



**November 1, 2020**

Melville United Church  
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**Melville United Church**

**Nov. 1, 2020**

**All Saints Day**

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Presiding today - 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 here at Melville United Church in Fergus, Ontario. We gather in community today - November 1, 2020 - some of us here in person and some of us on-line and some by the printed word.*

*Today we are marking what is known on the church calendar as All Saints Day. It is a day which has been celebrated mainly in the Catholic Church since the 8<sup>th</sup> century and I will talk a little more about its history later but many Protestant Churches also now recognize All Saints Day all be it with a bit of a different focus. I will talk about that later as well.*

*For now, I invite you to take some time to join us in a time of worship and inner contemplation - 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.*

**Announcements:**

**Joys and Concerns & Accomplishments:**

**Sharing the Light** *(If you are watching this on-line or reading it from a page I invite you to take a moment to light a candle, centre yourself and prepare to enter in to a time of worship and prayer. As you light your candle repeat the following words)*

We light a candle today to remind us

that there is a mysterious power or presence that connects us all -  
we call it God.

that this mysterious presence dwells within each of us -  
as it did in the person of Jesus whom we call the Christ.

that we *cannot* be separated from this presence that is  
the Spirit of love which created us and that is part of us always.

**Call to Worship:**

There are many who have walked the path of faith before us,  
showing us the way with their lives.

We give thanks for them.

We are here, each of us, like those who have gone before us,  
a strange mixture of saint and sinner.

God accepts us all and fills us with the Spirit,  
which empowers us to act.

So come, let us worship together.

**Hymn: For the Faithful Who Have Answered**

VU 707 (tune 115)

- 1 For the faithful who have answered  
when they heard your call to serve,  
for the many ways you led them  
testing will and stretching nerve,  
for their work and for their witness  
as they strove against the odds,  
for their courage and obedience  
we give thanks and praise, O God.
  
- 2 Many eyes have glimpsed the promise,  
many hearts have yearned to see.  
Many ears have heard you calling  
us to greater liberty.  
Some have fallen in the struggle,  
others still are fighting on.  
You are not ashamed to own us.  
We give thanks and praise, O God.
  
- 3 For this cloud of faithful witness,  
for the common life we share,  
for the work of peace and justice,  
for the gospel that we bear,  
for the vision that our homeland  
is your love - deep, high, and broad -  
for the different roads we travel  
we give thanks and praise, O God.

**Words of Wisdom:**

-West African Prayer

All-knowing, guiding ancestors,  
O dear innocent departed ones, hear our voices,  
you are not blind nor deaf to this life we live,  
you shared it yourselves.  
Be a good help to us now,  
for we do not forget you.

**Opening Prayer:**

Transforming God, we are amazed that you can take ordinary people like us and name us as saints, even though we are not perfect. We know we need your wisdom to understand ourselves and each other. And so we worship together and with all the saints of every age who challenge, encourage and inspire us. Be with us in this time together as we give thanks for the lives of those saints who have gone before, of those who are with us now, and of those who will come after us. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession:**

Holy Presence, we notice the saints around us  
who make time for their friends and family members.  
We notice the saints around us

who see a neighbour in need and respond without question.  
 We notice the saints around us  
 who are aware of injustice and find a way to bring change.  
 We notice and we give thanks.  
 We notice and seek forgiveness  
 for the times when we forget to do the same. Amen.

**Words of Affirmation:**

The qualities of sainthood are within each of us.  
 We each have the ability and the opportunities are endless.  
 When you get discouraged, remember that the saints of the ages  
 struggled and suffered, too.  
 Be open to the Spirit which brings peace  
 and a whole new attitude to life will be yours.  
 Thanks be to God!

**Ministry of Music:**

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:1-10 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)  
 (The Beatitudes)

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, Jesus began to teach them:

Blessed are those who are poor in spirit;  
 the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Blessed are those who are mourning;  
 they will be consoled.

Blessed are those who are gentle:  
 they will inherit the land.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice:  
 they will have their fill.

