



November 20, 2022

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church
November 20, 2022
Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Presiding today - Rev. Tom Watson

Words of Welcome

Good morning! Lynda Goy-Flint is on Study Leave this week, and I am pleased to be with you to fill in this Sunday.

Melville United Church continues 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. There is ample room to socially distance, and you are welcome to wear masks or not as 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

- **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
- The Social Justice & Outreach team feels incredibly grateful to report that **donations to the Christmas Gift program have reached \$1,300**. These funds will support two families' Christmases. Three children will receive gifts and clothing, and there is enough for a small gift for the caregivers, along with a treat for each family. Funds will also support youth Christmas activities organized by The Grove Hubs. The gift cards have been purchased and will be dropped off Monday. Don't worry, we can use any late donations to add joy to Christmas. Thank you!!
- Announcing a new music series - **"MID-DAY MUSIC AT MELVILLE" presented and performed by pianist BRAD HALLS**. Weekly concerts every Wednesday. Pianist Brad Halls will present music from **12 noon to 1:00 p.m.** at Melville United Church in Fergus. Free will offering. The music will be taken from the "The Great American Songbook" featuring the great composers of the past century: Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers and many more, and music written for the Broadway stage and Hollywood films.
- **Arthur United Church Women Poinsettia Luncheon & Bazaar, Sat. November 26th - 11:30 am to 1:30 pm**. Lunch includes soup, sandwiches, dessert & beverage. Everyone is welcome.
- We will be celebrating **White Gift Sunday** during Advent on **December 4th**. The Social Justice and Outreach Committee kindly asks you to make your white gift offering one of money, food, toiletries or small items appropriate for teens.
- **Christmas Bake Sale Plus, at Melville - Sat. Dec. 17th 10 - 2pm** Cookies, fudge, squares, tarts, Christmas Pudding & Sauce, Gift Boxes, Christmas Decorations, and Our Famous Melville Meat Pies! If you are not a baker, please consider donating ingredients i.e.: flour, white/brown sugar, butter, raisins, pecans, walnuts, chocolate chips, mincemeat, cherries, etc.. Items should be left in the upstairs kitchen with a note on them. We "Thank you!"
- **Photo Directory** – If anyone has random photos of events that have gone on at Melville in the last 5 years, please see Lorna about them, as we do have a page or two in the photo directory for those. Thank You!

- **Memory Angels:** Our Memory Angels will be displayed in the Sanctuary on Sunday Nov 27 thru Advent and ending January 8/23. Those who have had Angels in the past, can renew your Angel with a minimum donation of \$5, by contacting Lorna Bevcar. Those who are new to this, can have a handmade paper Angel, with an inscription on the skirt, dedicating this Angel in memory of your loved one, from you, for a minimum donation of \$5. The Angels stay at Melville safely packed away, throughout the year. These Angels bring comfort and meaning to the Melville families throughout Advent, knowing we are remembering our loved ones.
- 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. Items most needed as of Nov 8/22:

Side Kicks-rice, pasta	Apples	Oranges	Canned Fruit
Onions	Carrots	Fruit/Pudding Cups	Canned Tomatoes
Canned Salmon or Tuna	Soda Crackers	Chunky Soup (Habitant)	Hamburger Helper
Tuna Helper	Peanut Butter	Cookies	Toilet Paper

- **Save your Used Stamps from Incoming Mail:** The holiday season is coming and you'll be receiving cards, etc.. Cut off your used stamps, leaving a 1/2" border around them and give them to Marlene Tosh or put them in the Stamp Box on the shelf in the Cloak Room, where the Lift is on the main floor of the church. Marlene tidies them up and takes them to the Bible Society, to buy bibles. You can do this year-round!
- **Gifts with Vision: A Giving Catalogue from The United Church of Canada**
 - Give meaningful gifts that make a difference with [Gifts with Vision \(opens in a new tab\)](#)! Each year's gift catalogue gives a glimpse of the breadth of our Mission & Service ministries and programs.
 - *Gifts with Vision* has gift ideas to suit every interest, budget, and person. It's a great way to celebrate special occasions and honour loved ones!
 - The gift catalogue is updated online regularly, and is fully refreshed every fall. It is also distributed in print with *Broadview* magazine, and mailed to each pastoral charge.
 - **To order gifts, be inspired, or learn more, visit [GiftsWithVision.ca \(opens in a new tab\)](https://GiftsWithVision.ca) today!**

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.*

We acknowledge that this land on which we gather for worship is the traditional land of the people of Petun,

Haudenosaunee, (Hoe-day-no-show-nee)

Anishinabewaki,

Mississaugas of the Credit,

Odawa and

Mississauga nations. We acknowledge that we live on this land as people who have agreed to share the care and use of this land as a result of treaties—the Simcoe Patent-Treaty 4, 1793 and the Haldimand Treaty, 1784—that outline the rights and responsibilities associated with our place in this land. May we be people who remember this with thanksgiving and respect.

