



Celebrating 175 Years



June 7, 2020

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church, Fergus Ontario
Sunday June 7th 2020
Trinity Sunday—1st Sunday after Pentecost

Welcome

My name is Ruth Brown. I am a retired United Church minister living in Fergus. I am grateful to be offering these words of worship and pray they will lead you and all of us together in Spirit; gathering us deeper into the common-union we share in Jesus' name, strengthening us in hope for the day that is at hand, and inspiring us with love to live faithfully.

As Christians we are now keeping time with the **Season after Pentecost**. Sometimes known as the Season of Ordinary Time. Though nothing feels ordinary about time these days. This Season begins with the great feast of Pentecost, celebrated recently throughout the church. At Pentecost the church remembers God's gracious gift of the Spirit abundantly blessing the gathered community. In our faith tradition this takes place 50 days following the death and resurrection of Jesus. Pentecost is primarily symbolized by a mighty wind, tongues of fire, and life-giving breath.

In place of a hymn, or hymns, I have chosen a sung response. Throughout the worship you are invited as John Wesley would say, to "sing lustily and with good courage." I hope the tune is familiar enough that you can do just that, whether you are singing alone or with 2 or 3 in your household. Voices United #625 I Feel the Winds of God Today, (and #626 different words, same tune.)

May God's Spirited Blessing be upon us as we begin.

Sharing the Light *Take a moment to light a candle and centre yourself for this time of worship. As you light the candle offer 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.

Centering Words

The Peace of Wild Things *by Wendall Barry*

When despair for the world grows in me
And I wake in the night at the least sound
In fear of what my life and my children's lives may be
I go and lie down where the wood drake rests
in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
Who do not tax their lives with forethought of grief.
I come into the presence of still water
And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with their light.
For a time I rest in the grace of the world and am free.

Prayer

Fairest Lord Jesus, we come into your welcoming presence and there find rest. Deep within our souls we lay down all our weariness; all our sin and want and sorrow. In this time of Grace we open up to your compassion, your healing forgiveness and faith-full love. In communion with the Spirit we pray. Amen

Sung Response: I heard the voice of Jesus VU#626 vs 1

**I heard the voice of Jesus say, "come unto me and rest,
lay down, O weary one lay down, your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad,
I found in him a resting place, and he has made me glad.**

These Scripture Texts are printed from the New Revised Standard Version. If have your own family bible or confirmation bible, whatever version, feel free to read it as well. It can be really interesting to consider the different words that are chosen by each translator as they interpret from the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts.

Before reading offer the following prayer:

Prayer

May your Spirit of wisdom and truth guide the reading and hearing of these words. May they settle deep into my heart and mind and soul, your Word of Life and Love. Amen

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters, he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil;
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 goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord, my whole life long.
Amen

Sung Response I heard the Voice of Jesus VU# 626 vs 2

**I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus and I drank, of that life-giving stream.
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.**

Genesis 1: 1-2:3

Six Days of Creation and the Sabbath

1 In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,
2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep,

while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.

³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.

⁴ And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness.

⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.

And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters,
and let it separate the waters from the waters."

⁷ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome
from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so.

⁸ God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place,
and let the dry land appear." And it was so.

¹⁰ God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.
And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed,
and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so.

¹² The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind,
and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.

¹³ And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night;
and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,

¹⁵ and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so.

¹⁶ God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day
and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars.

¹⁷ God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth,

¹⁸ to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness.
And God saw that it was good.

¹⁹ And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures,
and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky."

²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves,
of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind.

And God saw that it was good.

²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas,
and let birds multiply on the earth."

²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind:
cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so.

²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind,
and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind.
And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;
and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air,
and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth,
and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them,

“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”

²⁹ God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.

³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude.

² And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

³ So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

Sung Response

I heard the voice of Jesus VU #626 vs 3

**I heard the voice of Jesus say, “I am this dark world’s light,
Look unto me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright.”**

**I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun
and in that light of life I’ll walk, till travelling days are done.**

Reflection God’s Perpetual Goodness and Care

I don’t know how these days of isolation have been for you. I suspect, if we could chat over a cup of coffee, face to face, we might find some common ground:

Alone; It’s tough not being able to see friends and family members. Though we can see our loved ones through face time or zoom, it’s safe to say we’ve come to a deeper realization of how much a touch and a hug really matters. The physical presence of others is central to our human existence and sense of well being. There’s a reason why physical isolation in prisons is a form of brutal punishment.

