

## HIPPOCRATIC

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Order of Service (bulletin)

<https://www.spiritofhope.ca/news-and-events>

Video (recorded live stream)

<https://www.youtube.com/@spiritofhopeunitedchurch791>

September 6, 2026

Pentecost 15

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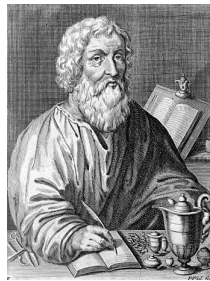
### Romans 13:8-14

Owe no debts to anyone - except the debt that binds us to love one another. If you love your neighbour, you have fulfilled the Law. The commandments - no committing adultery, no killing, no stealing, no coveting, and all the others—are all summed up in this one: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” Love never wrongs anyone - hence love is the fulfillment of the Law. Besides, you know the time in which we are living. It is now the hour for you to wake from sleep, for our salvation is closer than when we first accepted the faith. The night is far spent; the day draws near. So let us cast off deeds of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us live honourably as in daylight, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual excess and lust, not in quarreling or jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with our Saviour Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the night.

### Matthew 18:15-20

“If your sister or brother should commit some wrong against you, go and point out the error, but keep it between the two of you. If she or he listens to you, you have won a loved one back; if not, try again, but take one or two others with you, so that every case may stand on the word of two or three witnesses. If your sister or brother refuses to listen to them, refer the matter to the church. If she or he ignores even the church, then treat that sister or brother as you would a Gentile or a tax collector. “The truth is, whatever you declare bound on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you declare loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. “Again I tell you, if two of you on earth join in agreement to pray for anything whatsoever, it will be granted to you by my Abba God in heaven. Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there in their midst.”

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Hippocrates of Kos lived around the late 5th century, early 4th century Before the Common Era (BCE). So plus or minus the year 400. Hypocrates was said to be a philosopher and a physician. Hypocrates and those who learned and followed him are credited with basically establishing medicine as a profession.... certainly within the Greek world. There are a series of writings that are known as the Hippocratic Corpus. Little is known about Hypocrates himself, but the early discussions about medical practices and medical ethics are often attributed to him. His famous oath is included in the corpus. The most recent full copy of the Hippocratic Corpus is only around a thousand years old, but fragments date back to the fourth or fifth century of the Common Era (CE). So 800 years or so after Hypocrates' life. There's that one section of the hippocratic oath that is most often thought of: *Into so ever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick and I will abstain from all intentional wrongdoing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man and or woman bond or free.* Man or woman

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bond or free - that's pretty progressive for 400 BCE.

The hippocratic oath is often summed up as *do no harm*, although it's not usually said with the adjective in there, it might be more accurate to the oath: *do no intentional harm*.

Tradition says that among the first followers of Jesus was a physician, Luke. I wonder if the hippocratic ethic of *do no harm* (already four centuries old by Jesus' time)... Did that ethic weave its way into Jesus' own ethics and teachings?

Last Monday, August 31st, was the International Overdose Awareness Day. For the last week or so, little purple flags have been along the roadside on 50th Street in Leduc, where I live. Each one of them is placed by a family that has experienced a drug overdose death.

About a week ago, I was invited by the Mustard Seed here in Edmonton to take part in a prayer walk around Edmonton's inner city. When I arrived at the meeting point, I learned that I was the only one who hadn't cancelled or just didn't show up. So, I got a private tour. And it was a wonderful experience to be in the midst of such a real part of our experience that so many of us either never see regularly or avoid or drive by quickly. So much need in our community and there is so much tireless work going on to support basic human dignity. I was pleased to walk with Jeremy as a guide and I was particularly struck on this little walk by the history of where services are and where they used to be. Gentrification and downtown revitalization, especially the creation of the ice district, has pushed the inner city north over the years. There's actually an alley between the EPCOR building and the George Spady Center, which is currently the obvious dividing line.

Now, there are a lot of updated spaces for services, updated facilities, especially the King Thunderbird Center, which is run by Boyle Street Community Services: which had to move from their previous location in favor of new arena parking. And one of the things that Jeremy told me is that for a few years they didn't have a fixed place, which I found incredibly ironic that a place that deals with people who are houseless had no place to rest its head. But now it is right across the brick in the old Edmonton public school board building.

