



May 10, 2020

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
May 10, 2020
Christian Family Sunday/Mother's Day

Worship prepared today by
Rev. Marion Loree

We acknowledge with respect the history, spirituality and culture of the Indigenous peoples with whom Treaty 4 - also known as the Haldimand Tract - was signed and the territory wherein our church resides, and we acknowledge our responsibilities as treaty members.

Welcome

My name is Marion Loree and I am the minister at Melville United Church in Fergus, Ontario. We gather in community. Even though we cannot be together physically, we share in the community of faith through things like this - printed or videoed worship. This service is prepared for Sunday May 10, 2020.

This week we celebrate families, especially mothers and those who have 'mothered' us throughout our lives. And we celebrate our Mother God. It is important to realize that the Bible contains many images for the Love which created us and only one of them is as a Father. God, the Spirit of Life is beyond anything we can imagine. We are human, though and our human minds want to understand and so we focus today on the aspect of God as Mother.

So, I invite you to join me in a time of worship, a time in which we search together for hope and meaning and ways to strengthen our faith. A time for recognizing and acknowledging the still small voice within each of our hearts.

Sharing the Light *(take a moment to light a candle and centre yourself to prepare to enter in to a time of worship and prayer. As you light the candle repeat the following words)*

I light a candle

in the name of the God who creates life,
in the name of the Christ Presence who loves life,
in the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.

The centering words this morning, I think, are attributed to the Buddha. In any case, I thought these words might offer a bit of inspiration for these times we are living in right now. They are also words that fit for a day on which we honour the wisdom of mothers and our Mother God.

Centering words: -Buddha

Ships don't sink because of the water around them.
Ships sink because of the water that gets in them.
Don't let what's happening around you
get inside you and weigh you down.

Call to Worship:

We are one, in the body of Christ.
We are one, in the household of God.
We are one, mother, father, sister, and brother,
Grandma and Grandpa, aunt or uncle, nephew or niece...

single or in community... One family connected by God's love.
So we come together as God's family,
to sing, to pray, to share, and to worship together.

Hymn: Come In, Come In and Sit Down

VU 395 (vs 1,2,4)

Refrain:

Come in, come in and sit down,
you are a part of the family.
We are lost and we are found,
and we are a part of the family.

- 1 You know the reason why you came,
yet no reason can explain;
so share in the laughter and cry in the pain,
for we are a part of the family. R
- 2 God is with us in this place,
like a mother's warm embrace.
We're all forgiven by God's grace,
for we are a part of the family. R
- 4 There's rest for the weary and health for us all;
there's a yoke that is easy, and a burden that's small.
So come in and worship and answer the call,
for we are a part of the family. R

Opening Prayer:

Mother God, you are the One to whom we may go. You are the place where we find refuge as well as call. Yours are the hands in which we are held in grace. When trouble comes, may we not be troubled. May we trust you, and the way you travel with us. Amen.

Scripture: Acts 10:44-48 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(The gift of the Holy Spirit is given to the Gentiles)

Peter had not finished speaking these words when the Holy Spirit descended upon all who were listening to the message. The Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were surprised that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also, whom they could hear speaking in tongues and glorifying God.

Then Peter asked, "What can stop these people who have received the Holy Spirit, even as we have, from being baptized with water?" So he gave orders that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. After this was done, they asked him to stay on with them for a few days.

Scripture: John 15:9-12 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(Love one another as I have loved you)

My Abba will be glorified if you bear much fruit and thus prove to be my disciples. As my Abba has loved me, so have I loved you. Live on in my love. And you will live on in my love if you keep my commandments, just as I live on in Abba God's love and have kept God's commandments.

I tell you all this that my joy may be yours, and your joy may be complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

Message: Mothers and Families

Today is designated in the church as “Christian Family Sunday.” It is also known to most of us as “Mother’s Day”. I am all for celebrating families and Mothers. After all, mothers and mothering figures play a crucial role in the lives of families. For good or for bad mothers shape who we are as persons. Regardless of whether we get along well with our mothers and appreciate all that they have done for us or whether our relationship with our mothers was not all that it could have been, their influence is indelibly imprinted on our personality.

We are all familiar with the image of God as Father but I want you to try to include the image of God as Mother in your thinking, too. The Bible contains many images of God as a Mother or as a mothering figure. Beginning in Genesis 1:27 when it tells us “Humankind was created in God’s reflection: in the divine image God created them, female and male, God made them” to the words of Hosea “I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by the arm” , and Deuteronomy 32: 11-12 “Like the eagle that stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young, God spreads wings to catch you” and verse 18 “You deserted the Rock who gave you life; you forgot the God who bore you” and Isaiah 66:12-13 “ as a mother comforts her child so will I comfort you”.

And then we move on in to the New Testament where we find both Matthew and Luke referring to God, through Jesus, as a Mother hen who says “how often have I yearned to gather you together, like a hen gathering her chicks under her wings!” Indeed, our loving God encompasses all the traits that we attribute to mothers as well as fathers because God is everything that is good.