Anxious; Though we rest hopefully most nights, we rise to the same strange reality. It’s a dangerous time of sorts, yet if we follow the simple guidelines; stay six feet apart, wash your hands, don’t touch your face, we are relatively safe, most of us. It’s not as if a nuclear bomb has been dropped on our fair town. We are safer than when we do a lot of normal things, like drive the 401 in a car or ride the Wellington County Road 7, on a motorcycle. Nevertheless, there is this sense of impending doom and danger. And we have no idea when it will end. It feels like we are lost in familiar space.

Overwhelmed; We humans have great problem solving skills so that when life pulls the rug out from under our feet we eventually figure things out, we re-order our living, our routines, we begin to integrate the new normal into our daily frame of reference. We are very adaptable creatures, evolving through thousands of years.

I remember when my dad died when I was 17 years old. My world was shattered, meanwhile life on the streets carried on as usual. That used to make me so angry. But in time, as I gathered new information, as I pieced together how to move forward through my day, I was grateful that the whole world had carried on as before....so that I could rejoin it when I was ready.

But in this **extra-ordinary** time the whole world cannot carry on as before. The whole human family is being invaded by a virus. And that is a staggering realization. Our natural problem-solving skills feel overwhelmed by this reality. The health and science specialists among us have more knowledge to gather information together to problem solve the way through this. But we are all trying to do the same on our own level. It's what we humans do when our world falls apart for whatever reason.

Each morning with coffee in hand, I would turn on the radio, in search of information to inform a solution to my/our problem. But as the days progressed there was more and more information and conflicting information that I have at last turned the radio off. I sit in the 'cone of silence' and read a book, watch Netflix, go for a walk by the river. I tune it out. My problem-solving skills are overwhelmed. Life carries on as before only for the birds and the bees and the trees. All of earth is doing its thing. But we human creatures cannot carry on as before, which by implication raises the question, how will we return and to what?

Living through dangerous times, alone, anxious, overwhelmed. Our ancestors in faith were well acquainted with such circumstances. Foreign military bodies invaded their world, shattering their ordinary days. And problem solving to re-establish a routine as a community was most difficult when the powers at be upended on a whim, their sabbath gatherings, their businesses, their food and water supplies.

The poets and story tellers among them were a central force in sustaining Israel's faith and communal life through such dangerous times. Their works gave voice to both the difficult daily reality and the unseen abiding Presence. With words of faith they described God's perpetual goodness and care come what may, sustaining, redeeming, creating—giving shape and order to the void and darkness of their days.

Consider Psalm 23 and the picture the poet is painting with his words....the Lord is my shepherd, my good shepherd, my caring shepherd, providing me with rest, green pastures, still waters, where I lay down, no matter what valley I must walk, the oil of blessing is poured out upon me even in the face of my enemies....I am always with god, come what may in the battle that lays ahead for me.

Consider in the book Genesis, the first creation story. There the story teller paints a picture with his words.....a creator God from beyond who is nevertheless at work in the thick of it, each day of the week, creating out of the encompassing darkness and void, reordering, rebalancing, redefining the boundaries of the encompassing darkness and void...breathing their (God is plural, yet one, in this first creation story) life force into all things created...breathing them out of the chaos, the darkness and void, into a new reality of boundaries and function and order, one day at a time...and it is good!

Both sacred texts are born of faith, when green pastures, still waters and rest were indeed hard to come by; when Israel was lost under foreign occupation, in its sense of time and purpose, and each day of the week was coloured by a sense of chaos and darkness.

The poets and story tellers invited Israel to stay grounded in their faith...created in God's image, they were cared for by the Good Shepherd, even when the world around them was spitting upon them. With every breath they took, God's perpetual goodness, care, filled them with new life. Even in the worst of times, enveloped by this unseen presence they would re-order their day to day living by doing the simplest of things; worshipping in their homes, as the temple was not yet rebuilt; washing their hands, (the purity codes were created as a means to remember God in their midst, even when cooking dinner);keeping to themselves—respecting boundaries as it were—so as to keep their community safe for now. And above all being kind to their neighbour. Observing these basic rules would help them remember what could not be seen with the naked eye, the mighty God of all, walking with them all the days of their lives.

