



Celebrating
176 Years



December 5, 2021

Melville United Church
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Melville United Church
December 5, 2021
Second Sunday of Advent

Presiding today - Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

Welcome

I greet you in the name of the Jesus Christ, the one whose coming we celebrate, the one whose coming we anticipate.

We gather in community today – December 5, 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 the season of Advent, a time for the preparation of our hearts and selves for the arrival of Jesus. The liturgical colour for Advent is blue—the soft colour of the sky just before dawn. It is a time of already, and not yet. Jesus has come historically, but we also prepare ourselves for his coming again.

Announcements

- **Ladies of Melville** - You are cordially invited to a Christmas Coffee on Friday, Dec. 10th, at 10am, in the Chapel/Parlour. This is instead of Unit get-togethers. We plan on using our special teacups! You must be double vaccinated; masks must be worn indoors (mask can come off when seated to eat or drink) and hand sanitizer used when entering the building. If you need ride, call Lorna's cell: 519-994-1939.
- **2021-2022 Gifts with Vision** catalogues are out. These gifts are perfect for those difficult to buy for people. There's no going out, no standing in line, no wondering if the item you ordered will be here in time for Christmas, no wrapping. And you will be helping out those in need near and far. Items address healing and reconciliation, leadership, counter racism, wellness and safe spaces, education, poverty and hunger, the future, Mission & Service. Gifts range from \$5 to \$140. Gifts include food for the north, help build a well, purchasing Covid vaccines for the Global South and East, and much more. You can find the full catalogue at www.giftswithvision.ca.
- We continue to **collect items for the food bank**. A list of the most needed items was sent out, and if you need a printed copy, just let someone on the Social Justice team or Rev. Lynda know, and we will get it to you. In addition to non-perishable food items, the food bank is also looking for personal and feminine hygiene products as well as fresh vegetables, apples and oranges.
- We will be celebrating **White Gift Sunday** during Advent on December 12th. Although toys have often been what we offer as our white gifts, the food bank is doing something different this year. Therefore the Social Justice and Outreach Committee asks you to make your white gift offering one of money or food or personal and feminine hygiene products. Our children will be collecting toiletries and small items with an emphasis on what is needed for teens.
- **Mitten Tree** – We will once again be placing a mitten tree in the sanctuary and ask you to decorate it with mitts, hats, scarves and socks to keep folks in need warm during the winter.
- **High School Students Swap** – Centre Wellington District High School is collecting indoor and outdoor new and gently used clothing for students to access for free. Please take your donation directly to the high school.

- **Calling for Your List of Favourite Hymns** – We are looking for your favourite hymns from Voices United, More Voices or any others. Please complete the list on the handout and place it on the offering plate, return it to Lynda the office administrator, Rev Lynda or someone on the Worship and Music Committee.
- **Advent Study** – Advent is sometimes just the thing that stands between us and Christmas, or an opportunity to get at all those Christmas preparations—getting the Christmas cards sent, baking, picking out a tree, wrapping presents... What about preparing our hearts? That is just as important an activity for the weeks leading up to December 24th. With that in mind, we will be holding an Advent study on Monday nights during Advent: November 29th, December 6th, 13th and 20th from 7:00pm to 8:30pm. We will be meeting by Zoom and using the study materials in the Advent Unwrapped resource from the United Church of Canada. You can find the materials at <https://united-church.ca/worship-theme/advent-unwrapped> at the bottom under “Worship Blogs.” Please let Rev. Lynda or a member of the Faith Formation Committee know if you are interested.
- **Christmas Bake Sale Plus** - Dec. 18, 10 - 4, Christmas Bake Sale Plus. Your Funds, Fun and Fellowship Committee will offer a wide variety of homemade Christmas goodies and UCW meat pies. We are baking cookies, squares, tarts (butter tarts and mince), homemade fudge, candy and Christmas pudding with sauce. Buy yourself some treats and buy boxes or plates of goodies for gift giving. Let your neighbours know about our Christmas Bake Sale Plus on December 18th. We will also have a table of Christmas ornaments, etc. Do you have some excess Christmas ornaments/decorations etc. to donate? Contact Marg at 519-843-3274.
- **Upcoming Services:**
 December 12 – Third Sunday of Advent – White Gift Sunday
 December 19 – Fourth Sunday of Advent – Christmas Cantata musical service
 December 24 – Christmas Eve
 4pm – Family Christmas Service
 7pm – Traditional Christmas Service

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 the Simcoe Patent -
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.

Advent Candle Lighting

One blue/purple Advent candle is lit.