Of course, God, as the Spirit or Life Force of the Universe, requires and has no gender but our human minds want to understand and so we ascribe human characteristics to this Life Energy. But we must always keep in mind that these images and attributes are only our way to try to comprehend something which is beyond our understanding. So it is important that we not limit our God to one or another image but realize that each is simply an attempt to describe in human terms one aspect of what the Holy Presence is like.

It is important to our understanding to expand our thoughts in whatever ways we can and thinking of God as our Mother as well as our Father helps us to do that. But the most important thing to remember, no matter how we image our Creator, and it will be different for each of us, is that Great Mystery is love and only love and that love is in us, around us and part of us always. We can never be separated from it. We might refuse to know that. We might think we are alone in the world but our Mother/Father God is with us and loves us more than we can imagine and more than any human image can hold.

All that being said I want to share a couple of fun, humorous thoughts about mothers that I found on the internet some time ago. I apologize for not knowing who wrote them but I hope you will enjoy them. One thing that is good for the Soul and that my mother taught me is how to laugh and have some fun. So here goes...

The first is called: **“Things My Mother Taught Me”**

My Mother taught me LOGIC... “If you fall off that swing and break your neck, you can’t go to the store with me.”

My Mother taught me MEDICINE... “If you don’t stop crossing your eyes, they’re going to freeze that way.”

My Mother taught me TO THINK AHEAD... “If you don’t pass your spelling test, you’ll never get a good job!”

My Mother taught me INTUITION... “Put your sweater on; don’t you think that I know when you’re cold?”

My Mother taught me TO MEET A CHALLENGE... “What were you thinking? Answer me when I talk to you... Don’t talk back to me!”

My Mother taught me HUMOUR... “When that lawn mower cuts off your toes, don’t come running to me.”

My Mother taught me HOW TO BECOME AN ADULT... “If you don’t eat your vegetables, you’ll never grow up.”

My mother taught me about GENETICS... “You are just like your father!”

My mother taught me about my ROOTS... “Do you think you were born in a barn?”

My mother taught me about the WISDOM OF AGE... “When you get to be my age, you will understand.”

My mother taught me about ANTICIPATION... “Just wait until your father gets home.”

My mother taught me about JUSTICE... “One day you’ll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like YOU... then you’ll see what it’s like.”

And she thought no one was listening!

This next one is called: **Mother’s Never Change** - imagining what the mothers of some famous characters might have said to them.

PAUL REVERE’S MOTHER: “I don’t care where you think you have to go, young man, midnight is past your curfew!”

MARY, MARY, QUITE CONTRARY’S MOTHER: “I don’t mind you having a garden, Mary, but does it have to be growing under your bed?”

MONA LISA’S MOTHER: “After all that money your father and I spent on braces, Mona, that’s the biggest smile you can give us?”

HUMPTY DUMPTY’S MOTHER: “Humpty, if I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a hundred times not to sit on that wall. But would you listen to me? Noooo!”

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS’ MOTHER: “I don’t care what you’ve discovered, Christopher. You still could have written!”

BATMAN’S MOTHER: “It’s a nice car, Bruce, but do you realize how much the insurance is going to be?”

GOLDILOCKS’ MOTHER: “I’ve got a bill here for a busted chair from the Bear family. You know anything about this, Goldie?”

LITTLE MISS MUFFET’S MOTHER: “Well, all I’ve got to say is if you don’t get off your tuffet and start cleaning your room, there’ll be a lot more spiders around here!”

JONAH’S MOTHER: “That’s a nice story, but now tell me where you’ve really been for the last three days.”

LITTLE MARY’S MOTHER: “I’m not upset that your lamb followed you to school, Mary, but I would like to know how he got a better grade than you.”

It’s true - mothers never change.

“Always remember, wherever you are, whether near or far, you had a mother who really, really loved you. The original mother. Once you've found your true inner guru you can never again be divided. Perfect union with the divine, through the grace of your real teacher, transcends time, space, death and all worldly limitations. Your real teacher is the original mother - regardless in which manifest or non-manifest form, or gender, she appears. The one who nurtures you and the one who also, out of wisdom and compassion, corrects you if you are misguided.”

- Zeena Schreck

On a more serious note, we do need to recognize that not all families live up to the ideal. In fact, there is no such thing as a perfect family. Most families fall somewhere short of the ideal that has been presented to us over the past few decades. Our families and God's family include all sorts of people, good, bad and in between. But one thing we can be assured of - God welcomes everyone into the God's family, everyone is accepted for who or what they are and each and every one of us is loved equally and unconditionally.

I want to close with one more reading. It is called "**Festival of the Family**" and is in the form of a prayer.

God of all Living and Loving: how pleasant it is when women, men, and children live together in unity! How noble is your creation and the world that you have made! How blessed we are to receive the gifts of life and love!

