



**March 13, 2022**

Melville United Church

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**Melville United Church**  
**March 13, 2022**  
**Second Sunday of Lent**

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Presiding today - Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

### **Welcome**

I greet you in the name of Jesus the Christ, companion on the way.

*We gather in community today – March 13, 2022 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. We encourage people to come out to worship in the sanctuary. Double vaccinations, masking and hand sanitizing are all required to ensure the safety of all in attendance, and there is ample space for people to maintain social distancing. For those who are joining us online or by reading, we invite you to have a candle or tea light available.*

*As we gather in this season of Lent, we look inward, considering ourselves and our relationship with God: Creator, Christ and Spirit.*

### **Announcements**

- **Lenten Study**

**Lesser Evils** is a daily devotion/meditation book for Lent this year, and is available through [ucrdstore.ca](http://ucrdstore.ca) currently as an e-book for \$7.95 and hopefully soon as a softcover book for \$15.95. Have a look at the website if you are interested. There is also an online study webinar through United in Learning that will take place on Tuesdays at 1pm from March 8<sup>th</sup> to April 12<sup>th</sup>. Registration costs \$44.99 with \$5 off if you pay online, and you will also receive a 20% off coupon for the book.

- **Spring is around the corner!**

Are you dreaming of spring? Us too! The Garden Team is getting ready to decide which veggies to include and what our growing plan will look like for the upcoming season. Join us on Monday, March 21 at 7:00pm in the Chapel to help get the plan in motion. See you then! Any questions please contact LindaMae Ogilvie at [ogilvielms@mail.com](mailto:ogilvielms@mail.com).

- **Annual Congregational Meeting**

On April 3 we will be having our annual congregational meeting. There will be a short service at 11 and the meeting will take place immediately afterword in the Sanctuary. While we apologize for the inconvenience, we will not be live streaming the meeting, nor offering the possibility of virtually attending. What there is, is lots of room in the Sanctuary to spread out, enjoy a snack if you wish to bring one (this is a BYOS or bring your own snack event) and hear what your council has been up to for the past two years and what the future may hold. You are invited to join us.

- **Ukraine Appeal**

The invasion of Ukraine is costing precious lives and creating a humanitarian crisis as people flee to safety. Over a million people, displaced from their homes, are seeking refuge in neighbouring countries. Many have lost friends, loved ones, and property; struggle to meet their basic needs; and face an uncertain future. United Church Mission & Service partners are responding to the rapidly unfolding crisis—visit our website at <https://united-church.ca>, scroll down to Ukraine Crisis and click on the Act Now button to find out how you can show your support and make a gift.

- **Proposed Development Next Door**

As many of you are aware, there is a proposed development in the very early stages of the approval process next door. Melville council is actively engaging with legal counsel to defend Melville's interests as this matter progresses. Council will provide additional information as the situation progresses and details become clearer.

- **Trinity United presents Roast Beef in the Springtime ... A Drive Through, Take Out Dining Experience** – Thursday, March 31st – in collaboration with Jesse's at the Guelph Country Club. Including roast beef, honey glazed carrots, peas, coleslaw, mashed potatoes & gravy and Trinity's own chocolate brownie with raspberry coulis. Cost is \$25/dinner. Order by March 26 by calling Kathy at 519-829-9622 or emailing [kathyrobertstephens@gmail.com](mailto:kathyrobertstephens@gmail.com). Pick up is between 4:15-6:30 pm.

- **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 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](http://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.

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

**Land Acknowledgement** *Peter Chynoweth, **Gathering: Lent/Easter 2022**, p.30. Used with permission.*

This land on which we gather is the Traditional land of the

Petun,  
Haudenosaunee,  
Anishinabewaki,  
Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation,  
Odawa and  
Mississauga people

We worship Creator on this land and acknowledge with respect the thousands of years of ceremony and relationship that are etched in footprint, fire, and faithfulness on the soil and rock that surrounds us.

**Lighting the Lenten Candle:** *Juanita Austin, **Gathering: Lent/Easter 2022**, p.30. Used with permission.*

*(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)*

Holy One, as we light our Lenten candle today,  
may we be mindful of how your love persistently shines even in our times of wandering,  
our times of searching for the truth,  
our times of doubt and pain.  
Be the light of our lives, we pray;  
bring us back to you again.  
*(Light the Lenten candle.)*

**Call to Worship:** *Spill the Beans Resources Team, spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 42, p. 24. Copyright 2022, alt.*

On the second Sunday in Lent we gather,  
we come to remember and  
celebrate the life of Jesus,  
and how he chose to live  
and serve God.