Peace doesn't always mean being quiet.

**We seek to be a people of peace,
living from a place of justice,
joining our voices with others
who want to give birth to a new way of being.**

Peace calls out to us, so that we may help it become a reality.

God is our peace.

May we let God reconcile in places of conflict,
creating bridges where divisions have grown,
sewing all of creation into a new tapestry.

May peace be found in a manger and throughout the world.

A second blue/purple Advent candle is lit.

Sung Response Hope Is a Star

VU 7 verse 2

Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
giving a promise of safety and worth.

When God is a child there's joy in our song.

The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.

Call to Worship: *Spill the Beans Resources Team, spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 41, p. 22. Copyright 2021.*

A messenger will be born.

Peace is coming.

Someone to show the way.

Peace is coming.

A world is waiting.

Peace is coming.

Lord, we, your people,
wait patiently,

hanging on for Advent peace.

Lord, we bring you ourselves,
we bring you our worship.

Hymn: There's a Voice in the Wilderness Calling VU 18

- 1 There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
 a call from the ways untrod:
 prepare in the desert a highway,
 a highway for our God!
 The valleys shall be exalted,
 the lofty hills brought low;
 make straight all the crooked places
 where God, our God, may go!

- 2 O Zion, that bringest good tidings,
 get thee up to the heights and sing!
 Proclaim to a desolate people
 the coming of their King.
 Like the flowers of the field they perish,
 like grass our works decay;
 the power and pomp of nations
 shall pass, like a dream, away.

- 3 But the word of our God endureth,
 whose arm is ever strong;
 God stands in the midst of nations,
 and soon will right the wrong.
 God shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
 the lambs so gently hold;
 to pastures of peace will lead them,
 and bring them safe to fold.

- 4 There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
 a call from the ways untrod:
 prepare in the desert a highway,
 a highway for our God!
 The valleys shall be exalted,
 the lofty hills brought low;
 make straight all the crooked places
 where God, our God, may go!

Opening Prayer: Nancy C. Townley, *Ministry Matters: Worship Connection: December 5, 2021* at <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3281/worship-connection-december-5-2021>. Used with permission..

**We are busily preparing our homes, and our gifts, Gracious God,
but we need help in preparing our spirits to receive your message of Peace.
Free us from the stresses and strains of this time,
and place your peace which passes all our understanding in our hearts.
For we ask this in Jesus' Name. Amen.**

Ministry of Music: "Carol for Advent" words by Nancy Price and Don Besig, music by Don Besig –
Melville Choir accompanied by Colleen Weber

Call to Reconciliation Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1*. Copyright 2012.

Saints, let us trust in God's love for us and confess our sin,
confident in God's mercy.

Prayer Seeking Forgiveness and Reconciliation Scott Martin, *Gathering: Pentecost 2 2021*, p.47. Used with permission.

Lord, hear us this day as we open our hearts and our spirits to you.

These times in which we live are often confusing and fearful.

We are pushed to make preparations for a season
which is supposed to bring hope and peace;
yet we crowd it with obligations and stresses
and shut the door to your healing love and compassion.

We find ourselves being on edge, fretful,
wondering if we have done enough, can do enough.

You answer our fears with your voice, "Peace, be still".

Help us to hear you. Slow us down.

Encourage us to take some time to listen rather than shout,
to stop and rest rather than run.

Cause us to look around at situations and people who are in need
and to place our focus on helping them.

For it is in helping your people and reaching out in love that we will find true peace.

These things we pray, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Words of Assurance Scott Martin, *Gathering: Pentecost 2 2021*, p.47. Used with permission.

Jesus said, "I am bringing you peace,
not the kind of peace the world would give to you.

My peace I give to you, now and forever."

Be at peace. Know God's love is given for you.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

"...In the Midst"

Hymn: Hark the Glad Sound VU 29

1 Hark, the glad sound! The Saviour comes,
the Saviour promised long:
let every heart prepare a throne,
and every voice a song.

2 He comes, the prisoners to release
in Satan's bondage held;
the gates of brass before him burst,
the iron fetters yield.

- 3 He comes, the broken heart to bind,
the bleeding soul to cure,
and with the treasures of his grace
to bless the humble poor.

- 4 Our glad hosannas, Prince of Peace,
your welcome shall proclaim;
and heaven's eternal arches ring
with your beloved name.

Scripture:

Prayer Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1*. Copyright 2012.

