



August 21, 2022

Melville United Church

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Ministry of Music Team

Office Administrator

Custodian

Chair of Church Council

Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain

Office hours

E-Mail

Web Site

Pastoral Care Numbers

Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint

Martha Duncan

Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber

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Melville United Church
August 21, 2022

Presiding today - Rev. Tom Watson

Words Of Welcome

Good morning! For those I haven't had the privilege of meeting, my name is Tom Watson. Melville's minister, Lynda Goy-Flint, is on vacation this month, and I am pleased to fill in for these last three Sundays in August.

Melville United Church continues to gather in worship both in person and online, 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. There is ample room to socially distance, and you are welcome to wear masks if that is comfortable for you. For those who are joining us online or by reading, we invite you to have a candle or tea light available.

Announcements

- **Away on Vacation** – Rev. Lynda will be away on vacation from **August 10th to September 5th**. If you have a pastoral care emergency in that time, please contact Alison Rainford and she will connect you with the ministry personnel who is covering at that time. Worship services will be covered by Tom Watson and Ruth Cooke. Many thanks to all those looking after ministry matters in my absence. Blessings for the remainder of your summer!
- **Melville Photo Directory**: There have been two sessions of photos taken for the directory. There will be another session on **Wednesday, September 21st**. Please contact Lorna for your appointment. Everyone who has their photo in the book gets a free book and an 8" x 10" photo.
- **Kairos Blanket Exercise – Save the Date!** The Kairos Blanket Exercise has been developed in collaboration with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and educators. It is an interactive and experiential teaching tool that explores the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the land we now know as Canada. It is a 2 to 3-hour workshop and will be offered **at Melville on Saturday, October 1st 1:30-4:30pm**. It is intended for those 14 and over, and is limited to 25-30 participants. Please contact Rev. Lynda to reserve a space.
- As more and more people find their dollar shrinking, and having to decide between rent and three meals a day, the demand for food bank assistance rises. We ask you to prayerfully consider if you are able to **support the food bank**, either with a donation of food, or financially.
- **Ukraine Appeal**
The invasion of Ukraine is costing precious lives and creating a humanitarian crisis as people flee to safety. Many millions of 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.**
- **Gifts with Vision** 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.

- **New Gifts with Vision for Ukraine**

A gift of \$25 will provide families fleeing Ukraine with a **hygiene kit** containing items like toothpaste, laundry detergent and disinfectant

A gift of \$38 will provide **one food basket** with staples such as cooking oil, buckwheat, canned fish and more

A gift of \$40 provides **one hygiene kit plus a supply of incontinence products**

You can find the full catalogue at www.giftswithvision.ca

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

Land Acknowledgement *Peter Chynoweth, **Gathering: Pentecost 1 2022**, p.33. 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 Christ Candle:

(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)

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

I light a candle

in the name of the God who creates life,

in the name of the Christ Presence who loves life,

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

Call To Worship: *(based on the writing of Ann Weems)*

What I'd really like is to keep the world in springtime...

With crocuses and morning glories in full bloom...

The world ablaze in colour...

Filled with life.

God invites us to bring the needed colour to the world...

To celebrate all that is good and wonder-filled.

To this end, we gather in worship.

Hymn — We Praise You, Creator (VU 293 vs. 1 & 3)

We praise you, Creator, in earth, sea, and sky:

Our ruler, our maker, our sovereign most high.

Each new generation lifts voices in praise;

How good your creation, how gracious your ways.

Your wondrous works teach us, Creator, to trace

The limitless reaches of your love and grace.

Your grace dwells among us, your love goes before:

From eldest to youngest we praise and adore.

Opening Prayer: Gracious Creator, you have called us together. Be with us in our worship, bless us through this day, and help us to live in faith and hope all the days of our lives. Amen.

Ministry Of Music — "The Streets of London" *words and music by Ralph McTell. Sung by Tom Watson, accompanied by Suzanne Flewelling.*

Scripture Reading — Luke 13:10-17

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment."

