



*Celebrating  
175 Years*



**June 13, 2021**

Melville United Church

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**Melville United Church**  
**June 13, 2021**  
**3rd Sunday after Pentecost**

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Presiding today - Rev. Marion Loree

**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 into 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.

**Welcome**

*My name is Marion Loree and I am the minister here at Melville United Church in Fergus, Ontario. We gather in community today - June 13, 2021. We gather virtually only as Covid-19 restrictions are still in place. Today continues the long period of time on the church calendar known as 'Ordinary Time'. This period covers the next few months and allows time to engage with many of the Old and New Testament stories.*

*Because the scriptures were written centuries ago in a time and culture very different from the one we know, it is important to read them with an open mind and heart to glean the wisdom that exists underneath the surface words. In other words, reading scripture without context can make it very difficult to understand especially if one takes it literally.*

*So, as usual, I invite you to open your mind and heart as you watch and listen and let Spirit speak to you as it will.*

**Announcements:**

**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.*

**Call to Worship:**

Beloved of God, let us worship the one who sees us for who we are -  
We are created in God's image, called to God's service.  
Beloved of Christ, let us worship the one who sees us for who we can be -  
We are empowered by Spirit, transformed in God's new creation.  
Beloved people of God, come, let us worship together.

**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:**

We live in a world with many other creatures. Can we imagine what some of them might be praying? This week we hear from Spider. (Centering Prayers - William Cleary).

The Spider's Surrender

Behold, we spin our webs at your command  
 And frighten humans who don't understand  
 We are but "catching dinner," to be blunt.  
 They do the same - at every restaurant.

Those humans frighten us too - by their size,  
 Their hair, their fingered hands, their ears, their eyes,  
 The way they run, then peer from side to side,  
 Intent on unrelenting spidercide.

Oh, teach us not to dread the otherness  
 You've built into your world, Great Creatress,  
 For instance for us eight legs are a must,  
 Yet some have two, or twelve! One must adjust.

We'll love them: woman, man, or octopus,  
 However dreadful they may seem to us.

**Opening Prayer:**

Holy and mysterious Presence, you are all that is good.  
 Settle in among us and look past our external features.  
 Peer inside our hearts and see us for who we really are - yours.  
 Stubborn, doubting, self-centered and yet - ever yours.

Infinite Wisdom, when we try to see ourselves as you see us,  
 we are sometimes overwhelmed with a sense of our own shortcomings.  
 We find it hard to see ourselves clearly.  
 Our histories, clouded by past hurts or failures,  
 make it difficult for us to see the truth that lies beyond these things.  
 The truth that we are your beloved children, created in your image.  
 Forgive our tendency to judge ourselves and others by appearances.  
 Clear our eyes and spirits to see as you see and love as you love. Amen.

**Words of Assurance:**

God has created us not for fear or doubt, but for power and love.  
 Rejoice in the gifted-ness of God's creation, and the gifted-ness of you!  
 Know that each and every one of us is special in God's eyes.  
 You are a beloved child of the Creator.  
 Thanks be to God!

**Ministry of Music:** Madrigal for flute and piano - by Philippe Gaubert (piano/flute duet)**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:6-9, 14-17 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(Walk by faith, not by sight)

And so we are always full of confidence, even though we realize that to live in the body means to be absent from Jesus Christ. We walk by faith, not by sight. We are full of confidence, I repeat, and would actually prefer to be absent from the body and make our home with Christ. Whether we are living in the body or absent from it, we are intent on pleasing Christ.

The love of Christ overwhelms us whenever we reflect on this: that if one person has died for all, then all have died. The reason Christ died for all was so that the living should live no longer for themselves but for Christ, who died and was raised to life for them.

And so from now on, we don't look on anyone in terms of mere human judgement. Even if we did once regard Christ in these terms, that is not how we know Christ now. And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation. The old order has passed away; now everything is new!

