



**November 8, 2020**

Melville United Church  
300 St. Andrew Street West, Fergus, ON N1M 1N9  
Mailing address: PO Box 41, Fergus, ON N1M2W7  
519-843-1781

Team Ministry

Minister of Worship, Pastoral Care & Outreach	Rev. Marion Loree
Faith Formation & Youth	Martha Duncan
Ministry of Music Team	Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber
Office Administrator	Lynda Rivet
Custodian	Robert Mitchell
Chair of Church Council	Allan Hons
Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain	Alison Rainford, Rev. Marion Loree
Office hours	9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. T., Th. & F.
E-Mail	<a href="mailto:secretary@melvilleunited.com">secretary@melvilleunited.com</a>
Web Site	<a href="http://www.melvilleunited.com">www.melvilleunited.com</a>
Pastoral Care Numbers	519-835-8605, 519-843-3841

**Melville United Church**  
**November 29, 2020**  
**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent**

---

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 29, 2020 - some of us here in person and some of us on-line and some by the printed word.*

*Today we begin the journey of Advent - a journey which ends in a stable. A humble place that symbolizes the way God's love enters the darkness of our world. Advent is a time of waiting but it is also a time of preparation as we prepare our hearts and clear the way for love to enter.*

*So, I invite you to take some time 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:** Gifts with Vision

[www.giftswithvision.ca](http://www.giftswithvision.ca)

Christmas Appeal

**Joys, Concerns & Accomplishments:**

**Lighting of the Advent Candle** *(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)*

Our Advent journey has begun.

We prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth.

We prepare to embrace the good news of the Light which shines in the darkness.

We prepare to be transformed.

Today we light a candle reminding us of the way of HOPE. *(The first candle is lit)*

As the flame dances, may the Spirit dance within our hearts, drumming the rhythm of hope that enlivens us all.

**Song:** Hope Is a Star VU 7 - verse 1

Hope is a star that shines in the night,  
leading us on till the morning is bright.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,  
and none shall be afraid.

**Words of Wisdom:** Moderator's Advent Message

**Call to Worship:**

We come a scattered people, tossed about like leaves in a storm.  
 We come a worried people, minds filled with headlines of disaster.  
 We come a waiting people, yearning to see the face of God.  
 Gather us in, O God, and call us your people once more.  
 Joining with all the cosmos, with the angels of heaven,  
 and with the peoples of the earth,  
 let us worship our God together.

**Hymn:** O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

**VU 1** (*verses 1,2,6,7*)

- 1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
 and ransom captive Israel  
 that mourns in lowly exile here  
 until the Son of God appear.  
     Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
     shall come to thee, O Israel.
- 2 O come, O Wisdom from on high,  
 who orders all things mightily;  
 to us the path of knowledge show,  
 and teach us in her ways to go. R
- 6 O come, O Dayspring, from on high,  
 and cheer us by your drawing nigh;  
 disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
 and death's dark shadows put to flight. R
- 7 O come, Desire of nations, bind  
 all peoples in one heart and mind;  
 O bid our sad divisions cease,  
 and be for us the Prince of Peace. R

**Opening Prayer:**

Holy Presence, on this first Sunday of Advent we come with a mixture of feelings. Our preparations for the season will not be the same this year. But restrictions do not change the meaning of Christmas. Open us to the possibilities that lay before us. Remind us that maybe this year is the year we focus more on how we can be present to those we love instead of focusing on the presents we give them. May our Advent journey bring us a closer connection to your Spirit of love. Amen.

**Ministry of Music:**

## Sacrament of Holy Communion

*For those who are present - as you entered the sanctuary this morning you were given a little bag with grapes and crackers in it - these are the elements of communion today. For those watching on-line, I invite you to pause the video for a moment and gather some juice or a grape and a cracker or bread and then resume. At the appropriate time, you will be invited to consume first your cracker and then your grapes.*

### **Invitation:**

As we come to this table we are reminded that this is not the table of Melville United Church; nor is it the table of the United Church of Canada or any particular denomination. It is the table of Jesus the Christ, the family feast of the whole people of God. All who seek to be nourished and sustained in the journey of faith and long to live justly and in peace with their neighbour, are welcome here.