Jeremy and I talked about the gracious support that all of the inner city organizations get and, unfortunately, the constant challenge from people and businesses who just don't want it in their backyard.

There is a homeless memorial statue that is right directly north of the Canadian National Building, the CN building. It's in an overgrown park right now. When we were there, it was full of weeds. Half of the park is under construction to put up a new transit stop. And Jeremy also told me that this isn't where it has always been, and there's no guarantee it'll stay here in the future. Another bit of irony.

Drug use always starts as an escape. The temporary buzz to say goodbye to the moment's worries: to feel good. Something we all long to be: feeling good. But with many of the harder drugs, the buzz becomes addictive... addictive emotionally and chemically. And it begins to do harm not only to the person using, but also sometimes in the community as violence is sometimes the response in that circle where people are vulnerable. They can be taken advantage of. You're dealing with sketchy supplies, maybe laced with other things that make it even more addictive, making the possibility of overdose even more apparent. Then there is the harm done by disease spread through the sharing of pipes and needles. And so we talk about harm reduction. We invite people into detox, rehab, and we even offer people safe places to use where we don't have to worry whether the needle is clean or whether the pipe has got saliva that is carrying unwanted germs in it. My guide Jeremy had a Narcan pack on his belt which is a medication that can be given to someone

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experiencing an opioid overdose and in most cases counteract that if the person is not too overdosed.

People who are addicted need support. Support to keep the harm at minimum. And it requires us to be extremely patient as a society because attempts at rehab and detox are rarely successful the first time. There is so much judgment in our communities and in our media toward the addicted. People are afraid of that part of our community. They're often ignored and we just want them just out of sight. Not in my backyard.

Looking at our scripture readings today, even when harm is around us, (both Romans and Matthew touch on this) we are called, not to exclusion or rejection, but to community redemption. We are called to compassion. Romans reminds early Christians that what we are obligated to do in terms of being law-abiding people is live out a love for neighbor. Because if we simply do that then we will cover all that is required within the law. And Paul is largely talking to the Hebrew Christians and the law of the Torah, but it also applies to the Gentile Christians who would be more used to the law of the empire. Love your neighbor and you will fulfill the law.

In Matthew, Jesus is talking about conflicts more close to home. Somebody does something we think is wrong against us. Jesus says, "Keep the circle small to start. Let's not make this a big event for everyone to be expressing their opinions on." Go to the person, work it out. If that doesn't work, bring some people with you so that they can see that you've done everything you can because the third step, Jesus says, let the whole community try and resolve this.

This reminds me very much of the work that I do on the United Church of Canada's Remedial Committee and you can tell by its name that it's all about trying to remedy things that have gone wrong. This committee deals with ministers who are accused of violating the ethical standards for ministry or the standard practice or have been adjudicated in some way or another to not be fulfilling their duties as a minister appropriately. We almost never get to the point where we get this person out of church entirely. In fact, that last step takes a long time to get to, if you get there at all. It's always about confronting what the accusation is, what the adjudication review says, and what can be done to remedy this situation.

Jesus and Paul in these scriptures are talking about community reclamation, reclaiming the community as best it can be and living out compassion that, by design, has us living out the good rules of peace and good order. Jesus reminds us in the Matthew passage that even small groups, even just two or three can have a meaningful influence on community health, and on the happiness of each one. The truth is we all long to belong. And part of the goal of the church is to be a place where belonging feels real.

Even when people disagree in major ways or have different ideas about how we should chart the path to the future, our scriptures today are not inviting us to just *not* be in conflict with each other, to ignore it all. They're actually saying, embrace and understand why we're disagreeing, why wrong is happening in someone's eyes and to confront those wrongs: some that are obvious, some that are perceived, and find the path of remedy. Seek resolution out of compassion, out of love.

The resolution might not resemble anything that the parties had in mind when they started because we put in the hard and good and faithful work of finding the remedy.

Jesus always seemed to be looking for ways to reduce pain to open up the areas of isolation, to heal community and to ensure that we do no harm, especially to those who are most vulnerable.

May we live into this oath as we follow Jesus' way in our day and our time. Amen.

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#154MV Deep In Our Hearts

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