



June 20, 2021

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Melville United Church
June 20, 2021
Indigenous Day of Prayer

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 20, 2021. We gather virtually only as Covid-19 restrictions are still in place.

Today we mark Indigenous Day of Prayer in the United Church. National Indigenous Day officially takes place tomorrow - June 21st. It is always important to mark this day but, I think, it is even more important this year in view of the discoveries made recently of the buried remains of 215 children on the grounds of a former Residential School property in Kamloops, BC.

One of the reasons authorities designate special days is to raise awareness of specific groups and causes and I think the time is long overdue for Canadians in general to become aware of what our First Nations brothers and sisters have endured since European white settlers, our ancestors, began arriving in this land a few centuries ago.

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:

Next week will be my last service as Minister at Melville. I have decided it is time to retire from ministry to enjoy other, more leisurely pursuits. I believe there is a celebration planned beginning at 12:00 noon next Sunday to take place outside in the garden at the church. I am sure details will be or have been forthcoming and I look forward to seeing any who are able to attend.

Video: Land Acknowledgments and Why They Matter.

A group from the Guelph Indigenous community participated with Ryan Matheson (U of G) to produce the following video.

Acknowledgment:

We live on the traditional territories of the Attawandaron, Wyandot, Mississauga, and Haudenosaunee First Nations. These are treaty lands and territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit (“Between the Lakes Treaty”). They are also part of the crown grant to the Six Nations (“Haldemand grant”). Grateful for their stewardship of this land, we humbly seek to live together in pursuit of justice and right relations.

Call to Worship:

We come to this place seeking wholeness.
We come to this place seeking comfort.
We come to this place seeking reassurance.
We come to this place seeking forgiveness.
We come to worship, so let us sing and pray together.

Hymn: Called by Earth and Sky**MV 135**

Chorus:

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified.
Called by earth and sky.

Precious these water, endless seas,
deep ocean’s dream,
waters of healing, rivers of rain,
the wash of love again.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified.
Called by earth and sky.

Precious this gift, the air we breathe;
wind born and free.
Breath of the Spirit, blow through this place,
our gathering and our grace.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified.
Called by earth and sky.

Precious these mountains, ancient sands;
vast fragile land.
Seeds of our waking, rooted and strong,
Creation’s faithful song.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified.
Called by earth and sky.

Precious the fire that lights our way,
bright dawning day.
Fire of passion, sorrows undone,
our faith and justice one.

Called by earth and sky, promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust, treasure of life sanctified.
Called by earth and sky.

Words of Wisdom: Chief Tecumseh

So live your life so the fear of death can never enter your heart. Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their views, and demand that they respect yours. Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life. Seek to make your life long and of service to your people. Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide. Always give a word or sign of salute when meeting or passing a stranger if in a lonely place. Show respect to all people, but grovel to none. When you arise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for your life and strength. Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living. If you see no reason for giving thanks, the fault lies in yourself.

Special Music: Prayer for Reconciliation - words by Joanne Mitchell, music Suzanne Flewelling

Opening Prayer:

God, our Creator, Maker of all that is,
we come from all directions to this gathering of your people.
We come now with praises, grateful for many gifts.

From the East, the direction of the rising sun,
we receive peace and light and wisdom and knowledge.

And we are grateful for these gifts.

From the South comes warmth, guidance,
and the beginning and the end of life.

And we are grateful for these gifts.

From the West comes the rain,
purifying waters, to sustain all living things.

And we are grateful for these gifts.

From the North comes the cold and mighty wind,
the white snows, giving us strength and endurance.

And we are grateful for these gifts.

From the heavens we receive darkness and light,
the air of your breath, and messages from the winged creatures.

And we are grateful for these gifts.

From the earth we come and to the earth we will return.

And we are grateful for the gifts of Mother Earth.

May we walk good paths, Great Mystery,
living on this earth as brothers and sisters should;
rejoicing in one another's blessings,
sharing in one another's sorrows,
and together, renewing the face of the earth.