Holy One, through your Holy Spirit
instruct us by the light of your prophets.
Illumine our hearts, that we may hear your call
to become your path into the world.
In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Interactive Gospel Reading – by Carolyn C. Brown

Luke 1: 5-25 and 57-80

Narrator (speaking from the lectern while the couple is coming forward from the congregation): When Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest by the name of Zechariah from the priestly group of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was from the family of Aaron. Both of them were good people and pleased the Lord God by obeying all that he had commanded. But they did not have children. Elizabeth could not have any, and both Zechariah and Elizabeth were already old.

Zechariah: One day my group of priests were on duty, and I was serving God as a priest. According to the custom of the priests, I had been chosen to go into the Lord's temple that day and to burn incense, while the people stood outside praying. All at once an angel from the Lord appeared to me at the right side of the altar. I was confused and afraid!

Angel (stepping to the front beside Zechariah): Don't be afraid, Zechariah! God has heard your prayers. Your wife Elizabeth will have a son, and you must name him John. His birth will make you very happy, and many people will be glad. Your son will be a great servant of the Lord. He must never drink wine or beer, and the power of the Holy Spirit will be with him from the time he is born. John will lead many people in Israel to turn back to the Lord their God. He will go ahead of the Lord with the same power and spirit that Elijah had. And because of John, parents will be more thoughtful of their children. And people who now disobey God will begin to think as they ought to. That is how John will get people ready for the Lord.

Zechariah: How will I know this is going to happen? My wife and I are both very old.

Angel: I am Gabriel, God's servant, and I was sent to tell you this good news. You have not believed what I have said. So you will not be able to say a thing until all this happens. But everything will take place when it is supposed to.

Elizabeth: The crowd was waiting for Zechariah and kept wondering why he was staying so long in the temple. When he did come out, he could not speak, and they knew he had seen a vision. He motioned to them with his hands, but did not say a thing.

When Zechariah's time of service in the temple was over, he came home. Soon after that, I was expecting a baby, and for five months I did not leave the house. I said to myself, "What the Lord has done for me will keep people from looking down on me." When my son was born, my neighbors and relatives heard how kind the Lord had been to me, and they too were glad.

Eight days later we did for the child what the Law of Moses commands. People were going to name him Zechariah, after his father. But I said, "No! His name is John." Everyone argued with me, "No one in your family has ever been named John." So they motioned to Zechariah to find out what he wanted to name his son. Zechariah asked for a writing tablet. Then he wrote, "His name is John." Everyone was amazed. Right away, Zechariah started speaking and praising God.

Zechariah:

Praise the Lord, the God of Israel!
He has come to save his people.
Our God has given us a mighty Savior
from the family of David his servant.
Long ago the Lord promised by the words
of his holy prophets
to save us from our enemies
and from everyone who hates us.
God said he would be kind to our people
and keep his sacred promise.
He told our ancestor Abraham
that he would rescue us from our enemies.
Then we could serve him without fear,
by being holy and good as long as we live.
You, my son, will be called
a prophet of God in heaven above.
You will go ahead of the Lord
to get everything ready for him.
You will tell his people
that they can be saved
when their sins are forgiven.
God's love and kindness will shine upon us
like the sun that rises in the sky.
On us who live in the dark shadow of death
this light will shine
to guide us into a life of peace.

Narrator: All the neighbors were frightened because of what had happened, and everywhere in the hill country people kept talking about these things. Everyone who heard about this wondered what this child would grow up to be. They knew that the Lord was with him. As John grew up, God's Spirit gave him great power. John lived in the desert until the time he was sent to the people of Israel.

Luke 3:2b -17

Narrator: God spoke to Zechariah's son John when he grew up. John was living in the desert. So John went along the Jordan Valley, telling the crowds of people who came there to hear him,

John: Turn back to God and be baptized! Then your sins will be forgiven.

Narrator: Isaiah the prophet wrote about John when he said,

"In the desert someone is shouting,

'Get the road ready for the Lord!

Make a straight path for him.

Fill up every valley

and level every mountain and hill.

Straighten the crooked paths

and smooth out the rough roads.

Then everyone will see the saving power of God."

Narrator: Crowds of people came out to be baptized, but John said to them,

John: You bunch of snakes! Who warned you to run from the coming judgment? Do something to show that you really have given up your sins. Don't start saying that you belong to Abraham's family. God can turn these stones into children for Abraham. An axe is ready to cut the trees down at their roots. Any tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into a fire.

Narrator: The crowds asked John,

The crowds: What should we do?

John: If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn't have any. If you have food, share it with someone else.

Narrator: When tax collectors came to be baptized, they asked John,

Tax-collectors: Teacher, what should we do?

