



August 27, 2023

Melville United Church

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Custodian

Suzanne Flewelling

Chair of Church Council

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Office hours - August

9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Wednesday-Friday

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Pastoral Care Numbers

519-843-3841

Melville United church
Sunday August 27, 2023

Presiding today - Rev. Tom Watson
Music Ministry: Suzanne Flewelling

Prelude

Welcome

Good morning! Welcome to worship at Melville United Church. How wonderful to be together on this summer Sunday morning—both in person here in the sanctuary and online.

Announcements

- **If you are worshipping with us for the first time, welcome!** Please join us for refreshments and conversation in the parlour after the service.
- **UCW Meat Pies** are available for purchase after the service or order by contacting Marg Frayne 519-843-3274 or margfrayne@hotmail.com Only **\$5.00** each, cash or cheques made payable to Melville United Church UCW.
- Help is needed with the PowerPoint and sound on **September 3rd**. Barry can provide training to anyone interested before then. Please contact Barry Rawn brawn@cogeco.ca
- **We are in need of welcomers and counters.** Onsite training will be provided. Excellent benefits. Please see Ralph Rainford to volunteer.
- Mark your calendars for **November 18th at 7:00pm**, because the King is coming to Melville! Join us for an unforgettable evening with the incredible **Elvis Tribute** Artist, Garry Wesley! Tickets will be \$25 and will be on sale soon. More details coming soon.
- **Kids' Church** is on a summer break and will gather again September 10. During the summer books and independent activities will be available in the sanctuary. Have a great holiday!
- **Summer office hours (July & August):** Wednesday, Thursday, & Friday 9:00am - 3:30pm.

Land Acknowledgement

Let us take time to acknowledge the peoples who have lived on and stewarded these lands since time immemorial.

God, help us to be thankful, and to become better neighbours and stewards that we might continue to honour these lands.

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:

If only we knew how to look at life as God sees it...

We would realize that everything is sacred.

We would realize that everything makes its own important contribution to this world.

We would realize that each of us makes our own important contribution to this world.

We would realize that we are loved—precious in God's sight—of infinite value to God, and to each other.

We are part of the interwoven harmony of God's song.

Together, let us praise our God.

Hymn: Let All Things Now Living VU 242

- 1 Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
to God our Creator triumphantly raise;
who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,
by guiding us on to the end of our days.
God's banners are o'er us, pure light goes before us,
a pillar of fire shining forth in the night;
till shadows have vanished and darkness is banished,
as forward we travel from light into Light.

- 2 By law God enforces, the stars in their courses
and sun in its orbit obediently shine;
the hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
the depths of the ocean proclaim God divine.
We, too, should be voicing our love and rejoicing;
with glad adoration a song let us raise:
till all things now living unite in thanksgiving,
to God in the highest, hosanna and praise.

Gathering Prayer (in unison):

Creating, loving, God: with all things now living we gather in this worship time. We come to say our words, and sing our songs...to be refreshed by being together in this sacred space, to be rejuvenated by love, encouraged by faith, renewed by hope. Be with us, God, in this worship time. Amen.

A Celebration Litany *(adapted from the writings of Ann Weems)*

I celebrate the church of Jesus Christ...

Where two of three can gather together and touch this world with the amazing news that somebody cares.

I celebrate the church, where every person of God is hailed as unique and valuable...

Where arms are open wide, and all who come are welcomed.

I celebrate the church that gives me hope...

The church that holds me close when I'm hurting, sticks with me when I'm tempted to give up.

I celebrate the love that exists among us, the spirit we share, the attitude of partnership.

I celebrate that God works miracles in common clay pots, changes caterpillars to butterflies and water into wine.

I celebrate the church of Jesus Christ...

Where the wonderful wildness of God breaks through and fills us with a spirit that overflows...

Where we see rainbows even in the darkest of times...

And every day is a festival of faith.

Together, we celebrate being the church.

Hymn: Small Things Count VU 361

1. Small things count, so Jesus said:
 cups of water, crumbs of bread,
Small things done because we're kind
 count as big things in God's mind.

