctor was and demanded, "What's the matter with you? Mrs. Terry is 63 years old, she has four grown children and seven grandchildren, and you told her she was pregnant?" The new doctor continued to write on his clipboard and without looking up said, "Does she still have the hiccups?"

Words have power. Our words have an impact on people. Do you remember that old nursery rhyme ... Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me? Don't you wish that was true?! Most of us would rather have the sticks and stones thrown at us, because the wounds of vicious words can really hurt and last for a long time. And if you hear negative words enough, you start to believe those words in your heart. We become those words. We make them our reality. We are especially seeing this in our youth and their opinions of themselves as it is reflected in their Social Media feed.

In **Jeremiah 17:5-6**, note the caution against "putting trust in mere mortals" and "following the advice of the wicked." In our time, there is a tendency to put our trust in those with the loudest voices, who promise to "fix" a world they inevitably describe as "broken". They pick something that you "should be afraid of" like immigrants or people who identify as LGBTQ+ and tell us over and over again that "they are the source of our problems". On TV, in social media,

and on the streets, loud angry voices clamour, insisting on being heard and obeyed. Sometimes, it seems that rage is the only language we human beings know how to express.

Surely, God wants us to experience another kind of language: words of reconciliation and understanding, words of unconditional love. Surely, these are the words of God. Very often, this kind of trust, trusting in “mere mortals” who have a lot of negative things to say, leads to the destruction of community and the erosion of compassion and justice.

Toothpaste Recant: One night in July at an all-girls summer camp, the campers were gathered around in a circle for their nighttime devotions. The counsellor asked if any of the girls wanted to share something that had happened that day that impacted them. One camper raised her hand and said a girl from another camp cabin had said something that hurt her feelings, and she was really upset about it. The camp counsellor went to the bathroom to grab a tube of toothpaste. She took the tube and squeezed it just a bit, so some toothpaste came out. She then tried to put the toothpaste back in the tube, but it just created a mess. Then she squeezed the tube even more, pushing more toothpaste out and creating even more of a mess, but none of it would go back into the tube. The counsellor then told the campers, “This toothpaste represents the words you speak. Once you say something that you want to take back, it’s impossible and it only creates a mess. Think before you speak, and make sure your words are going to good use before you let them out.”

In today’s reading of **Matthew 15:10-20**, Jesus says that “what comes out of your mouth can defile you”. He speaks to the fact that the thoughts that start in the heart should be pure and kind because these are the thoughts that your mouth expresses. When we speak with truthful, kind, and thoughtful words, we are an example of what living a life guided by God’s word can bring. Comforting and consoling, the words that come from our mouths can help others mature in their faith and to live right.

Ephesians 4:29, speaks profoundly about the words that we use. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” God commands that our speech be helpful for building others up. We are to encourage one another. We are to use our words to nurture, guide, build, and mentor. This verse also says that the words we use in our daily speech should never include obscenities, malicious gossip, slander, or abusive words towards others. It’s the old adage, “If you don’t have something good to say, don’t say anything at all.” That’s really good advice.

We have a story that illustrates this Bible passage.

In a small country village in Sicily, there were two brothers, renown members of the local Mafia. They were mean, bad, and very rich. No one had a good word to say about them. Indeed, everyone seemed to have a story about how they had either been cheated or maligned by the brothers.

One day, one of the brothers, Luigi, died. The surviving brother, Guiseppe - with a rare touch of conscience, felt that something nice should be said about his brother Luigi at the funeral. So, he went to the Preacher and said: “I know that folk in the village hate us, and they don’t know the half of what we have been up to. However, I want you to say something nice about Luigi at his funeral. I want you to say that “Luigi was a saint” when you preach. If you will agree to do that, I’ll show my gratitude by giving \$100,000 towards the repair of the church roof. And here’s the cheque. If you don’t, you’ll be in big trouble with me and don’t forget that my reputation is not for nothing.” The vicar thought about it for a minute, agreed, and took the cheque for \$100 K. A week later, the whole village turned out for the funeral, and everyone wondered what the vicar would say. After the opening hymns had been sung and the readings had been read, the vicar climbed up into the pulpit and delivered his sermon. Eyeing Guiseppe, sitting in the front row, the vicar said how evil the pair of them had been. He went on to say how Luigi had cheated, not only in business but on his wife, how he had lied and how he had had no concern for anyone but himself. In fact, he went on to say what a downright scoundrel Luigi had been. After ten minutes of preaching in this vein, the vicar, being the man of integrity, ended his sermon by simply saying, “But compared to his brother, Guiseppe - Luigi was a saint.”

