



*Celebrating
175 Years*



July 25, 2021

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

Pastoral Care & Outreach

Faith Formation & Youth

Ministry of Music Team

Office Administrator

Custodian

Chair of Church Council

Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain

Office hours

E-Mail

Web Site

Pastoral Care Numbers

Ruth Cooke

Martha Duncan

Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber

Lynda Rivet

Robert Mitchell

Allan Hons

Alison Rainford

9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. T., Th. & F.

secretary@melvilleunited.com

www.melvilleunited.com

226-500-5004, 519-843-3841

Melville United Church
July 25, 2021

Presiding today - Rev. Tom Watson

Words of Welcome and Introduction

Acknowledgment of Indigenous Territory

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

Sharing the Light

We now take a moment to centre ourselves for worship as I light the Christ candle.

I light a candle

in the name of the God who creates life,

in the name of the Christ Presence who loves life,

in the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.

Call to Worship:

We live in a world where beauty abounds!

The mystical beauty of flowers, the majestic beauty of mountains, the intricate beauty of the spider's web.

We live in a world where mystery abounds!

The mystery of the genetic code, the mystery of the future yet to be shaped, the mystery of life itself.

We live in a world where grace abounds!

The cheerful grace of the bird singing in the garden, the welcoming grace of laughter, the gentle grace of the clasp of another's hand.

To the God who holds all that beauty, mystery and grace together among us, we give thanks in our worship.

Hymn - Sing Your Joy (VU 253)

1. Sing your joy, proclaim God's glory!

Rise and sing, the morning has come!

Bless our God and praise all creation;

Song of the earth, and light from heaven:

God is alive! Hallelujah!

2. All the earth is filled with rejoicing,

Light and life the wonder of God!

Christ has triumphed! Risen forever!

Joy of our hearts and hope of our dreaming:

God is alive! Hallelujah!

3. May we learn to become your kingdom.
May we be your kindness and truth!
Love is our calling, gift of your presence:
Children of God, and spirit of Jesus:
God is alive! Hallelujah!

4. Light our way, O God of the living,
May we learn to see with new eyes!
Jesus the Lord, our power and promise,
Light for the blind and food for the hungry:
God is alive! O praise our God!

Opening Prayer: Creator God, so many things speak to us of you—the wonder and beauty in our surroundings, the lives of your people throughout the ages, the creative visions that break in upon us and nudge us to a new and different future. May all that we see and hear make a difference in us...in what we are, and in what we do. Amen.

Ministry of Music - "Jesus, Be the Centre" (solo, Lillian Gohn)

Scripture Reading: John 6:1—14

After this Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples.

Now the Passover, the festival of the Jews, was nearby. When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming towards him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little."

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down."

Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also, the fish, as much as they wanted.

When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So, they gathered them up...and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets.

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

Message: "Necessary Virtues"

2. Impossible Dreams

Last Sunday here at Melville I started a mini-series of sermons. There are only two in the series...that's about as short a series as you can get and still be respectable. The broad title for the series is "Necessary Virtues." By that I mean things that help us get

Last Sunday, the necessary virtue I talked about was a sense of humour. This morning I want to talk about the need to be able to dream impossible dreams.

One of my all-time favourite stories is *The Man Of La Mancha*. Written by Miguel de Cervantes. And I love the story's captivating song "The Impossible Dream."

To dream the impossible dream, to fight the unbeatable foe,
To bear with unbearable sorrow, to run where the brave dare not go. To right the
unrightable wrong, to love pure and chaste from afar,
To try, when your arms are too weary, to reach the unreachable star!

This is my quest, to follow that star,
No matter how hopeless, no matter how far;
To fight, without question or pause,
To be willing to march into hell for some heavenly cause!

And I know, if I'll only be true to this glorious quest,
That my heart will lie peaceful and calm, when I'm laid to rest.

And the world will be better for this;
That one man, scorned and covered with scars, still strove with his last ounce of
courage, to reach the unreachable stars.

A story of dreaming impossible dreams...and reaching unreachable stars. This is the stuff of the life of the "Man Of La Mancha"—Don Quixote. An unforgettable character who believes firmly that if we can attempt what seems impossible, we indeed have a shot at making it reality.

But Don Quixote, you will probably remember, is considered utterly insane. After all, Don Quixote, what chance does a dreamer have in a world where power and wealth are what counts, not dreams. So quit dreaming your foolish dreams, Don Quixote! Face it! You—just like everybody else—are nothing but a pawn in a chess game in which others make all the plays!