**We come as we are,  
beloved children,  
to worship God.**

Let us come close to God,  
as God comes close to us.

**Hymn: All Praise to Thee**

**VU 327**

- 1 All praise to thee, for thou, O King divine,  
didst yield the glory that of right was thine,  
that in our troubled hearts thy grace might shine:  
hallelujah; hallelujah!
- 2 Thou cam'st to us in lowliness of thought;  
by thee the outcast and the poor were sought,  
and by thy death was God's salvation wrought:  
hallelujah; hallelujah!
- 3 Let this mind be in us which was in thee,  
who wast a servant that we might be free,  
humbling thyself to death on Calvary:  
hallelujah; hallelujah!
- 4 Wherefore, by God's eternal purpose, thou  
art high exalted o'er all creatures now,  
and given the name to which all knees shall bow:  
hallelujah; hallelujah!
- 5 Let every tongue confess with one accord  
in heaven and earth that Jesus Christ is Lord;  
and God eternal be by all adored:  
hallelujah; hallelujah!

**Opening Prayer (in unison):** *Ryan McNally, Gathering: Lent/Easter 2022, p.32. Used with permission.*

**Merciful God, in this season of waiting and anticipation,  
we come to you hopeful for the possibilities of new life.**

**We await the coming of spring,  
when the sleeping creation will break forth  
and once again verdant life will grow.**

**As we wait, cause new life to stir within each one of us,  
that we might prepare for a renewed and plentiful life.**

**We pray in the name of the one who came to bring life. Amen.**

**Ministry of Music** Holy Is God's Name by John Michael Talbot played by Suzanne Flewelling

**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, alt.*

God is our light and our salvation; Ps. 27:1  
whom shall we fear?  
With humble hearts,  
let us confess our sins before God and one another.

**Prayer Seeking Forgiveness and Reconciliation (in unison)** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from **Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1.** Copyright 2012.*

**Merciful God,** **Phil. 3:20–21**  
**you have made us citizens of heaven,**  
**but we confess that we have set our minds on earthly things.**  
**We have let our desire for security**  
**restrain our commitment to serve the poor.**  
**We have let our fear of danger**  
**curb our obligation to love our enemies.**  
**We have let our love of things**  
**dull our generosity to the needy.**  
**We have let our craving for public status**  
**prevent our honesty about hidden sins.**  
  
**Yet, you know the desires of our heart**  
**and nothing is hidden from you.**  
**By the power of the Holy Spirit,**  
**conform our sin-weakened bodies to the glory of Christ,**  
**that we may be the body of Christ for the world. Amen.**

*Silence is kept*

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

God, our light and our salvation, Ps. 27:1  
does not forsake us or leave us with our sin.  
In Christ we are forgiven  
and offered the gift of healing repentance.  
**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

## “...In the Midst”



When I was a little kid, I remember looking up at the sky at night and feeling quite uncomfortable and perhaps a little afraid. All that sky, all those stars, so far away. I felt very insignificant, and I didn't like it.

I have since come to have an appreciation and a love for the night sky and all those stars. And I'm thinking that Abram must have appreciated them too.

God has told Abram to leave his country and come with God, that God will make of him and Sarai a great people. Abram is already 75 when he heads off with Sarai and their household to Canaan. After they settled in Canaan, God reiterated the promise, that they would have many, many descendants. More years pass, and God again visits Abram, telling him that God is Abram's shield, that God will make Abram's reward very great. But Abram is not satisfied. He questions what is the point of all these blessings, if he and Sarai will die childless. And God promises once more, Abram and Sarai will have descendants as numerous as the stars.

Now Abram has been very faithful, following God for many years, waiting for God's promise to be realized, waiting for a child that by now seems impossible given their advanced ages. I wonder when Abram looked at the stars, what he saw. God has promised and promised, but God has failed to deliver. Was God toying with them? Was God simply distracted or teasing them, with no intention of following through? Yet there was the sky, with all the stars—God's promise. And Abram waited with faithfulness and courage.



And now? Well, now there are billions of descendants of Abram—Jewish, Christian, Muslim, across the globe.

