



October 18, 2020

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
Oct 18, 2020
20th Sunday after Pentecost

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 - October 18, 2020 - some of us here in person and some of us on-line and some by the printed word.

The service today is conducted on a contemplative note. I will offer an opportunity to quiet our minds and take a journey inward by means of a guided meditation. We spend so much time every day tending to what is going on around us and outside of us and each of us needs to stop now and again and take a look inside, to connect with our true selves - our Spiritual selves. It can help tremendously in keeping us grounded as we deal with the stresses of life.

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:

All that we are is a gift of God!

All that we have is a gift of God!

Every breath we take...

Every movement we make...

The life in which we partake...

is a gift of God!

And so we gather...

To receive, to give back, to listen,

to teach, to remind ourselves
 that we are blessed in the sharing.
 So come, enter this time of worship.
 Come and find the quiet centre.

Hymn: Come and Find the Quiet Centre VU 374

- 1 Come and find the quiet centre
 in the crowded life we lead,
 find the room for hope to enter,
 find the frame where we are freed:
 clear the chaos and the clutter,
 clear our eyes, that we can see
 all the things that really matter,
 be at peace, and simply be.

- 2 Silence is a friend who claims us,
 cools the heat and slows the pace,
 God it is who speaks and names us,
 knows our being, face to face,
 making space within our thinking,
 lifting shades to show the sun,
 raising courage when we're shrinking,
 finding scope for faith begun.

- 3 In the Spirit let us travel,
 open to each other's pain,
 let our loves and fears unravel,
 celebrate the space we gain:
 there's a place for deepest dreaming,
 there's a time for heart to care,
 in the Spirit's lively scheming
 there is always room to spare!

Words of Wisdom:

Anyone who thinks that fallen leaves are dead has never watched them dancing on a windy day. - Shira Tamir

Fall has always been my favourite season. The time when everything bursts with its last beauty, as if nature had been saving up all year for the grand finale. - Lauren Destefano

Opening Prayer:

Creator of all that is good and wondrous in our lives and who loves us more than we can know, we gather here with hearts open. We gather, some to be healed, some to be inspired, some for companionship and some to learn. Let us feel your presence with and within us as we seek to know you more deeply and more fully. Release us from fear and open us to the wonder of possibility. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Infinite Wisdom, we have looked for you in the wrong places and have missed your presence when it has been right here.

We have created gods out of powers and principalities and bowed before wealth and privilege.

We have admired the external glamour that comes with excess and easy access but missed your presence in humbleness and diversity.

We have walked right past your essence and neglected to notice the divine beauty of internal grace in shared love and respect.

Forgive us, we pray. Open our eyes and teach us to see, hear, feel, and know your presence in everyone and every thing. Amen.

Words of Affirmation:

Know that the Divine is present in every breath we take, every kindness we share, every act of love we witness, and every beauty we embrace.

You can rest assured that you are forgiven just as you can be assured that the sun will rise each morning.

Thanks be to God!

Ministry of Music: Turn! Turn! Turn! (To Everything There is a Season) performed by Spirit Sings**Scripture:** Exodus 33: 12-23 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(God speaks to Moses face to face)

Moses said to YHWH, "Look, you have told me to lead this people, but you have never told me who you will send with me. You have said to me, 'I know you by name,' and 'You have found favour with me.' So if I have found favour with you, teach me your ways so that I might truly know you, and that I might find favour in your eyes. Remember that these people are the nation you have chosen as your own."

YHWH replied, "My Presence will go with you. Let this set your mind at ease."

Moses continued, "If your Presence does not come with us, do not send us from this place. How can it ever be known that we have found favour in your eyes - I, and your people - if you do not accompany us? It is your Presence alone that will mark us - I, and your people - from all others of the people on the earth."

And YHWH said to Moses, "As you have asked, I will do, for you have found favour in my eyes, and I have known you by name."

Then Moses said, "Please, show me your glory!"