Still, even in the face of this apparent reality, Don Quixote persists in dreaming impossible dreams and reaching for unreachable stars. And in so doing the quaint and aged knight appears a clown, a fool, an absurdity. Someone whose mission in life is tilting at windmills.

But what's better, Don Quixote reasons, to see the worst in everything or the best in everything?

This seeing the best in everything includes seeing the best in people. People including Dulcinea, the prostitute? Others see her as a tramp, but he sees her as the very epitome of virtue, purity, nobility.

Puzzled by Don Quixote's blindness to reality, Dulcinea asks:

"Senor, why do you do such ridiculous things?"

To which he replies, "I hope to bring some measure of grace to the world."

"Hah, the world is a trash heap!" Dulcinea retorts.

"My lady knows better in her heart," counters Don Quixote.

"What's in my heart will get you halfway to hell!" snorts Dulcinea.

"And you, Senor Don Quixote...you...you are going to take such a beating!"

To which he answers: "Whether I win or lose does not matter. " "What does matter?" she asks.

"Only that I follow the quest." says Don Quixote.

"...and the world will be better for this, that one man, scorned and covered with scars, still strove, with his last ounce of courage, to reach...the unreachable stars."

Fictional though he may be, Don Quixote is not absurd. For he had a dream—a dream of what life could be like. A better life. A just, compassionate life, where everyone treated everyone else with affection and caring.

He refused to surrender to despair and hopelessness. He insisted that somewhere beyond all this there was possible a different reality. And although he might be considered a fool for believing it, he would pursue what seemed like an impossible dream. Because it led to something infinitely better and eternally worthwhile.

And even if he did not find what he was looking for, he believed that the world would be better for his having tried!

Sound familiar? Don Quixote sounds strangely like Jesus, doesn't he? A dreamer. Someone who looked beyond another's sickness or incapacity and saw someone capable of being whole. Someone who saw through another's weakness and saw a person of strength behind it. Someone who saw new possibility rising out of the ruins of people and nations and worlds.

Someone who saw the kingdom of God present wherever the focus was on the abundance of life rather than on the scarcity of life

One day on a hillside. On the shore of the Sea of Galilee. A huge crowd. Supper time.

"Feed them," Jesus said to his disciples.

"But, Jesus, we have nothing with us. And it would take 6 months' wages to go to town and buy enough bread so that each of them had even a nibble. There just is not enough to go around!"

"Gather up what you can find," Jesus said.

And they gathered it up. 5 loaves of barley bread and 2 fish. And... you know what...it was enough.

Why? Because Jesus placed the emphasis not on what they did not have, but on what they had. He placed the emphasis not on scarcity but on abundance. He dared to dream that it was enough...and it was!

I wonder if we, with our too small imagination, are not strangely like the disciples.

"There's not enough to go around." Not enough money. Not enough time. Not enough resources. And there never is, of course, if that is how we look at it.

Or we see a problem, and we would like to do something about it, but...my goodness...it seems so much like...well, like an impossible dream. Just cannot push a string uphill, you know.

Most people I know have been shaken by the recent discovery of the bodies of children found in unmarked graves at the sites of former residential schools throughout Canada. We are up to well over 1,000 now.

And we were shaken again to learn about the massacre of black people in the Greenwood area—also known as Black Wall Street—of Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1921.

And shaken even more when a 20-year-old man deliberately drove his pickup truck up and over a curb and mowed down a family of five, four of whom were killed. Why did he do it? They were Muslim people. What were they doing to deserve this? Nothing. Just a family of five out for a Sunday evening stroll in the neighbourhood where they lived.

As I said, most people I know have been shaken by these things. But there is a risk. The risk is that we just shake our heads about the senseless things that go on, we tsk-tsk about it, say "isn't it awful" and move on. The risk in that? Nothing changes.

What if we, instead, dreamed that things could change. Not only dreamed but did something about it, each in our own way.

We have been presented a chance. We know that the world can be better than this. So what if we did as the adage suggests and "be the change that we want to see in the world?"

Oh yes...oh yes...there's that voice of Dulcinea that whispers in our ear, "You're such a fool, Senor...or Senorita...you...you are going to take such a beating!"

I'll tell you what my dream is. I dream of the day when we don't judge each other by putting us into groups. Groups of men and women. Groups of different coloured skin. Groups defined by their religion. Groups of people defined by their political leanings...Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Green.

I dream of the day when each person on this planet is recognized for their individual, unique, worthwhileness...no matter who they are.

I dream of the day when there's no such thing as race, or colour, or creed, but we're all recognized as brothers and sisters on this one spinning blue planet.