God is with us as we open our hearts  
to Spirit and to one another.  
Let us offer our gratitude  
for it is right to give thanks and praise.

### **Communion Prayer:**

God of hope, we embark on this Advent journey with longing  
and pregnant with anticipation of what is to come.

An excited electricity courses within us  
as we seek the hope that only you can bring.  
Grant us the courage that flows from hope,  
the courage of expectation,  
the courage of belief in a better way.

God of peace, you ask us to live into the promise  
of being your covenant people.  
We come to you this day with a peace which passes all understanding  
knowing that you can do all things,  
and yet you choose to use us as your agents of peace.  
Grant us strength and fortitude to be your peacemakers.

God of joy, we too often overlook or dismiss the great joy in our lives,  
because we are too busy planning the next best thing,  
yet in this Advent season, we ask that you slow us down,  
let us move against the grain of the glitz and glamour  
and business of our days,  
help us to let go of our resentment of Covid-19 restrictions  
to appreciate the fullness of life you have given us,  
and the joy to be found even in this difficult time.

God of love, in our brokenness you did not turn away from us,  
rather your Spirit resides in the world as part of us.  
You see and hear and feel all of our hopes and dreams for peace and joy.

You come to show us what love truly means.  
 Grant us hearts that can be changed to bear the love bestowed upon us.  
 We celebrate the gift of Christ in the bread and fruit of the vine.  
 May they be for us a visible sign of the invisible grace  
 shown in the life and death of Jesus and showered on us daily.  
 May they strengthen us for the task of being Christ's hands and feet,  
 displaying hope, peace, joy, and love to the world. Amen!

**Words of Institution:**

On the night before he died Jesus took bread, offered thanks,  
 and gave it to his friends saying, "Take, eat. Each time you do this, remember me."  
 In the same way, he took the cup, offered thanks,  
 and gave it to them saying, "Take, drink. Each time you do this, remember me."

And so now we are bold to do the same, to take these simple, ordinary things, and let them be  
 for us reminders that Jesus is always with us.

Holy Wisdom, Comforter, Advocate, Friend, may these gifts of creation bless our lives with the  
 presence and power of the risen Christ. May they give us comfort and strength, peace and  
 wisdom. May they make us whole.

**Breaking of the Bread & Pouring of the Cup**

The body of Christ - the bread of life.  
 The blood of Christ - the cup of blessing.

Jesus said: "I am the bread of life,  
 whoever comes to me will never be hungry:  
 whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

**Sharing the Elements:**

The body of Christ - the bread of life. (*Bread or cracker is consumed*).  
 The blood of Christ - the cup of blessing. (*Juice or grape is consumed*)

**Post Communion Prayer:**

We give thanks that bread broken brings wholeness;  
 that wine poured out replenishes;  
 that time spent with the Risen Christ  
 and one another is gift and grace. Amen.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 64:1-9 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would shake  
 before you! As fire kindles the brushwood and the fire makes water boil, make your Name  
 known to your adversaries, and let the nations tremble before you!

When you did awesome things that we could not have expected, you came down, and  
 the mountains quaked in your presence! From ages past no ear has ever heard, no eye has  
 ever seen any God but you intervening for those who wait for you!  
 Oh, that you would find us doing right, that we would be mindful of you in our ways!

You are angry because we are sinful. We sinned for so long - how can we be saved? All of us became unclean and soiled, even our good deeds are polluted. We have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind. No one calls upon your Name, there is none who clings to you, for you hid your face from us and delivered us into the hands of our sins.

Yet you are our mother and father, YHWH, we are the clay and you are the potter, we are all the work of your hands. Don't let your anger go beyond measure, O God, don't remember our sins forever, for we are all your people.

**Message: Hope**

Isaiah 64:1-9 (based on What does it look like? By John Moses, Gathering ACE 2020 pp 68-70)

'Hope' - definition 1. Desire accompanied by expectation of fulfilment. 2. Confident expectation.