John: Don't make people pay more than they owe.

Narrator: Some soldiers asked him,

Soldiers: And what about us? What do we have to do?"

John: Don't force people to pay money to make you leave them alone. Be satisfied with your pay.

Narrator: Everyone became excited and wondered, "Could John be the Messiah?" But John said,

John: I am just baptizing with water. But someone more powerful is going to come, and I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His threshing fork is in his hand, and he is ready to separate the wheat from the husks. He will store the wheat in his barn and burn the husks with a fire that never goes out.

Narrator: This is the Word of the Lord!

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

Prayer David Sparks, *Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphany 2021-2022*, p.34. Used with permission.

John had a word for his time, and the people came hopefully to Jordan's bank.

John had a word that called for a decisive response, and the people were ready to respond.

John has a word for our time and he encourages us to listen.

In today's scripture, John has a word that calls for a decisive response, and so you ask us, Loving God, if we are ready to actively respond. Amen.

May the words I speak and the reflection that we all share
find a response that is worthy of you,
most Just, most Loving, and most Compassionate God. Amen.

David Sparks, Summerland, B.C.

Reflection: Repent!

In our scripture for today, we heard John say turn back to God. This part of his exhortation is often translated as "Repent!" Repent is defined as "feel or express sincere regret or remorse about one's wrongdoing or sin." There is an element of self punishment about what we have done. But the word translated as repent, comes from the Greek *metanoein*, which literally means to "change one's mind." It's about learning from our mistakes, taking a different action, and doing better.

So with that in mind, I want to share a short story by Maria Savva.

*

Angela couldn't remember; Gina could never forget.

Gina ran down the escalator, anxious to catch the Tube train that could be heard pulling into the platform. Pushing past a woman who was walking slowly, Gina huffed. *I need a coffee*, she thought, blaming exhaustion for the show of impatience. She'd missed breakfast because getting to work on time rated as more important, and she'd struggled to get out of bed due to lack of sleep.

The insomnia came about because of Bradley, or more accurately because of her expectation that he should reply to her text message; he hadn't responded. After their first date, Gina got carried away, imagining herself in a relationship with Bradley. There seemed to be a mutual attraction. Two months later, with little communication from him apart from the odd text or sporadic interaction on Facebook, she was starting to feel ignored.

Gina jumped onto the Tube train and turned around only to notice the slow-walking woman stepping into the carriage.

Angela looked at the young woman. *This must be her*, the thought came from out of nowhere, *the one I was warned about*. The girl had shoved her out of the way before boarding the train. *I have to do it now*. A feeling of despair took hold before all went black.

*

The knife—a small, serrated kitchen knife—had been plunged deep into Gina's shoulder, narrowly missing an artery. 'You're quite a lucky girl; must have had an angel on your shoulder, Miss Turner. If it had just been... perhaps a centimetre to the left, you may not have survived to tell the tale.'

Lucky? Gina didn't feel lucky to have been stabbed by a deranged woman on a train. 'If I'd had an angel with me, surely they would've kept that crazy woman away from me.'

The doctor laughed but said nothing further.

One minute she'd been on the train, the next lying in a hospital bed. As the doctor relayed the story, pictures formed in Gina's mind: the stranger she'd pushed aside who'd subsequently boarded the train; the woman's hollow stare. Gina remembered feeling intimidated. It all happened so quickly. Gina turned around to avoid the hard stare; the woman seemed angry. Then there were screams. For a short while Gina stood still, stunned, watching people screaming, confused by their reactions... Did a terrorist board the train? Maybe someone with a gun, or someone with a belt of explosives?

'Are you all right?' asked a fellow passenger, his eyes wide as he looked at Gina. Then he'd called out to the other passengers: 'Quick, someone call an ambulance... Pull the alarm! We need something for the wound, to stem the flow...'

Gina lowered her gaze and noticed something red: blood... everywhere. Then nothing.

*

Lying on the hospital bed, Gina thought back over the events of the morning. She had been in such a hurry to get to work. It all seemed so unimportant now. No one should have to work 9 to 5 these days, but Sue, her boss, was so old-fashioned yet vehemently in denial about getting older.

A few months ago, one staff member innocently commented that fifty-something Sue might be menopausal as she always felt hot and insisted on opening the windows in the office even on cold days. Sue responded sharply with: 'I'm all woman.' Gina baulked at the response, wanting to say something sarcastic like, 'Men don't go through the menopause', but she stopped herself, for fear of losing her job.