Blessed are those who show mercy to others:  
 they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are those whose hearts are clean:  
 they will see God.

Blessed are those who work for peace:  
 they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice:  
 the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

**Scripture:** Revelation 7:9-17 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)  
 (They will hunger and thirst no more)

After that I saw before an immense crowd without number, from every nation, tribe, people and language. They stood in front of the throne and the Lamb, dressed in long white robes and holding palm branches. And they cried out in a loud voice, "Salvation is of our God, who sits on the throne, and of the Lamb!"

All, the angels who were encircling the throne, as well as the elders and the four living creatures prostrated themselves before the throne. They worshiped God with these words: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and strength be to our God forever and ever! Amen!"

Then one of the elders asked me, "These people in white robes - who are they, and where do they come from?"

I answered, "You are the one who knows." Then the elder said to me, "These are the ones who survived the great period of testing; they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white. That's why they stand before God's throne and the One they serve day and night in the Temple; the One who sits on the throne will shelter them forever. Never again will they be hungry or thirsty, the sun and its scorching heat will never beat down on them, for the Lamb, who is at the centre of the throne, will be their shepherd and will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe every last tear from their eyes."

**Message: Everyday Saints**

Revelation 7:9-17

Matthew 5:1-10

I want to begin today with a bit of history. November 1<sup>st</sup> on the church calendar is known as All Saints Day and I thought you might like to know how it came about and what it means for us today.

Although now observed in November, All Saints Day was originally celebrated on May 13, although the origin cannot be traced with certainty, according to Encyclopedia Britannica. Pope Boniface IV formally started what would later be known as All Saints Day on May 13 in 609 CE when he dedicated the Pantheon in Rome as a church in honor of the Virgin Mary and all martyrs.

The current date of November 1 was established by Pope Gregory III during his reign (731-741 AD) when he dedicated a chapel in Rome's St. Peter's Basilica in honor of all saints. While this celebration was originally limited to Rome, later in 837 Pope Gregory IV ordered the official observance of All Saints Day every November 1 and extended its celebration to the entire Church.

All Saints really means ALL saints. While many canonized saints are celebrated with their own individual day (such as St. Patrick), saints that have not been canonized have no particular holiday. All Saints Day recognizes those who have attained heaven, but their sainthood is known only to God. Even so, Catholic observances tend to focus on known saints, those canonized by the Catholic Church.

Within the Catholic Church, All Saints' Day is generally considered a Holy Day of Obligation, meaning all Catholics must attend Mass unless they are prevented by illness or another sufficient excuse.

After the Protestant Reformation, many Protestant sects kept All Saints Day although they dismissed the need to pray for the dead. Instead, the day has been used to commemorate those who have recently died, usually in the past year, and to remember the examples of those who lived holy lives. Methodists, for example, acknowledge it as a day of giving God earnest gratitude for the lives and deaths of saints.

Although not a public holiday for us, All Saints' Day is observed publicly in many countries. In France and Germany, people have the workday off and businesses are closed. In the Philippines, All Saints Day is known as "Undas" and isn't just for remembering the saints, but for honouring and paying respects to departed loved ones, usually with prayers, flowers, and offerings left on graves.

During medieval England the festival was known as All Hallows, and its eve, the night before - All Hallows Eve - we know today as Hallowe'en.

Hallowe'en's origins date back to the ancient Celts who lived over 2000 years ago mostly in the area that is now Ireland, the United Kingdom and northern France. They celebrated their

new year on November 1, a day that marked the end of summer and the harvest and the beginning of the dark, cold winter. It was a time of year that was often associated with human death. Celts believed that on the night before the new year, the boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead became blurred. On the night of October 31 they celebrated Samhain (pronounced sow-in) when it was believed that the ghosts of the dead returned to earth.

Although the Catholic church would not officially say so, it is widely thought that the church was attempting to replace the Celtic festival of the dead (Samhain) with a related, church-sanctioned holiday. Whether this is true or not, we do celebrate All Saints Day on November 1<sup>st</sup>, the day after All Hallows' Eve or Hallowe'en.

