



October 25, 2020

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
Oct 25, 2020
Anniversary Celebration Sunday

Presiding today - Rev. Marion Loree
Message by Rev. Stephen Huntley

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 25, 2020 - some of us here in person and some of us on-line and some by the printed word.

Today we are marking the 175th Anniversary of Melville United Church. There had been many celebrations and special events planned but, alas, Covid-19 has put a stop to all that and we cannot celebrate in the manner we would like to at this time. I believe some of those planned events will take place at a future date when it is safe to do so.

In the meantime, today we can enjoy the presence and the words of our guest speaker the Rev. Stephen Huntley who was minister here at Melville from 1998 to 2009. We welcome you, Stephen, and look forward to hearing your wisdom for us today.

So I invite all of 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.

Special Anniversary Greeting from the Moderator of the United Church

Call to Worship:

We are people on a journey -
A journey of faith and hope in God's love.
This congregation has been on the journey
a long, long time - 175 years.
Come, let us continue the journey,

keeping our sights on the promises of God's grace.
We are invited to follow the Christ wherever we are led.
Come, let us journey on
as we worship together.

Hymn: We Are Pilgrims on a Journey **VU 595** (vs 1,2,3,6)

- 1 We are pilgrims on a journey,
fellow travelers on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

- 2 Sister, let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

- 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

- 6 Brother, let me be your servant,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Words of Wisdom:

The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.

To get through the hardest journey we need take only one step at a time, but we must keep on stepping.
- a Chinese Proverb

Opening Prayer:

We have visions, Great Creator. We hold images and dreams in our spirits that we long to see manifest, but for now, sustain us for the journey. Be known to us as we open to your Spirit and help us to cast our visions into the realm of possibility. Be known to us and guide us ever closer to healing and wholeness. Be known to us and help us to see that every step is balm itself. Be known to us and help us know that every effort, every intention to love and share compassion is your love embodied. Be known to us as we gather in community, and help us to see what is true now, as well as to hold the vision for what is possible. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Just a little further... Just a little more... Just a little longer... Just a little closer.
As we journey in faith, we have often made the mistake of believing that the destination is the goal. We forget that the journey itself holds blessings often unseen and unknown. We join with Abram and Sarai and Moses and Zipporah in holding visions of what is possible.

Yet, we confess, we often forget that our dreams and visions, whatever they are, can become reality if we remember to let your Spirit guide us.

Forgive us, and open our eyes to see the treasure that is in our midst as we journey together in your love. Amen.

Words of Affirmation:

Look around and take it in!

Though we journey together toward new life, and always will, God is with us now. Though we seek better days and long for greater healing, God is with us now.

Though we are called to challenge the status quo of injustice, God is with us now.

Thanks be to God!

Ministry of Music: Yet Not I, but Through Christ in Me -Spirit Sings Praise Band

We will enjoy a recording of our praise team, Spirit Sings, in the sanctuary today. For those watching on-line the recording can be found on Melville's You Tube channel and on Tuesday, when she is in the office, Lynda will incorporate the music into the recording of today's service.

Scripture: Genesis 12:1-5 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(God calls Abram)

YHWH said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people, and the home of your parents, and go to a place I will show you. I will make of you a great people. I will bless you and make your name so great that it will be used in blessings. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse those who curse you. And all the people on the face of the earth will be blessed through you."

Abram, who was 75 years old when he left Haran, began the journey as YHWH had instructed, and his nephew Lot went with them. Abram took Sarai his spouse, Lot, all their possessions, and all the dependents they acquired in Haran, and set out for Canaan.

Scripture: Exodus 3:1-6, 10-14 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(God calls Moses)

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock deep into the wilderness, Moses came to Horeb, the mountain of God.

The messenger of YHWH appeared to Moses in a blazing fire from the midst of a thornbush. Moses saw that the bush was ablaze with fire, yet it wasn't consumed. Moses said, "Let me go over and look at this remarkable sight - and see why the bush doesn't burn up!"

When YHWH saw Moses coming to look more closely, God called out to him from the midst of the bush: "Moses! Moses!"

Moses answered, "I am here."

God said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground! "I am the God of your ancestors," the voice continued, "the God of Sarah and Abraham, the God of Rebecca and Isaac, the God of Leah and Rachel and Jacob!"

"Now go! I will send you to Pharaoh, to bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

God answered, "I will be with you, and this is the sign by which you will know that it is I who have sent you: after you bring my people out of Egypt, you will all worship at this very mountain."

"But," Moses said, "when I go to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is this god's name?' what am I to tell them?"