Gina couldn't help smiling as an image came into her mind's eye: Sue looking at the clock, cheeks reddening, nose up in the air as usual. 'Does anyone know where Gina is?'

Gina pushed the thoughts away and sneered. Sue was to blame for all of it, creating the paranoia about being late resulting in the frenzied impatience to board the train.

*

'Yes. I definitely saw a young woman. I can still see her face if I close my eyes; she'd pushed past me to get onto the train. I remember thinking that young people have no patience these days.' Angela looked down at her hands. 'I don't remember anything else after that. I'd assumed I must have passed out.'

The knife had been in Angela's bag because she sometimes took cutlery to work, didn't trust the hygiene in the office kitchen.

'It seems as if it was a psychotic episode. Have you ever suffered from mental illness in the past?' The psychiatrist waited for an answer.

'No,' Angela lied. It still persisted, the sense of shame. She'd suffered a breakdown many years ago, in her mid-twenties, and spent time in a psychiatric ward. Family and friends drifted away after the episode. Angela was aware that their departure from her life was a reaction caused by fear or ignorance, but it didn't stop her feelings of inadequacy.

Times had changed; mental illness wasn't as much of a taboo subject these days, but even being aware of that could not shift Angela's ingrained lack of inner worth, so entrenched; the idea of revealing the truth, exposing herself, struck her as more daunting a prospect than facing a mountain with an unreachable summit.

Whenever the depression threatened, which it had done quite frequently over the years, she'd found ways to keep it at bay.

Angela often saw herself as more of an onlooker in life, just outside, not fully involved. Friends and colleagues would get excited about things, plan ahead; she'd constantly feel stuck, tormented. Her heightened tension had morphed into a familiar companion, like an old comfort blanket a child might become attached to; it felt safer to stay within its hold. The dark feeling—usually depicted in comics and animation as a black cloud and, ironically, often in a jokey way—remained like an obtrusive shadow, forever present in Angela's life, at least on the periphery of consciousness. She kept it to herself. Didn't want to be labelled, didn't want the stigma.

'We'll have to keep you here for a while and do some tests,' the doctor explained.

'Is she all right? The girl?' Even while asking the question, Angela wasn't sure she wanted to know the answer. Anxiety began to play its mind-games, concocting the worst-case scenario. The girl could be dead or permanently disabled. Flashes of courtrooms, police stations, jail cells, came to mind along with the familiar sense of being guilty, blaming herself for everything.

'She'll be fine, Ms Mobrey.'

The doctor's words battled against Angela's inner anguish. Was he telling the truth or trying to protect a fragile mind?

'It could have been much worse,' continued the psychiatrist. 'We have to make sure you're fit to leave, to avoid anything like this happening again.'

'Will I go to prison?'

'We believe it was mental illness, so we are going to present a report to the court. It's a very serious incident.'

'Why can't I remember any of it?'

The doctor's eyes gave nothing away. Did it sound believable? Wouldn't it be best to tell the truth? It was all there in her medical records, after all.

'It's quite unusual for someone to do something like this, at your age, Ms Mobrey, without any history of mental illness. Although, it's not beyond the realms of probability that it was some kind of episode maybe linked to trauma.'

'I lied.'

'I'm not sure what you're saying, Ms Mobrey. Please elaborate. Are you telling me you deliberately stabbed that girl?'

'No; no, I wouldn't do anything like that... I lied about... I do have a history of mental illness.'

With some coaxing from the doctor and many tears, Angela began to open up, unlocking the secrets that were buried deep under years of insecurities, scraping away the untruths, revealing what lay beneath.

Talking about the past felt freeing somehow. The doctor wasn't being judgemental. He seemed to find it interesting, was asking many questions. It felt almost as if her experience was helping him to learn more. The weight of carrying it all inside for so long slid away bit by bit. The doctor didn't react in horror but with sympathy, giving her hope and explaining the help they could offer.

'Don't worry. You're not alone. We can help you. In fact, if you'd seen a doctor sooner, chances are this incident might never have happened.'

*

There'd been an outpouring of sympathy on Facebook. Nothing from Bradley. At first, Gina obsessed over that, almost ignoring all the positive messages. Now, nearly two weeks later, there was still no word from him. Today it didn't matter: her perspective had changed. The days laid up in a hospital bed offered the gift of time to contemplate what was important.

Gina heard that the woman who'd stabbed her had been admitted to hospital, suffering from mental illness. Reflecting on her own behaviour, Gina couldn't help wondering how much of what she'd done had provoked the woman's reaction. Things could have turned out much worse. Gina had expected to feel angry about what happened, but somehow there'd been a mental shift.

