



December 20, 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	secretary@melvilleunited.com
Web Site	www.melvilleunited.com
Pastoral Care Numbers	519-835-8605, 519-843-3841

Melville United Church
December 20, 2020
4th Sunday of Advent - Love

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 - December 20, 2020 - because our area has been moved in to a Red Zone category of Covid-19 restrictions there is no one here in person. On-line services will be our norm for the foreseeable future and those who don't have electronic access have a printed version.

Today is the last Sunday in Advent - our journey is almost over. Soon we will encounter the baby born in a stable - an innocent child and a humble place, both symbolizing the way God's love enters the darkness of our world. Advent is a time of waiting and preparing our hearts for the way of love to enter. Today we will hear from some of the children and youth in our congregation who have prepared a video for our enjoyment.

Announcements: Gifts with Vision

www.giftswithvision.ca

Christmas Appeal - Centre Wellington Food Bank

Mission & Service Fund

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 is nearly complete
yet the waiting continues with anticipation.
We come to discover the love that transforms from the inside out.
We come to take up the challenge of affirming
that each and every person is worthy of love.

We light the first candle reminding us of the way of HOPE. *(1st candle is lit).*
We light the second candle reminding us of the path of PEACE. *(2nd candle is lit)*
We light the third candle, reminding us of spiritual JOY. *(3rd candle is lit).*
And today we light the fourth candle to remind us that God's love is ever with us. *(4th candle is lit)*

As the flame dances, may the Spirit dance within our hearts,
drumming the rhythm of love, connection and interdependence.

Song: Hope Is a Star VU 7 - verse 2

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.
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:

Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get - only what you are expecting to give - which is everything. - Katherine Hepburn.

Love grows by giving. The love we give away is the only love we keep. The only way to retain love is to give it away. -Elbert Hubbard

Call to Worship:

We come into this place to make a home for love.
 We come to make a place in our hearts for God.
 We come to tell the stories of our faith tradition.
 We come to learn what it means to follow the Christ.
 So come, people of God, let us worship and learn together.

Hymn: There Was a Child in Galilee (sung)

MV 134

There was a child in Galilee
 who wandered wild along the sea.
 A holy child, alone was she,
 and they called her Dreaming Mary.
 And she dreamed, rejoicing in her saviour;
 she dreamed of justice for the poor.
 She dreamed that kings oppressed no more
 when she dreamed, that Dreaming Mary.

One holy day an angel came
 with voice of wind and eyes of flame.
 He promised bless-ed would be her name
 when he spoke to Dreaming Mary.
 Then she spoke, rejoicing in her saviour.
 She spoke of justice for the poor.
 She spoke that kings oppressed no more
 when she spoke, that Dreaming Mary.

And did she dream about a sone?
 And did he speak, the angel one?
 We only know God's will was done
 in the son of Dreaming Mary.
 Then she prayed, rejoicing in her saviour.
 She taught him justice for the poor.
 She taught that kings oppressed no more
 when she taught, that Dreaming Mary.

Then Jesus grew in Galilee,
 they wandered wild along the sea.
 Now he calls to you and me
 to dream with Dreaming Mary.

And we dream, rejoicing in our saviour.

We dream of justice for the poor.

We dream that kings oppress no more

as we dream with Dreaming Mary.

Opening Prayer:

Gracious Creator, through us your presence is made manifest. Although you cannot be contained you are with us, around us, among us and within us always.

You call us to remember that we are not the only creatures who reflect your image but that all of Creation is an expression of your love and presence.

May we, like Mary, be filled with humble gratitude that we are blessed to do your work. Birth in us the love which is so needed in our world right now. Open our hearts as we remember and worship together.

Today, Great Mystery, we celebrate the story of how a humble young woman sang a song of joy at being asked to do something difficult. Forgive us for the times when we turn our heads and refuse to do the more difficult things required of us. We call Mary blessed because she did as the angel told her to do. Forgive our reluctance to step out with courage as she did. Lead us to follow that we may be called blessed, too. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

God does not wait until we are ready or completely prepared to call us to follow. God knows our weaknesses and our faults and beckons us with compassion and understanding. We are loved, we are renewed, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Ministry of Music: Was It a Night Like Tonight? - Carol McMillen Tornquist Greg Tornquist
Sung by Melville's Spirit Sings Praise Band

Scripture: Luke 1:26-35, 38,46-55 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)
(Song of Mary -The Magnificat)

Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, "Rejoice, highly favoured one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!"

Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel's greeting meant. The angel went on to say to her, "don't be afraid, Mary. You have found favour with god. You'll conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus. His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end."

Mary said to the angel, "how can this be, since I have never been with a man?"

The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you - hence the child to be born will be called the Holy One of God.