We open ourselves to listen as Spirit calls. Amen

Words of Assurance:

Jesus said, "Love one another as I have loved you."
Open yourself to God's love and be renewed.
Thanks be to God.

Ministry of Music: Solo - Lillian Gohn

Dark Sky Island -words & music by Eithne Ni Bhraonain, Nicky Ryan, Roma Ryan

Scripture: John 13:34-37(the Inclusive Bible The First Egalitarian Edition)

(A new commandment)

Jesus said: "I give you a new commandment: love one another. And thou are to love one another the way I have loved you. This is how all will know that you are my disciples: that you truly love one another."

Message: The Seven Grandfather Teachings and other information.

Today in the United Church of Canada we mark Indigenous Day of Prayer - the nearest Sunday to June 21st. In 1996 the Canadian Government, in cooperation with indigenous organizations, chose to designate June 21st as National Indigenous Peoples Day. For generations, many indigenous peoples and communities have celebrated their culture and heritage on or near this day due to the significance of the summer solstice as the longest day of the year.

It is a day for all Canadians to recognize and celebrate the unique heritage, diverse cultures and outstanding contributions of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The Canadian Constitution recognizes these three groups as Aboriginal peoples, also known as Indigenous peoples. Although these groups share many similarities, they each have their own distinct heritage, language, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

In light of the recent discovery of the buried remains of 215 children on the grounds of the former Kamloops Residential School I think it is a good idea for us, too, to mark this day and to begin to explore what we can do to assist in the process of healing and reconciliation that is so sorely needed in our country today.

I want to begin by sharing some of the teachings that many Indigenous peoples believe are the basis for living a good life. These thoughts are based on a service of worship published on the United Church of Canada web-site and the information I will share was contributed by Deb Anderson Pratt.

Deb says "There are seven Grandfather Teachings or Laws our people lived by daily". Preceding each teaching a supporting scripture verse will be offered. In the interests of time and space I have edited and condensed some of Deb's words.

Colossians 3:14 Above all else, put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect.

Love:

To know love is to know the Creator, therefore it's expected one's first love is for the Creator or Great Spirit. Creator is the parent of all children. The love given to the Great Spirit is expressed through self-love; if you can't love yourself how can you love anyone else? The Great Spirit chose the eagle to represent love. Although love is the supplier of the greatest and most powerful medicine, it can also be the most elusive of the teachings as it depends on a world that acknowledges the importance of spirituality.

1 Peter 5:5 Let the young among you respect the leadership of the elders. Let all of you clothe

yourselves in humility toward each other, for “God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.”

Respect:

Respect is the condition of being honoured. Respect is represented by the buffalo. Through giving its life and sharing every part of its being the buffalo showed the deepest respect it had for people. Its gifts provided shelter, clothing, and utensils for our daily life. Our people believed we were the true caretakers of the herds and developed a sustainable relationship with the buffalo that resulted in a relationship of true respect. The same kind of respect was to be shown to the Elders and to each other.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God didn't give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, of self-discipline.

Courage:

Courage is the ability to face danger, fear, or change with confidence and bravery. The bear teaches us courage in the way it lives. The true definition of courage is a mother bear's ferociousness when it comes to her cubs being approached. A human mother, too, can exhibit the same kind of ferocity when her child is threatened. This same ferociousness is needed to have the moral and mental strength to overcome fears that prevent us from living our true spirit as human beings. Living in the heart and spirit is difficult.

Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, let's have no more lies. Speak truthfully to each other, for we are all members of one body.

Honesty:

Honesty is speaking and acting truthfully, thereby remaining morally upright. The Sabe (Sasquatch) represents honesty. Long ago, there was a giant called Kitchi-Sabe. It walked among the people to remind them to be honest to the law of the Creator and with each other. The highest honour bestowed on a person was the saying, “There walks an honest one, who can be trusted.” Keeping the promises one made to the Creator or to others and self was to be truly honest. The elders said live true to your spirit, never try to be someone else.