God replied, "I AM AS I AM. This is what you will tell the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Scripture: Matthew 28:16-20 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(Jesus commissions the disciples)

The Eleven made their way to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had summoned them. At the sight of the risen Christ they fell down in homage, though some doubted what they were seeing. Jesus came forward and addressed them in these words:

“All authority has been given me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name of Abba God, and of the Only Begotten, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, even until the end of the world!”

Message: GO -Rev. Stephen Huntley

Genesis 12: 1-5; Exodus 3 selected verses; Matthew 28: 16-20

God calls each of us to leave behind our agenda's or "whatever we are pre-occupied with" and "GO". Lead by the Holy Spirit we step out in confidence and hope - knowing that wherever that takes us, God will provide.

*GO! – like a Go Train leaving the station, has a purpose and direction. That purpose and direction is **changed lives**.*

Greetings on behalf of Kate, and Family, Thanks you for the opportunity to return and celebrate an important anniversary with you, 175 years

Seeing how I've not preached at an anniversary service before, I thought history to be helpful, this is my first. Referring to the first time I was asked to preach at my home church in Walkerton, now 33 years ago. I asked for advice, "what should I talk about?" The answer I got was, "It's your home church, they love you, if you can recite the alphabet, you'll be just fine! I'm not sure this will work at an Anniversary Service!

This morning's scriptures, all three of them...hope you got it all!! All have one thing in common, (actually two) they all contain the word "Go!" and, they are also involved in three great Movements of the biblical story.

Coincidence? I don't think so... (CS Lewis said, "Coincidence is just another name for God!")

FIRST: Genesis, Chapter 12. Abraham is called by God to go into a foreign land. "Leave your country, your people and your Father's household and go to the land I will show you! No more details than that-not even a map! Abraham will be the first of great movements in the Bible. Perhaps that is the lesson, God's people are asked to GO. The church is not to satisfied, locked down in one place – goes for us too! Abraham (with help from Sarah) will also be the Father of all three monotheistic. Judaism, Islam, and Christianity all claim him as their Patriarch.

SECOND-MOSES: Exodus 3 chapter. "Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush."

"I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So now, **GO!** I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt." God's people are to get the move on!

THIRD – THE DISCIPLES – The Great Commission Matthew records that the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore **GO!** and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

So, these three great events/movements of the Bible all started with God saying one word, **GO!** Notice, he doesn't tell them what to do or how to accomplish these great asks, just GO. It is hard to imagine that if we were asked to leave home and all that is familiar and strike out on an adventure on one word GO. that, we might have a few more questions. Have you left home for God? Perhaps some have.

And it is no small undertaking they have been given. Abraham, to be the father of a great nation; Moses, to liberate his people, the nation of Jews; and The 12 well, 11 disciples...Judas, and Go to all the nations of the known world and spread the Good News!

It is easy to read about these movements and be wowed and to immediately think, “Well that doesn't apply to me, that was long ago.” Yet we too are asked to GO! God didn't say, go home, relax, I'll put you on the practice squad and if your needed, or I'll give you a call. No, God's call is for everyone. It may not mean moving geographically but moving in our own person – Not be satisfied with what the world thinks and does – be someone who speaks for God in our own communities. We aren't necessarily asked to go to another country, but new land – a area of work foreign to us. We are asked to GO, like any “Go” Train' it leaves the station and has a purpose. I would contend that God's purpose involves changing lives. To bring healing and hope to people everywhere. And like today, our world needs healing and hope like never before.

There is one very important statement given to all THREE and to US. “I will be with you!” God say to Abraham, Moses, and The Disciples. *Will come back to this later.*

We are here today to celebrate 175 years of Melville UC. We wouldn't be here if people hadn't answered the call and Go! We celebrate the Past, Present, and Future.

When I was asked to preach on this Anniversary, I was very surprised to see the number 175. I realized a couple of weeks ago that I needed more history on the church to give context. I contacted Graeme and Millie Chalmers (they arrived the year I left). The 3 ARTICLES in the Wellington Advertiser.

While I was aware that the name Melville was attached to a Scottish Reformer from the past (didn't know it went back to the 16 hundred's, I didn't know much about the history in the 19th century – and more modern times. If some of you are not familiar with the history, a short lesson.

George Smellie and his followers met.

Melville's roots are deeply Presbyterian. Melville UC gets its name from the 16th century Presbyterian leader Andrew Melville, who championed the cause of the independence of the

church. Independence meant that they had the right to make their own decisions, as opposed to the Official Presbyterians Church of Scotland. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland was then caught up in the movements of Kings and wars between English and countries in Europe. It is a complex history, not one to spell out here. Takeaway, is that congregations in both Scotland and in Canada wanted greater say in running their churches. Scots have a history of being fiercely independent!

