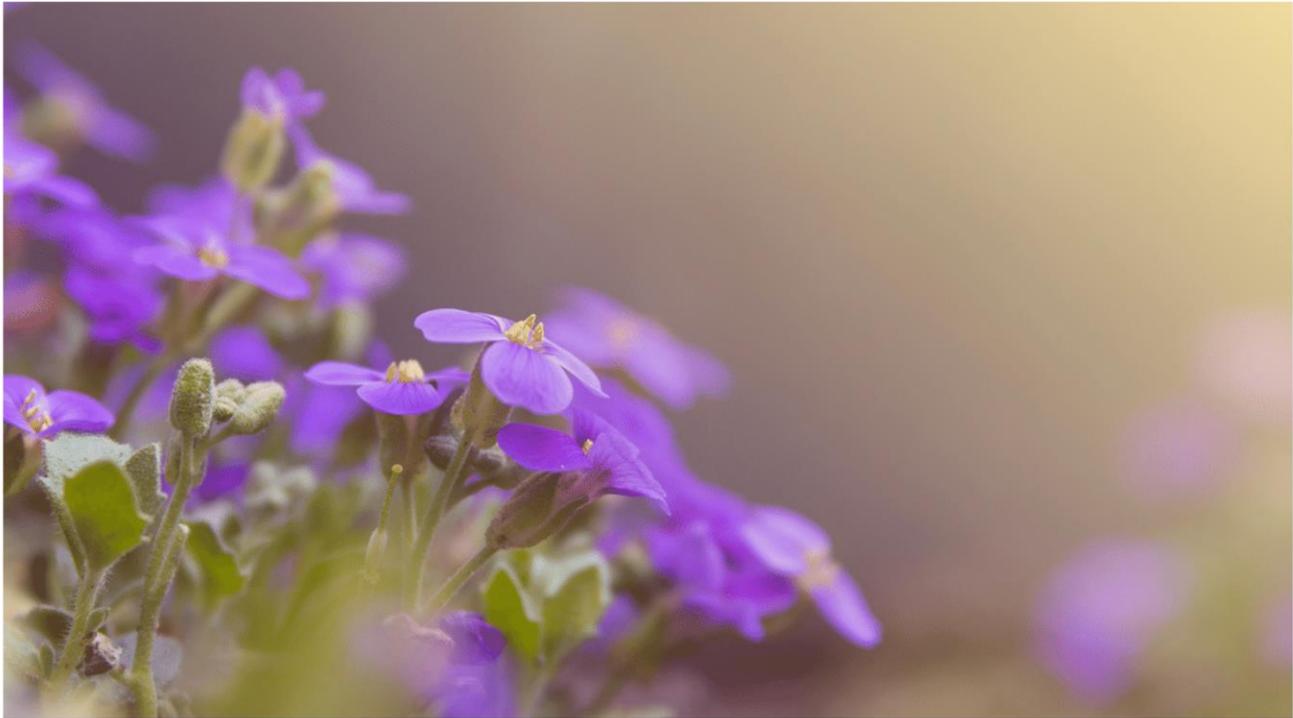




***Celebrating
175 Years***



February 28, 2021

Melville United Church
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Melville United Church
February 28, 2021
Second Sunday of Lent

Presiding today - Rev. Marion Loree

Welcome

My name is Marion Loree and I am the minister here at Melville United Church in Fergus, Ontario. We gather in community today - February 28, 2021 virtually. Because of Covid-19 restrictions in our area there are no worshippers here with me. We are in code red right now but as restrictions are lifted gradually we will keep you informed about when in-person worship might resume. Until then, on-line services will continue to be our normal mode of operation with printed copies being distributed to those without internet access.

So today is not only the last day of February but it is also the second Sunday of Lent. Lent, of course is the few weeks leading up to Easter. During this time we focus on the activities and teachings of Jesus as he journeyed toward the city of Jerusalem where he would end up executed on a cross. It is believed he was resurrected in some form and appeared to some of his followers three days later and that event is known as Easter.