James 3:13 If there are any wise and learned among you, let them show it by good living - with humility, and with wisdom in their actions.

Wisdom:

Wisdom is the ability to make decisions based on personal knowledge and experience. Community is entirely dependent on the gifts given to each member by the Creator. The beaver teaches us wisdom. If the beaver didn't use it's teeth to cut down trees and branches to build its dams and lodges its teeth would continue to grow until they became useless, ultimately making it impossible for the beaver to sustain itself. The same can be said for human beings. One's spirit will grow weak if it is not fulfilling its use. When used properly, one's gifts contribute to the development of a peaceful and healthy being and community.

Proverbs 18:12 Prior to hardship a heart may be proud, but honour comes only after one has been humbled.

Humility:

Humility is recognizing and acknowledging that Creator is a higher power than people. True humility is being humble and not arrogant. To capture true humility one must express deference or submission to the Creator, through the acceptance that all human beings are equal. Humility is expressed through the consideration of others before oneself. The wolf teaches us humility; it bows its head in the presence of others in deference and shares its food with the pack. The wolf's lack of arrogance and its respect for its community is a hard lesson, just as it can be for people.

1 John 5:20 We know, too, that the Only Begotten of God has come and has given us knowledge about the One who is true. We are in the One who is true, and we are in the Chosen One, Jesus Christ. This is the true God; this is eternal life.

Truth:

Truth is to know and understand all of the original laws given by the Creator and to remain faithful to them. The turtle teaches us about truth. It is said that in the beginning when the Creator made humanity and gave them the Sacred Laws, the Grandmother Turtle was present to ensure that the laws would never be forgotten.

The shell of the turtle represents the body's real events as created by a higher power, and serves as a reminder of the Creator's will and teachings.

Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, Truth - the Seven Grandfather Teachings. If we were all to let these things guide our living what a different world this could be. Our thanks to Deb Anderson Pratt for sharing her wisdom and the wisdom of her people.

So now we have an opportunity to walk along side of our Indigenous neighbours and work with them to bring healing and reconciliation. Which raises the question - how do we do that? What can we do?

The web-site Indigenous Corporate Training, Inc. writes "In May 2021, the remains of 215 young Indigenous children were found in a mass grave at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School. While the school may have closed down in 1969 (and the last school in Canada closed in 1996), this news has brought the tragedy of the residential school experience to the forefront of the minds of Canadians and the world. Reactions from the federal, provincial and municipal governments have poured in, along with public outcry for further action.

We wanted to share what you can do to ensure that every child is recognized and accounted for. There are many ways to support Indigenous communities every day, here is a list of what you can do today to show your support."

1. Write to your Member of Parliament - seeking a forensic search of all property used at any time for Residential Schools. There may be many more unmarked and undisclosed graves to be discovered.
2. Write a letter to your MP seeking clean and potable drinking water for every Indigenous person in Canada. Lack of clean drinking water is still causing major health issues to 126 nations and remote communities in Canada.

I invite you to look up an organization called 'Water First' that is deeply involved in working to resolve water issues and was recently brought to my attention

3. Write a letter to your MP seeking a minimum standard of housing according to provincial building codes for all Indigenous Peoples in Canada. According to the 2016 census, 1 in 5 indigenous people lived in a dwelling in need of major repairs.

4. Lower flags at half-mast for 215 hours in honour of Canada's children. Many municipalities have lowered their flags in response to the discovery and resulting news coverage of the 215 children. All federal buildings were doing so as well. Melville rang our church bells 215 times on June 6 and orange ribbons were tied to bushes outside.

5. Wear an Orange Shirt and encourage others to learn about the Orange Shirt. Orange Shirt Day falls on September 30 every year, however, wearing orange at any time to support Indigenous children is a simple way to support communities.

