



*Celebrating
175 Years*



June 06, 2021

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
June 6, 2021
2nd Sunday after Pentecost

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 6, 2021. Today begins the long period of time on the church calendar known as 'Ordinary Time'. Over the next few months stories from the Old Testament as well as stories of Jesus and his life and teachings (New Testament) are discussed and mined for their wisdom as it might apply to us in this day and age.

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:

Today, Sunday June 6, 2021, at 11:00 am the bells at Melville will ring 215 times. Once for each child's remains discovered in Kamloops, BC.

June 10, 2021 - 7:00 pm - Union Day Service of Celebration - 96th Anniversary of UCC - with Moderator Richard Bott. Find it on [United Church YouTube channel](#).

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:

Listen! Too many sounds, too many voices, too many people shouting in our ears.
 We listen to the television pundits, thinking they will tell us what we need to know.
 We listen to advertisements, thinking they will give us what we need.
 We listen to others' judgements, thinking they will show us the way.

But do we listen to Spirit?

Listen! To the One who made us,
 the One who gives us life,
 the One who will show us the way.

Listen, for God is speaking, even here in this time and place.
 Come, let us listen and worship together.

Hymn: Praises Singing (words by Scott Kearns) Tune **VU 312**

Praise, my soul, the wondrous beauty
 to discover everywhere:
 painted sunset, morning glory,
 cooling rain, and breezes fair.

Praises singing, praises bringing,
 for the wonder that we share.

Praise, my soul, the sense of myst'ry,
 knowledge we have yet to find,
 much awaiting our discovery, life's details of every kind.

Praises singing, praises bringing,
 for the questing, searching mind.

Praise, my soul, the deep compassion
 freely offered, freely giv'n,
 care that reaches past the barriers,
 care that takes the stranger in.

Praises singing, our lives bringing,
 joined with all we share a part.

Praise, my soul, the sense of justice,
 seeing others equally,
 full respect for rights and honour,
 full respect for dignity.

Praises singing, our lives bringing,
 t'wards a whole humanity.

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 a slug. (Centering Prayers - William Cleary).

The Matins of a Slug

I move in you, Creative God, then rest,
 And rest again - to ponder what is best.
 You've loved me into being slow and strange,
 And I give thanks and do not care to change.

Ten thousand years ago you gave us eyes
 So we could slide about without surprise,
 But slow - while other folks go rushing on:
 Those racing snails! That tortoise marathon!

But I give thanks for being just a Slug
 Who answers all harassments with a shrug;
 A little damp, a little weed to eat,
 A little ooze, and, ah! my life's complete.

All praise to God, stillpoint outside of time,
 I love the comfort of your sacred slime,
 I rest serene withing your placid calm,
 And dedicate to you this sleepy psalm.

Opening Prayer:

Ever-present God, as we come together in body, mind, and spirit, move us to settle into the notion that we are never separated from your presence. Your all-encompassing love binds us to one another and to you. May we recognize Spirit's presence in all faces in all places.

We confess that we do not always see your light shining all around us. We choose to stay comfortable rather than go to the places you point us to. We too often turn our attention to things that matter more to ourselves and that serve the expectations of other people.

Forgive us, and lead us to do your work wherever we find the needs. Work in us now, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

Hear the good news! With God we are given the opportunity to begin again, and again, and again. We are forgiven and loved more than we can ever know.

Thanks be to God!

Ministry of Music: A piece from Enigma Variations by Edward Elgar

Scripture: 1 Samuel 8:4-20,11:14-15 (The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language)

(The Israelites demand a king)

Fed up, all the elders of Israel got together and confronted Samuel at Ramah. They presented their case: "Look, you're an old man, and your sons aren't following in your footsteps. Here's what we want you to do: Appoint a king to rule us, just like everybody else."

When Samuel heard their demand - "Give us a king to rule us!" - he was crushed. How awful! Samuel prayed to God.

God answered Samuel, "Go ahead and do what they're asking. They are not rejecting you. They've rejected me as their King. From the day I brought them out of Egypt until this very day they've been behaving like this, leaving me for other gods. And now they're doing it to you. So let them have their own way, but warn them of what they're in for. Tell them the way kings operate, just what they're likely to get from a king."

So Samuel told them, delivered God's warning to the people who were asking him to give them a king. He said, "This is the way the kind of king you're talking about operates. He'll take your sons and make soldiers of them - chariotry, cavalry, infantry, regimented in battalions and squadrons. He'll put some to forced labour on his farms, plowing and harvesting, and others to making either weapons of war or chariots in which he can ride in luxury. He'll put your daughters to work as beauticians and waitresses and cooks. He'll conscript your best fields, vineyards, and orchards and hand them over to his special friends. He'll tax your harvests and vintage to support his extensive bureaucracy. Your prize workers and best animals he'll take for his own use. He'll lay a tax on your flocks and you'll end up no better than slaves. The day will come when you will cry in desperation because of this king you so much want for yourselves. But don't expect God to answer."

