



***Celebrating
175 Years***



September 19, 2021

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
September 19, 2021
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost
Second Sunday in Creation Time

Presiding today - Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

Welcome

My name is Lynda Goy-Flint and I am delighted to join in ministry with you as the newly called minister here at Melville United Church in Fergus, Ontario. We gather in community today – September 19, 2021 virtually and in person. We will continue to offer both in-person and on-line services with printed copies being distributed to those without internet access who are unable to attend in person.

As we gather today, we mark the Season after Pentecost, and the second Sunday of Creation Time. The Season after Pentecost is the long season of Ordinary Time when the church, baptized with God's Spirit at Pentecost, focuses on our sending into the world that God so loves, in light of the story of Jesus.

Creation Time in the Season of Pentecost is the five, or six Sundays after Labour Day continuing through Thanksgiving Sunday. The root of Creation Time is in the liturgical time known as Ember Days, with various historical understandings, but perhaps best known as "Quatember" or "quarter day," a day of asking God's blessing on the new season. Creation Time is a season when we consider God's good creation and our relationship to it. Some have called creation God's First Bible. The liturgical colour is orange, a warm colour associated with enthusiasm, creativity, fruitfulness, endurance, and strength, as well as with sunrise and sunset, fall and harvest, and the changing seasons, nature's last burst of colour before winter. It is the red of passion tempered by the yellow of wisdom.

Announcements

I invite you to join us now for a time of worship and contemplation.

Acknowledgement *Peter Chynoweth, **Gathering: Pentecost 2, 2021**, p.25. Used with permission.*

Land is sacred and holy. Our relationship to the land is sacred and holy. Our relationship with each other on this land is sacred and holy. It calls for respect and appreciation. And so we offer our appreciation, our thanksgiving, and our respect that we can gather in this place and on this land as a result of the welcome that comes through the Haldimand Treaty and Treaty No. 4, which allow for peaceful and respectful living on this land. Thanks to the Petun, Haudenosaunee, Anishinabewaki, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Odawa and Mississauga people who have lived on and walked these lands for thousands of years. We acknowledge that we are connected with the people who have lived here for all these years because of the treaties. Because we are treaty people, we must honour the responsibilities that come with it. May we be people who remember this with gratitude and respect.

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)

As we move into our time of worship let us light our Christ Candles

There once was someone who said such wonderful things and did such amazing things

teaching

healing

helping

loving

inviting everyone to join in

that people wondered who he was. Finally they just couldn't help it. They had to ask him who he was. When they asked him who he was, he said, "I am the light of the world."

So we light this candle to remember and remind ourselves that the Light of the World, and the love, healing and welcome that are with us here in this time

Call to Worship: *The United Church Publishing House, Celebrate God's Presence: A Book of Services for The United Church of Canada. Copyright 2000. Used with permission.*

God has given us this beautiful earth,
all that grows, all that lives upon it.

Thanks be to God.

God has given us breath to live and spirit to sing.

Thanks be to God.

God has gathered us into a community of care and worship.

Let us worship God with love, thanksgiving, and praise.

Hymn: For the Fruit of All Creation **VU 227**

- 1 For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God.
 For the gifts to every nation, thanks be to God.
 For the ploughing, sowing, reaping,
 silent growth while we are sleeping,
 future needs in earth's safekeeping, thanks be to God.

- 2 In the just reward of labour, God's will is done.
 In the help we give our neighbour, God's will is done.
 In our worldwide task of caring
 for the hungry and despairing,
 in the harvests we are sharing, God's will is done.

- 3 For the harvests of the Spirit, thanks be to God.
 For the good we all inherit, thanks be to God.
 For the wonders that astound us,
 for the truths that still confound us,
 most of all that love has found us, thanks be to God.

Words of Wisdom:

“Wisdom is, broadly speaking, the knowledge of God’s world and the knack of fitting oneself into it.”

--Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be*

Opening Prayer: *Rebecca Gaudino, Ministry Matters: Worship Elements: September 19, 2021. Used with permission.*

We draw near to you, O God,
Source of all understanding,
and ask you to draw near to us.
Teach us your wisdom from above,
that we may bear good fruit in our lives.
Root us beside the streams of your wisdom,
that the green leaves of our goodness,
fed by your insight,
may not wither. Amen.

Call to Confession *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2. Copyright 2015.*

Recognizing that we are easily swayed
by the wrong advice
and that we have strayed from the ways Jesus taught,
let us confess our sins to God,
with hope of finding love and mercy.