When we are struggling with our faith, with our courage, with God's promises as yet unfulfilled, we can look to the stars, and know that God does keep promises. Not in our idea of a convenient time, but God keeps them. Of that we can be sure. Look up to know the steadfast faithfulness of God.

May we find God in the midst of all our days.

**Hymn: God, Whose Love Is Reigning o'er Us VU 399**

1 \* God, whose love is reigning o'er us,  
source of all, the ending true;  
hear the universal chorus  
raised in joyful praise to you:  
Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
worship ancient, worship new.

\* or 'God, whose love is ever with us,'

2 Word of God from nature bringing  
springtime green and autumn gold;  
mountain streams like children singing,  
ocean waves like thunder bold:  
Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
as creation's tale is told.

3 Holy God of ancient glory,  
choosing man and woman, too;  
Abr'am's faith and Sarah's story  
formed a people bound to you.  
Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
to your covenant keep us true.

4 Covenant, new again in Jesus,  
Star-child born to set us free;  
sent to heal us, sent to teach us  
how love's children we might be.  
Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
risen Christ, our Saviour he!

5 Lift we then our human voices  
in the songs that faith would bring;  
live we then in human choices  
lives that, like our music, sing:  
Hallelujah, hallelujah,  
joined in love our praises ring!

**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, alt.*

God of the ages, *Gen. 15:4–6*  
open your Word by your Holy Spirit,  
so that we, like Abram,  
may believe your promises to us. **Amen.**

**Scripture: Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18** *(The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition)*

*God seals the covenant with Abram and Sarai*

After these events, the word of YHWH came to Abram in a vision:

“Fear not, Abram,  
I am your shield;  
I will make your reward very great.”

Abram said, “But my Sovereign, My God, what good are these blessings to me, so long as Sarai and I will die in disgrace?  
My only heir is a foreigner who lives in my household, Eliezer of Damascus.  
Since you have given me no offspring,” Abram continued,  
“an attendant in my house will be my heir.”

Then the word of YHWH came to Abram and said,  
“This person will not be your heir. Your heir will be of your own flesh and blood.”  
Then God took Abram outside and said, “Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can!  
As many as that, you will have for descendants.”  
Abram believed YHWH, and God accounted it to Abram as righteousness.

YHWH then said to Abram, “I am YHWH who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land as a possession.”

Abram asked, “Sovereign God, how am I to know that I will possess it?”

God answered Abram, “Bring me a heifer, a goat, and a ram, each three years old, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.”  
Abram brought all of these, cut them in half, and place each half opposite the other—except the birds, which he did not cut up.  
Birds of prey swooped down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.  
As the sun was about to set, a trance fell over Abram, and a deep terrifying darkness enveloped him.

When the sun had set and it was dark, a smoking brazier and a flaming torch appeared, which passed between the halves of the sacrifices.  
On that day YHWH made this covenant with Abram:  
“To your descendants I give this land, from the River of Egypt to the Great River, the Euphrates.

**Scripture: Luke 13:31-35** (*The Inclusive Bible: The First Egalitarian Edition*)

*Jesus cries over Jerusalem as a hen over her chicks*

Just then, some Pharisees came to Jesus and said,  
“You need to get out of town, and fast.  
Herod is trying to kill you.”

Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox,  
‘Today and tomorrow I’ll be casting out devils and healing people,  
and on the third day I’ll reach my goal,’  
Even with all that, I’ll need to continue on my journey  
today, tomorrow and the day after that,  
since no prophet can be allowed to die anywhere except in Jerusalem.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!  
You kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you!  
How often have I wanted to gather your children together  
as a mother bird collects her babies under her wings—  
yet you refuse me?  
So take note: your house will be left to you desolate.  
I tell you, you will not see me again until you say,  
‘Blessed is the One who comes in the name of our God!’”

May God bless to our understanding these readings from scripture. Amen.

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

Loving God, *Ps. 27:1, 5, 11, 14*  
you save all who seek refuge in you.  
Grant that we who know your salvation  
may walk always in your light,  
take courage in your faithfulness,  
and rejoice in your astounding goodness to us.  
Through Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit, we pray. **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: The Strength of Love



As someone who grew up in a city, and except for nine years, has always lived in a city, I have not had much exposure to chickens. I'm thinking for some of you, chickens are, or have been, a much more common part of life.