Gina walked towards the Tube station platform. Her first day back at work after the "accident". The doctor at the hospital had given her a leaflet about the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Gina took deep breaths, trying to keep her nervousness under control. She walked more slowly than usual and observed the other commuters. Many appeared to be in a rush, oblivious to other people's needs or existence. Huffing and tutting down escalators and along platforms, cursing everyone around them, the commuters conveniently forgot the real reason for their lateness: they'd set off on their journeys at the last possible moment thereby giving themselves only a limited amount of time to get to where they were going. In this moment, with one-track minds, it was always the person in front of them that was to blame for their slow progress. Always someone else to blame.

The world was moving at a faster pace and people were caught up in it all, too busy to care. She noticed a man shaking his head impatiently as a woman in front of him struggled to place her suitcase on the escalator. These were the tiny sparks of anger that trickled all year round and led to arguments, led to violence, spiralled into social degeneration. The man didn't offer to help the woman with her suitcase, but rushed past her as soon as she was on the escalator, reminding Gina of the way she had pushed past the older woman a couple of weeks before.

Does it always have to take a tragic or traumatic event to change people? Gina wondered. Just slowing down, taking a deep breath, taking a step back, could avoid so much pain. Such a simple idea, but so difficult to grasp.

There was a man with a walking stick in front of Gina on the station platform, moving very slowly.

The train arrived.

Gina stood and waited for the man to reach the door of the carriage. 'Do you need any help?' she asked, with a smile.

'Yes, please dear,' he smiled back.

Gina thought again of the woman who'd stabbed her. She hoped she'd be all right.

A change of heart for Angela; she would tell the truth about her mental illness. A change of heart for Gina: she would take her time and take responsibility for her own actions. Repenting, turning back to God. We are encouraged, called to do so, before the traumatic event takes place.

Hymn: It Came Upon the Midnight Clear VU44

- 1 It came upon the midnight clear,
 that glorious song of old,
 from angels bending near the earth
 to touch their harps of gold,
 'Peace on the earth, good will to all,
 from heaven's all-gracious King!'
The world in solemn stillness lay
 to hear the angels sing.
- 2 Still through the cloven skies they come
 with peaceful wings unfurled;
and still their heavenly music floats
 o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
 they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
 the blessed angels sing.
- 3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife
 the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
 two thousand years of wrong;
and warring humankind hears not
 the love song which they bring.
O hush the noise, and cease your strife,
 to hear the angels sing.
- 4 For, lo! the days are hastening on,
 by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
 shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
 its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world send back the song
 which now the angels sing.

Joys and Concerns

Preparation for Prayer

Let us practice the art of Praying with our Eyes Wide Open, that in seeing the world and those within it we are called to tend we may be *opening the eyes of our hearts to all in need around us* (*Lamont Koerner '81 MDiv God Pause for Thursday, September 16, 2021 from Luther Seminary*):

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

Holy God,
we do not know how to pray,
but Jesus invites us into the life he shares with you,
and so we keep coming, because we want to live.
Receive us now in our frailty, our complacency, our desire.

We pray for your church all over the world.
May the life we discover in you
bind us to each other and to the world you love,
for no need is beyond the strength of your call
and no child of yours is expendable.
Merciful God, give us wisdom and courage beyond our imagining.

We pray for each leader who might be an instrument of peace
in a troubled land.
By the movement of your reconciling spirit,
bless your people with the courage to reach past
old wounds and persistent fears.
God of resurrection, bring life where hope has died.

We pray for friends and strangers in the grip of addiction.
Make us able companions for each other,
and bless us with hope that bears fruit.

We pray for unsettled economies
and those whose needs are overlooked in the choices of the powerful.
May we, who know so much privilege,
bear our responsibilities with open eyes and open hands.

We pray for all who stand at the thresholds of life:
your children who are soon to be born,
and your children who are soon to go home.

We give thanks for new faces to love, ideas to ponder, work to do—
and we marvel at the sturdy friendships and persistent memories
that sustain us when the way is hard.
May each be a reminder of your love and your provision.

We thank you for the gift of song—
for notes that speak when words fail,
and choirs that practice at the end of long days.
Give strength to leaders who call forth the best from us
and invite us to breathe together.

Holy One, keep calling us into the world—your world—
as salt and light.

Equip each of us for the challenges we will face
until we learn to worship in the most unlikely places,
for you are the source of our song and the well from which we pray,
wherever we are planted.