2. Small things make the big things grow:
 yeast that bubbles in the dough,
Puffs that fill a big balloon,
 notes that make a happy tune.

3. Every hair that's on our head,
 every sparrow, Jesus said,
God takes care of, counts and knows,
 God loves us from top to toes!

Ministry of Music — Solo "I Believe" — Jo Anne Hall

Scripture Reading — Romans 12:1-10

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgement, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another.

We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour.

SERMON: Each of Us Has Something Important to Offer

For the past 5 years, I have belonged to the Guelph Wellington Men's Club—a group of 275 retired guys, from varied backgrounds and occupations, who meet every Tuesday morning.

Prior to Covid, the average weekly attendance was 150 to 180. Currently, we're more in the 125

area, but still respectable.

More than once I've come away from the meeting thinking: "What a huge amount of collective wisdom and knowledge in that large group of retired men. Each one brings his own particular gifts, talents, abilities to the group."

It makes the point I'd like to make today: Each of us has something important to offer.

Not that each of us constantly feels that particularly wise or knowledgeable. At least, I don't. Because I have my moments when I feel anything but wise and knowledgeable.

For example ... A Saturday afternoon a couple of years ago. It was a hot summer day, I'd been in a show, and when I came home I was tired. And hungry. Before getting supper, I wanted to change into something more casual, so I went into my bedroom, took off my shirt, stepped into the ensuite bathroom, took off my undershirt and, instead of reaching over, lifting the lid of the laundry hamper, and putting my undershirt in there, I reached down, lifted the toilet seat, and pitched my undershirt into the toilet.

I can't imagine anyone feeling especially wise or knowledgeable in such a moment.

Funny how life sometimes goes, isn't it?

But take away those kinds of moments and the point still remains: There's something about each of us that's important, and whatever it is we're called to offer it.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul wrote that, collectively, we're like a body—a body with many parts—and when each of us plays our part the body is stronger for it.

Jesus talked about how even the smallest of things has something great inside of it. For example, he said, take a mustard seed. It's the smallest of all the seeds on earth. And yet, from this small seed grows the greatest of all shrubs. A shrub so large that the birds can make nests in its shade.

Whenever Jesus talked about the kingdom of God, the emphasis was always on the smallest becoming great; or the weakest becoming strong; or the last becoming first; or something that we hadn't even noticed—hadn't even given the time of day to—suddenly being revealed as the work of God!

All of which is an invitation for us not to judge anyone, or anything, by outward appearances or size, or stature, or what we would call normal behaviour. We're to see beyond the surface, look for the inner depth. For God may be at work in the most profound of ways in people whom we just write off, and would rather they go away and not bother us!

British Columbia writer Ralph Milton once wrote a short story entitled "You Took Me Seriously..." It goes as follows.

Neil was in the boys' group I led at church. Neil was, by any standards, a holler. Red-haired, hyper-active, bright, manipulative, physically strong. Every week, Neil managed to effectively sabotage all my well constructed plans for meaningful and helpful activities with the boys' group.

My feelings about Neil were, to say the least, ambivalent. Every Tuesday evening on the way home, I was determined to resign from leading that boys' group.

But for reasons I can't explain, I was there again the next Tuesday, and Neil was driving me wild again.

A good many years later, I was speaking at a church anniversary dinner. After the dinner, a tall, good-looking, young man with a shock of red hair came up to me. "Hi!" he said. "Do you remember me? I'm Neil."

Neil was now a social worker. I was astounded. I found out later that his work is a genuine ministry, and that he has a deep and lively faith.

"You were really important to my life when you led that boys' group," said Neil, "and I want to thank you."

"But Neil," I said, incredulously, "you and I were always struggling. You were my number one discipline problem. You were...a heller!"

"I know," said Neil. "But I always felt you liked me. And you took me seriously."

"You took me seriously." No leader could ever be paid a greater compliment. You took me seriously. You took the time, and the patience, to look beyond the surface and see someone who was still growing. Someone who was still becoming something else.

A friend used to have a sign on his office wall that said, "Please be patient. God isn't finished with me yet!"