When my children were young and attending preschool, we went on a trip to a farm where we got to experience some of what farm life was like, including getting to interact with chickens. I have to say, one of the first things I learned when I held a chicken in my lap was how surprisingly soft their feathers are. I just wanted to sit and stroke the beautiful feathers on that gentle hen for as long as the farm folk would let me—okay, I did have to pass the chicken along so the preschoolers, whose trip this really was, could experience them too.

In our gospel reading today, Jesus is not in nearly as peaceful a mood as was the hen I held. Pharisees, whom we often see as “the enemy” come to Jesus this time on a mission of mercy. They tell him that he needs to beware of Herod (Antipas this is, not Herod the Great who ruled when Jesus was born, but cut from much the same cloth), because Herod wants to kill him.

Jesus must have animals and perhaps even chickens on the mind, because he tells the Pharisees to pass a message on to Herod for him. “Go and tell that fox for me, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow and on the third day, I finish my work.” He then moves from confronting Herod to lamenting Jerusalem, the city toward which he is travelling. Jerusalem, he says, kills prophets and stones those who are sent to it.

We might here this as an indictment of the population, the people, of Jerusalem. In fact it is really and indictment against the leadership of the city and the Temple. Why, Jesus is saying, must you treat the people appointed by God in such inhospitable and violent ways?

And so we come to the difficulty in this story: Jesus knows, even as he is deliberately heading closer to Jerusalem, that he is drawing nearer and nearer to his death. He even makes reference to what will happen when he says, “...on the third day, I'll reach my goal.” The leadership may have its way with him, putting him to death; but regardless, he will finish the work for which he was born.

There is a fox in the henhouse of Ukraine these last two weeks, or really, the last decade, as Russian leader Vladimir Putin sought to annex the Crimean Peninsula, part of Ukraine until 2014, and is now waging an unjust, unprovoked war to claw back the rest of Ukraine and its many valuable resources to its former position within Russian control. The plight of Ukraine and its 43 million citizens is as dire as that of Jesus, whose life Herod seeks to take in grasping fear and egotism.

As I write this, the number of people fleeing Ukraine to countries to its west is 2.3 million. There are reports, albeit unconfirmed, of attacks by the Russian army against those who understood that they were fleeing in a safe corridor. There have also been unconfirmed reports of attacks on civilian sites such as a maternity hospital in the south of the country.

And so we lament as Jesus laments—oh, the greed and desire and egotism that has led to this terrible state of affairs.

And so Jesus offers the image of a hen, gathering her brood under her wings. And we might say a chicken, offering defense against a fox? It seems preposterous, defense offered by a defenseless bird.

But hens are more than so much fodder for a fox. They do have sharp beaks and claws, and will use them if necessary. They can fly, enough to get up into a tree, they grieve when a companion dies, and they will choose a “leader” whose main job it is to watch out for predators, especially hawks, warning others to take cover when one approaches. While it is clear that a hen is outmatched by a fox, it does care for its chicks and companion chickens, even if it is an uneven fight.

We might think that the fight between the might of the Russian military and the much smaller military of Ukraine is an equally uneven fight, which might seem doomed. But there are heartening stories of heroism, care and compassion to be found in the war on Ukraine.

The Wall Street Journal reported on a “People’s Army” in Ukraine, composed of rock stars, arts performers, entrepreneurs, TV hosts and playwrights and many, many ordinary folks. People have left their usual walks of life to offer their skills, and perhaps even more importantly, their heart, to the resistance that Ukraine is mounting.

A ballet dancer has taken up a weapon to fight directly for his country. A TV host, who was killed on March 6th, joined a territorial defense battalion in the first days of the attack. A comedian is aiding in procurement of PPE—helmets and bulletproof vests. And a playwright also joined a territorial defense battalion on the second day of war. He notes that he fights beside entrepreneurs, taxi drivers, journalists, designers and programmers.

And we might forget, but that champion of his country, president Volodymyr Zelensky, who has transformed himself into an applauded wartime leader, is himself a former comedian and actor. He is seen as very brave, like a lighthouse for the Ukrainian people, who has told the people with great determination that they will fight to the last bullet..

This resistance movement is described as strong and flexible and hard to break. The playwright, Maksym Kurochkin affirms, “This is an army of free people, each of whom is not afraid to take the initiative.” And they have a history of doing just that.