When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day."

But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?"

When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

SERMON SERIES "SEARCHING FOR GOOD NEWS"

2. In Words and Touches That Heal

A cute story came my way recently. It's about a little girl named Jennifer who, one Sunday in church, became restless as the preacher's sermon dragged on and on—it was a hot day in August likely. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him the money now, do you think he will let us go?"

We continue, this morning, with the second sermon in the series about our search for good news. Last week, we were invited to think about how to love the unlovable. Today we're searching for good news in words and touches that heal.

In this morning's gospel story from Luke, Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues.

It's the sabbath day. There appears a woman who has been possessed by a spirit that has crippled her for 18 years. She can't stand up straight. She's "bent over double" it says in another version of the Bible.

Jesus sees her. First he calls over to her, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment." Then he walks over to her, lays his hand on her, and she—for the first time in 18 years—stands up straight.

Notice there is no suggestion of any physical ailment. No back injury, or a pinched nerve, or anything like that. No, it just says that a "spirit" has kept her from standing up straight. In other words, it's a spiritually crippling ailment. In our day, we would call it a psychosomatic ailment; in Jesus' day everything they didn't understand was said to be caused by an evil spirit.

But they were not that far off the mark, really. There's an "evil spirit" component to viruses. I read recently that, in each of our bodies, at any given moment, there are around 380 trillion viruses. Most of them will never take hold, but all of a sudden one of them does, and we're stricken ill.

What makes the virus suddenly become active? Well, maybe we're run down physically, and therefore more susceptible to illness. Or maybe our mental and emotional state is such that it drains away our energy and again makes us easy prey for errant viruses.

There's really not a whole lot of difference, is there, between a poor mental state and an evil spirit.

And that's what Luke says was the problem with this woman. An evil spirit had bound her up for 18 years. By the way, don't take that 18 years literally. In ancient numerology, 18 simply meant a long time.

And when Jesus tells her that, after being this way for so long, it isn't necessary for her to be this way anymore, she straightens up and walks away erect. It's a quite dramatic event...and awfully good news for her.

But now comes the wrinkle in the story. It's not good news for the leader of the synagogue:

The leader of the synagogue gets all uptight, and makes a big speech to the crowd: "Hey, what's going on here? This is the sabbath! If there's curing to be done, there are 6 other days to do it. This is work. We don't work on the Sabbath in this town. We don't have wide-open Sunday here. If she wants to get healed, let her and her out-of-town healer come back tomorrow and do it!"

But is his problem really with the fact that the healing took place on the Sabbath? My hunch is that it had more to do with him being jealous that her change had come about so easily.

For, really, all that happened was that Jesus somehow convinced her she could stand up and walk away from her problem. Just as easily and as quickly as that, she was set free.

So, had I been the leader of the synagogue, I would probably have been saying to myself—underneath all my righteous indignation—"Now, shouldn't I, somewhere over the course of these last 18 years, have taken the trouble to get close enough to this woman to bring about the same thing?"

"I mean, I've been here all the time. I've seen this woman come here for 18 years...all bent out of shape...and along comes this minister from out of town...and he doesn't even have a license to work here...who's he think the minister is here anyway!"

And as the woman dances away into life, the leader of the synagogue thinks to himself, "And all he said to her was, it's okay for you to drop it now! I could have done that."

All it took one gracious act. No dramatic miracle. No demons came screaming out. Jesus just reaches out and touches her, and she stands up straight. No longer crippled.

"Stand up. You are free!" Caring touches and words by another human being can be such a powerful thing.

Have there not been times in each of our lives when we longed for somebody to come and touch us and tell us it will be alright? To lift us up and cure whatever it is that has grabbed hold and crippled our body...or grabbed hold and crippled our soul?

Have each of us, at some point, not longed for some gentle hand to reach out and take ours, and make it better?