By the power of your Spirit, we make our prayer with resurrection hope,
in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**
saying: **[Lord's Prayer]**

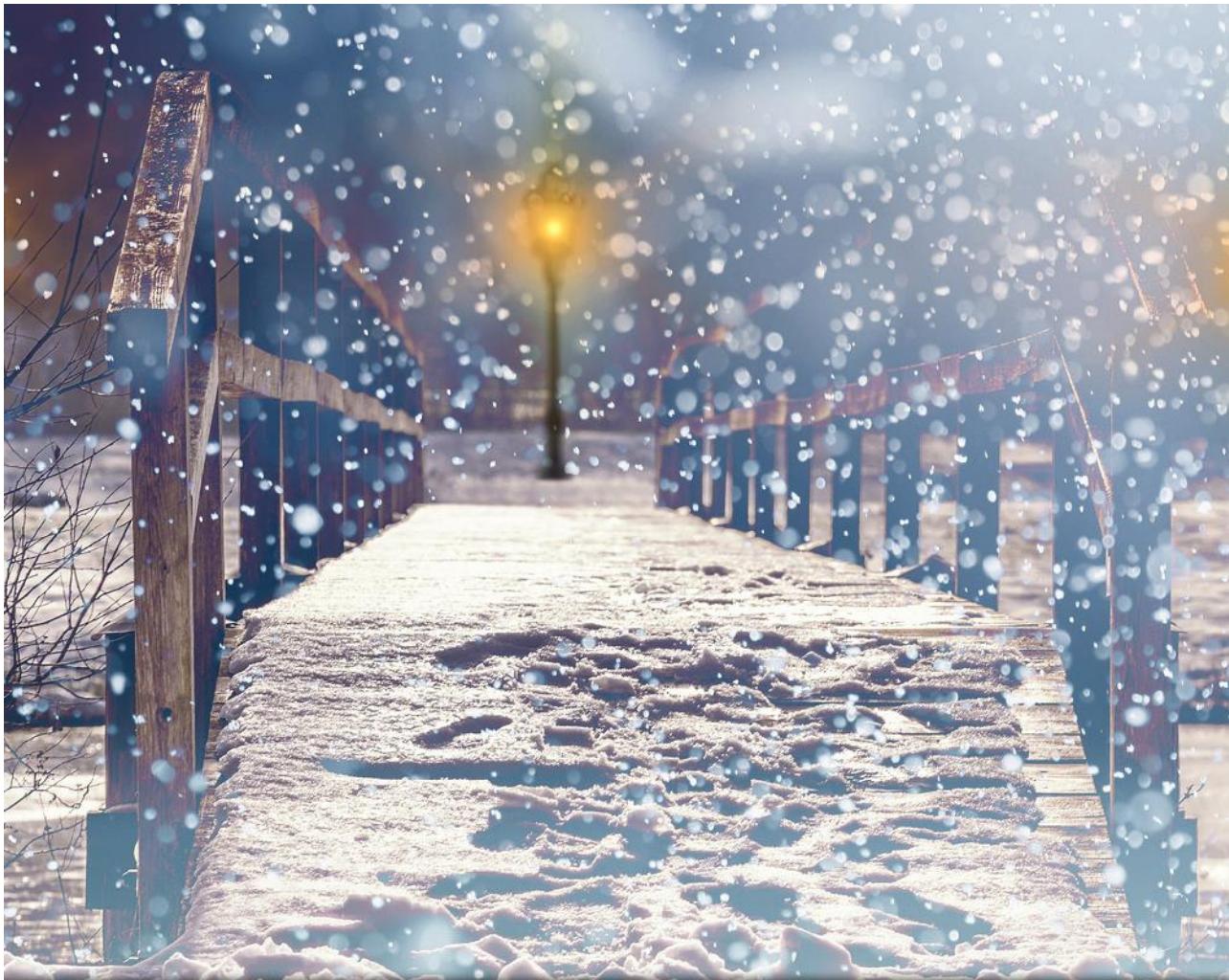
Lord's Prayer Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
 Thy kin-dom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread,
 And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
 For thine is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing of the Prayer Shawls - Prayer Of Blessing (blessing for a completed shawl)

By: Janet Severi Bristow – 2000 © 2021 All rights reserved. www.shawlministry.com

May God's grace be upon these shawls...
warming, comforting, enfolding and embracing.
May each mantle be a safe haven... a sacred place of security and well-being...
sustaining and embracing in good times as well as difficult ones.
May the one who receives each shawl be cradled in hope, kept in joy, graced with peace,
and wrapped in love.
Blessed Be!

