



**January 15, 2023**

Melville United Church

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## Melville United Church

January 15, 2023

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Presiding today - Rev. Tom Watson

### Welcome

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

We gather in community today – Sunday January 15th 2023, 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. Masking and hand sanitizing are all optional and there is ample space for people to maintain social distancing if you feel more comfortable doing so.. For those who are joining us online or by reading, we invite you to have a candle or tea light available.

### Announcements

- Come and enjoy a musical break in your busy day when **“Mid-Day Music at Melville”** returns on **Wednesday, January 18 from 12 noon to about 1:00 p.m.** at Melville United Church in Fergus, when pianist Brad Halls will present a selection of songs written by Harry Warren, one of the greatest composers of songs for Hollywood films. The winner of 3 Academy Awards for Best Song, Warren’s enduring standards include *The Lullaby of Broadway*, *You’ll Never Know*, *At Last*, *Chattanooga Choo Choo* and many more. Admission to the performance is free, but free-will donation to Melville to keep the lights on and the piano tuned are welcomed.
- 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. Food bank use is up 35% over the last three years. The food bank has also calculated that a basket of food and goods that cost \$39.85 in 2021 now costs \$50.83, a 27.55% increase in one year. The Food Bank is asking for your financial support as they come to the end of the year.
- **Save your Used Stamps from Incoming Mail:** Please help the Bible Society to buy bibles by saving your used stamps! Simply 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. 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 \(opens in a new tab\)](#) today!**

- **Melville council has commissioned a Halo study in conjunction with the Trinity Centres Foundation.** This study will look to anchor Melville in Centre Wellington and determine our value to the community, as event and program space, volunteer time and effort and community well being. This will serve as a snapshot of the value Melville brings to the community in terms we can share with local governments, charitable organizations, and current partners. This will serve as the foundation for further efforts to make Melville a sustainable, energetic, and integral part of Centre Wellington. Please ask a council member if you have any questions.

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, Anishinabewaki, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, 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 No. 4 and the Haldimand Treaty, that outlined 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**

Let us hear again, the ancient sacred words of our ancestors in faith:

The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness, not even the darkness of death, has overcome it.

**Praise be to Christ our light and our salvation.**

### **Call to Worship**

Those who wait for God shall renew their strength,

**They shall mount up with wings like eagles.**

They shall run and not be weary,

**They shall walk and not faint.**

### **Hymn: Praise with Joy the World's Creator**

**VU 312**

- 1 Praise with joy the world's Creator,  
God of justice, love, and peace,  
source and end of human knowledge,  
God whose grace shall never cease.  
Celebrate the Maker's glory,  
power to rescue and release.
- 2 Praise to Christ who feeds the hungry,  
frees the captive, finds the lost,  
heals the sick, upsets religion,  
fearless both of fate and cost.  
Celebrate Christ's constant presence:  
friend and stranger, guest and host.

- 3 Praise the Spirit sent among us,  
liberating truth from pride,  
forging bonds where race or gender,  
age or nation dare divide.  
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure:  
foolishness none dare deride.
- 4 Praise the Maker, Christ, and Spirit,  
one God in community,  
calling Christians to embody  
oneness and diversity.  
This the world shall see reflected:  
God is One and One in Three.

**Gathering Prayer:**

Sustaining God in the midst of our day, and embraced by your world,

**We call upon your wisdom, we draw upon your strength, we rely upon your grace.**

As Jesus' disciples we are called to share your light in the world,

**Yet we can miss the mark.**

Help us to search our hearts and open to your life-giving word and healing forgiveness,

**For things said and done, that we might say and do differently now, had we the chance.**

Help us to accept our human condition, the sin that separates us from each other in all manner of ways.