And that's how the kingdom of God works, Jesus said. In things, or people, with whom God isn't yet finished. With things on the way to becoming something else. We may find it hard to see it today...but take it seriously, look again tomorrow. Because you don't really know, yet, what's growing and developing there.

Each of us is part of the body, each called to play our own part. Sometimes, though, we have a hard time taking ourselves seriously. We downplay our strengths, feel as if we couldn't possibly be important to the body at all.

A week or so ago, Julia and I watched the animated movie Sing. Buster Moon, a koala bear, is threatened with the foreclosure of his struggling theatre, so he decides to put on a singing competition. He asks his assistant, Miss Crawly, to type out flyers advertising the singing competition. The prize is supposed to be \$1,000.

Now, Miss Crawly is quite elderly, and gets flustered easily. She also has one glass eye. So, while she's typing out the flyer she gets flustered over something, her glass eye pops out and bounces on the typewriter keyboard, adding two extra zeroes to the prize money amount.

Before the flyers can be proofread, they are blown out the window by a fan, and float all across the city, advertising this singing competition with a prize of \$100,000.

Crowds of animals gather to audition, and Buster selects his contestants. Among them are:

- a pig named Rosita, a housewife and mother of 25 piglets
- punk-rock porcupine Ash
- teenage gorilla Johnny
- street musician mouse Mike
- an exuberant dancing hog named Gunter

Teenage gorilla Johnny's problem is that his father has never taken him seriously, never affirmed him, didn't believe Johnny had all that much going for him at all...until he finally heard him sing. "Never knew you could sing, boy," says the father, "you're good!"

An elephant contestant Meena had the opposite problem. She never took herself seriously. Plagued by stage fright, she fails her audition. Pressured by her grandfather, Meena attempts to request a second audition, but stage fright gets her again and she settles for being a stagehand. After some acts withdraw from the competition, Meena is offered a spot in the show, but once again struggles to overcome her fear that she just doesn't have what it takes.

Finally, on the day of the show, disaster strikes. A flood. The theatre collapses. The owner, Buster Moon, becomes distraught. All his life's work gone in an instant.

But, at that same moment, the most likely contestant becomes the hero. Meena, the elephant, stands on the rubble of the theater, puts on some headphones, listens to a tape playing, and sings out loud.

This inspires Buster. Maybe there's hope yet. He decides to hold an outdoor show. The local news station becomes interested and broadcasts it. Soon, a large audience has gathered. Meena overcomes her stage fright and gives an enthusiastic performance.

Things all take a turn for the better when Meena begins to take herself seriously.

Can you think back to a time when somebody else took you seriously, and the difference it made?

I grew up on a farm in southwestern Ontario. The elementary school was on the corner of our farm. A typical red-brick schoolhouse, with all 8 grades in one room.

Report cards were issued twice a year. On the report card, there was a block for conduct. There were two possible entries in the Conduct block, S or U. S for satisfactory, U for unsatisfactory.

When I was in grade 3, my Christmas report card had a U in the Conduct block. My parents were mortified! Thomas? He's such a nice child. A lovely child. A good child. Unsatisfactory conduct?

So they went to see the teacher. "Trouble is," the teacher said, "he gets his work done and then he bothers everybody else."

I know...I know...you still can't imagine it, can you?

Their solution. Put me on into grade 4. Load me down with work. Keep me busy so I didn't have time to bother everybody else. And that's how I came to do two grades in one year.

I suppose there were other possible solutions. Certainly more punitive ones were available. But you know what...that teacher, and my parents too, took me seriously. And rather than being called down for my disruptive behaviour, rather than condemning me for how bad I was, they redirected my energies.

I'm not sure what that particular incident meant in the grand scheme of my life, but I do know what it has meant, over the years, to be affirmed, to have others believe in the best in me. And I know that counts for a whole bunch.

In my home, I never received anything but positive affirmation. Never. And, at least from the school teachers who mattered, I never received anything but positive affirmation. And I know that makes a difference.