We are having to rely heavily upon our faith. And by that I don't mean our creeds and teachings so much as *faith* in the unseen yet ongoing presence of God. Faith in the sense of trusting in the reality of something more at work among us and beyond us, than just us humans. That something more we call God. We are having to trust strongly that though we don't know how, God is in the thick of it with us helping us to figure it out, recreating, redeeming, sustaining....in laboratories, in health care units, on the streets, discerning a way forward.

When I first saw the blessing rocks being laid down at the foot of Groves Memorial Hospital Sign I tell you I felt strongly that Presence....in other words...that unseen perpetual goodness and care shaping the day ...some would describe it as a light enfolding, upholding the hospital; its patients, its staff and health care workers. Stunningly the weakest among us are included in this holy perpetual goodness and care. It is not survival of the fittest with the God of our faith. That is not enough for us and for our sense of the sacredness of all human life. How future resources are allocated or not, for the most vulnerable in our communities including nursing homes, will be a continued call upon us all.

For me the unseen presence was made visible by those painted rocks. But maybe for you it was the gratitude parades, the thank you signs on the lawns of random houses, the rainbows painted on store fronts and businesses throughout Fergus and Elora and where else....a phone call from an old friend, a sense of unexplained presence in your isolation and grief.

These extra ordinary times have been full of danger, sorrow, threat, anger, fear, and on and on. We have felt lost to each other and to all that made the world go around. But we have not been lost to our God, nor have we been lost to all that makes us fully human. Out of the chaos, and the void of darkness, there has also been a life and light we could not help but express, whether we were nursing at the bedside of a stranger or placing our small rock down to honour the daily sacrifices of front line workers...just doing their jobs.

God's perpetual goodness and care bearing us through the deepest valley and we shall dwell in the house of our God our whole life long.

Preparation for Prayer *As we prepare our hearts and minds to enter into a time of prayer, I invite you to sit comfortable and quietly for a moment. Breathe deeply a few times paying attention to your breath as it moves in through your nose and as it fills your lungs. Picture your breath as a light entering your body and filling it with love and relaxation. Then when you exhale through your mouth 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 into the prayer time.*

Prayers

A selection of prayers from Voices United

Gracious and loving God. We thank you for the blessings of life. We bless you for the wonders of the world. For heights of mountains and breadth of prairies, for diversity of peoples and the intimacy of families, for the goodness of all you have made.

We bless you for the gift of Christ Jesus who lived and died and lives again in Spirit among us wherever your seeds of justice are sown, wherever your goodness and care are expressed in word and deed. We bless you for your life among us, forgiving sins, renewing spirits and refreshing us in the common-union we share.

Grant O God in the silence and stillness of these difficult days, that our hearts and minds would be grounded in faith and trust for you are yet with us creating and recreating, sustaining and redeeming day by day. May such faith issue forth from among us bright hope for tomorrow.

Take a moment to offer your personal prayers of thanksgiving and prayers for those facing trouble of any kind.

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 several 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@melvilledunited.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

Sung Response:

**I feel the winds of God today VU 626 vs 1
I feel the winds of God today, today my sail I lift,
though heavy oft with drenching spray and torn with many a rift'
If hope but light the water's crest, and Christ my bark will use.
I'll seek the seas at his behest and brave another cruise.**

Blessing

May the Winds of God strengthen you as you make your way through life.

May the Grace of Christ enfold you as you seek to serve others in Jesus' name.

May the Life-Giving Spirit encourage you as you tend to each day of the week,

open to the blessing of God's perpetual goodness and care. Amen

Prayer of the Week

Keep the song in my soul, let it not lose its music.

Keep the holy in my soul, let it not ignore its source.

Keep the love in my soul, let it not close in on self.

Keep the light in my soul, let it not forget to shine.

Keep the vision in my soul, let it not lose sight of you.

~Fragments of your Ancient Name by Joyce Rupp