



*Celebrating  
175 Years*



**August 23, 2020**

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church, Fergus Ontario  
Sunday August 23rd 2020

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Worship prepared today by  
Ruth Cooke

**Welcome**

*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. We acknowledge our responsibilities to treaty people.*

**The Christ Candle Is Lit**

**Call to Worship/Prayer of Approach (Carol Penner)**

Merciful God:

We come together to worship longing for tenderness  
because this world can be hard.

We come longing for light  
because our lives are crowded with shadows.

We come desperately needing direction.

Fill us this morning with your peace;  
your spirit is our peace and our path.

**Hymn:** Jesus Bids Us Shine    **VU 585**

**Epistle Reading: Ephesians 6:1-18 (Good News Translation)**

Children, it is your Christian duty to obey your parents, for this is the right thing to do. "Respect your father and mother" is the first commandment that has a promise added: "so that all may go well with you, and you may live a long time in the land."

Parents, do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead, raise them with Christian discipline and instruction.

Slaves, obey your human masters with fear and trembling; and do it with a sincere heart, as though you were serving Christ. Do this not only when they are watching you, because you want to gain their approval; but with all your heart do what God wants, as slaves of Christ. Do your work as slaves cheerfully, as though you served the Lord, and not merely human beings. Remember that the Lord will reward each of us, whether slave or free, for the good work we do.

Masters, behave in the same way toward your slaves and stop using threats. Remember that you and your slaves belong to the same Master in heaven, who judges everyone by the same standard.

Finally, build up your strength in union with the Lord and by means of his mighty power. Put on all the armor that God gives you, so that you will be able to stand up against the Devil's evil tricks. For we are not fighting against human beings but against the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age. So put on God's armor now! Then when the evil day comes, you will be able to resist the enemy's attacks; and after fighting to the end, you will still hold your ground.

So stand ready, with truth as a belt tight around your waist, with righteousness as your breastplate, and as your shoes the readiness to announce the Good News of peace. At all times carry faith as a shield; for with it you will be able to put out all the burning arrows shot by the Evil One. And accept salvation as a helmet, and the word of God as the sword which the Spirit gives you. Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people.

**Ministry of Music:** "Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring" J.S. Bach

**Meditation:**

Would you pray with me and for me, please...

May the words of my mouth, the meditations of all of our hearts, and the actions of all of our lives be acceptable in your sight, O God.

My ex-husband, who currently pays me to stay home and be a full-time parent to our autistic adult son, has announced that he will be retiring at the end of the coming school year, and that he will no longer be able to pay me.

This is fine—I knew it was coming, and I'm surprised that he didn't retire *this* year, given all that's been going on.

But it does leave me in a bit of a quandary. At the grand old age of sixty, I'm going to have to start doing more than just supply preaching for money.

For many years, I've been thinking about starting a home-based business. So I went on the internet, especially YouTube to search for any ideas that seemed like they might be interesting. The good news is that there are a lot of things that I can do to support myself that don't entail working retail for minimum wage, and some of them actually take advantage of all that education and wisdom I've accumulated over the years.

But I began to notice something as I perused the different opportunities presented. I realized, after a time, that the vast majority (meaning all but one) of the YouTube channels I found helpful were hosted by the same type of person.

One hundred percent white.

About ninety percent male.

And all but one of the hosts was under the age of thirty five.

And it made me realize just how segregated our society has become. It used to be that elders and youngsters lived together in a great big house. Then they lived in the same town, at least. Now, many of our families are scattered across the globe.

We are divided by more than geography, too. There is a very real technology divide, which is part of the reason most YouTube hosts are under forty.

On the other side of the divide, we have young people growing up with no sense of permanence, and little to no resiliency. They've generally had easier lives than their grandparents, benefitting by increasing wealth, at least in most of North America, better and longer educations, and the 24/7 convenience that comes with the modern age.

This divide comes with its own prejudices.