Will you join me in those dreams? Or will you tell me that I am being absurd...a fool just like Don Quixote?

"Sit them down on a hill," Jesus said. "What?" the disciples asked, "then what?"

"Feed them," Jesus said.

"But we have nothing," they countered, "how are we ever going to feed them?" And they showed Jesus their empty hands.

And Jesus said, "There's a whole multitude of people. How be you go see what is out there?"

So they went, and returned saying, "All we could find is a small boy that has 5 loaves of barley bread and 2 small fish."

"It's enough," Jesus said. "Share it."

And what happened? It was not only enough; when everybody had eaten, and was satisfied, there was still enough leftovers to fill 12 baskets."

Jesus, like Don Quixote, didn't see the scarcity, he saw abundance. He said, "Know what, if you take what you have, and offer it to God, it will be enough. Might not look like enough, might just look like an impossible dream to think it's enough, but...it's...enough."

When I was a student minister in Straffordville, there was an old woman in the village. Everybody referred to her as Aunt Kate. Aunt Kate had more faith in her little fingernail than I ever had.

Her philosophy was that how you looked at other people, and at situations—even seemingly hopeless situations—was a matter of choice. You could focus on the worst, or you could focus on the best.

Life dealt you a nasty blow? Aunt Kate would say that you could choose to concentrate on the nasty blow and spend all your energy on the bruises from that, or you could concentrate on what to do with what you still had.

Not feeling well? With all the caring in the world, Aunt Kate would remind you that not feeling well about not feeling well was not going to make you feel any better.

Things not going well in the marriage? "Trouble is, she'd say, "you are thinking only about the bad things. Try thinking about the good things!"

Worried about something? "Consider the lilies of the field; they neither toil nor spin, yet God looks after them." That was her favourite scripture passage. I wonder how she discovered that worry never accomplished a single thing.

Over the last several years of her life, she battled cancer, and a few strokes, and a weak heart. And her health gradually went downhill.

One of the things she loved to do was to go and pick berries. But her family was concerned about her—she might collapse in the berry patch and hurt herself, maybe even die there—so they wouldn't take her to the berry patch. So, she got Janice to take her. "Might as well die in the berry patch as somewhere else," she reasoned. Made sense, too.

So who do Aunt Kate and Janice meet in the berry patch, but Aunt Kate's 2 daughters-in-law? They weren't that excited about this outing.

But to her, that was their problem, and she wasn't going to let their problem, and their worries, control her life! Because she was a dreamer of sorts. She believed in concentrating on the abundance of life, not its scarcities. She believed that the essence of life lay in the faith to go ahead and live fully—with the complete and confident assurance that God was present in that faithful approach to living.

"But what if it doesn't work?" I remember asking her.

And she answered, "So? Are you going to be worse off than if you hadn't tried at all?"

No, as Don Quixote said, it's not the winning or losing that matters, but following the quest.

One of the necessary virtues of the faithful life. Being open to impossible dreams.

"...and the world will be better for this. ..that one man, scorned and covered with scars...still strove, with his last ounce of courage, to reach the unreachable stars."

Amen.

Hymn - I Feel the Winds of God (VU 625)

1. I feel the winds of God today, today my sail I lift,
Though heavy oft with drenching spray and torn with many a rift,
If hope would light the water's crest, and Christ my bark will use,
I'll seek the seas at his behest, and brave another cruise.

2. It is the wind of God that dries my vain regretful tears,
Until with braver thoughts shall rise the purer brighter years;
If cast on shores of selfish ease, or pleasure I should be,
O let me feel your freshening breeze and I'll put back to sea.

3. If ever I forget your love and how that love was shown,
Lift high the blood-red flag above; it bears your name alone.
Great pilot of my onward way, you will not let me drift.
I feel the winds of God today; today my sail I lift.

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*

Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Reflection

Closing Hymn – Down to the River to Pray

1. As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way.

O sisters, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O sisters, let's go down
Down in the river to pray.

2. As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the robe and crown
Good Lord, show me the way.

O brothers, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
Come on, brothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray.

3. As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way.

O fathers, let's go down
Let's go down, come on down
O fathers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray.

O mothers, let's go down
Come on down, don't you wanna go down?
Come on, mothers, let's go down
Down in the river to pray.

4. As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good ol' way
And who shall wear the starry crown
Good Lord, show me the way.

Good Lord, show me the way.

Departing Prayer

With the gift of faith as our companion...

With the encouragement of our greatest dreams as our energy...

We live our lives forward into God's future!

May God go with us, wherever we go!

Amen.