In 1843 Rev. George Smellie arrived as the new minister for Presbyterian Church in Fergus, just as another division gripped the Church of Scotland, and over the same basic issues as previously. At 32, he was ambitious, intelligent, and a man of unshakeable opinions. The unrest had travelled from Scotland to Canada, and Smellie did nothing to hide his sympathy with the dissidents. Rev Smellie would dominate the history of Melville for ½ century. Rev Smellie would lead a break-away from the Church of Scotland and what is now St Andrews Presbyterian.

After a period of time worshipping in various places in town, Rev Smellie and congregants made plans to construct a new church, a building committee. On Oct. 13, 1845, the new church was named after Andrew Melville, the 16th century Presbyterian leader who championed the cause of the independence of the church. The new church, Melville Presbyterian, was erected across the river. The church was built of stone, with seating for 400. The contracts included construction of the manse and totaled \$3,200.

During the early part of 1870's, there came a boom of growth in Fergus following completion of the railway. Melville's membership grew well past the 1,000 mark, making it easily the largest congregation in the county outside Guelph. With a growing congregation, along with serious building issues in the church, a decision was made to construct a new church. Where we sit today! Like Moses, Rev. George Smellie did not live to set foot in the promised land. The patriarch of Presbyterianism died in 1896, at the age of 85.

Early in 1899, The building committee, headed by cattle dealer Hugh Black, advertised for tenders in March. Louis C. Wideman of Guelph accepted the commission and agreed to design a structure within the \$12,000 budget established by the congregation. However, when the Building Committee, after a month of bickering, tallied up the final construction, it ballooned to the outrageous price of \$19,000!

The official opening took place in May of 1900. In ensuing years, other additions were added to the church – Sunday School – Christian Education. In 1925, Melville Presbyterian Church joined the United Church of Canada, part of the church's past was some Methodist roots, decided to join the union.

(lots of colorful stories – don't have time to tell) Very colorful. If Myrtle Black was still with us, she could have supplied a bit more detail. She often spoke about history to me, especially stories of Rev Smellie! Broke the mold..Big heart for this church! Nfld – Told me stories about previous ministers!! Myrtle had a lot of GO! in her.

History is important in churches; we are built on a firm foundation. It takes a lot of work, dedication, and faith to make a church GO! We thank those in the past, who we remember even this day and we pick up the "torch" and Go!

The church is far different today, so much has happened, the world is a very different place today. We do not live in Christendom of the past 175 years. This is not all bad – just different. Pluralism. We can take heart from the past. Chinese Proverb, “The only thing certain in life is change!” Except perhaps for one, – Jesus! Hebrews, the same Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow.

My Message today is "Go" God calls each of us to leave behind our agenda's or "whatever we are pre-occupied with" and "GO". Lead by the Holy Spirit we step out in confidence and hope - knowing that wherever that takes us, God will provide.

GO! – like a Go Train leaving the station, has a purpose and direction. That purpose and direction is **changed lives**. Faith in God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit we venture into the future. So many lives have been changed through the work of the Gospel. You are part of that work. Where do we Go to from here?

I believe that the Spirit is challenging us to move beyond the church walls. There is no denying that we are a much smaller entity in the societies we live. Small is not a bad thing, often in history large entities can become fat, in Christianity it was the smaller groups who made the biggest impact; Monks, monasteries during the first centuries.

Example: I'm a part of a Zoom Meeting, that meets studying Spirituality and Aging. I turned 65 last week. There are new mediums to explore the Gospel and to have an impact on people's lives. The church has not always embraced new technologies, perhaps Covid 19 offers opportunity, not just crisis.

There are great challenges ahead today. Is the Spirit calling you to “Go”; to spread the Good News through your life and actions? Our scripture today contained the word “GO”, just go. But that is not all. I come back to something I said earlier.

To each of these persons, Abraham, Moses, and the Disciples, they were told that they would not be on their own, “I will be with you!” The Lord of heaven and earth would accompany and “go before them.” Let's examine that further.

One day back in the spring I was driving back from Hamilton, where I am working as a Supply Minister and Listening to ‘Tapestry’ on CBC Radio. It was an interview with Rabbi, **Harold Kushner**, the man who wrote the popular book, “When Bad Things Happen to Good People.” 1970. What I didn't understand from the book, was that he was writing a very personal memoir, he and his wife had recently lost their son to a complicated illness at the age of 13. They knew he wouldn't live very long. He and his wife asked the question, “If God had said to them, “I'm going to give you a child for 13 years, then take away, would you have said yes?” They answered definitely, YES.