**Scripture:** 1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 (The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)

(David is anointed as king)

Samuel departed for Ramah, and Saul went home to Gibeah. Until the day he died, Samuel did not see Saul again, but Samuel grieved over Saul. And God regretted making Saul king over Israel.

YHWH said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve for Saul since I rejected him as ruler of Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and be on your way. For I am sending you to Jesse in Bethlehem, for I have chosen my ruler from among his children."

But Samuel replied, "How can I go? For if Saul learns about it, I will be murdered."

YHWH replied, "Take a heifer with you: I am sending you to Jesse. Tell him that you came to offer a sacrifice to YHWH, and invite Jesse to the sacrifice. Then I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me my selection."

Samuel did what YHWH said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met Samuel. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

Samuel said, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to YHWH. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his children and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they arrived, and Samuel saw Eliab, he said to himself, "Surely, God's anointed stands here before YHWH."

But YHWH said to Samuel, "Pay no attention to appearance and height; I have rejected him. YHWH does not see as mortals see; mortals see only appearances but YHWH sees into the heart."

Then Jesse called Abinadab to pass before Samuel, who said, "No, YHWH has not chosen this one."

Next came Shammah, but Samuel said, "Not this one either."

Seven sons were presented to Samuel by Jesse, who said, "YHWH has not chosen any of these."

Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse said, "but he is tending the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until the lad arrives."

So they sent for the boy, a ruddy youth with bright eyes, and handsome to behold. God said, "Rise and anoint this one."

Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed the boy in the presence of his brothers, and from that day forward the Spirit of YHWH came upon David and was with him. Then Samuel set out on his way to Ramah.

**Message: In God's Sight**

1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17

At the bar in the local hotel in a small town in rural South Australia, in the early sixties, a single figure cut a lonely image. The hotel, the bar, and the bar stool had become his home-away-from home, or maybe his home, as he sought friendship and acceptance in a town that seemed to push him to the periphery.

After a few beers, he found courage to attempt to engage in conversation and try to tell his story. He proudly told of the time during World War I when he fought side-by-side with his friend, the man who was now Premier of the State. No one paid much attention; their preconceived notions and prejudices thought the stories to be the ramblings and imaginings of a lonely, intoxicated man.

Until one day when the town was abuzz with excitement because of a planned visit by the Premier. The crowd gathered at the Town/Institute hall, the red carpet stretching from the curbside to the entrance of the building. The council officials, other dignitaries, and a young child in Sunday best, clutching a posy of flowers, assembled and prepared to greet the Premier as he stepped from the car.

The Premier arrived to great applause. As he moved toward the outstretched hands of the dignitaries, he spotted someone at the back of the crowd. The Premier stepped away from the red carpet and made his way through the crowd, stopping when he reached the one who was at the edge of the gathering. "This is my friend, Tom" he exclaimed, "he was with me when I was wounded during the war."

Last week we heard the story of how the Israelites had demanded that the prophet Samuel anoint for them a king so they could be like all the other nations. Against Samuel's advice they insisted and so God instructed that Saul be anointed king. Now, it appears that Saul had not lived up to their expectations. He had ignored God's commands and done what he wanted and then had lied about it to the prophet, who was greatly upset and grieved by Saul's behaviour. It seems, not surprisingly, that the power he had been given had gone to his head and he had proved unsuitable for the position. So now they needed a new king. Who would it be?

Samuel is commissioned by God to anoint a new king and is told to go to the home of Jesse in Bethlehem. Seven of Jesse's sons are paraded before Samuel. They are smart, handsome and capable sons and Samuel is bewildered when God tells him, "No, none of these are the ones I have chosen." It turns out that the youngest son is the one God wants. The boy who is out tending the sheep, much to every one's surprise, is the one who is to be anointed the next king of Israel. It seems everyone's preconceived notions and prejudices have been tested as they are forced to look beyond appearances and see what is not immediately apparent. We could say they were being forced to see through God's eyes.