I invite you to join us now for a time of worship and sharing. This particular service is sponsored by the Melville Social Justice Team which has decided to focus our attention over the next few months on the resources available in our community for those who are struggling, not only during this time of pandemic, but during normal times too. To help us with that we have invited Ron McKinnon, the Executive Director of the Community Resource Centre to be our guest speaker.

Announcements:

World Day of Prayer Service - March 5 - on-line

Acknowledgment:

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.

Sharing the Light: 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: (written by Catherine Tovell, Gathering, Lent/Easter 2021, pg 33, used with permission)

On this second Sunday of Lent,
we come seeking God.
In this time of uncertainty in our lives,
we come seeking God.
Quieting our minds, opening our hearts,
and waiting for the divine mystery
to make itself known,
we come to worship God.

Hymn: Morning Has Broken **VU 409**

- 1 Morning has broken like the first morning,
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

- 2 Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall on the first grass.
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,
sprung in completeness where God's feet pass.

- 3 Ours is the sunlight! Ours is the morning
born of the one light Eden saw play!
Praise with elation, praise every morning,
God's recreation of the new day!

Words of Wisdom:: - Edward Everett Hale

I am only one. But I still am one.
I cannot do everything.
But still I can do something.
And because I cannot do everything.
I will not refuse to do
the something that I can do.

Opening Prayer:

We come to you, O God. For you do not turn away.
We come to you, Holy Presence, for you have heard our cry.
We come to you, Infinite Wisdom, for you live in us.
May this time be sacred,
shaped beyond this world,
and ready for encounter.
We come to you, Great Mystery,
for you come to us. Amen.

Prayer of Confession:

Time! There's not enough of it. Who has the energy to care about homelessness, asylum seekers, or the stranger? Everyone should have a home but...

God forgive us when we turn away from the homeless and the work of finding shelter for everyone.

It's too hard to face. Who doesn't feel helpless in the face of illness? We want to fill up the uncomfortable silence, yet we cannot find a useful word. Everyone should be visited, but...

God forgive us when we allow our discomfort to distance us from others.

War is someone else's business - politicians, activists, soldiers - someone else, anyone else. Who understands what's going on anyway? Even if we did, what could we do about it? We know war only leads to destruction, but...

God forgive us when we keep silent when you want us to speak out for peace.

Hunger and poverty are very real in our world and we know your heart grieves. But who can make a difference anyway? Who knows if the resources get to the right people? We know compassion is central to who we are as people, but...

God forgive us when our ears become deaf to the needs around us.

Every day we see the effects of climate change and our neglect of the earth. It is easy to point our fingers at the big industries and other countries who are not doing enough to care for the environment. We know you have called us to be good stewards of your creation, but...

God forgive us when we call on others to change and forget about our own responsibilities. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

Remember God's goodness is forever, and God's forgiveness is bottomless. With God we can begin again and again and again. Thanks be to God.

Ministry of Music: Prelude II by George Oldroyd**Scripture:** Romans 4:16-24 (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition*)

(Everything depends on faith)

Hence everything depends on faith; everything is grace. Thus the promise holds true for all of Sarah's and Abraham's descendants, not only for those who have the Law, but for all who have their faith. They are the mother and the father of us all, which is why scripture says, "I will make you the parents of many nations" - all of which is done in the sight of the God in whom they believed, the God who restores the dead to life and calls into being things that don't exist.

Hoping against hope, Sarah and Abraham believed, and so became the mother and father of many nations, just as it was once promised them: "Numerous as this will your descendants be." Sarah and Abraham, without growing weak in faith, thought about their bodies, which were very old - he was about one hundred, and she was well beyond childbearing age. Still they never questioned or doubted God's promise; rather, they grew strong in faith and gave glory to God, fully persuaded that God could do whatever was promised. Thus, Sarah's and Abraham's faith" was credited to them as righteousness."

The words, "was credited to them," were not written with Sarah and Abraham alone in mind; they were intended for us, too.