Colossians 4:6 says: “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.” Amen.

Prayers of the People -by Cindy Randall, Humbervale UC, Etobicoke, ON

L: *This is a “Fingerholds Prayer”. Each digit is said to represent an emotion. We invite you to begin the prayer with your palms facing up, hands resting lightly in your lap. As we proceed through the prayer, we invite you to hold the finger that represents that emotion. The actions are voluntary; it’s the words and thoughts in the prayer that are important. And so we begin, palms face up, hands resting in your lap.*

L: Holy God, Creator and Sustainer of Life, we come to you in prayer this day. Hear us, Compassionate One, the words we speak and the unspoken yearnings of our hearts.

P: **Hear us, we pray, for we come in Jesus’ name.**

(Thumb – represents sorrow, sadness)

L: We pray now for all that causes us to feel grief and sorrow ... Relationships with family and friends that are broken or strained; Memories of hurtful words or actions; Those we have lost or those who are unwell, Those who have become alienated or distant; The hurtful things in our lives, our communities, our world.

P: **Heal us, O Comforting One, heal us and make us whole.**

(Pointer finger – represents fear)

L: We pray now for all that causes us to feel afraid ... We have memories of things that frightened us when we were children; And yet, we are still sometimes afraid of those things now that we are adults; Our life experiences can cause us to be afraid; Other times, we are afraid of what will happen in our homes, in our country, or in our world. Fear can restrict who we are and what we do.

P: Heal us, O Encouraging One, heal us and make us whole.

(Middle finger – represents anger)

L: We pray now for all that causes us to feel angry ... Sometimes we are angry with certain people; Sometimes we are angry about events or circumstances; Sometimes we do not know why we are angry, we just are; Sometimes we feel a sense of rage and resentment. Sometimes we have righteous anger for all that is unjust around us and in our world.

P: Heal us, O Centering One, heal us and make us whole.

(Ring finger – represents anxiety, worry)

L: We pray now for all that causes us to feel worried and anxious ... Our worries burden us, like so many bundles on our backs, Like chains we drag behind us as we walk, Thoughts that will not leave us alone, preoccupations that plague us. Even though we know we cannot change things by worrying, we have trouble letting go, we have a hard time finding peace.

P: Heal us, O Calming One, heal us and make us whole.

(Little finger – represents feeling small)

L: We pray now for all that causes us to feel small and insignificant ... Sometimes we feel like no one sees us or hears us, No one senses our presence, our value, our gifts. Some how we have received a negative message about who we are, as children or as youth, or as adults. But we remember that we are precious in your sight, children of God, and so we are.

P: Heal us, O Empowering One, heal us and make us whole.

(Palms face up, hands resting on lap)

L: Holy God, Creator and Sustainer of Life, we come to you in prayer this day. Hear us, Compassionate One, the words we speak and the unspoken yearnings of our hearts.

P: Hear us, we pray, for we come in Jesus' name. Amen.

Parting Hymn Saviour, Again to Your Dear Name, VU # 426

Saviour, again to your dear name we raise With one accord our parting hymn of praise, We give you thanks before our worship cease, Then, in the silence hear your word of peace.	Grant us your peace upon our homeward way, With you began, with you shall end the day, Guard now the lips from sin, the hearts from shame, That in this house have called upon your name.	Grant us your peace throughout the coming night, Turn all our darkness to your perfect light, Then, through our sleep, our hope and strength renew, For dark and light are both a-like to you.	Grant us your peace throughout our earthly life, Comfort in sorrow, courage in our strife, Then, when your voice shall bid our conflict cease, Call us, at last, to your eternal peace.
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Commissioning & Benediction Lord, let my words be kind, my thoughts be true, and my actions reflect your love this week. Stop me when I am about to speak in anger and fill my mouth with grace. Help me think before I speak, and may my tongue bring healing not harm. Give me the right words to comfort the weary and silence my ego when I only want to win an argument. This I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Choral Amen

Extinguishing of the Christ Candle