Both of these stories remind us that what we see and believe we know are not always the truth. We are reminded that our preconceived notions and prejudices can often get in the way of our ability to 'see' the real truth of a thing or a person. We are reminded that we would do well sometimes to trust in things that are beyond ordinary means of seeing. We would do well

to remember that things and people look very different in God's sight.

In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians he says "we walk by faith, not by sight". Meaning, I think, that to be followers of the Christ we have to be tuned in to the Spirit and that means getting past the baggage that years of living in this world can burden us with. We are born with an innate ability to love. Look at any baby and you will see an open, innocent, loving being who demands only to be loved and cared for. You will see a being who instinctively trusts and delights in the world around them.

Someone once said "if you want to see God look into the eyes of an infant." What you see there is pure love, openness and trust. And if each of those children is raised in an environment of love and acceptance and respect they will learn that the world is a good place to be and they will grow into confident and caring adults who can make a good contribution to the society they live in. If, however, that child is born into a situation where they experience neglect, abuse, violence, hate, or other trauma then chances are great that they will grow to act out the hurt and pain that they carry within them. The saying that children learn what they live is so true.

What I am getting at is that every child born into this world has the potential to be a Christ or to be a devil. The difference most times will be the kind of environment in which they grow up. No one is born evil. Evil is learned. Prejudice is learned. Hate is learned.

We all learn what we live and everyone of us arrives at adulthood with some kind of 'baggage'. Even if we had the most loving family and all the advantages money can buy we will still have some baggage because we live in societies that teach us things we are not even aware we are learning. We acquire prejudices and form judgements about people based on what we see going on around us. We can't help it. It is part of living in a human world.

I learned a long time ago that everyone has a story and when I come across someone who is mean or grumpy or violent or abusive I remind myself that they weren't born that way. They were born pure and innocent just like everyone else but something happened to them along their life's journey that caused them to be filled with anger or hurt or vindictiveness or self-loathing and when I think of that, I find it very difficult to 'hate' them and wish harm to them. We all need to face the consequences of our actions, of course, but no one deserves to be hated. Even the worst person you can think of yearns to be loved and accepted even if they have managed to convince themselves they don't or aren't aware of it.

I believe that within every person lurks that spark of God with which we were born. Within us dwells that child who wants to be loved and cared for. Within us, and it may be buried very deep, is the spark of the Divine essence. It is that part of us through which we connect to Spirit. It is that part that we call our 'true self' or our 'essence' or our 'soul'. And it is that part of us - pure, basic, human spirit - that our Creator sees and loves beyond measure. It is that part of us that came from the source of life and love and that will return to the source when this body and all that it has endured dies.

And all that it has endured. You have often heard it said - We came into this world with nothing and we can take nothing out of it. That goes for the personal baggage that we carry with us through life, too. When we cross over and return to the Source of Being all that 'stuff' which shapes our thinking and behaviour here will also fall away. What will be left is that basic, loving soul, that spark of God/Spirit that is us.

As we review our life and actions we will realize our errors. We will be judging ourselves in the light of unconditional love and acceptance. To my mind, that kind of judgement is far more harsh than any judgement imposed on us from an external source be it God or anyone else. To realize we are held precious; to realize that we are loved and have always been loved; and to realize that we turned away from that love and yet are welcomed back into that same loving presence, regardless of our actions while here, has got to be the greatest pain and punishment we could ever experience.

I don't know if any of this makes sense to you but it is my attempt to answer a question which arose out of last week's message when I said that everyone - regardless of who we are or what we do - returns to God when we leave this world through death. Some people were wondering then what happens to those who inflict pain on others, who abuse children, who kill innocent people, etc., etc. Don't they go to 'hell' or experience some form of punishment, is what I hear behind the wondering.

Well, I don't think so. Just as I don't believe there is a physical place called heaven, I don't believe there is a physical place called hell. I also don't believe that a God, who is pure, unconditional love would condemn anyone to an eternity of pain and torment because they acted out of the pain they experienced in this life. That doesn't sound very loving to me. I don't believe that a God who is all goodness and love could do that. And what's more, I couldn't worship or love a God like that.