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:

In the various seasons of the year—the awakening, newly budding days of spring...the warm, wonderful days of summer...the transitional days of autumn...the cold, snowy days of winter during which earth renews itself...

God is in our midst.

In the various seasons of our lives—times when we respond with joy and wonder at a new birth...times when we hold each other tightly as we tread uncertain paths...

God is in our midst.

Where one life touches another life, where sharing occurs, where kindness and caring cause grace to abound...

God is in our midst.

Let us worship the God who is right now in our midst.

Hymn — The Lone, Wild Bird (VU 384 v. 1, 2 & 5)

The lone, wild bird in lofty flight
Is still with you, nor leaves your sight.
And I am yours! I rest in you,
Great Spirit, come, rest in me too.

The ends of earth are in your hand,
The sea's dark deep and far off land.
And I am yours! I rest in you,
Great Spirit, come, rest in me too.

O search me, God, my heart reveal,
Renew my life, my spirit heal,
For I am yours! I rest in you,
Great Spirit, come, rest in me too.

Opening Prayer: Creator God, we are drawn to this time in response to your love for us—the love that joins us, one to another...the love that nurtures us in our relationships...the love that heals old scars and touches us with the gift of tomorrow. Come, Great Spirit, rest in us. Be with us now in our worship. Amen.

Spirit Sings — "God of The Movement and Martyrs" (by David LaMotte)

Scripture Reading — Reading: Matthew 25.31-46

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.

Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink and when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?"

And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me"

Then he will say to those at his left hand, "You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me."

Then they also will answer, "Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?" Then he will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me."

Sermon — "Life in Our Town...The Good Goat"

This morning, I thought I should update you on the comings and goings in Our Town. Most of you have been on a visit to Our Town, and will know that it's one of the most vibrant communities ever to dot the Canadian landscape. Most folks say that once you've visited there, you can't wait to go back.

So let's go back this morning, and see what's been happening.

Well, it's been a busy week in Our Town. Now that the first flakes of snow have fallen, it's clear that fall is making its long, slow slide towards another Ontario winter. So people have been busy doing any remaining work around their yards—raking the last of the leaves, cutting back plants, covering rose bushes, making a compost area in the back corner of the yard, putting a board over their air conditioner, stuff like that.

At least, that's what the women have been doing. The men are busy thinking about how their cribbage tournaments should be organized this winter. As you can imagine, a lot of planning goes into stuff like that.

For a couple of years, due to Covid, The Church of the Reluctant Apostle didn't hold its annual bazaar. But I'm happy to report they're planning it again this year...to take place on the first Saturday in December.

You may remember that, a few years back, the old guys in Our Town took up quilting—they figured that if women could make quilts there was no reason they couldn't—so I suspect they'll unveil one of their masterpieces for the church bazaar this year.

Bizarre...that's actually an appropriate description for a couple of those said masterpieces, but they keep trying.

And the women...well, when the men started up their quilting guild, the women decided to take up woodworking. Making lamps on lathes, coffee tables with glass tops. So I wouldn't be surprised to see a few items the women have made in the bazaar.

Men making quilts, women doing woodworking projects...it's not quite the way things usually work...but, in fairness, Our Town isn't known for doing things the usual way. And the beauty of it is that projects such as these keep the husbands and wives out of each other's hair.

A side benefit is that a competition of sorts has developed between the men and the women. Husbands arguing that they make better quilts than the women ever did, and the wives arguing right back that never has a better lamp or coffee table been made in the history of Our Town.

Competition. Arguments. Keeps their relationships from growing stale. And it's all in good clean fun. That's what's important.

Oh...speaking of arguments, I must tell you that the stage was all set for one at a meeting of The Lodge the second Wednesday night in November. November 9 that would be. It occurred when President Lefty Simpson called for New Business. Immediately Hiram Jones leapt to his feet. Well, "leapt" isn't exactly the correct word. Old Hiram is beyond the leaping stage. "Creaked and groaned" would be more like it.

Anyway, let me back up a bit. Two years ago, when Covid hit, The Lodge stopped meeting in person, and the members took to holding their meetings on Zoom—something that Hiram Jones objected to...at least, at first.