Prayer Seeking Forgiveness and Reconciliation *Rebecca Gaudino, Ministry Matters: Worship Elements: September 19, 2021. Used with permission.*

O God,
we live our lives as best we can—
dealing with difficult relationships and situations,
putting failures and disappointments behind us,
and moving into each new day
with as much energy, goodwill,
and optimism as we can muster.
But here, right now,
we seldom have the right answers,
we seldom seek your higher wisdom in our lives,
we just move ahead.
Forgive us for not asking for your insight.
Fill us with your wisdom,
that we may live lives
of goodness and peace. Amen.

Words of Assurance *Rebecca Gaudino, Ministry Matters: Worship Elements: September 19, 2021. Used with permission.*

When we come before God in humility and honesty,
God draws near to us with forgiveness
and renewed blessing.
Thanks be to God!

"...In the Midst"

The Pain and the Great One by Judy Blume

In *The Pain and the Great One* by Judy Blume, an eight-year-old girl describes all the unfair advantages of her six-year-old brother, "The Pain." And he describes all the unfair advantages that she, "The Great One," has. The two monologues include hints that the two really need each other and that part of their problem is the fear that their parents love the other more. The entire book can be read aloud in five minutes. Or, sections of it can be cited to illustrate points about "greatness" competitions.

Hymn: I Am a Child of God

MV 157

I am a child of God,
I am a glimpse of God's new creation.
I am a child of God
I am a child of God

I am an endless prayer,
I am a yearning for contemplation.
I am endless prayer
I am endless prayer

I am an angry voice,
I am compassion and consternation.
I am an angry voice
I am an angry voice

I am a cry for peace,
I am commitment and dedication.
I am a cry for peace
I am a cry for peace

I am a song of joy
I am the moment of jubilation
I am a song of joy
I am a song of joy

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Your Word is our wisdom;
it gives us insight, strength, and courage.
Open our hearts and our minds on this day,
that we might receive what you want to give. **Amen.**

Scripture: James 3:13-4:3, 7-8a (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition*)

(Wisdom from above is gentle and peaceable)

If there are any wise and learned among you,

let them show it by good living—

with humility, and with wisdom in their actions.

But if you have the bitterness of jealousy or self-seeking ambition in your hearts,

be careful or you'll find yourself

becoming arrogant and covering up the truth with lies.

The kind of "wisdom" doesn't come from above.

It's earthbound, animal-like and demonic.

Where there is jealousy and ambition,

there is also disharmony and wickedness of every kind.

The wisdom from above, however, has purity as its essence.

It works for peace; it's kind and considerate.

It's full of compassion and shows itself by doing good.

Nor is there any trace of partiality or hypocrisy in it.

Peacemakers, when they work for peace, sow the seeds which will bear fruit in holiness.

...

Submit yourselves, then, to God.

Resist the Devil, and it will flee from you.

Draw near to God, and God will draw near to you.

Scripture: Mark 9:30-37 (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition*)

(Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me)

They left that district and began a journey through Galilee,

but Jesus did not want anyone to know about it.

He was teaching the disciples along these lines:

"The Promised One is going to be delivered into the hands of others
and will be put to death, but three days later this One will rise again."

Though they failed to understand these words, they were afraid to question him.

They returned home to Capernaum.

Once there were inside the house, Jesus began to ask them,

"What were you discussing on the way home?"

At this they fell silent, for on the way

they had been arguing about who among them was the most important.

So Jesus sat down and called the Twelve over and said,

"If any of you wants to be first, you must be the last one of all and the servant of all."

Then Jesus brought a little child into their midst

and, putting his arms around the child, said to them,

"Whoever welcomes a child such as this for my sake welcomes me.

And whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the One who sent me."

Prayer Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2*. Copyright 2015.

God of the first and the last, *Mark 9:30–37*
give us strength of mind,
that we might walk the path of obedience and discipleship
without wasting our time thinking about who is more important.
Instead, guide our thoughts and our emotions
that we may be like children, totally dependent on you,
welcoming all with hospitality and love.
In the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen.**

Reflection: Lift from Your Core

Have you come across those ads on the radio, the ones that encourage us all to be back protection experts? The ones that tell us not to injure our back doing the million and one activities in our lives that require us to put our back into it. The ones that tell us to lift from our core? Why? Because if you don't you might throw your back out, leaving your whole body out of commission for days (and yes, unfortunately, I know of what I speak).

And what, you might wonder, does that have to do with our Epistle reading today from James? The overarching theme in James' message in this part of the letter is, Are you a friend of the world or a friend of God? In other words, are you lifting from your core, or from elsewhere, which will lead to the body being thrown out of whack? Specifically, this week James is asking, Is the wisdom informing your action in the world coming from above, coming from God?