The day after that - November 2 - is observed as All Souls Day. The meaning of All Saints Day, as I mentioned a moment ago, was to commemorate all the saints of the church, both known and unknown, who had made it to heaven, while All Souls is to commemorate all who have died whether they have reached heaven or are still residing in 'purgatory' which is believed to be the in-between place. The 3 dates together (Oct 31-Nov 2) are known as Allhallowtide. So there you have it - a bit of history about All Saints Day.

Now to modernize it a bit. The old notions that saints are only those who have been recognized by the church or who have lived a godly and impeccable life according to someone's standards have gone by the wayside. At least they have for me and many people I know.

We are human and being human brings with it all the human frailties, faults and challenges that most of us encounter. We can try our best but often the circumstances of life or the events around us will determine many aspects of our daily living. The difference is in the way we respond. It is a matter of attitude in many cases. Different people experiencing the same event will have different reactions and respond differently.

In our Christian tradition we are taught to follow the teachings of Jesus and Jesus teaches a way of living that is based on love - not judgement. His is a way of love and acceptance, justice and equality and I think anyone who seeks to authentically and sincerely follow his way is a saint. And that does not mean one has to belong to the Christian religion. Many people follow Jesus' teaching without knowing it. It also doesn't mean they are perfect individuals. It doesn't mean they will never do wrong. It doesn't mean they will never fail in their attempts. It doesn't mean they will never choose a destructive path. It simply means that they try to live from a centre of love and care. It sounds simple but it can be a very difficult thing to do in practice.

A motto I often share with folks is this; we are called to do what we can, with what we have, where we are - that's all. In other words we don't need to go out and change the world by doing extraordinary things. All we need to do is live each day the best we know how and by trying to stay true to our heart. I believe that is the core - the essence of Jesus call to us. It means living from a centre of love and care as Jesus did. When we do that we are doing God's work and we don't even have to be associated with God or religion to do that. We can all be - we all are - saints in the making.

When we look back on the history of humankind what we see is a long line of people who, touched by the love of God (whether they knew it or not), did their part to help further God's work in this world. We see all kinds of people who lived the best way they knew how with what they had at hand wherever they were planted. Some of them did extraordinary things and we honour them for that but the majority simply went quietly about living their lives doing what they had to do while passing on values and lessons and wisdom to those of us who followed.

When we talk of saints in our tradition we aren't only speaking about the famous ones that have made the news and been given the title. We are talking about all those ordinary folks who

have gone before us. All those who have touched us and left their imprint on our lives. All those who tried to do their best to pass on the values that were important to them.

I don't believe you have to be famous, or perfect, or dead to be a saint. You just have to be you - the one-of-a-kind, never-to-be-repeated human being whom God created you to be - to love as you are loved, to throw your arms around the world, to shine like the sun.

And we don't have to do it alone. We are in this together. All of us are knit together in the communion of saints - we are all God's children.

We heard the Beatitudes today. The blessings Jesus talked about to his audience on the hill that day were his way of encouraging them. They lived under the oppressive rule of Rome and they would have easily identified Jesus' words as being in direct opposition to what they were experiencing every day.

One scholar suggests that the word used for "blessing" in this reading is best translated as "you are on the right road." In other words, Jesus says, "You are on the right road when you are poor in spirit... when you mourn...etc. These are things we have all experienced at some point.

The words from the Revelation reading were also written for a people oppressed. The writer was painting a picture of a better world order, one where justice, compassion, and healing took precedence and one where those who had persevered and tried to live in God's way - the saints - were free of heartache and were welcomed and honoured. Never again will they be hungry or thirsty. The sun will not scorch them for the shepherd will lead them to the waters of life. It is a beautiful picture.

So 'All Saints' day is a time to remember all the saints - those who are still with us and those who have gone before us into the closer presence of God and to give thanks for the blessings we know because of them. It is also a time to honor the saints who will come after us. We belong to the communion of saints - past, present, and future.

And so I offer you a moment to remember those saints who have been and are important to you.