"That's," Jesus says, "how the kingdom of God works. Because God sees not what appears now, but the potential."

God sees the gifts that both you and I bring. They're all important. Together we're like a body—a body with many parts—and when each of us plays our part we're all stronger for it.

Hymn: I Have Called You by Your Name MV 161

1. I have called you by your name, you are mine;
I have gifted you and ask you now to shine.
I will not abandon you; all my promises are true.
You are gifted, called, and chosen; you are mine.

2. I will help you learn my name as you go;
Read it written in my people, help them grow.
Pour the water in my name, speak the word your soul can claim,
Offer Jesus' body, given long ago.

3. I know you will need my touch as you go;
Feel it pulsing in creation's ebb and flow.
Like the woman reaching out, choosing faith in spite of doubt,
Hold the hem of Jesus' robe, then let it go.

4. I have given you a name, it is mine;
I have given you my Spirit as a sign.
With my wonder in your soul, make my wounded children whole;
Go and tell my precious people they are mine.

Poem — "The Old Man" by Rev. Tom Watson

The old man stands
Solid, erect,
His farmer cap straight on his head.
Near the door to his barn
He looks off 'cross the fields;
He's proud of his
Fine old homestead.

There's been many a crop—
Some good, others not—
Each spring a fresh furrow to plow.
"Farming's not always easy
But it's been my life's way,"
He smiles, "I've done it somehow."

Perched close nearby,
On top of a post,
Ears perked, otherwise still,
Murphy the cat watches for prey.
He's getting on in his age
But no rodent is safe
If it happens by old Murphy's way.

Over there by the fence
Sit the three dogs—
Tucker, Piper and Ace.
They keep watch that the cows
Are behaving themselves
And aren't tempted to crash
Through the gates.

A fine pastoral scene
If ever there was—
A snapshot of prairie farm life.
There's work and there's worry
But in balance it's good
For there's far more
Pleasure than strife.

So here's to the old man
Standing there by his barn,
And all like him
Who steward the soil.
When we sit down at our table
To eat our next meal
We should pause and
Give thanks for his toil.

Prayers of the people and the Prayer of Jesus

Sharing our joys and concerns

- **Birthdays**
 - Lorna Bevcar celebrates 76 years on Tues Aug 29th
 - Ken McCorquodale celebrates 89 years on Fri Sept 1st
 - Larry Broome celebrates on Fri Sept 1st
 - Marjorie Lister celebrates 92 years on Fri Sept 1st
- **Anniversary**
 - Linda & Norm Porritt celebrate 53 years on Tues Aug 29th

Offering Invitation

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

Hymn — VU #646 We Are Marching

1. We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching in the light of God,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,
We are marching in the light of God.
We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,
We are marching in the light of God.

2. We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God.
We are living in the love of God,
We are living in the love of God.
We are living, living, we are living, living,
We are living in the light of God.
We are living, living, we are living, living,
We are living in the light of God.

3. Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
Siyahamb' ekukha kwenkhos.
Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',
Siyahamb' ekukha kwenkhos.
Siyahamba, hamba, siyahamba, hamba,
Siyahamb' ekukha kwenkhos.
Siyahamba, hamba, siyahamba, hamba,
Siyahamb' ekukha kwenkhos.

4. We are marching in the light of God,
 We are marching in the light of God.
 We are marching in the light of God,
 We are marching in the light of God.
 We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,
 We are marching in the light of God.
 We are marching, marching, we are marching, marching,
 We are marching in the light of God.

Benediction

As we leave this sacred space for another week...

May we return to our homes and work enlivened and renewed.

May we be forever thankful for the life that sustains us...

And open to the grace that surrounds and surprises us.

May gentleness, kindness, compassion and caring...

Be our constant companions.

May it all be so.

Amen.

Postlude — "She Comes Sailing on the Wind" (Suzanne, Rev. Tom Watson)

This is #380 in Voices United. The congregation is invited to sing along in the chorus.

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.

Worship Schedule

September 3	14 th after Pentecost	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
September 10	15 th after Pentecost	TBD
September 17	16 th after Pentecost	TBD