But the people wouldn't listen to Samuel. "No!" They said. "We will have a king to rule us! Then we'll be just like all the other nations. Our king will rule us and lead us and fight our battles."

Samuel took in what they said and rehearsed it with God. God told Samuel, "Do what they say. Make them a king."

So, at Gilgal Samuel crowned Saul king of Israel.

Message: The World is Calling

1 Samuel 8:4-20, 11:14-15

Sometimes we don't know what is best for us. Sometimes we are swayed by what is going on around us. Sometimes listening to our neighbours over-rides listening to our conscience or to what our heart may be telling us. Sometimes our very human desire to be like everyone else, to fit in takes precedence over our better judgement. So it was with the people of Israel.

Samuel had served the people well for many years as their judge, the highest authority in a

nation loosely governed by the elders of the various tribes. As judge, Samuel had mediated God's leadership over the people. Now he was old and ready to retire and pass along the responsibility but, unfortunately, his sons had not followed his example and were considered unsuitable to take his place. So the elders were demanding that they have a king of their own just like all the other nations did.

Samuel feels rejected. But God seems prepared for it and points out that it is actually God that is being rejected, noting that from the very time of deliverance from Egypt, the people of Israel had been forsaking God, despite God's great acts on their behalf.

God responds by instructing Samuel to deliver a lengthy warning to the people about what it will mean to embrace human power. It is implied that, unlike God, earthly kings will rule brutally and exploit them. The people will be conscripted to fight wars and labour in the king's fields. The king will also take the best of all the nation's resources - people, flocks, land, and harvests.

And worst of all, when you have had enough of being exploited by brutal rulers God will not be available to bail you out. The warnings do not deter the elders, however, who continue to insist they want a king just like other nations.

In the end, a reluctant Samuel heeds the people's request and anoints Saul as king. We are left with the picture of God going along with the people's demands even as God is aware that it is not in the best interests of the people. It seems God thinks it is time for these errant children to learn from their own mistakes. God loves them enough to let them learn from the consequences of their own actions.

This story sounds so familiar to me. From hearing my children say "but everyone else is doing it" to times when I, myself, didn't want to go against popular opinion even though my conscience told me I should. It is hard to take the road less travelled, as a popular author once said. It is hard to be the one who is different or the one who speaks out against what it seems the majority want. It is hard to be the dissenting voice.

This is an all too human story, I think. Most of us live the better part of our lives trying to fit in with our neighbours, trying to be like everybody else, wanting to have what everyone else has and sometimes that means ignoring or losing contact with the still small voice of God within us. And it is so easy to become deaf to that voice because the voices of the world that surround us can be so loud, especially today when it is so almost impossible to disconnect from the news.

The world calls much more loudly and from everywhere we turn. We cannot escape being bombarded by the world's noise. Maybe it is time we turned off the internet, the email, the cell phones for a while and listened to the birds or the wind or a water fall or the silence so that we can hear the voice of our own hearts and souls - the still small voice that whispers inside us - because that is where we find the voice of Wisdom, the voice of Spirit, the voice of God. God knew that the Israelites would not stop grumbling until they had experienced for themselves what following an earthly king would be like. God knew what would happen and

yet told Samuel to let them have their way. That is the way Spirit works - Love lets us make our own choices so we can learn from our own mistakes. It is the consequences of our own choices that teach us best. And if we can learn to listen to the wisdom of Spirit when choosing we will never be steered wrong even if it means being a dissenting voice.

This week will mark the 96th anniversary of the founding of the United church of Canada. It has been a dissenting voice on many occasions and on many issues over the last 96 years. This church has been a leader in demonstrating how to live out God's command to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God. Just a few examples - this church was the first to speak for gender equality by ordaining women; this church was the first to remove all barriers to official service in the church - including sexual orientation; this church was the first to offer an apology to First Nations people over the Residential School disaster - a full 20 years before the government of Canada did the same; this church was first to welcome couples of all orientations to publicly declare and celebrate their love through marriage. And these are only a few examples of how this church has dared to speak out and take a stand on all manner of issues that went against popular opinion. This United church of ours was listening to Spirit against the call of the world. It is a daring church and I am proud to be part of it.

Religion can be a mixed bag, though. Not all churches - or religions - are the same even though all religious traditions were founded on the same principle of the Golden Rule - do to others what you want done to you. But even Christian churches can get off track, I think.

An example is one of the statements I have been asked to respond to during my time in ministry. "I was taught growing up that accepting Jesus into your heart as your personal saviour (read becoming Christian) and being good gains you entrance to heaven. Yet I don't hear it preached in the United Church." A statement like this has many implications, one being that God is human and thinks and acts like a human person. It also implies a system of reward and punishment that is based on fear- the fear that if one is not good enough one will be punished with eternal damnation. That is not how I see God at all.