When President Lefty Simpson first called him to inform him, Hiram said, "If you think I'm gonna waste my time meeting on anything viral, you've got another think comin'. I'm havin' nuthin' to do with that cockamamie viral technology."

"It's not viral, Hiram," said Lefty Simpson, "it's virtual."

"It's all the same to me," replied Hiram, "my pappy would roll over in his grave if he knew what this here Lodge has come to."

But then a funny thing happened. Pretty soon Hiram realized that he had no way to control what took place if he wasn't at the meeting. So he got his 10-year-old grandson, Kenneth, to help him shop for a computer, and show him how to use Zoom. And I have to say, to give old Hiram credit, he adapted quite nicely. Proving that you **can** teach some old dogs new tricks.

But they're back meeting in person again now. Started up again in October. Hiram missed that meeting but he was there for the meeting on November 9th. And here's what happened at that meeting.

It came to the point in the agenda when President Lefty Simpson called for New Business. That's when Hiram Jones creaked and groaned to his feet. And the rest of The Lodge members held their breath. "Here he goes again," said Fred Bowers to Milt Prosser.

You see, more than once, Hiram has attempted to get New Business removed completely from The Lodge agenda. New Business, in Hiram's mind, always means new ideas, or somebody proposing a new project of some kind of other, and Hiram doesn't like those things, so, more than once, he's mounted vigorous campaigns against suggested new projects.

That's why, on that Wednesday evening, the Lodge brothers were all prepared for another Hiram-type tirade.

"The Chair recognizes Brother Jones," said President Lefty. Hiram said, "Thank you, Brother Simpson. I must say that...and I'm sure my pappy, if he were still alive, would agree with me...that I'm mighty glad to see us back here meeting in person, the way the Good Lord would want us to."

Members looked at one another, silently asking where old Hiram might be going with this.

"But," Hiram continued, "you fellers know that, even though I didn't like the idea of those Zoomer meetings at the start, I did get onto them pretty good. Thanks, of course, to my 10-year-old grandson, Kenneth, who got me all set up with a computer." That brought nods from the rest of the members.

"Well," continued Hiram, "when Kenneth was helping me do that, he told me a bunch of stuff I hadn't thought about. The parents of some of Kenneth's school friends lost their jobs due to the Covid thing, and they've been really hurting...and now with inflation, rising food and gasoline prices...quite a few folks could use some help.

"I therefore would like to make a motion that this here Lodge raise some money to create a place where people can pick up clothing and food...and also create an emergency financial fund for folks who need it right now."

After some collective gasps of surprise, several hands went up to second the motion. President Simpson accepted Grant Smithers as seconder.

Hiram said, "Thank you, Brother Smithers. I've been thinking about this a lot since Kenneth talked to me...and, well, I'm getting older all the time so don't need as much money to live on...so the other day I cashed in a GIC...and if this here motion of mine passes, I'll immediately put in \$50,000 to get things going. If need be, there's more money where that came from."

Everybody sat in stunned silence. Then they all clapped and cheered. Some had tears in their eyes. The motion passed unanimously.

When Frank Birstead went home, he started to tell Myrtle about what happened at the meeting, and as he talked he had to stop, get a Kleenex and dab his eyes. It had been a pretty emotional meeting.

When he finished, Myrtle rocked back and forth in her rocking chair for a minute or so, and then said, "Now, Franklin, that sure is something. And Hiram even opened his wallet to get things started."

"Yep," replied Frank. "He put in \$50,000."

Myrtle just sat there for a few minutes, then got up from her chair. "Well, Franklin, it's time for our bedtime snack. You ready for our usual wieners and beans."

"Sounds good, Myrt," replied Frank.

Myrtle headed for the kitchen. Then she stopped, turned to Frank and said, "Hiram Jones. Imagine that! Hiram Jones. The old goat! That wonderful...old...goat!"

Well, that's all the news from Our Town for this week. At least from the stories that I've heard.

Now, I find it interesting that Myrtle Birstead used the term "goat" to refer to Hiram Jones. Interesting because today's parable mentions goats. Sheep too. Sheep and goats.

Is it okay to tell you that I don't really like this parable? I don't like the divisive nature of it. Sheep to the right, goats to the left. The good—apparently the sheep—stand over here, the bad—apparently the goats—stand over there. The righteous—the sheep—over here get rewarded, the bad—the goats—over there get damned. That bothers me.

Oh, I understand it from a historical perspective. The sheep, generally the lamb actually, was offered as a sacrifice to God in purification rituals. And Jesus is referred to as the sacrificial lamb.