Rabbi Kushner then turned to the story of Moses and the Burning Bush and God's call to Moses to “GO” to go back to Egypt and lead the Hebrew people out of Egypt. God says to Moses, “I will be with you”. Moses replies, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (we get that!!). Then a peculiar conversation ensues, basically ending with Moses saying to God, “Who did you say your name was?” The reason Moses asks, is that time there was a pantheon of God's, weather God's, God's of war, fertility, agriculture, etc. Moses is asking, which God are you?

God replies, "I am who I am."

Kushner then explains that Rabbis gave it – a theological term – to distinguish it from a name we could name. In other words, "I am who I am – you can't understand me." So... I Am.

What he is saying, Kushner says "I am the God who is with you when you try to do something that you think is too hard for you."

Have you ever experienced a time like that? Was there a time in your life that you thought you couldn't make it, the challenge just too difficult? Loss of a job, a friend, a loved one, or a loss of faith? Maybe, that time for you is now. In these times the Bible is telling us – God was with you. To whom did you turn? God is with you.

You see, the real proof of God is in the experiential, not certitude. We "GO" -step out in faith and trust, believing that God is with us. The opposite to faith is not doubt it is certitude. It's ok to doubt or we go through times in our life when we doubt. For Melville and the greater church "GO" God is with you.

Amen.

Ministry of Music: Tambourin –Francois-Joseph Gossec
A flute solo played by Linda Mae Ogilvie
accompanied by Colleen Weber

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:

Infinite Wisdom, we give thanks for your presence always with us. We have been on many journeys of life and faith in our lives - journeys of family and career, of friendship and imagination, of personal fulfillment and community building. And we live, always, with the hope of someday arriving into the light of fulfillment with hopes and dreams realized.

God of our journey, God who is present with us at all times, God who leads and guides and is amongst us in word, and wisdom, in spirit, love, and life, there have been many endings and beginnings in our journeys.

For all the endings in our lives, no matter how hard they have been, we give thanks. As a community we have struggled with many things, yet we have learned so much, and seek to feel your presence with us also in all our new beginnings.

We pray that we will be just and kind in our actions and words. We pray that we will be compassionate in our dealings with each other and with all whom we encounter along the way. We pray that we will recognize your wise guides, and be honest in our learning.

We know that some of our dreams may not ever be fully realized, and yet, we know that to let go of the possibilities is to let go of your heartbeat in our lives.

We seek to be a people who bring honour to your name as we live in the courage, persistence, and truthfulness that we have learned from the Christ, and from those who have followed him wisely through the years.

We pray today for our brothers and sisters of Grand Valley UC and for all those who journey to other parts of our country and the world to work on our behalf. And we pray for ourselves as we open our hearts and minds and let the light of your love illuminate our joys, our concerns, our sorrows and our thanksgivings. Hear the prayers of our hearts.... (silence)... Today we pray for _____.

New beginnings and fresh choices continue, Holy Presence, for we live and move and have our being in your unfolding story. Be with us as we head into the future as you were with our Melville ancestors over the past 175 years.

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

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:

We dedicate the journey to you, today, Divine Friend. With thanksgiving for all the beauty and potential we can see from this vantage point as your people, we give of ourselves and our resources. Bless and transform them, we pray. Amen.

Hymn: One More Step Along the World I Go

VU 639 (vs 1,3,4,5)

- 1 One more step along the world I go,
one more step along the world I go,
from the old things to the new,
keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

- 3 As I travel through the bad and good,
keep me travelling the way I should;
where I see no way to go
you'll be telling me the way, I know:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

- 4 Give me courage when the world is rough,
keep me loving though the world is tough,
leap and sing in all I do,
keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

- 5 You are older than the world can be,
you are younger than the life in me,
ever old and ever new,
keep me travelling along with you:
And it's from the old I travel to the new;
keep me travelling along with you.

Blessing:

Let us continue the journey!
Let us go from this place
to love God, our neighbours and ourselves.
Go! And find the peace that comes with the confidence
of knowing that the love of God,
the peace of Christ
and the companionship of the Holy Spirit
is with us - always!. Amen.

Postlude:

Prayer of the Week:

Creator of life, you set before us the promise of freedom and opportunity to live in a just and compassionate relationship with one another and all of life. You promise to be with us along the way. May we live up to our own and your expectations to love with extravagance all whom we meet along the way. Amen.