**Help us nevertheless to hold to hope, to dare in faith, to receive from your gracious love, that as disciples we may follow in Jesus's Way, by the power of your Creative Spirit. Amen.**

**Hymn: Will You Come and See the Light VU 96**

- 1 Will you come and see the light from the stable door?  
It is shining newly bright, though it shone before.  
It will be your guiding star,  
it will show you who you are;  
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?
- 2 Will you step into the light that can free the slave?  
It will stand for what is right, it will heal and save.  
By the pyramids of greed  
there's a longing to be freed;  
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?
- 3 Will you tell about the light in the prison cell?  
Though it's shackled out of sight, it is shining well.  
When the truth is cut and bruised,  
and the innocent abused,  
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?
- 4 Will you join the hope, alight in the young girl's eyes,  
of the mighty put to flight by a baby's cries?  
When the lowest and the least  
are the foremost at the feast,  
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

5 Will you travel by the light of the babe new born?  
In the candle lit at night there's a gleam of dawn,  
and the darkness all about  
is too dim to put it out:  
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

**Scripture Reading: John 1: 29-42 (NRSV)**

*The Lamb of God*

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and declared, 'Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, "After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me." I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.' And John testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit." And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.

*The First Disciples of Jesus*

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, 'Look, here is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and see.' They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

The Word of Love and Life

**Thanks be to God**

**Ministry of Music:** "Till the Storm Passes By" By Mosie Lister played by Suzanne Flewelling

**Sermon: "Somebody's Calling My Name"**

Any of us who have grandchildren will know that you're never sure what they are going to say, or how they will respond to any given situation. Here are a couple of examples...

A woman didn't know whether or not her granddaughter had learned her colours yet, so she decided to test her. She would point out something and ask what colour it was. The granddaughter would tell her and was always correct. It was fun for the grandmother, so she continued. Finally, the little girl got up, headed for the door, turned and said, "Really, Grandma, I think you should try to figure out some of those yourself!"

A grandchild asked his grandfather how old he was. The grandfather, who was quite the one to tease, replied, "I'm not sure." To which the grandson said, "Well, Grandpa, all you have to do is look in your underwear! Mine says I'm four to six."

Those stories have nothing to do with the sermon. I just thought they were cute stories to share.

In last week's gospel, we read about Jesus hearing the call that led him to his baptism and sent him on his life's journey. Today we read about the beginnings of his public ministry. He is somewhere between the age of 30 and 33, and is calling disciples who will follow him.

The first two are Peter and Andrew. Later there would be others. He called their names—Peter, Andrew, James, John, and others—and they left whatever they were doing, and followed.

Have you ever heard Jesus call your name? Inviting you to come and be a disciple? Inviting you to follow?

Every one of us here has heard it in some form or another. Heard it on our mother's knee as she read the old stories from the Bible to us. Or heard it from our Sunday School teacher. Or maybe at some other point in our lives. Sam, John, Betty, Mary...come follow me.

My family was always active in the United Church in Wheatley, Ontario, and so, from a very young age, I went to church every Sunday. When I was between the ages of 8 and 15, the minister in our church was a man by the name of William H. Smith. And every Sunday, on my way out of church, Mr. Smith would say to me, "Thomas, some day you should be a minister."

Well, I'm sure he didn't say that every Sunday. It just seemed like every Sunday. Regardless, whenever he said it I thought to myself, "You foolish old man! Will ya quit saying that! Just stop it! Who in their right mind...!"

And, in due course, he did quit saying it. Because he moved away. But, for whatever reason, the voice stayed behind. Never left me. I kept hearing it. Kept hearing it for more than 20 years. Until, finally, at the age of 35, I decided to take it seriously.

In different forms, and at different times in our lives, our names are called. Or called again. Sometimes we hear the first time. Sometimes—as in my own case—our name has to be spoken over and over again before we hear it.

In any event, in 1973, when I decided to study to become a minister, I had 6 years of studies ahead of me—3 years at University of Western Ontario in London for my BA, and then 3 years at Emmanuel College in Toronto for theology.

We had four children so I needed to have income to support my family while I studied. Fortunately, I was able to secure a student minister position at Straffordville, Vienna and Port Burwell—three villages on Highway 19, south of Tillsonburg—and I was there on that 3-point charge for 6 years...which meant that I worked full-time and also undertook full-time studies.

Something that wasn't available back then, in the mid-1970s, was the Internet. Now it's something we use every day. So handy. And the ads we get for stuff is simply amazing.

For example, I have received the following ad several times...

Be ordained now!