The goat was more symbolically associated with neighbouring religions that the Hebrews saw as pagan. But is that enough for Jesus to write goats off as the bad guys? Is it really that simple and clear-cut?

And try it on from the goat's perspective. How would you like it if you were always referred to as the bad guy? The scapegoat? The one who, like Hiram Jones, was never thought to have anything helpful to do or say?

Does that further help to explain why I don't like this parable? Why it bothers me? Because it smacks of prejudice.

A friend of mine used to have a goat farm near Cambridge. Goats produce way more milk than sheep do. And they're hilarious to watch. They're curious, they're frisky, they're cut-ups. They're like adolescents, always testing the edges.

Sheep, on the other hand, are simple, dull, docile, go where they're told to go, do what they're told to do. So, is that what's valued—obedience—and that's why the sheep show up as the good guys?

Isn't it possible that Jesus is just using those images to make a point, and goats could just as well be the good guys?

I think so. Remember that most of Jesus' teachings turn the world upside down. So we mustn't dwell too much on the labelling of the sheep as good and the goats as bad. The truth lies in what they do. As it says later in the parable.

- Did you bring me food when I was hungry?
- Did you arrange a clothing drive when I didn't have anything to wear?
- Did you tend to my wounds when I was bleeding at the side of the road?
- Did you come and see me when I was in prison, or visit me when I was lonely?

It's the mercy, the justice, the caring, the compassion, that count. Not who you are. And there's the twist. Those who carried out the mercy, the justice, the caring, the compassion, didn't even know that's what they were doing...they just did it because they saw the need. That's the point of the parable.

Back about three years ago, I became acquainted with Yvonne Heath. She lives in Huntsville now, but when I became aware of her she lived in Port Sydney, Ontario, a village near Huntsville. For 26 years, Yvonne was a nurse, then she quit to write a book entitled *Love Your Life to Death*, to help people deal with death and grief.

Then she started a movement called "Just Show Up." It's based on the notion that when you see something that needs to be done, just show up and do it. Don't wait for somebody else to organize things; just show up yourself, and do it.

Once Yvonne "just showed up to pile wood." An elderly neighbour, a widower, had a bunch of firewood that needed to be piled in a shed to keep dry for the winter, so Yvonne pulled together a bunch of other neighbours and they went to pile the man's winter wood safely away.

No thought of being rewarded for what she does. She does things just because they need doing. She...just...shows...up.

You see, good things happen at the most unlikely of times, and are often done by the most unlikely of people.

So, back to Our Town...

Ten years from now...ten years from now...when Kenneth Jones is 20, he'll be on his way to the hospital to visit his grandfather Hiram in palliative care. On the way there, he will pass by The Lodge building. It's been there since 1947.

On the side is an addition. They call it The Annex. People can go to The Annex and get clothing, and emergency food supplies. On the door of The Annex is a plaque that reads: "Erected November, 2022. With special thanks to Hiram Jones."

Imagine that! The old goat! That wonderful...old...goat!

Hymn —When I Needed a Neighbour VU 600

1. When I needed a neighbour, were you there, were you there?

When I needed a neighbour, were you there?

And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,

Were you there?

2. I was hungry and thirsty, were you there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
Were you there?

3. I was cold, I was naked, were you there, were you there?
I was cold, I was naked, were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
Were you there?

4. When I needed a healer, were you there, were you there?
When I needed a healer, were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
Were you there?

5. Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll be there,
wherever you travel I'll be there.
And the creed and the colour and the name won't matter,
I'll be there.

Joys And Concerns

- Brenda Breunig celebrated on Mon Nov. 7th
- Deb Bodiam celebrated on Wed Nov. 9th
- Fred Martin celebrates 86 years Sun Nov 20th
- Heather Halls celebrates on Mon Nov. 21st
- Nancy Kruger celebrates on Thurs Nov. 24th

Prayers Of the People

The Lord's Prayer

Spirit Sings — "A Christian's Daily Prayer" *(by Jordan Kauflin, Dave Fournier & Matt Merker)*

Offering

Offering Hymn: What Can I Do

MV 191

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 — Amazing Grace **VU 266**

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved,
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,
This word my hope secures,
God will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

(Musical interlude)

Congregation sings...

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now I'm found,
Was blind but now I see.

Commissioning & Benediction

When we are apart from this holy time and space...

May the light of God be like a lamp before our feet...

The power of God carry us when we grow tired...

The joy of God mend our bruised knees or hearts...

The grace of God hold us fast...

The love of God keep our hearts and minds this day and always.

May it be so. Amen.

Postlude