At the time in 2014 when Russia was annexing Crimea through spurious allegations of voter fraud in the referendum on annexation, The Wall Street Journal reports that, "Demonstrators set up a tent city in Kyiv's central square and defended it from attacks by the police and pro-government thugs." At the time, "mass protests were taking place against anti-government corruption, which led the pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich to flee the country."

This is a country of people who may have not many more defenses than the hen of our scriptures, but those of the resistance movement have freely taken the lead, offering big-hearted care and protection of the country and its citizens.

And so for us? What can we take from this scripture? Jesus offers himself as a hen watching over his brood, powerfully protecting in deep love those he was sent to serve and save. And he does so, despite the inevitability, of which he is well-aware, that he will be offering his life. He does so despite the collusion between religious leaders and Herod, and their intent to bring a violent end to the life-giving work he is doing.

And as those leaders do, how often do we reject that love, to our own peril. How often do we wriggle out from the warmth and care of those loving wings, to go peck the ground, or see the big world? And how often does our foray out of the encircling love place us in peril.

In Jesus, the love for humanity that brought him to his death, is the love of God, who raises him on the third day, and brings us hope, healing, new life. May we, in our thanksgiving and gratitude, take up that which is given, and in that new life, let us offer our prayers, our compassion, our action for those, like the Ukrainian people, like those who attack them, even those who have sent them to do so, like those who have to make due with little, those who are ill, those facing threat and violence, who struggle for the chance at life at all.

May we implore our God, a God of steadfast faithfulness and loving kindness, to protect each of these, and to bring us to action, however much we might question that to which we are called.

For in life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us, we are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

**Hymn: Like a River of Tears                      MV 98**

1. Like a river of tears your love pours upon us;  
like a sunshine of blessing your grace will sustain us;  
like a star-studded sky your spirit shines o'er us,  
Renewing our spirits with courage and faith.
2. Like a bird in free flight by windows around us;  
like a wind in the forest that breathes life among us;  
like a phoenix that's rising from ashes around us,  
renewing our spirits with vision and grace.
3. Like a pillar of cloud you promise to guide us;  
like a bright fiery bush you come to speak to us;  
like a calm cooling breeze your spirit breathes in us,  
renewing our spirits with loving embrace.

4. Like a lover's caress your spirit revives us;  
like a song of the soul you come to be with us;  
like a prayer of the heart you heal and restore us,  
renewing our spirits, the future to face.

### **Joys and Concerns**

- Birthdays: Susanne Flewelling celebrates on Fri. Mar. 18th

### **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 of the People** *Spill the Beans Resources Team, spill the beans: worship and learning resources for all ages, Issue 41, p. 135. Copyright 2021, alt.*

Faithful God,  
we are awed by Jesus' ability  
to keep focussed on his goals;  
to hold fast to choices made years earlier  
now that he could see what it was going to cost him.  
We give thanks for all who, like him,  
refuse to stop caring for others  
even when they meet with nothing  
but cruelty and rejection.  
Thank you for the vulnerability that never  
left him and was part of his strength.

Such people are few and far between, Lord,  
and we pray for those, ourselves included,  
who find it hard to the stick to your way  
of integrity and costly, unconditional love.

We pray for parents,  
trying to give their children a firm foundation in life,  
especially if they have not received  
what they needed early on  
to feel safe in the world.  
We think of the clear vision and idealism  
of so many of our young people,  
and ask that they may not become  
too cynical too soon.

We pray for politicians and civil servants,  
for charity and aid workers, teachers and carers,  
all who chose a life of public service because  
they wanted to make the world a better place.  
Many are tired and disillusioned;  
some have compromised their ideals;

some have put on a hard shell of indifference  
because the cost of caring  
and not being able to help is just too high.

We pray for those who,  
like the people whom Jesus saw in Jerusalem,  
have lost their sense of purpose and direction;  
those who have been let down too often to trust again;  
those, again ourselves included,  
who cannot bear to watch or listen to the news  
because there is just too much suffering in the world;  
too many problems that cannot be solved;  
too many people beyond our reach to help.

Loving God,  
may your compassion break through  
all our defences.  
May we be willing this Lent and Easter season  
to take just one more risk for love's sake,  
and in the eternal battle between goodness and evil,  
love and hatred, life and death,  
may we discover,  
with Christ and all his faithful servants,  
that goodness and love and life  
are always stronger  
and will win out in the end.  
Amen.