After 8 or 9 months of Covid-19 restrictions I am in need of a little hope. The phrase 'pandemic fatigue' has become something I am beginning to understand. I don't know about you but I am sick and tired of Covid-19 and the accompanying restrictions it has brought. I suspect that many of you might be feeling the same.

At the beginning of the pandemic back in March it didn't seem so difficult to hunker down at home for a time, to be with family members and friends only via Zoom, Messenger or Facetime. We were more than willing to do what we could to help stop the spread of this deadly virus. Many of us used the time to get caught up on domestic chores, enjoy more family time, or simply took some time to relax a bit, read or maybe get some extra exercise outdoors. Entertainers took to social media to bolster people's spirits with on-line concerts or recorded porch performances. It was a great time of pulling together to fight a common enemy.

But as time went on it became harder to keep those spirits up. Gradually the cheerful "we are in this together and will get through it together" mantra lost its glow and we were left with the stark reality that this pandemic may go on for much longer than we thought it would. That became especially evident when trips abroad were cancelled and vacation plans had to be altered, and then beloved events around Thanksgiving were curtailed and now Christmas is being affected, too.

All the events which bring us together in a spirit of love and joy at this time of year are not happening because now we are into what is called the 'second wave' of the pandemic. Infection rates are hitting record numbers and hospitals are worried about reaching their capacity to care for the infected. Mental health issues, domestic violence and suicides are on the rise. People are fearful of losing their homes because of the lack of income with businesses being shut and jobs lost - and people are dying.

This is the picture that is painted for us everyday on the news. Is it any wonder that I, and probably many of you, are feeling deflated, fed up, and tired of it all? Since Trump's defeat in the US election there doesn't seem to be any other news in the world except the dire predictions about Covid-19. I don't even like to turn on the news anymore. Does this sound familiar to any of you? If I believed in a God who sits out there somewhere I would be

tempted to shake my fist in anger like the writer of the Isaiah reading today and demand that God come down and save us. But that is not what God is like and that is not how God works.

And so we come to Advent - a time in our church calendar of waiting and preparing our hearts to receive, once again, God's love in the presence of an innocent child who arrives in the dark of a winter's night. The word and theme for this first Sunday of Advent is - Hope. But hope can seem in short supply these days.

So what does hope look like in a time such as this? What does hope feel like? What is it like to live in hope?

Hope might look like families and children painting rocks and placing them where nurses and medical staff and first responders can see them each time they head in to their shift at the hospital because the children know the value of gratitude and encouragement. Hope might look like churches and charities adapting their community meals to a take out or delivery model so those in need don't go hungry because their desire to help others hasn't waned. Hope might look like dance and music groups holding classes on Zoom because they know that participation overcomes apathy and feelings of isolation. Hope might look like churches figuring out how to put Services of Worship on-line so those who are isolated at home can continue to feel connected because they know the value of community. Hope might look like young people marching to call for action on the climate crisis which continues even when we are in lock down because they aren't about to give up or be silent. Hope might look like protestors united in their conviction that Black Lives Matter because they know that every life is precious and the racism must stop. And perhaps hope looks like millions of people affected by a global pandemic waiting in expectation for a vaccine for the Covid-19 virus that will allow us to return to a life without restrictions or fear. Hope looks like us and our neighbours doing what we can to weather this storm.

What does hope feel like? It feels like the first warm day of spring. You know it will get cold again but summer will come. Hope feels like a door that has always been locked and barred moving when you push it. It may only move a little bit and you may wonder if you have the strength to open it, but the barrier has become a possibility. Hope feels like an encouraging word just when you thought you couldn't go any longer. Hope feels like being in a dark, scary place when suddenly you see a pin-prick of light and your heart leaps at the possibility that perhaps there is a world of light out there after all.

And what is it like to live in hope? Hope always looks up, straining to see the first glimmer of light along the horizon. Eyes cast down will miss the dawning of a new day. Hope always listens - to the angel voices of kindness and mercy and love - which can drown out the voices of doom and gloom. Hope does not believe the haters and the nay-sayers and the doomsday prophets full of dire predictions but looks for the cracks where the light of possibility gleams. Hope is expectation of fulfilment as the definition states. For us, as Christians, hope means trusting and knowing that we are not alone - that God is with us in the darkness and in the light. Hope believes that we are God's beloved children and that all will be well somehow.