We are thankful for families where scattered piles of stuff testify that we live fully in the moment; where the noise of laughter and the silence of sadness are freely shared.

We are thankful for families where we find sanctuary from danger and judgement; where words of love and openness are the rule of life.

We are thankful for families where our differences are the spices of life; where our unity is something that we can always take for granted.

We grieve for families where violence and rejection are living realities; where hearts are broken, and dreams are shattered.

We grieve for families where walls of protection become fortresses of isolation; where language is a weapon of destruction and hate.

Help us to understand those families whose identities are different from ours; the ways of loving, parenting, partnering and working together for peace.

Help us to dare to stand strongly against hate and divisiveness; to encounter our differences with love and respect.

This we believe: that love is stronger than hate; that hope is stronger than despair, and that good is stronger than evil.

I hope you have enjoyed a bit of a laugh or derived some wisdom from these readings and I hope you and your family are staying home and staying safe in this time of Covid-19. Soon we will all be able to come together with our families and join with our church family again, too. We will look forward to celebrating together all the love that is ours. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Preparation for Prayer: *As we prepare our hearts and minds to enter into a time of prayer I invite you to sit comfortably and quietly for a moment. Breathe deeply a few times paying particular attention to your breath as it moves in through your nostrils and fills your lungs. Picture your breath as a light entering your body and filling it with love and relaxation. Then when you exhale imagine the breath taking all your tensions and worries with it as it leaves your body. Do this a few times until you feel relaxed then move on into the prayer time.*

Prayers:

Mother/Father God, on this Mother's Day and Christian Family Sunday, we think of families and mothers. We are thankful for those mothers who have loved and cared for us and we grieve for mothers unable to love and show care.

We think of fathers who were and are caring and kind, always there, and other fathers who were unknown, far away or unable to love.

We think of those in our lives of all genders and all generations, biologically connected, adopted, or befriended, in all the various relationships that make up our families. We give thanks for the love we share with those to whom we are close and count ourselves blessed.

Today we think of the new commandment given to us by Jesus that we are to love one another as he has loved us.

We ask your help in meeting the challenge of loving those in our family with whom we have differences and difficulties, those who have caused us suffering or wronged us, and those whom we have caused suffering or wronged, or those from whom we are estranged for reasons we may not even fully understand.

We know we may also bear a part in these broken relationships and pray that your love will fill our hearts to overflowing, showing us what healing means as we continue to strive to love others as we are loved.

Today we pray for our brothers and sisters of Arthur United Church and for all our relations who work in other parts of our country and the world.

And today we pray for ourselves. Whether we are a family of one or many remind us that no one is excluded from your family. Remind us that your love is with us, around us and in us always. Hear the prayers of our hearts... (silence)... Today we pray for us all as we wait and hope for the loosening of Covid-19 restrictions. Give us patience, give us the drive to dig deep and find the resources we need to not only endure but to find positive things to bring with us out of this challenging time.

Holy Presence, you shelter us, guide us, comfort us and love us beyond measure. Hear us now as we offer these and all of our prayers in the name of our brother, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray as a family of faith saying...

Lord's Prayer:

Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.

Offering:

If you would like to do your part by making a monetary donation to Melville United Church there are a number of ways to do that.

1. *Cheque (post-dated cheques are welcome): made payable to: Melville United Church - which can be mailed to the church at P.O. Box 41, Fergus, ON N1M 2W7 or put in the mail slot beside the parking lot door.*
2. *Donate online through the Canada Helps web-site*
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/melville-united-church/>
3. *Call or email Lynda, to arrange Pre-Authorized Remittance payments (PAR).*
4. *E-transfer directly from your bank. E-mail to secretary@melvilleunited.com*

Thanks to all of you who continue to contribute so much to make Melville the caring community of faith that it is. May you be blessed.

Quote: -Zeena Schreck

“Always remember, wherever you are, whether near or far, you had a mother who really, really loved you. The original mother. Once you've found your true inner guru you can never again be divided. Perfect union with the divine, through the grace of your real teacher, transcends time, space, death and all worldly limitations. Your real teacher is the original mother - regardless in which manifest or non-manifest form, or gender, she appears. The one who nurtures you and the one who also, out of wisdom and compassion, corrects you if you are misguided.”

- Zeena Schreck

Hymn: Mother and God

VU 280

**Mother and God, to you we sing:
wide is your womb, warm is your wing.
In you we live, move and are fed
sweet, flowing milk, life giving bread.
Mother and God, to you we bring
all broken hearts, all broken wings.**

Repeat

Blessing:

Step forth into the world,
ready to lead and ready to support
children and mothers,
young and old, yours and mine.
Go now knowing that you never go alone
for our Mother/Father God is with you
now and always. Amen.

Prayer of the Week:

Faithful Parent God. Be our refuge in all of our living and in our dying. Help us when we stumble. Help us grow into your fullness of life with all of your people - one family connected by your love. Amen.