Which is a very relevant question, but how do you know? Is the wisdom I am basing my action on coming from the world, or coming from God? We can tell that it is wisdom from God if we're listening to our core and acting from our core. In etymological terms, "core" is more than the centre of the body where our physical strength lies. "Core" is derived from the Old French *cor* or *Coeur* meaning "heart". "Courage" comes from the same place etymologically—that is, the heart. Discernment begins with the courage to listen to our core for the whisper of God and then act from that place.

In your heart, what drives the choices we make? James asks, Is it envy? If so, says James, then our wisdom is unspiritual, even devilish. Are we driven by selfish ambition? If so, says James, then our actions betray us as friends of the world rather than friends of God.

The very distressing thing about acting as friends of the world, is that the damage done from these actions is not isolated to one individual. James' philosophy is profoundly horizontal as well as vertical. Wisdom is born from above in order to spread healthy and holy ways of being a community. James highlights in this letter that damage done to the community when an individual takes action based on wisdom of the world. It throws the whole body out of whack. There will be disorder, wickedness and even murder. If you covet, your cravings will lead you away from God as well as away from your neighbour.

"Show you are wise and learned by good living—with humility and with wisdom in your actions."
James 3:13b)

James offer us descriptions of the healing, holy wisdom that can give birth to our actions when we **lift from the core**. First James says, "Wisdom from above has purity as its essence." But since few things in this world are pure, perhaps we can consider the second trait of wisdom from above. It is

“kind and considerate”, we might say gentle, as does theologian Casey Thornburgh Sigmon, when she shares, “As someone with a **very** loud and harsh inner critic, I can pause and consider an entire sermon on this attribute [gentleness] for God’s wisdom.” [I would love to hear that!].

“Choices I make,” she says, “based on my inner critic rarely make for peace, creativity or beauty. I picture my inner critic as a mean-faced coach with a whistle, blue shorts, white polo [shirt] and knee-high white socks—he’s hunkered down, red-faced and yelling at me to do better as I flail about, not lifting from my core....this coach is fueled by insecurity and scarcity, as if I am not doing enough or not taking the path of so and so, thus falling behind in a race for selfish ambition I never wanted to start. Hello, wisdom from below. I’d rather not act on your advice.

“But wisdom from above is gentle. I picture a beloved spiritual director, nodding, listening, asking those self-awakening questions that help me to hear the wisdom of God in the core of my being. Gentle. Not coercive. Invitational, not manipulating and bullying. Hello wisdom from above. Action and choices prompted by you make for peace, beauty, joy, abundance.”

Wisdom from above is also considerate. Friends of mine have introduced me to the series on TV called Ted Lasso, about a second-tier American college football coach who is hired to be the head coach/manager of a professional, Premier League soccer team in England. Ted Lasso seems to be imbued with wisdom from above. At one point he opines, “The wise Walt Whitman once said: ‘Be curious, not judgmental.’ Curiosity is a wise action born of consideration. Judgment it is not. Judgment leads to defensiveness and may cause us to miss out on an invitation from God to try something new.

But that consideration is not just between and among us. The tone of this verse speaks to the idea that God has **consideration** for **us**, rather than to love us by control and domination. We might think of the scene of Jesus overlooking Jerusalem as he comes to it for the final time, willing himself to move forward and act out of deep consideration, to yield himself, and at the same time, lamenting, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather you children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37 NRSV).

Wisdom from above is full of compassion, and shows itself by doing good. These are two ideas, but we can see how compassion paves the way for doing good, both within ourselves, and as a result, between one another. This “doing good” might remind us of the fruits of the Spirit as described in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. These allow for the societies God intends and imagines for us.

We might wonder about the times when following wisdom from above has led to conflict or tension in our dealings with one another, such as when Jesus drove the money changers and sellers of sacrificial animals out of the Temple; but this stands in sharp contrast to the conflict born of envy and selfish ambition. Conflict that at times is undertaken with consideration, that is curious or compassionate, is doing good of the sort that will nourish society.

Wisdom from above is without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. Earlier in James’ letter he calls out his community for showing partiality for the rich, in Chapter 2. In this election season, in this Covid-tide, we might wonder how many politicians, decision-makers and boards need to be reminded of the challenge to not have partiality that goes against our commitment to God, who is made known in a poor, rural Jewish man who rubbed shoulders with the marginalized. We might ask ourselves,

whose best interests are at the heart of our choices, our actions—or inaction—as a church? This is the challenge of James, as much now as it was then.

As we together discern as a congregation what our actions should be, we would do well to consider James and draw near to God. God will draw near to us. Resist the Devil of selfish ambition, envy and covetousness. When our actions, including this very action of preaching and reflecting upon the word-broken-open, are born from God's wisdom, our inner and outer worlds become a friendlier, holier, more peaceable place. When we lift from our core, we find that we have the collective strength to lift what once seemed an impossibly heavy burden to bear.