Scripture: Matthew 25: 35-40 (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition*)
(Caring for others is caring for Christ)

For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me; naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me.' Then these will ask, 'When did we see you hungry and feed you, or see you thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or clothe you in your nakedness? When did we see you ill or in prison and come to visit you?' The ruler will answer them, 'The truth is, every time you did this for the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it for me.'

Reflection:

Before I introduce our guest speaker today I wanted to talk a bit about the scripture readings. First the reading from Romans which refers to the story of Abraham and Sarah. Their story is a wonderful witness and example of faith and trust. In their old age they were promised a son and their faith in God did not waiver. Even though they were of advanced age they trusted that God could do what God had promised. And it happened. It is also another covenant story, God promised they would become the parents of many nations and they promised to trust and to follow God's way. This story teaches us that having faith is not only about doing good things, but that faith is about how we live and commit to following the way of Spirit with trust.

The reading from Matthew is a familiar one to most of us and doesn't need much explanation - Jesus calls us to look after each other in whatever way is needed. When we care for others we are caring for him because the Christ-Spirit lives within every human heart.

And that is the best way to introduce our guest speaker today. Ron McKinnon is the Executive Director of the local Community Resource Centre. And as you will hear the CRC is in the business of helping people. Ron will give us an overview of what the CRC offers its clients.

Message: Community Resource Centre

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.

Silent Preparation:

Prayers:

Loving parent, Holy Mystery, we come in prayer with faith knowing that our every word is heard. We come in prayer with faith knowing that you always work for our highest good. We come in prayer with faith in the assurance that you are with us always.

We hope against hope that through our heart longings things that we dream of that do not yet

exist in our world will be called into existence. We come in prayer knowing that our deepest desires and dreams are plentiful in your world.

We dream of a just peace in places stricken by oppression and violence.
We dream of loving-kindness among people afflicted by prejudice and hate...
We dream of abundant life in communities suffering from generational trauma...
We dream of healing mercies in people living with devastating illness...
We dream of safety for those experiencing abuse...
We dream of full plates for the hungry and homes for the homeless...
We dream that your way of love will reign here on earth...

We pray today for our brothers and sisters of Auburn/Knox Pastoral Charge, Auburn and for all those who faithfully follow your call to work on our behalf in other parts of our country and the world.

And we pray for ourselves as we stop for a moment to look inward and share with you all the concerns, and joys we find there. Hear the prayers of our hearts... (silence)....
Today we remember _____

Great Mystery, we are living in troubled times. Strengthen us, and fortify us with patience, and kindness and the will to be what you need each of us to be to our neighbours, for we are all your children and we are all connected - what we do to anyone we do to you and to ourselves for we are one in you.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of our brother, Jesus the Christ, who walks with us, who calls us and who loves us. And we repeat the words he taught us to say 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 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

Offering Prayer: (written by Gord Dunbar, Gathering Lent/Easter 2021, pg 31)

They seem so little and the world is so big and so overwhelming right now, yet we offer our gifts to you, Precious God. Take what we offer and bless it for your mission of love. In a world of conflict and pandemic, may these gifts, and we ourselves, become agents of change and transformation. Amen.

Hymn: Jesus Christ Is Waiting**VU 117**

- 1 Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
*Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you.
- 2 Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets,
where injustice spirals and real hope retreats.
*Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too.
In the Kindom's causes let me rage with you.
- 3 Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets;
curing those who suffer, touching those he greets.
*Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too.
Let my care be active, healing just like you.
- 4 Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets,
where each sign of hatred he, with love, defeats.
*Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too.
On suspicion's graveyard let me dance with you.
- 5 Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,
'Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet.'
*Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me; I will follow you.

Blessing/Sending Forth:

As we journey, God says to you and me:

I am with you,

I hold you,

I call you,

I know you,

I care for you,

I travel with you,

I give myself to you,

I am on this journey with you,

I am God, and my steadfast love is with you always.

Let us travel in peace.

Postlude:**Prayer of the Week:**

God of all generations, all time, and all space, when we wonder if you will respond to our prayers, remind us that you do answer but maybe not in the way we expect. Strengthen our faith so we might trust in you. Continue to journey with us as we seek to be your faithful followers always. Amen.