I think that ideas like heaven and hell and damnation and punishment are purely human inventions. It is the human part of us that wants to strike back and hurt those who have hurt us. It is the human part of us that sees the broken person who acts out as a thing to be hated. God sees past all that stuff. God sees deep into the soul and knows the torment that each of us has lived through. God sees deep into the essence of who we really are underneath all of our conditioning and learning and hurts and baggage.

God sees with loving eyes and in God's sight we are all precious. In God's sight we are all beloved children who are known and valued beyond our wildest imaginings. God yearns for us to remember and rediscover the love that made us, that sustains us and that will welcome us home.

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.*

#### **Silent Preparation:**

**Prayers:**

Holy Mystery, we cannot fathom your wondrous workings. We cannot totally grasp the concept of unconditional love. We are so human - but we try. We try to understand what it means to be your Spirit manifested on this earthly plane. We try to understand our purpose here. We try to understand but we *are* only human so it is impossible for us to know completely. Keep us wondering. Keep us searching. Keep us always striving to know that place within us where we find you.

Listening God, we know there is not one prayer that is not heard. We also know that the answers may not be what we expect or even want. We know that all that happens in our lives and the lives of others is for the ultimate good of all for that is what you want - our ultimate good.

Like Samuel we grieve over endings. Like Jesse, we overlook people whom you deem valuable. Like David, we need your help to be the people you've created us to be.

Hear the prayers we bring before you - spoken and unspoken - prayers for your incredibly beautiful and fragile world; for our nation and all nations; for leaders, both bold and weak; for the church - changing, evolving, seeking to do your work; for families of every size and kind, and for ourselves as we offer the prayers of our hearts... (silence)... \_\_\_\_\_ We pray for Indigenous peoples everywhere who have been wronged by the system of colonialism of which we and our ancestors have participated in. May the events of last week in Kamloops bring awareness, understanding and compassion and may our grief help to begin the journey toward healing and reconciliation that is so sorely needed in this nation.

We pray also for those affected by the murder of the family in London this week. Who can understand a hate so deep that it would move a young man to run down an innocent family simply because they are of a different faith tradition. Be with the young boy who is left without his family and be with us all as we work to overcome our differences.

Spirit of God, move mightily among us and receive these and all of our prayers which we offer 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 kingdom 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 kingdom, 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 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)*

**Offering Prayer:**

We return a portion of all that we have so abundantly received, Holy Presence. Even as we give, our hearts seek you and your blessings. Take us and take these gifts, and cause us and them to become blessings for others. Amen.

**Hymn:** Open My Eyes, That I May See

**VU 371**

- 1     Open my eyes, that I may see  
      glimpses of truth thou hast for me;  
      place in my hands the wonderful key  
      that shall unclasp and set me free.  
          Silently now I wait for thee,  
          ready, my God, thy will to see.  
          Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!
  
- 2     Open my ears, that I may hear  
      voices of truth thou sendest clear;  
      and while the wave notes fall on my ear,  
      everything false will disappear.  
          Silently now I wait for thee,  
          ready, my God, thy will to see.  
          Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!
  
- 3     Open my mouth, and let me bear  
      gladly the warm truth everywhere;  
      open my heart and let me prepare  
      love with thy children thus to share.  
          Silently now I wait for thee,  
          ready, my God, thy will to see.  
          Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!

**Blessing/Sending Forth:**

Go, as God sees, looking for what is hidden in the heart.

Go, as the Spirit moves, expecting the unexpected.

Go, as Jesus lives, leading by serving.

Go in peace, love and joy and let God's love  
flow through you. Amen.

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

Yes, no, maybe, not now, who - me? How will we answer when you call us, Holy One?  
Whatever our answer may be, may we come to it knowing you will equip us and guide  
us through every step of the journey. May our living be a blessing to others. Amen.