When you hear an elder say, "Young people these days..." or a millennial say, "OK, Boomer!" you're hearing judgemental and prejudiced opinions that keep us apart.

We all, elder or young person, desperately need to hear the entreaty in today's scripture. Young people, respect your elders. Elders, do not treat young people with contempt or judgement.

Right now, we're living through the worst crisis in the world since World War Two. Anxiety and depression are at record highs. Contempt, judgement, and lack of respect for differing points of views are rampant.

No one is listening to anyone whose viewpoint is not exactly the same as their own.

The young people I watch on YouTube are trying to navigate this new world without the guidance of their elders. They have to do it without the guidance of their elders, because their elders, almost to a person, would tell them to "get a real job with benefits."

Their elders often fail to recognize that the world has changed tremendously since they were young. I grew up in the sixties and seventies in a semi-detached home in Toronto that my parents paid \$17,000 for. My dad had a blue-collar job as a maintenance worker, only getting a promotion to supervisor near the end of his career. My mother worked part-time, mostly to afford our second car and vacations, I assume. My three siblings and I went to summer camp, and to after school activities like swimming, horseback riding, music lessons, and church sponsored youth groups. We went to the dentist every six months for cleanings.

Today, a blue-collar worker would be lucky to find a two bedroom apartment that he could afford, let alone a four bedroom home in Toronto.

That's assuming he could find a permanent job at all, let alone one with benefits.

The world has changed, and one of the things I find that makes young people angry is when elders suggest or even try to impose 1950s solutions on 2020 problems.

Elders, do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Recognize that times have changed, and many of the things that worked for you as a young person would not work in today's world.

But that doesn't mean all of your hard-earned experience is useless. In fact, I think that some of it is more needed now than it has been in the past seventy years.

Our children have grown up in a world of instant gratification. They've grown up, for the most part, in good health. Many of them have never even had the mumps or the measles. They've never even known anyone who suffered from polio or smallpox, let alone had it themselves.

In this time of COVID, they desperately need to hear that this, too, shall pass, but not by next week. They need to know that their sacrifices are not restrictions on their freedom, but measures being taken to ensure that they remain not only free, but alive.

They need to know that the world does indeed change. That what is now has not always been. That what is now will not always be.

That reminder that what we are experiencing is only a passing thing can give our young people a sense of confidence. Things will get better, it tells them. It may take time, but you will live through this.

But how do we mend the rift, especially for those of us whose children live in another part of the country, or even on the opposite side of the globe? And what if our children won't listen to us? What then?

This past week, a cousin of mine posted a YouTube video on Facebook. It was part of a Victoria County Historical Society project to record videos of seniors speaking about their life growing up, and it was a video of my uncle, Bill Chirpaugh, who is 78 years old.

I learned that he was often what we would consider today a very naughty boy, who threw snowballs at strangers and broke windows. Even that little slice of boyhood brings home strongly how things have changed—today if a child does something like that, it's likely to end up with the police being called. I learned that the ice cream parlour was a cherished part of his childhood—he mentioned it at least four times in the fifteen minute video—and that some things don't change all that much.

But most importantly, he talks about how, as a young man, he bought a farm and raised cattle, and still had to work an outside job to make ends meet. For a millennial raised by parents who worked at a steady job for one company all their lives, hearing about the struggles folks had before the economic boom of the fifties and sixties might resonate very strongly.

I think that one thing that might bridge the generation divide might simply be to tell our stories, and to listen, in turn, to theirs.

Drag out those old black and white photos, get a young person to turn on the video recorder of their phone, and start with the words, "I remember..."

Let them know who you were before you were old. Let them know what it was like raising them, or their parents. Funny memories. Sad memories. Regret and sorrow and laughter and joy. Let them know that these feelings are universal, and that, good or bad, they too shall pass, and that with every passing year there is something new and wonderful to experience.

As for listening, listen to their story. What happened during their days? What do they remember about their childhood? I find that what my daughter remembers of her childhood is often very different from what I remember.