*(If you are reading this at home please take a few minutes to light 3 candles - one for past saints, one for present saints and one for the saints of the future).*

Candle 1 - Saints of the past. Think of those you have known and who have passed on into the closer presence of God. Remember them and give thanks.

Candle 2 - Saints of the present. Think of those who are still here sharing life with you. Think of them and give thanks.

Candle 3 - Saints of the future. Think of those who will come after you. Think of what you might offer them and give thanks.

"I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints." 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:**

God of the past, God of the present and God of the future. We are here today to celebrate the saints - those people who are, were, and continue to be guiding lights for us. Saints are people who live with integrity and authenticity, not necessarily those who follow a specific set of rules. Saints are people who may or may not be part of any organized religion, sect or nationality because saints are any and all persons who live and work from a centre of love, compassion and justice.

I read Jesus' words earlier that we call the Beatitudes - beautiful blessings - yet we do not always recognize ourselves in his words. We do not always know how to receive your blessings Infinite Wisdom. Yet, we hear that we are beloved, and our hardened hearts are melted by the kindness and generosity in these words.

We do hunger, Holy One, and we know others hunger, too. We thirst, and we mourn; we grieve, and we seek peace; we strive to be merciful and just, and we know we are not perfect. We need help to hear your blessings and be empowered by them, to stand tall in our faith and be renewed in spirit - to become everyday saints.

We pray today for all the saints who work for peace, for justice and for a new world order. We pray for wisdom for government leaders whose decisions affect the lives of millions of people every day. We pray for attitudes of sharing to prevail among the privileged and rich and that includes us here in North America. We pray for colonial mind-sets to be examined and discarded and replaced with acceptance and equality and dignity for all.

We pray today for the saints who are part of Mimoso UC and for all the saints who work on our behalf in other parts of our country and the world. And we pray for ourselves as we open our hearts and minds to the possibility that we are beloved and that your love is all we need. Hear the prayers of our hearts.... (silence).... We remember especially today the families amongst us who are mourning loved ones - the Bott family, the Ladd family, the Black family. And we pray for \_\_\_\_\_

Beloved, Holy Presence, you have been the rock and guide of the ancestors - the saints of the past; you are the rock and guidance we need today and you will be the rock and guidance for saints yet to come. You do not forsake those who call upon you. Your steadfast love and truth endures forever.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of our brother, Jesus the Christ, who stand with us as we pray together 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 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 website  
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/melville-united-church>
3. Call Lynda, to arrange Pre-Authorized Remittance payments (PAR).
4. E-transfer directly from your bank. E-mail to [secretary@melvilleunited.com](mailto: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. You are a blessing.

**Offering Prayer:**

Because you have loved us, we dedicate ourselves to loving others.

Because you have forgiven us, we dedicate ourselves to forgiving others.

Because you have blessed us, we dedicate ourselves to being a blessing to others.

Take these gifts and know our gratitude and devotion, today and always. Amen.

**Hymn/Reading:** For All the Saints

VU 705

- 1 For all the saints, who from their labours rest,  
all who by faith before the world confessed,  
your name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
- 2 You were their rock, their fortress, and their might:  
you were their captain in the well-fought fight;  
you, in the darkness drear, their one true light.
- 3 O blest communion, fellowship divine!  
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;  
yet all are one within your great design.
- 4 The golden evening brightens in the west;  
soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;  
sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.
- 5 But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day  
the saints triumphant rise in bright array:  
as God to glory calls them all away.  
Hallelujah, hallelujah!

**Blessing:**

Go from here  
both challenged and comforted by the Spirit.  
Go from here  
surrounded by the great cloud of witnesses.  
Go from here.  
Knowing you never go alone for  
God the source of love,  
Christ our example of love and the  
Holy Spirit, the bearer of love  
is with you - always!

**Postlude:****Prayer of the Week:**

Blessed One, you never cease to surprise us. We grow accustomed to a way of accounting for our lives that often puts us in the losing column. Help us claim the identity and direction you offer to us so that we may stay on the road to your freedom, justice, mercy, and compassion. Amen.