Become a legally ordained minister within 48 hours!

DO WEDDINGS! Marry your brother, sister, or your best friend. Don't settle for being the best man or a bridesmaid.

FUNERALS! A very hard time for you and your family. Don't settle for a minister you don't know!

Do the funeral yourself!

BAPTISMS! You can say, "Welcome to the world! I am your minister and your uncle!"

FORGIVE SINS!

START YOUR OWN CHURCH! After your legal ordination, you may start your own congregation!

All necessary ordination certificates included!

The cost? Well, let's talk about how much the program is worth. Considering the value of becoming an ordained minister, the program could easily be worth \$100. Right? However, no! Not even close! The goal is to make this life changing program affordable so average folks can benefit from the power of it.

Since it's clear how much you want to help others, you are going to receive your Minister Certification for under \$100. Even under \$50. In fact, this entire life-changing course is yours for only \$29.95. An additional \$11 shipping cost if you live outside the U.S. Visa, MasterCard and American Express accepted.

All orders filled within 24 hours of receiving them. Apply to Box 142, Billings, Montana.

And to think that I spent 6 years at university, when I could have had all that training and certification in just 48 hours for a mere \$29.95. Yes, it's in American funds, but listen...as my mother used to say: Cheap at half the price!  
Oh well...

Back to the theme: Somebody's calling my name. In J. R. R. Tolkien's marvelous story *The Lord of the Rings*, that somebody is Frodo Baggins. Frodo's mission: save the world from the Dark Lord, Sauron the Great.

Frodo is reluctant. Primarily because he wonders if he is equal to what is required of him. The notion of one little hobbit setting out to save the world seems quite absurd.

"I wish this had not come to pass in my time," he says to the wizard Gandalf.  
"So do I," replies Gandalf. "And so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for us to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us."

Hear that sentence again: All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.

That applies to you and me too. And to this church. We do not decide our time, its complexities, its ambiguities, the things that weigh upon it and war against it. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.

Will we use our time productively, faithfully, creatively? And if some important cause or journey falls across our path, will we take it up? Even though we feel like Frodo: Can one little someone—me or us—really make a difference?

You know what...we don't have to make this into some grand, earth-shaking journey. Just consider the little journeys about which we have to decide that come our way on a regular basis.

- Will we, in the little choices we have to make regularly, be faithful?
- Will we, by the choices we make, be a force for right and good?
- Will we do things that build up or tear down?
- Will we seek the kind, the gracious, the generous way?
- How will we decide in the time that is given us?

In September of 2019, I went, with two friends, on the CN Tower EdgeWalk in Toronto. When people knew I was doing that the reactions ranged from, "You wouldn't catch me up there for a million dollars," to...the most common..."Are you nuts!"

But, turn that EdgeWalk into a metaphor for life and what can be learned from it. I learned that edges are not necessarily to be feared.

Life has a wide variety of edges. What if we didn't fear them just because they're there?

Let's just talk about one edge—the edge we call the future. What about the future? What will it bring? You see, the future has an edge called "unknown." We wonder: Can we do what the unknown future demands of us? Are we up to the challenge?

One day, Jesus stands at the door of his father's carpenter shop in Nazareth. And as he stands there, he hears a voice echoing from somewhere down the Jordan valley. A strange voice. A voice being carried on the very wings of time. And as he listens, he realizes that the voice is calling his name. Calling it in such a way that he feels compelled to put down his carpenter's tools and go discover what it's all about. In some strange way, it even sounds as if it might be the voice of God.

And when he gets there—to the banks of the Jordan River—he discovers that the voice he heard isn't really the voice of God at all. It's the voice of his cousin, John the Baptizer. A voice he knows all too well.

But there is still something...something from 'somewhere beyond' in the experience. And then, following his baptism, the voice is there again: "This is my beloved son, one in whom I am well pleased."

I'm a member of the Guelph Wellington Men's Club. In May of 2019, the Club invited David Johnston, former Governor General of Canada, to come and speak about his book *Trust: 20 Ways to Build a Better Country*. I was asked to be the Moderator of the event and to have a "fireside chat" with David Johnston. It was a distinct privilege to be asked to do it.