And learn from them. How do they make videos with their phones? Can you learn it too, so they don't need to be there for you to record? How do they earn money on line? If you're short on cash yourself, maybe you can find something you can do.

What are their fears and hopes and dreams? What are their passions? And do they know yours?

Another example of how storytelling can help occurred in another Facebook post. The title of the post was, "How to Live Through a Plague," and simply told of a gay man who came of age during the AIDS pandemic. He speaks of how he used protection without feeling like someone was infringing on his rights, how he changed his practices when the advice of health professionals changed because the science had revealed that the former recommendations were harmful rather than helpful, and how he did it without blaming the health professionals or distrusting science. He told of his partner, who hung a picture on the fridge of a group of friends from the 80s, of which he is the only surviving member. He told of the patience required during the decades-long search for a vaccine that has not yet ended in success. Of volunteering to be a medical guinea pig while vaccines and anti-viral drugs were developed.

Of the many funerals, some of which were picketed by Christians waving signs that said God Hates Fags.

His story is a stark reminder that plagues and pandemics are part of the human condition, and that mistrust of health authorities and science prolongs the hurt and increases the death toll.

His story is also a beacon of hope. We may or may not find a vaccine, but already the treatments we have for COVID are so much better than those we had in March. Just like AIDS and all of the other illnesses we've dealt with over the course of human history, we will overcome, and his and other stories of resilience remind us of that fact.

We don't have to preach to each other. We don't have to give advice, solicited or unsolicited. We just have to talk to each other, to tell of our stories and experiences, and the lessons will take care of themselves.

Amen.

**Hymn:** Faith of Our Fathers, VU 580

**Prayers of the People** (Written by Moderator Rev. Dr. Richard Bott)

God of the COVID times, God of the anxious times, God of the mask-wearing and the hand-washing,

You whose love fills the spaces made by the social distance...

Hear my 1am prayers, when I can't fall asleep,  
And my 3am prayers, when something wakes me up;  
Hear the prayers of my, "AAAUGH!"  
And my, "Seriously?"  
And my, "What in the Name of All That is Holy!?"  
(and my prayers that are far less... polite)  
When my scrolling makes me want to throw my phone across the room.

Hear the prayers in my snores when I find myself sleeping in my office chair, roused by Outlook's "BING" to tell me my next Zoom meeting is about to start.

Oh, God, hear my prayers,  
And, in your love, answer.

My prayers for those who are protesting,  
Those who are fighting racism with all that they are;  
For those on ventilators,  
And those who are healers having to make impossible decisions;  
For my child, our children, and their lives;  
For decision makers the world around;  
For the gloom that surrounds me,  
Even in the sunlight;  
For the people who don't know where to turn,  
And the people who are being the ones to turn to.

For these, and all the prayers in my heart,  
The ones I can't say out loud,  
And the ones I don't even know about...  
I give them all to you.  
Oh, God! Hear my prayers!  
And, in your love, answer.

Even if that answer is just the reminder,  
Of what my call is, in all of these places,  
Of the simple fact,  
That you are present in all places, all things,  
All the spaces in-between;  
Of the hope beyond hope,  
Of the love beyond love,  
Of the things, seen and unseen,  
That sing of your care for creation.

O God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit...  
Hear my prayers.

And, in your love...

This we pray in the name of the one who taught us to say as we pray:

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 sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory,  
Forever and ever. Amen.

**Blessing** (William Sloane Coffin)

May the Lord bless you and keep you.

May the Lord's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

May God give you grace not to sell yourselves short,

Grace to risk something big for something good,

Grace to remember that the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth and too small  
for anything but love.

May God take your minds and think through them.

May God take your lips and speak through them.

May God take your hands and work through them.

May God take your hearts and set them on fire.

Amen.

**Musical Commissioning:** Go Now in Peace, Guided by the Light **MV 211**