YHWH said, "I will make all of my goodness pass before your eyes, and I will pronounce my Name, I AM, in your presence. I will show my grace to whom I will show my grace, and I will show my compassion to whom I will show my compassion. But you cannot see my face," God continued, "No human can see my face and live."

Then YHWH said, "Look - here is a place beside me, where you can stand on a rock. When my glory passes you, I will place you in a cleft in the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. When I remove my hand you will see my back; but my face, you must not see."

Message:

First, a word about the scripture. Two things pop out at me from this reading. One is God's name - "I AM." To me this is a very descriptive name - it tells me that God just is. God exists as a presence, an energy, a force - not a being, and especially not a human being. This presence is always with us as it was with Moses and all the ancestors.

The other thing that speaks to me from this reading is that we can never know this presence completely. Moses had the same longing that humans have had from the beginning of time - to understand the mystery that is God. To know God 'face to face,' as the passage puts it - in human terms as we would know another person. We long to understand but it is not possible. We cannot understand. We can often only 'know' the working of the Spirit after the fact, by the way things have worked out. Hindsight, as they say, is 20/20.

The holy presence, although intimately personal, is far beyond our human understanding and that is the part we find hardest to accept. And that is why many feel compelled to put a human face with human qualities on it. We want to understand and so we put the unknowable "I AM" into understandable human boxes. And that is all well and good as long as we remember our human limitations of language and understanding.

Spirit is best 'known' through experience. So - Today we are going on a journey - a journey inward. For it is there that we find the great I AM presence that we call God. It is part of each of us but we often forget that and we neglect to take the time to connect with that part of ourselves. So today I invite you to do just that. This guided meditation is called *Entering the Heart of Autumn* and is based on one written by Joyce Rupp in a book she wrote with Macrina Weiderkehr called *The Circle of Life*.

In case you are wondering about the word 'meditation' - don't worry. Just let your imagination take you where it will. It is as simple as that.

First, I invite you sit comfortably in your seat. You will find this works best if you close your eyes... So eyes closed or not just relax your body and let the seat hold you.... as you feel your body settle notice your breath entering and leaving your body.... take a few deep breaths... notice the air entering and leaving through your nostrils... Notice your chest rise and fall with the movement of the air coming and going... each time you breathe out feel your body relaxing more deeply... let any tension go out with your breath... let your spirit rest... gently let go of the busy thoughts in your mind... allow your whole self to slow down...and sink into a quiet place of ease and comfort as you breathe in and out a few times....

Now let your thoughts drift inward... find that place within yourself where the real you dwells.... Once there picture in your minds eye, a peaceful and inviting wooded area... There is a trail that meanders through the trees. Look for it... When you find it, begin to walk on this narrow path... As you walk along, notice that it is autumn. The air feels cooler... Hear the crunch of the dry leaves beneath your feet... smell the odor of tree bark and dry leaves... See the sunlight coming through the trees... Everywhere you glance, you see magnificent coloured leaves of gold, rust, orange, and yellow... Look up and see little gusts of wind twirl more leaves to the ground...

You now come to a widening of the path that leads to a circle of oak trees... In this circle there is an old, but sturdy wooden bench. Go to the bench and sit down... Relax there and let the mellow beauty of the woods penetrate your whole being...

As you sit on the bench, reflect on your life. Ponder the part of your life that feels satisfying and rewarding:... think about the dimension of your life that is like the bounty and fullness of an autumn harvest... the part that is mellow and fulfilling...

Now look at the leaves hanging on the branches... Watch a leaf as it breaks free from a twig and twirls to the ground... As you watch, become aware of a part of your life that is also hanging on a branch... a part that is about to break free and fall to the ground.... See what it is that you need to let go of... that no longer needs to be a part of your life... Take some time to be with this...

What does it feel like to be there among the beauty of the trees with their dying leaves falling to the ground?... Is it consoling?... does it hurt? ... Is it helpful?... Is it challenging? ... does it encourage you? ... or discourage you? Stay with these things for a moment.

Finally, you arise from the bench in the woods to go back the way you came. But before you leave the circle of trees, stoop down and pick up one leaf... Notice what colour and shape it is.... Hold it to your cheek and feel the texture of it... lay it carefully in the palm of your hand and notice its details.... Now begin the journey on the path toward the place where you started...