I had learned that David Johnston was born in Sudbury, so in my closing remarks I said, "David, there's a biblical phrase that says, 'How can any good come out of Sudbury,' but you're living proof that it can." He's an Anglican lay reader so I knew that he'd catch the reference when I said "Can any good come out of Sudbury"...and he did.

In Jesus' time, the question was: "Can any good come out of Nazareth?" ... "After all, he's just a carpenter's son. One of Joseph and Mary's kids! How in the world can he make any difference?"

How could a guy named David Johnston, born in Sudbury, Ontario, make any difference? How can Fred, or Helen, or Sally, or Joe, or you, or I—from Guelph or Fergus, or wherever—make any real difference?

My reading of history leads me to believe that there are very few 'naturally great' people. For the most part, there are just ordinary people who, in given moments of time, find the capacity to act in great ways.

Jesus says...first to Andrew and Peter...and, by extension to you and me...come and follow. Come and make a difference in this world.

So, take up whatever journey you are called to with hope, with faith, and with courage.

So be it. Amen.

### **Hymn: He Leadeth Me VU 657**

- 1 He leadeth me: O blessed thought!  
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!  
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,  
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.  
    He leadeth me! He leadeth me!  
    By his own hand he leadeth me!  
    His faithful follower I would be,  
    for by his hand he leadeth me!
  
- 2 Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,  
sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,  
by waters calm, o'er troubled sea,  
still 'tis his hand that leadeth me. R
  
- 3 Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,  
nor ever murmur nor repine,  
content, whatever lot I see,  
since 'tis my God that leadeth me. R
  
- 4 And when my task on earth is done,  
when by thy grace the victory's won,  
even death's cold wave I will not flee,  
since God through Jordan leadeth me. R

### **Sharing Our Joys and Concerns**

#### **Prayers Of the People and The Prayer of Jesus**

#### **Minute For Mission**

#### **Offering Invitation**

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All creation teems with the abundance of God's provision:  
mountains and hills, fruit trees and cedars,  
creeping things and flying birds!  
Our own lives bear witness to the abundance of  
God's love and mercy, for God has lifted us up and carried us in our need.  
In joyful praise, we offer to God a portion of all we have received.

#### **Offering Hymn: Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow VU 541**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
praise God, all creatures high and low;  
give thanks to God in love made known:  
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

#### **Offering Prayer**

**Gracious God in gratitude and humility we offer these gifts today, to serve your cause and to**

**make tangible your love in the world. Guide and enlighten us as we share these gifts and the gift of our life together with others, in Jesus name. Amen.**

**Hymn: Bless Now, O God the Journey VU 633**

- 1 Bless now, O God, the journey  
that all your people make,  
the path through noise and silence,  
the way of give and take.  
The trail is found in desert  
and winds the mountain round,  
then leads beside still waters,  
the road where faith is found.
  
- 2 Bless sojourners and pilgrims  
who share this winding way,  
whose hope burns through the terrors,  
whose love sustains the day.  
We yearn for holy freedom  
while often we are bound.  
Together we are seeking  
the road where faith is found.
  
- 3 Divine Eternal Lover,  
you meet us on the road.  
We wait for lands of promise  
where milk and honey flow.  
But waiting not for places,  
you meet us all around.  
Our covenant is written  
on roads, as faith is found.

**Benediction**

**Postlude:** What a Wonderful World

**Household Prayer**

Wondrous God, I am in awe that you would choose to be born among us, revealing your divineness enlivening the ordinary things of my life.

I thank you for the gift of Jesus who walked among us, wept with the suffering and raged in anger at the injustices of his day. I thank you for the vision you etched in his heart, a fullness of righteousness for all the world.

I thank you that he called others to follow that they too might know the joy of new life.

As Jesus' disciple, help me to walk in the way. Help me to carry the vision in my heart, however discouraged I get. Help me to see through eyes of faith, my life, my relationships, the world you so love. Help me day by day, in my words and deeds to reflect your light.

Through your wisdom and Spirit, may I grow in my capacity to love you, my neighbour, and myself, as you so love. Amen