Mary said, "I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say." With that, the angel left her.

Mary said: "My soul proclaims your greatness, O God, and my spirit rejoices in you, my Saviour. For you have looked with favour upon your lowly servant, and from this day forward all generations will call me blessed. For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me, and holy is your Name.

Your mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear you. You have shown strength with your arm; you have scattered the proud in their conceit; you have deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places. You have filled the hungry with good things, while you have sent the rich away empty. You have come to the aid of Israel your servant, mindful of your mercy - the promise you made to our ancestors - to Sarah and Abraham and their descendants forever."

Message: Love - as shared by the children and youth of Melville

Love - definition: 1. A deep devotion or affection for another person or persons. 2. One who is beloved. 3. A very great interest in, or enjoyment of, something.

The word for this fourth Sunday of Advent is 'Love'. There are many different kinds of love. I found a number listed when I Googled the word.

There is familial love - what one feels for family members and relatives.

There is romantic love - what one feels for a spouse or lover.

There is playful love - what one feels when taking delight in something.

There is affectionate love - what one feels for friends and companions.

There is self love - what one feels when one is comfortable with who one is.

There is enduring love - the kind of love that one can count on to be there when called upon.

There is unconditional or self-less love - what one feels for another without expecting anything in return.

Of course, that last one is the kind of love that God has for us. We are loved beyond imagining just because we are. There is nothing we can do to earn that love because it is ours already. From the day we are born to the day we die and beyond nothing can separate us from the love that created us. And it is that kind of love that we celebrate at Christmas. Think about a trusting, helpless, innocent child - there you will find all the kinds of love listed rolled into one. There you will find the love of God born into this world.

Today we are blessed with the love of the younger folks of our congregation as the children and youth of Melville share a presentation they have prepared with the help of our Youth Leader, Martha Duncan.

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:

Loving God, throughout history, you have been active in this world, speaking, guiding, whispering, and nudging us to be the people you know we can be. You have spoken through angels, messengers of your grace, justice and love. You have spoken through prophets, the truth-tellers of our world who call us from self-interest to community, from human limitation to divine vision. You have spoken from our own hearts, embodying all that it means to be human. You speak to us of abiding love and your enduring promises, which have never failed, no matter how often we turn away. You have spoken, Holy Presence, through all the generations.

Help us to hear you now. Help us to take the ancient stories of our faith and learn from them, as Mary did. Help us to re-imagine the words that still speak truth to our lives. Help us to remember that you dwell, not within the buildings we construct, whether they be church, synagogue, mosque or temple, but within the very love of our hearts.

Today we pray for our brothers and sisters of Nottawa-Rob Roy Pastoral Charge and for all those who answered your call to action to go and work on our behalf in other parts of our country and the world. And today we pray for ourselves as, once again, we bare our souls and offer the prayers of our hearts.... (silence).... Today we pray for _____

Great Mystery, you are the ground of our being. We cannot exist apart from your presence. May we know that, remember that and live that every day.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of the one who lived love every day of his life and beyond, Jesus the Christ, who is with us now as we 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

Offering Prayer:

Infinite Wisdom, we bring our gifts and ourselves, our treasure and our heart. Bless us, in all that we offer, that our offerings might be used in your call to us to be stewards, not owners, of what we have been given; to be places in which you live but not where you are constrained. Bless us in our giving. Amen.

Hymn: O Ancient Love (spoken)

VU 17

- 1 O ancient love, processing through the ages;
O hidden love, revealed in human form;
O promised love, the dream of seers and sages:
 O living Love, within our hearts be born,
 O living Love, within our hearts be borne.
- 2 O homeless love, that dwells among the stranger;
O lowly love, that knows the mighty's scorn;
O hungry love, that lay within a manger:
 O living Love, within our hearts be born,
 O living Love, within our hearts be borne.
- 3 O gentle love, caressing those in sorrow;
O tender love, that comforts those forlorn;
O hopeful love, that promises tomorrow:
 O living Love, within our hearts be born,
 O living Love, within our hearts be borne.
- 4 O suffering love, that bears our human weakness;
O boundless love, that rises with the morn;
O mighty love, concealed in infant meekness:
 O living Love, within our hearts be born,
 O living Love, within our hearts be borne.

Blessing/Sending Forth:

As our Advent journey comes to an end
and we move toward the blessed time of Christmas,
Go with hope.
Go with peace.
Go with joy.
And above all - go with love -
knowing you never go alone for the love of God,
the Peace of Christ
and the companionship of the Holy Spirit is with you - always!
Amen.

Postlude:**Prayer of the Week:**

Holy Love, we ask that you move us beyond the daydream of a world that shows your love to the reality that is your love in the world. Move and breathe within us until your reality becomes our reality. Amen.