



*Celebrating  
175 Years*

“Acknowledging the  
good that you already  
have in your life is the  
foundation for all  
abundance.”

—ECKHART TOLLE



**October 11, 2020**

Melville United Church

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**Melville United Church**  
**Oct 11, 2020**  
**Thanksgiving Sunday**

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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 today - some of us here in person and some of us on-line and some by the printed word. Today is October 11, 2020, Thanksgiving Sunday here in Canada.*

*The Thanksgiving holiday is a day set aside once a year for us to focus on all the good things in our lives and to be grateful. And I maintain that, even though we may be experiencing difficult times, we can always find something to be grateful for. And that concept is the basis of this worship service today. I hope to give you a few things to think about and I will suggest a couple of activities which might help you practice thankfulness because an 'attitude of gratitude' truly does need to be practiced. And once you get into the habit of this kind of practice it really can make a difference to your day to day lived experience.*

*So I invite you now to join us in this 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:**

**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:**

On this October day,  
think about God's beauty outside the windows.  
Open your mind to the beauty that you see around you.  
Open your mind to the beauty of God's presence within you.  
Hold those beautiful thoughts in your mind  
as we worship together the Holy Presence  
which created us and all this beauty.

**Words of Wisdom:**

Gratitude turns what we have into enough.            -Aesop

Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have more to express gratitude for.    - Zig Ziglar

**Hymn:** Come, You Thankful People Come            VU 516

- 1    Come, you thankful people, come,  
      raise the song of harvest home!  
          All is safely gathered in,  
          safe before the storms begin;  
      God, our maker, does provide  
      for our needs to be supplied:  
          come to God's own temple, come,  
          raise the song of harvest home!
  
- 2    All the world is God's own field,  
      harvests for God's praise to yield;  
          wheat and weeds together sown,  
          here for joy or sorrow grown;  
      first the blade, and then the ear,  
      then the full corn shall appear:  
          Harvest-giver, grant that we  
          wholesome grain and pure may be.
  
- 3    For our God, one day, shall come,  
      and shall take this harvest home;  
          from the field shall in that day  
          all offences purge away;  
      giving angels charge at last  
      in the fire the weeds to cast;  
          but the fruitful ears to store  
          in the garner evermore.

**Opening Prayer:** By Gretta Vosper in Holy Breath, Prayers for Worship and Reflection

On this morning of Thanksgiving, our hearts leap with joy at the wonder with which the world was created. We delight in the gifts the Earth provides. We rejoice that we can live, move and work amongst such beauty. We give thanks that, even in times we know as difficult, traumatic, life-shattering, when we pause and remember the deep connectedness we have with all of creation, even in those darkest moments, our hearts can well up from the depths with gratitude.

May we be inspired this day with the beauty of the world in which we live and love that we, who too often forget to give thanks, might be stirred to living only in thanksgiving for all the passion that life shows to us.

Let our lives be turned into gifts - to each other, to ourselves, to our world. As those born into light, yet ever seeking it, we pray. Amen.

**Prayer of Confession:**

We see the star-filled heavens, we smell the fragrance of a flower, we taste the sweetness of a peach or a tomato and we remember our responsibility to care for the earth which sustains us.

We enjoy the companionship and love of family, friends and community and we remember that we are called to support others in good times and bad.

We bask in the comfort of our homes, of tables laden with food, and in the material goods which make our lives easier and we remember those who do not have the basics of life.

We confess the ease with which we take these countless gifts for granted. Forgive us, Holy Provider, we pray. Amen..

**Words of Affirmation:**

Great Mystery, the One Who Loves, hears our heartfelt cries for the world's needs, for our neighbour's needs, for our own deep needs. God's forgiveness and peace are ours. Thanks be to God!

**Ministry of Music:** Grateful Are We

-Scott Kearns

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 8:7-18 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

**(Do not forget God)**

For YHWH, your God, is bringing you into a good land - a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and in the hills, a land of wheat, barley, vines, fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey, a land where bread will not be scarce and where you will lack for nothing, a land where rocks are iron and copper is dug out of hills. You will eat and have your fill, and you will praise YHWH, your God, for the good land given to you.

Take care that you do not forget YHWH by failing to observe the statutes, decrees and commands that are given you today. When you have had plenty to eat; and have built a fine house to live in, when your flocks and herds, your silver and gold, and all your possessions increase, do not grow proud and forget God; YHWH, who brought you out of Egypt, from the land of slavery. It was YHWH who led you through the vast and desolate wilderness, a thirsty and waterless land, filled with poisonous snakes and scorpions. God made water spring forth for you out of solid rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your ancestors had

never known. God humbled you to test you, and in the end, to make you prosperous. Do not say to yourself, "My own strength and the power of my hands brought this wealth to me." Remember God, YHWH, who enabled you to produce this wealth, to confirm the covenant that God swore to your ancestors, which is fulfilled today.

**Message:** The Practice of Giving Thanks                      Deuteronomy 8:7-18

Well, here I am, back to preaching after four months of combined sabbatical leave and vacation time. When I left at the beginning of June my intention was to return September 1<sup>st</sup> but circumstances conspired against me and I found it necessary to take the extra month.