—Okay, you can be different now!

—Okay, you no longer have to feel guilty.

—Okay, you no longer have to be angry.

—Okay, you no longer have to be a sourpuss. You can lighten up now!

—Okay, you no longer have to blame your childhood for who you are now.

—Okay, you're forgiven.

—Okay, you no longer have to carry around that grudge; you can reach out and forgive that other person.

"Whatever it is that cripples you, limits you, you can drop it. You can change!"

Most of us, I think, have something which has tended to limit us. Maybe it's a feeling of inadequacy about who we are, or what we can do. Maybe some authority figure, as long as 40 years ago, or as late as yesterday, said something that left us feeling we don't quite measure up, and we're left with low self-esteem. That's a biggie for a lot of us.

The late Fred Craddock was professor of preaching at Candler School of Theology, Emory University in Atlanta. I remember him talking about how well we learn to downplay our accomplishments. Fellow in his service club...being presented with the award for selling the most boxes of peanuts in the club's annual fund raising drive...outselling every other member by 3000 boxes.

The President of the club stands there with the award in one hand and the other outstretched to congratulate this worthy recipient. But the fellow comes up with his head bowed, sheepishly, eyes down to the floor, looking at his shoes, feet shifting nervously, responding in a low voice: "Oh, it wasn't that much, really. You shouldn't make such a fuss about it."

Craddock says what the guy should have done was come running up, eyes beaming, and shouting so the whole world could hear, "You're absolutely right! I worked day and night on that project! So I deserve this award! In fact, I probably should be nominated for a Nobel prize!"

But we wouldn't do that, would we? "Aw, it wasn't that much, really. I was just lucky, I guess. Because I have never done anything significant in my life."

Wouldn't it be nice to be rid of that? Wouldn't it be nice for someone to come along and take us by the hand and lift us up to where we should be?

There's a story called The Ugliest Pilgrim that fits here. A story by Doris Betts, about a woman who was so badly hurt in a car accident that she was left with a hideously deformed face.

She feels so badly about how she looks that she has a great deal of difficulty interacting with other people, because she believes they will no longer like her, or bother with her...or, worse still, will turn away from her because they can't stand to look at her. So she becomes an outcast. At least in her own mind.

But she wants to get better, so she decides to go and see a miracle-working Preacher in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Maybe he can take away her ugliness. Carefully, she considers what she will say to the preacher.

"But suppose that he will say he can't heal my ugliness. Well, then I will spread my palms by my ears and show him this is a crippled face. He heals cripples, doesn't he? I've seen them get up and walk away on television.

"Or I will say that this is just like any other kind of physical ailment. The Preacher himself once stuttered...I read that some place...and God bothered with that. Would God not bother with me and my ugly face?

"Why, I've seen the Preacher wrap his hot, blessed hands on a clubbed foot and cry out HEAL! Will he not cry out too when he sees this poor clubbed face? I will be to him as Goliath was to David—a need so giant it will drive God to action!"

So great is her faith that she can't possibly conceive that God wouldn't work through this Preacher and heal her face. But when she tells her fellow passengers on the bus, as it nears Tulsa, Oklahoma, about the purpose of her trip they begin to caution her—preparing her for disappointment and let-down.

"Maybe the Preacher's a fake," says one, with a worried look.

"Yes," she says, "I've thought of that. But maybe what I believe is stronger than his faking. Maybe that Preacher will be electrified by my trust, the way a magnet can get charged up against its will."

When she finally gets to the Preacher's church, he's out of town. So she goes to the church office and lays her case before his assistant. She has her story all written out for him to read. He reads it carefully. An impressive case.

But then the assistant says, "My child...I understand how you feel. And we will most certainly pray for your spirit."

"Never mind my spirit!" she replies. "What about my face?"

"God has a purpose in all things."

"Then ask God to set the purpose aside."

"We must trust in God's will. Let us pray for inner beauty."