Hymn: When We Are Living **VU581**

- 1 When we are living, it is in Christ Jesus,
and when we're dying, it is in the Lord.
Both in our living and in our dying,
we belong to God, we belong to God.
- 2 Through all our living, we our fruits must give.
Good works of service are for offering.
When we are giving, or when receiving,
we belong to God, we belong to God.
- 3 'Mid times of sorrow and in times of pain,
when sensing beauty or in love's embrace,
whether we suffer, or sing rejoicing,
we belong to God, we belong to God.
- 4 Across this wide world, we shall always find
those who are crying with no peace of mind,
but when we help them, or when we feed them,
we belong to God, we belong to God.

Preparation for Prayer

Let us once again practice the art of Praying with our Eyes Wide Open, seeing the world and those within it we are called to tend:

As we prepare our hearts and minds to enter a time of prayer, I invite you to sit comfortable and quietly for a moment. Breathe deeply a few times paying attention to your breath as it moves in through your nose and as it fills your lungs. Picture your breath as a light entering your body and filling it with love and relaxation. Then when you exhale through your mouth 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 into the prayer time.

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[A brief silence is kept after each petition.]

Let us pray for the church, the world, and all Earth's needs, saying:
God of mercy, hear our prayer.

We give you thanks, Holy One, for all that sustains life.

We thank you—

for good soil and clean air . . .

for the waters of Earth and especially *[name local waterways
and bodies of water]* . . .

for fish and mammals, birds and insects, for trees and plants
of every kind . . .

for all the varieties of people you have made and the richness
of our many cultures . . .

for responsible leaders and citizens, healthy nations, schools,
and plenteous food . . .

for shelter, clothing, medical care, and art

for all those things we name now in gratitude, silently
or aloud . . .

God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty and gracious God, we call on your help

in the face of all that we do not know how to change. We pray—

for people of faith everywhere . . .

for the healing of Earth wherever there are scars . . .

for all nations at war . . .

for peacemakers, diplomats, and inventors . . .

for families lacking the necessities of life . . .

for people who are suffering in any way . . .

for all those needs we lift before you now silently or aloud . . .

God of mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lean on your compassion, O God,

and trust your promise to heed the cries of your people

and answer our need, in the name of your Son, Christ Jesus,

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

now and forever. **Amen.**

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 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 web-site
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/melville-united-church>
3. Call or email Lynda, to arrange Pre-Authorized Remittance payments (PAR).
4. E-transfer directly from your bank. E-mail to secretary@melvilleunited.com

Thanks to all of you who continue to contribute so much to make Melville the caring community of faith that it is. May you be blessed

Offering Prayer *Rebecca Gaudino, Ministry Matters: Worship Elements: September 19, 2021. Used with permission.*

You are the generous one,
full of mercy
and goodness for your creation.
Send your wisdom with these gifts,
that they may reach those
who need your love and welcome.
Bring about a harvest of goodness
through these gifts sown in peace. Amen.

Hymn: Blessed Assurance

VU 337

- 1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of the Spirit, washed in Christ's blood.
Chorus: This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.
- 2 Perfect submission, perfect delight!
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending, bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. *Chorus*
- 3 Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blessed;
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with God's goodness, lost in Christ's love. *Chorus*

Commissioning *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**[®] Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2. Copyright 2015.*

Go out into the world
endeavoring to be the last of all and the servant of all.
Welcome the children, for in doing so,
you welcome Jesus.
Submit yourselves to God,
resist all evil;
draw near to God,
and God will draw near to you.

*Mark 9:30–37;
Jas. 4:7–8a*

Change the Light

Watch. I am going to change the light and I invite you to change your light. I'm not going to put it out, **just** changing it. See how it is only in one place? *Change Light* Can you see it? Now everywhere you go today, the light will go with you.

Blessing *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**[®] Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2. Copyright 2015.*

May God, who watches over all the righteous,
give you the gifts needed to be a capable servant.
May Jesus Christ, who welcomes everyone,
give you the loving heart of a child
so that you can welcome others unconditionally.
May the Holy Spirit, who gives us the understanding we need
to love God and to love others,
give us unselfish and generous hearts,
to heal relationships and to live in peace.

Household Prayer: Morning *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**[®] Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2. Copyright 2015.*

As we rise,
we have so much to do!
We work without realizing
that all we do can be a song of love to you
and to the ones with whom you have surrounded us.
Lead me, O God,
so that everything that I do in my life
can be done in praise to you. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word**[®] Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2. Copyright 2015.*

As this day ends,
I hope I have done my work
with a gentleness born out of your wisdom.
Thank you, triune God,
for the rest that you will provide
and for the strength for a new morning. Amen.