**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.

## Minute for Mission



*Photo Credit: Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble*

March 14 is PIE Day, and in church circles it has nothing to do with math. PIE is short for public, intentional, and explicit—the standards we hold ourselves to when we seek to live into being affirming, welcoming, and inclusive people and communities.

PIE Day was co-founded by Affirm United/S'affirmer Ensemble and Affirming Connections. Every year, [Affirm United \(opens in a new tab\)](#) invites the church to celebrate the full inclusion of LGBTQ2SIA+ people in faith communities and beyond. The day also reminds and challenges us to continue widening our welcome to embody love and celebrate gender and sexual diversity in all its forms. It's critical that we do.

Gender identity and sexual orientation continue to be used to justify serious human rights violations around the world. Same-sex sexual activity is a crime in 71 countries; in 11 of these the death penalty is at least a possibility or imposed. While Canada is now home to 1 million people who identify as Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA+ in 2019, police reported 263 hate crimes targeting people for their sexual orientation, a 41 percent increase over the previous year and the highest total since 2009.

Your gifts through Mission & Service sustain life-transforming advocacy and education work, including supporting refugees fleeing for their lives because they identify as Two-Spirit and LGBTQQIA+, safe shelters, community awareness education, human rights programs, and safe spaces.

This work is vitally important. For some, it means the difference between life and death.

Thank you for giving through [Mission & Service](#). God's compassionate love knows no boundaries. Your generosity shows ours doesn't either.

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

Christ has given his life for us.

Let us offer ourselves and our gifts to God.

## 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](mailto: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** Gord Dunbar, *Gathering: Lent/Easter 2022*, p.35. Used with permission.

These symbols of the sweat of our brow,  
we present to you, O God, as an act of trust:  
trust they will contribute to your mission in the world,  
trust that we will become instruments of your will,  
trust that you will bless the giving and the givers. Amen.

## Hymn: Lead On, O Cloud of Presence VU 421

- 1 Lead on, O cloud of Presence, the exodus is come.  
In wilderness and desert our tribe shall make its home.  
Our slavery left behind us,  
new hopes within us grow.  
We seek the land of promise where milk and honey flow.
- 2 Lead on, O fiery Pillar, we follow yet with fears,  
but we shall come rejoicing though joy be born of tears.  
We are not lost, though wandering,  
for by your light we come,  
and we are still God's people. The journey is our home.
- 3 Lead on, O God of freedom, and guide us on our way,  
and help us trust the promise through struggle and delay.  
We pray our sons and daughters  
may journey to that land  
where justice dwells with mercy, and love is law's demand.

**Commissioning** Ryan McNally, *Gathering: Lent/Easter 2022*, p.36. Used with permission.

You are blessed people of God, inheritors of an everlasting promise.

**As we go out into the world,  
we go with hope to share the promise of God's love  
with all whom we meet. Amen.**

### **Change the Light/Blessings**

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 change it.

See how it is only in one place?

*\*Change Light\**

Can you see it? Now it is moving everywhere, to everyone, with everyone.  
Now everywhere you go today, the light will go with you.

**Blessing** *Bob Root, Gathering: Lent/Easter 2022, p.36. Used with permission.*

And the blessing of God,  
who made us in love,  
who made us for companionship,  
who made us to enhance and strengthen the world,  
go with us as we leave this place  
into all the places life calls us to be.  
We do not go alone.  
We go, loved and blessed,  
to be a blessing. Amen.

**Household Prayer: Morning** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word®  
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Dear God,  
I do not know all of the challenges that face me this day,  
but still I pray:  
if I should be tempted by desire for earthly gain,  
remind me of my citizenship in heaven. *Phil. 4:1*  
If I should be distracted by hunger,  
satisfy me with your Holy Spirit until I hunger no more.  
Let me walk in the way of Christ  
so that my life testifies in deed and word,  
"Blessed is the one who comes in the name of our God." Amen.

**Household Prayer: Evening** *Reprinted by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from Feasting on the Word®  
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Dear God,  
great is your mercy to me,  
even when I have not remembered you.  
Where I have strayed from your path,  
forgive my sins and show me the way to salvation.  
Grant me rest this night  
that I may rise refreshed in my commitment  
to the way of my Lord, Jesus Christ,  
in whose name I pray. Amen.