"No, I will not pray for inner beauty! I want outer beauty!"

And she leaves the office and storms down the hall to the church auditorium, goes straight to the pulpit where the Preacher normally stands. She lifts her head and shouts, "There is nobody here

to plead my case, so I will do it myself God. Do you have any idea how it feels to be this ugly, with nothing to look back at you but a deer or an owl?"

And then she reads the entire case paper she had prepared for the Preacher.

When she has finished, she says, "I have been praising you, Lord, but it gets harder every day...every time I look into this old pocket mirror of mine..." And she takes a pocket mirror out of her purse and waves it in God's face.

Eventually she leaves. And then comes the healing. Not in any change in her face. In fact, her face doesn't change at all. The change comes in the people on the bus who begin to see in this hideously disfigured woman a new beauty.

And, eventually, nurtured by the love and care of her companions, she looks in her pocket mirror and sees something of beauty herself. The ugliness is gone. The face has not changed at all, but the ugliness is gone.

They took her by the hand and lifted her up. Enabled her to hold up a new mirror to her face and see a new image in the mirror. And in that came the healing. Not healing in the sense that we normally use it—not physical healing—but healing as wholeness.

The simple act. The human touch. The affirmation. The love. The caring. The reaching out of the hand, the lifting up of another, the restoring of self-worth—all that removes the crippling. The thing that brings wholeness.

And in that simple act of human touching and kindness, God is present. In that taking of the hand, the lifting up, God speaks and says...

"Remember, always, that you are my child! Someone of worth and value and beauty! What is it that keeps you from being who you are?"

"Whatever it is, put it aside. For I will raise you up! You will mount up with wings like an eagle. You will run and not be weary. You shall walk and not faint!"

Hymn — On Eagle's Wings (VU 808)

You who dwell in the shelter of our God
Who abide in this shadow for life
Say to the Lord, "My refuge, my rock in whom I trust!"
And I will raise you up on eagle's wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of my hand.

The snare of the fowler will never capture you
And famine will bring you no fear.
Under God's wings your refuge, God's faithfulness your shield.
And I will raise you up on eagle's wings...

You need not fear the terror of the night
Nor the arrow that flies by day;
Though thousands fall about you, near you it shall not come.
And I will raise you up on eagle's wings...

For to God's angels is given a command
To guard you in all of your ways.
Upon their hands they will bear you up
Lest you dash your foot against a stone.
And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of my hand
And hold you, hold you in the palm of my hand.

Joys And Concerns

- **Birthdays**

- Mary Woods celebrates 100 years on Aug. 20th
- Elizabeth Stinson celebrates 95 years on Aug. 23rd
- Vivian Andrews celebrates on Aug. 25th
- Marilyn Stickney celebrates on Aug. 27th

- **Anniversary**

- Lorri & Richard Wright celebrate 47 years on Aug. 23rd

- **Condolences**

- W. Gordon Kirk passed away on July 18/22. He has been on our Melville Historical Roll for many years. Please keep Karen and her family in your prayers.

Prayers of The People

The 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.

Offering

Offering Hymn: What Can I Do (Mv191) OneLicense #A-740237

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

Offering Prayer

Closing Hymn — Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love (MV 593)

(refrain) Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
Show us how to serve the neighbors we have from you.

1. Kneels at the feet of his friends, silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them. (refrain)

2. Neighbours are rich and poor, varied in color and race,
Neighbours are near and far away. (refrain)

3. These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love,
All these are neighbors to us and you. (refrain)

4. Kneel at the feet of our friends, silently washing their feet,
This is the way we should live with you. (refrain)

Commissioning & Benediction

As we leave this place and time, may the creative power of God,

The caring, compassionate love of Jesus,

The driving force of the Spirit,

Go with us and remain with us always,

As we fulfill our calling as people of God in our world.

We go in peace.

Amen.

Postlude: "Till the Storm Passes By"