Minute for Mission: Build Bridges of Peace



Build Bridges of Peace

Photo: geralt from Pixabay



December is one of the holiest months of the year. Along with Christmas, there's the Jewish festival of Hanukkah, winter solstice rituals, as well as spiritually significant days for Buddhists, Muslims, and Zoroastrians. That makes this month a good one to remember what unites us.

And it's important we do. In October, Global Affairs Canada stated that, worldwide, the right to practise, choose, and change one's religion or belief is increasingly under attack. According to the Pew Research Centre, in 2018 more than a quarter of the world's countries experienced hostilities caused by religious hatred, mob violence related to religion, terrorism, and harassment of women for violating religious codes.

"I think we have a great lack of understanding of other faith traditions. Lack of understanding breeds contempt and fear. The more we understand and the more we talk, there's a greater opportunity to break down some of the walls of fear. We can't do that if we keep talking about us and them," says John Dowds, City of Edmonton Chaplain in a film called *Building Bridges*.

The film is produced by the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action, a Mission & Service partner. Your gifts through Mission & Service support the centre—the first of its kind in Canada—to hold interfaith celebrations, dialogues, and learning events. You can watch [Building Bridges\(opens in a new tab\)](#) on the centre's website, and faith communities are encouraged to host a screening. This is one way your Mission & Service gifts not only transform the lives of others but can also change yours for the better, too.

Karen Lumly Kerr from the Society of Edmonton Atheists speaks compellingly about finding common ground in the film: “We all have to learn how to cooperate and figure out how to get along...trying to understand each other a little bit better and finding your common ground. What things do you all believe in? What things do you all find important?”

“Look at my veins, they’re blue,” says Indigenous Elder Fernie Marty, lifting his arm slightly before the camera. “It’s so important to understand our own values and understandings and share them openly and honestly. When we don’t share who we are as individuals, the different cultures, it creates fears.... All of us have blue veins. That tells me we’re all royalty. We’re all equal. None of us is superior to the others. We’re all human. All created by the same divine being,” he says.

Each one of us needs to take a clear and public stand against intolerance and for love. During this month, which is so much about spiritual deepening for so many of us, let us take that stand. Let’s build bridges of peace with all of our neighbours.

Thank you for your generosity through [Mission & Service\(opens in a new tab\)](#). Your gifts support organizations that remind us there’s more that unites us than divides.

Offering Invitation

Giving is an act of worship, an act of relationship, an act of love.

And so, as we worship this God,
 who seeks us in relationship,
 who loved us into being,
we offer our gifts.

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. By leaving your offering envelope on the offering plate at the back of the sanctuary.
2. 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.
3. Donate online through the Canada Helps web-site
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/melville-united-church>
4. Call or email Lynda, to arrange Pre-Authorized Remittance payments (PAR).
5. 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 Gill Le Fevre, *Gathering: Advent/Christmas/Epiphan*y 2021-2022, p.34. Used with permission.

Abundant God, sustain in us a willing spirit to serve your purpose in the world.

Inspire us to share peace where there is discontent,
to bring healing in the place of hurt,
to shine your love into the overlooked corners of our world.

Remind us of the joy of reaching out to you

even as you already draw us near.

Bless all that we offer today. Amen.

Hymn: Angels from the Realms of Glory

VU 36

- 1 Angels, from the realms of glory,
wing your flight o'er all the earth;
ye who sang creation's story,
now proclaim Messiah's birth:
 come and worship, come and worship,
 worship Christ, the newborn King.
- 2 Shepherds in the field abiding,
watching o'er your flocks by night,
God with us is now residing,
yonder shines the infant Light: R
- 3 Sages, leave your contemplations;
brighter visions beam afar;
seek the great desire of nations;
ye have seen his natal star: R
- 4 Saints before the altar bending,
watching long in hope and fear,
suddenly the Lord, descending,
in his temple shall appear: R

Commissioning Spill the Beans Resources Team, *spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 41*, p. 22. Copyright 2021.

Out of fear and into hope

God has called us.

Out of darkness and into light

God has called us.

Out of confusion and into peace

God has called us.

Today and tomorrow

we walk with God.

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The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Household Prayer: Morning *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1. Copyright 2012.*

Blessed are you, Holy God: *Luke 1:68, 78–79*
by your tender mercy
the dawn breaks upon us.
Guide our feet this day
in paths of peace;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1. Copyright 2012.*

Blessed are you, Holy God: *Luke 1:68, 79*
for you have smiled on us this day
and redeemed us from our sin.
Give light to all who wait in darkness
until we rest with you in perfect peace;
through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.