My sabbatical started out wonderfully even though my planned trip to the UK and the Iona community in Scotland had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. I spent some beautiful days sitting on the patio outside my back door studying Celtic Spirituality and reading books by Eckhart Tolle and other spiritual teachers. And I will talk about some of what I learned as time goes on but then, as I said, circumstances changed.

A friend that I have known for about 40 years died at the beginning of June and her only son to whom her estate was bequeathed died in July. Long story short - this left me as executrix of his estate. My friend had been an only child and she had only one child and had divorced when he was very young so there are no close family members to take on the task. I had agreed to it a couple of years ago thinking that my services would probably never be needed. But one never knows what curves life will throw at us.

So, needless to say, much of my time over the summer was taken up, first consoling and supporting my friend's very distraught son and, following his death, getting properties cleared out and starting the estate process. Being a trustee as it is called, of an estate is a time consuming job and I knew I could not do that and start back at the church at the same time - thus, I decided to take a month of vacation after the sabbatical time.

So here we are - Thanksgiving Sunday - a day set aside for us to focus on what we are grateful for. A day to celebrate the season of autumn with its harvest, its gifts of colour and fresh produce and brisk, sunny mornings. It is a lovely time of year here in Canada.

This year it is especially poignant for many because of the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Some people are facing Thanksgiving without loved ones who have succumbed to the virus. Many people are facing it alone because of the restrictions placed on visiting and travel. Others will forgo large family gatherings in order to protect the most vulnerable in their midst.

I was raised in Erin and many of you may know that the Erin Fall Fair, which was established in 1850, has been a popular Thanksgiving destination for thousands each year. It has been a family tradition for me since before I can remember. In my whole lifetime I think I have only missed it 3 or 4 times. But this year it, too, is cancelled because of Covid-19 which means my family and I will also be rethinking how we mark this holiday. All this is to say that, for many of us, this Thanksgiving will look totally different from what we have experienced before.

But one thing will remain the same - the purpose of the holiday. And that purpose is to take time to stop for a moment and think about what we value and what we are grateful for. It is an opportunity to change our thinking from the tendency to dwell on the negative and to focus on the good and positive things in our lives.

I am one of those who believes that no matter what situation one finds oneself in we can always - always - find something to be thankful for. Something positive can be found in even the worst of situations. It is all a matter of perspective - of how we look at things.

It is unfortunate in this day and age that so much of what we hear and see on the news and over social media promotes a negative perspective. I find it more and more difficult to watch the news each evening as it seems the journalists are intent on reporting events in the worst light possible with not even a hint or pretense of presenting a balanced view. I guess, if it isn't terrible news it isn't considered news at all. It makes it very difficult for most of us to maintain any kind of positive attitude when one has to search out the good news stories.

But maintaining a positive attitude is possible. Although, I find, it requires a lot of practice. You see, it is human nature in these times to tend to look at things from the negative side. And we know that challenging situations and obstacles are a part of life but we can re-train our brains to think positive. And doing so, most experts in mental health tell us, can make all the difference to our daily living and our overall well-being.

It is no surprise to me that many of these experts start with the practice of gratitude and suggest keeping a gratitude journal. That is, write down everyday things that you are grateful for.

Making a gratitude list can alter your mood and keep you focused on the positive in life. Some other suggestions are: to open yourself up to humor. ...spend time with positive people. ... practice positive self-talk. ... identify your areas of negativity. ... and to start every day on a positive note. A key in all of this is to become aware of your thoughts and work to change them.

One person put it this way "Your brain is going to think whether you're aware of it or not, and if you spend just 10 minutes monitoring your thoughts, you might be surprised by how negative you can be." They follow this with the suggestion of having a mantra each day that will stop the negative thoughts in their tracks.

A mantra is a phrase that can be as simple as "I am a happy person" or "Today is a beautiful day." I know it has surprised me the difference it can make by simply saying to myself each morning when I get out of bed "Today is going to be a great day." It seems to set the tone for the rest of the day. It just takes practice.

I am going to share with you a reading that I have shared before from a book called *The Circle of Life* written by Joyce Rupp & Macrina Wiederkehr. And then I am going to offer a little practice you can do that I found in the resources for this week. The reading is called "A Closer Look at Thanksgiving." Joyce Rupp writes:

If you look at a sunset, you might see only the disappearance of daylight.

If you look beneath, you may see darkness opening the splendor of stars.

If you look at illness and disease, you might see only physical diminishment.

If you look beneath, you may see it as a teacher bringing you vital wisdom.

If you look at a broken relationship, you might see only a harsh ending.

If you look beneath, you may see the courageous seeds of new growth.

If you look at lost dreams, you might see only disappointment and doubt.

If you look beneath, you may see the stuff that new dreams contain.

If you look at the death of a loved one, you might see only pervasive sorrow.  
If you look beneath, you may see that love lives on forever in the heart.

If you look at the planet's pain and creatures' woe, you might see only despair.  
If you look beneath, you may see hope woven in the compassionate care of many.