As you arrive at the entrance to the woods, turn around and look once more at the autumn trees... Look at the leaf in your hand.... Is there anything stirring your heart?... What is the message your leaf has for you?.... Repeat it slowly and quietly to yourself as you let the leaf fall gently to the ground.... Leave it behind to celebrate your desire and willingness to let go and grow...

Now slowly become aware, once again, of your breath moving in and out of your body... and gradually and gently, when you are ready, come back to this time and place. We will sit quietly for a few moments. Think about your experience in the woods and mentally note anything you would like to remember.

An important part of this type of meditation is to integrate our experience by sharing with others. We cannot do that here so I invite you to take some time after the service or later today to reflect on your experience of this meditation and share your thoughts, feelings or questions that may have arisen for you with someone you trust.

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: *(beginning with 'Resting in Love' - by Bruce Sanguin - If Darwin Prayed, pg 135)*

O Holy One,
by your grace
we enter now
the sacred realm,
a place of deep connection
with you,
with each other,
with the planet,
and with all creation.

By your grace,
the walls that isolate fall;
fear dissolves into trust;
arrogance is gentled by compassion;
our need to prove ourselves is tempered
by self-acceptance.
Now, we rest in a love
that helps us see our lives
as part of a great unity,
a coherence of grace.
We join with all creation in
proclaiming your glory,
and the glory of being alive.

Our prayers continue as we pray for our brothers and sisters of Knox UC, Ayr and for all those who work on our behalf in other parts of our country and the world. In this time of Covid-19 we are growing weary of our daily lives being restricted and upset by the need to be careful. It is hard to struggle against an unseen enemy that can come at us from who knows where and strike with devastating consequences.

Strengthen us, bolster our resolve to keep each other and the most vulnerable among us safe. Inspire us to be creative and find ways to cope and to help others cope. Open our minds to learning new things and remove the resistance to change that comes so naturally to us. For, in the end, we still live in your beautiful world and, although we don't know how right now, in the words of Julian of Norwich we know that, "all will be well, and all will be well and all manner of thing shall be well."

And so we pray for ourselves now in a moment of silence. Hear the prayers of our hearts as we lift up our concerns, our joys and our questions.... (silence)... Today we remember especially_____.

Infinite Wisdom, we do not always recognize your presence but we know you are with us always. Help us to see your face beaming at us in every face of humanity we encounter. And through these help us to know you and your love more perfectly.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of our brother, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray together 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

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:

Presence of Being, out of our privilege we give. Out of our longing, we seek your face. Bless these offerings and claim them for yourself, knowing we give them with thankful hearts. Use them to further your good work in this troubled world. Amen.

Hymn: In the Quiet Curve of Evening VU 278

- 1 In the quiet curve of evening,
 in the sinking of the days,
 in the silky void of darkness, you are there.
 In the lapses of my breathing,
 in the space between my ways,
 in the crater carved by sadness, you are there.
 You are there, you are there, you are there.

- 2 In the rests between the phrases,
 in the cracks between the stars,
 in the gaps between the meaning, you are there.
 In the melting down of endings,
 in the cooling of the sun,
 in the solstice of the winter, you are there.
 You are there, you are there, you are there.

- 3 In the mystery of my hungers,
in the silence of my rooms,
in the cloud of my unknowing, you are there.
In the empty cave of grieving,
in the desert of my dreams,
in the tunnel of my sorrow, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

Blessing:

Know that you are the very face of God.
Go now and shine!
And know that you never go alone
for God, the source,
Christ, the example and
the Holy Spirit, the bearer
of love is with you always.
Amen.

Postlude:

Prayer of the Week:

Spirit, life, and soul of all creation, in moments of change, when all we know starts to fade away and yet before we know what is coming, bless us with confidence in your wisdom and guidance. Help us, as the leaves begin to change and fall, to let go of what is no longer needed in our lives. Free us to accept a new day and a new way. Amen.