To me God is pure love and pure spirit. God is the life force that animates us and all living things. God is universal energy of which our spiritual essence is part. It is the force that gives us life as it comes to dwell in this physical body and it is the source to which we will return when this body dies. We cannot be separated from it. We are part of the unconditional source of love. This is so whether the world judges us to be 'good', 'bad' or in between. So what about 'heaven'? My answer to that is, if we are all loved unconditionally no matter how the world judges us then 'heaven' is simply the unseen spiritual realm that we can't see but from which we came and to which we will return - everyone of us - with or without any religious connection - no exceptions. Our purpose here is not so much to be 'good' or 'bad', those are human judgements which change depending on the culture into which you are born. But rather, our purpose is to learn and evolve and grow into our full human potential. In other words to be and become our own beautiful, magnificent selves.

The Israelites were to learn the hard way that following what everyone else is doing may not lead you where you want to go. They were to learn that lesson over and over again just as most of us do too. It takes practice to learn that it is only by following the ways of Wisdom that speak

to us in our own hearts that we can be sure of being led to wholeness and peace.

We need to remember to stop, shut out the noise of the world and open our spiritual ears to hear what God has to say to each of us. Yes, the world is calling, but so is God.

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: (beginning with Psalm 138 - Psalms for Praying, Nan C. Merrill, pg 276-277)

I give you thanks, O Blessed One, with my whole heart;
 before all the people I sing your praises;
 I was humbled when I came to see that you dwell in me,
 in the Sacred Chapel of all souls;
 my gratitude knows no bounds!
 For you are the Holy One, the Life of our life.
 On the day that I called, you answered me;
 the strength of my soul you increased.

All the leaders of the earth shall one day praise you,
 When your Spirit Awakens in every heart;
 And they shall proclaim the new dawn of Light and Love,
 Great will be the radiation of your Glory!
 For even as you are the Most High,
 You are Friend to the lowly;
 the arrogant close their hearts to your love and guidance.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life;
 you are a very Presence as I face my fears and doubts;
 your strength upholds me.
 You guide me as I pray to fulfill my purpose on earth;
 You do not forsake those who call upon you.
 Your steadfast Love and Truth endures forever.

Our prayers continue with some of the words from a prayer written by Rev. Murray Pruden, Executive Minister, Indigenous Ministries & Justice, The United Church of Canada. He prays "Creator, give us the heart and strength to come together in prayer in time of mourning, reflection, and peace.

We have heard news these last few days of our relations, our families, the children who have been physically taken away from us and who have now been found.

And with this news, we grieve for their memory, for their struggle, for their spirit.

We pray for good understanding, guidance, and love for all our families and communities who will need direction and resolution at this time.

And we come together in prayer and ask for your light to guide us to be a part of that needed peace, support, and resolve for everyone who is reacting to this great tragedy in our Indigenous Nations of this great land.

Creator be with us, allow us to be brave. Allow us to be strong. Allow us to be gentle to one another. Allow us to be humble. But most of all, allow us to be your love to each other.

We pray also today for our brothers and sisters of Morriston/Mount-Carmel pastoral charge 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 share the burdens and joys that we carry within. Hear the prayers of our hearts... (silence)....

May your peace fill us, Source of Love. We offer these and all of our prayers in love, trust, and truth in the name of our brother, Jesus the Christ, who grieves with us and who taught us to pray together as a family of faith 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 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:

Out of your abundance, Great Mystery, we have been blessed in so many ways. Reveal to us now what it is that we can offer in return. Bless what we give of ourselves, not because it is much, but because it is given with love. Amen.

Hymn: Come to My Heart**VU 661**

- 1 Come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
teach me to walk in your way.
Come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
come to my heart today.
 Give me the peace and joy
 that only you can bring.
 Come to my heart, Lord Jesus;
 give me a song to sing.

- 2 Fill me with love, Lord Jesus;
teach me to walk in your way.
Fill me with love, Lord Jesus;
fill me with love today.
 Give me the peace and joy
 that only you can bring.
 Fill me with love, Lord Jesus;
 give me a song to sing.

- 3 Answer my prayer, Lord Jesus;
teach me to walk in your way.
Answer my prayer, Lord Jesus;
Answer my prayer today.
 Give me the peace and joy
 that only you can bring.
 Answer my prayer, Lord Jesus;
 give me a song to sing.

Blessing/Sending Forth:

Go now and be the magnificent one you were created to be.
Follow in the footsteps of the Christ,
with the guidance of the Holy Spirit
that lives and breathes in and through you.

Go in peace. Go in love. Amen.

Postlude:**Prayer of the Week:**

Source of all Wisdom, still the noise around us and let us hear your voice speaking in the calmness of our centre. May we hear and heed the wisdom contained within all of our hearts. Amen.