If you look at yourself, you might see only tarnished unfinishedness.  
If you look beneath, you may see your basic goodness shining there.

If you look for the divine being, you might see mostly unresolved questions.  
If you look beneath, you may be astounded at the availability of divine love.

She ends by offering these words: "Thanksgiving is a time to look beneath our external lives for the unwavering love, the ceaseless peace, and the enduring strength that lie in the deep waters of our soul. The more we trust the "unknowable depths" of our existence, the more the power of gratitude becomes a song we daily sing. With what do you struggle today? What might lie beneath that struggle for which you can give thanks?"

Retraining your brain to think positively is similar to working out to build and strengthen muscle. It may not come naturally at first, but with time and practice the skill of positive thinking will become stronger and stronger — and you'll become a happier, more fulfilled person in the process. To help you get started I share the following "First Thing/Last Thing Prayer" .

*As you open your eyes in the morning spend a few moments breathing deeply in and out, slowly waking up. From that place of comfort and rest in your bed, offer a prayer of gratitude for another day of life.*

*At night, just before you drift off to sleep, take some deep breaths in and out, and offer gratitude for the day that has been, thanksgiving for a night of rest, and thanks for another day of life.*

Our scripture reading today tells us to "not forget God" which to me is the same as saying "be thankful and remember you are not alone." Be grateful for the life that is in you for that life is the stuff of the Divine Presence that we call God. The spirit of life and love in you is part of the spirit of life and love that created you. Never forget that - it will make the practice of giving thanks so much easier.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

#### FIRST THING / LAST THING PRAYER

This is a personal prayer practice for the moments after you first open your eyes in the morning and just before closing your eyes for sleep at night. It is a simple and clear acknowledgment of gratitude for what has been and what is to come.

As you open your eyes in the morning spend a few moments breathing deeply in and out, slowly waking up. From that place of comfort and rest in your bed, offer a prayer of gratitude for another day of life.

At night, just before you drift off to sleep, take some deep breaths in and out, and offer gratitude for the day that has been, thanksgiving for a night of rest, and thanks for another day of life. Amen.

**Preparation for Prayer:** *As we prepare our hearts and minds to enter 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:** (beginning with selected verses of Psalm 106 from “Psalms for Praying” by Nan C. Merrill)

Giver of Life, we praise You!  
Bestower of all gifts, we give  
You thanks, for  
your steadfast Love endures forever!  
Who can tell of your generosity in  
all generations,  
the rich variety of the living cosmos?  
Blessed are they who recognize the  
Gift, and  
who follow the precepts of your  
Life at all times.

You remember us, O Beloved, as we  
journey through life;  
help us to live the Mystery,  
That we may fulfill our divine destiny,  
that we may co-create with You,  
that we may live into our divine birthright.

Teach us to be patient with ourselves,  
that we might offer the gift  
of patience to others.  
Comfort us, O Beloved, with the  
tranquility of your Spirit.  
The earth itself will reap the  
Blessing of those  
who become beneficent and live  
with integrity.  
We listen for your Voice, O Giver  
Of the journey, and  
we praise You with grateful hearts!

May we have faith in the unfolding of  
our lives, and  
radical trust in the universe!  
Awaken us to the Oneness of all things,  
to the beauty and truth of Unity.

Our prayers continue as we pray for our brothers and sisters of Trinity Centennial UC Rosemont and for all who work on our behalf in other parts of our country and the world. And



we take a moment to offer our own prayers as we pause in a moment of silence to open our hearts to the Presence of Love that is as near as our breath. We pray in silence.... (silence)...

Today we especially remember \_\_\_\_\_.

Eternal One,

May we become aware of the interdependence  
of all living things, and  
come to know You in every thing,  
and all things in You.

For as we attune to your Presence  
within us,  
we know not separation, and  
joy becomes our dwelling place.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of one who came offering love to all, one who we call brother, Jesus the Christ. We pray now the words he taught us saying...

**Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name,  
thy kindom 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 kindom, 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 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:**

Generous and loving One,  
with grateful hearts we bring our gifts  
as a sign of our love.

We share these gifts because we have been given so much.  
Take and bless these offerings to further your good work in this world.  
May they spread your love to those who need it.  
May they help shine a light where there are shadows. Amen.

**Reading:** For the Fruit of All Creation

VU 227

- 1 For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.  
For the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.  
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,  
silent growth while we are sleeping,  
future needs in earth's safekeeping, thanks be to God.
  
- 2 In the just reward of labour, God's will is done.  
In the help we give our neighbour, God's will is done.  
In our worldwide task of caring  
for the hungry and despairing,  
in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.
  
- 3 For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.  
For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.  
For the wonders that astound us,  
for the truths that still confound us,  
most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

**Blessing:**

Our loving and generous Creator is calling us to share our  
many gifts with the wider community.  
Remember, to be grateful always,  
and to share God's love with others  
as you move into your daily living this week.  
And know that you never go alone,  
for, God, the Spirit of Generosity,  
is with you - always. Amen.

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

God of my life and of every life, may I be blessed enough today to know how lucky I am to be  
alive - and may I share this blessing with all I meet. Amen.