6. Take a Pledge of Reconciliation. If you have not already, check out our different ways to continue showing support and sign our pledge.

7. Read the Truth and Reconciliation commission report. In order to further understand the tragedy of Residential Schools, and the impact they have on communities today, the report accounts testimonials from survivors, and their experience attending these schools.

8. Take action on any of the Call to Action items. The Truth and Reconciliation commission of Canada released their 94 calls to action in 2015. So far, only 10 have been met. Read the full document and continue to practice the actions toward reconciliation and share them with family and friends.

9. Learn about The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People. It is a comprehensive document outlining the different rights given to all Indigenous Peoples of the World. Canada is working toward implementing it.

10. Donate to the Indian Residential School Survivors Society. The IRSSS is a British Columbian society that provides counselling services to survivors and descendants of the Residential School experience and relies on the support of individuals to continue providing that support. Check out their website to learn more and find out other ways to help.

I hope you have the information presented today helpful. You can find much more information and links to the Pledge and other relevant documents as well as access to courses at www.ictinc.ca. And the Water First Education & Training organization's web-site is waterfirst.ngo.

I apologize for the longer length of today's message but, when you think about it, First Nations people have been living this nightmare for centuries, the least we can do is take some time to listen to their experiences and learn how we can be part of the healing that needs to take place as we all work together toward reconciliation.

After all, we are all in this together - we are all children of the Creator. 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:**

Creator, we come together as a human family, blessed to be alive, blessed to have neighbours as diverse as your creation. We are surrounded with air to breathe, water to drink and all manner of living plants and animals to delight and sustain us. We ponder now the many blessings of family, friends, places to call home, food to eat and the web of life in which we, and all creatures live, move, and have our being.

Today we give thanks especially for our Indigenous neighbours and friends and we lament the historic and present-day racism that continues to mar our relations. We lament the role of our ancestors and our churches who gained at the expense of the First Peoples of this land. We lament the apathy in the face of the need for change that recognizes the sovereignty of the First Peoples who hold the land sacred and who would guide us all to walk humbly upon it. Open our hearts to what is just and right. Encourage us to listen more, speak less, and share openly. Inspire us to participate in movements for change that will bring us together in good and respectful ways.

We pray today for those who live with racism every day; for survivors of residential schools and their families; for people living on reserves with shortages of decent housing, water, schools and other basic infrastructure; for Indigenous women and girls who experience elevated rates of violence and abuse; for Indigenous men who face prejudice in the judicial system and racial profiling.

We pray today for healing, for reconciliation, for justice, for strength, for restoration. We pray that all peoples learn to walk with courage, honesty, humility, love, respect, truth, and wisdom.

We pray today for our brothers and sisters of St. Mary's United Church and for all those who work on our behalf in other parts of our country and the world. And we pray for ourselves as we offer now the prayers of our hearts... (silence)...

Great Spirit, provide us with wisdom, guidance, and direction as we learn to walk together through healing and reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters.

We offer these and all of our prayers in the name of one who is brother to all, Jesus the Christ, and we pray together the words he taught us, 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*
 - i. <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:

Creator, we offer our best selves. We offer a portion of our resources. We offer our hearts to be filled with love and compassion. Take all of these and use them to bring healing in our world. Amen.

Hymn: Deep In Our Hearts MV 154

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;
Deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one

Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.

Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
deep in our hearts there is a common current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.

Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Blessing/Sending Forth:

Let us go knowing there is much work to do
to rectify wrongs done in the past.

Let us go being ready to listen, pause, and reflect
on the stories others tell.

Let us go knowing that we are carried by a God of love,
That we are walking alongside Jesus, a friend for the journey,
and that we are inspired by the Spirit's call to respond.

Postlude:**Prayer of the Week:**

Great Mystery, open our hearts and minds, guide our ways. Build our trust in your strength and vision, and guide us as active participants in the much needed work of justice for all peoples.
Amen.