So as we journey through Advent this year I invite you to remember what hope looks like - it looks like a baby born into the dark of a winter's night bringing the light of possibility and

promise. I invite you to remember what hope feels like - like the warm breath of spring on the frozen ground where seeds lay sleeping. I invite you to live in hope remembering that we are not alone and that this, too, will pass.

There are many bits of wisdom floating around on Facebook and once in awhile I see one that I feel needs to be shared. This one came the other day. It does not list an author but only a website called 'MyPositiveOutlooks.com' it reads:

Not everything is cancelled...  
 Sunshine is not cancelled  
 love is not cancelled  
 relationships are not cancelled  
 reading is not cancelled  
 naps are not cancelled  
 going for a walk is not cancelled  
 kindness is not cancelled  
 imagination is not cancelled  
 conversations are not cancelled  
 HOPE is not cancelled.

Jesus was born into the darkness of a long winter's night. He brought the light of God's love. The darkness was still there but with him came the light of possibility and promise - the light of HOPE.

Thanks be to God. 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:** *(we begin our prayers today with a contemporary Celtic cain - an encircling prayer which Celts used to affirm God's presence and protection.) (from pp. 7,8 in Prayers for All Seasons, Year B, edited by Ellen Turnbull)*

Keep shadows without and light within;

let your face shine that we may be saved.

Keep fear without and justice within;

comfort, comfort your people.

Keep chaos without and life within;

may those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy.

Keep despair without and hope within;

deliver us that we may rejoice.

Come, O Advent God,

and reveal your promise in us now.



Our cry is one of longing, O God,  
     for a restored relationship with you.  
 As we enter the Season of Advent,  
     the longing is at its greatest.  
 It can be hard to find you in our world,  
     yet we believe you are here with us,  
     renewing all that is broken.  
 Come among us and, in flesh, abide with us,  
     that we may witness your presence around us,  
     and be filled with a new vision for your world.

Our prayers continue as we pray for all of the brothers and sisters that make up this congregation of Melville United Church here in Fergus, and we pray for all those who work on our behalf to bring hope and light to other parts of our country and the world.

And we pray for ourselves as we willingly release our deepest concerns and thanksgivings to the care of your ever present Spirit of love - hear the prayers of our hearts - ....(silence)... Today we pray for \_\_\_\_\_.

No matter what path we are on, Great Mystery, you are our Creator and we are your people. As we journey through Advent may we remember this and look forward with hope in our hearts.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of our brother, Jesus the Christ, who stands among us as we pray together 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](https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/melville-united-church/) web-site*  
*<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:**

Infinite Wisdom, you strengthen us in so many ways, and we thank you for receiving all that we are. We ask that you take our gifts and mould them, craft them, shape them into those things that bring your hope to all the world. Amen.

**Hymn:** (spoken) When the Wind of Winter Blows MV 71

When the wind of winter blows,  
bringing times of solitude,  
fill the silent icy night,  
be our hearts' compassion.

Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.

Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.

When we shiver in despair,  
when the chill of death comes near,  
hold us, Spirit, calm our fear,  
while the evening deepens.

Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.

Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.

When in days of fallen snow,  
change confounds or love burns low,  
from the ashes may there rise  
phoenix of our growing.

Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.

Holy Light, warm our night;  
warm the time of winter.

**Blessing/Sending Forth:**

Peace be with you.

Righteousness be in you.

Comfort be among you.

Faithfulness be around you.

Go out into the world

Reminded of God's steadfastness,

Revealing God's love,

Redefining this season of waiting

into preparation for the dawn of God's holy light.

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

Spirit's presence is revealed in the light of hope, Holy One. The light of hope shines brightly and overcomes the darkness. The light of hope reveals the needs of home and community. May we work joyfully to bring the light of hope to those most in need this Advent season. Amen.