



July 30, 2023

Melville United Church

300 St. Andrew Street West, Fergus, ON N1M 1N9

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Custodian	Suzanne Flewelling
Chair of Church Council	Allan Hons
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Summer Office hours (July & August)	9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Wed.-Fri.
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Pastoral Care Numbers	519-843-3841

Melville United Church
July 30, 2023
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Presiding today - Rev. Felicia Urbanski
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 **August 27th**, and possibly on **September 3rd**. Barry can provide training to anyone interested before those dates. 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.
- **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

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. I recently found it particularly insightful to learn that we are on the land promised to the Six Nations people which includes a whole ten kilometres on each side of the Grand River. May we be people who remember this with thanksgiving and respect.

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

Open our ears

to hear your word.

Open our eyes

to see your presence.

Open our arms

to the embrace of community.

Open our minds
to the beauty of truth.
Open our hearts
to the joy of new life.

Hymn: O God of All the Many Lands **VU 523** (*sung to the tune of VU 518*)

- 1 O God of all the many lands,
 we lift our hearts in prayer,
 for this our land of Canada,
 a country wide and fair;
for mountain heights and northern lights,
 for prairie, lake and sea,
 for every blessing from your hand
 bestowed so lavishly.

- 2 We thank you for the sacrifice
 of venturers of old,
 who dared to cross uncharted seas,
 whose dreams made others bold;
for valiant souls and pioneers,
 for all who served their age,
 and left for us who follow on
 a sacred heritage.

- 3 We thank you that from many lands
 with varied gifts they came,
 to pledge their love and loyalty
 where scarlet maples flame.
May justice here belong to all,
 and may our nation play
 its rightful role in ushering in
 the peace for which we pray.

- 4 May we be worthy of our land
 and seek its highest good,
 shaping a noble destiny
 of truest nationhood.
May this fair land, our Canada,
 your own dominion be;
 your people bless abundantly
 from seas to Arctic sea.

Opening Prayer: VU 525 (in unison)
Eternal God,
whose image lies in the hearts of all people,
we live among peoples
 whose languages are different from our own,
 whose faiths are foreign to us,
 whose ways we fail to understand.

Help us to remember

**that you embrace all people with your love,
that all religion is a response to you,
that the yearnings of other hearts
are much like our own, and are known to you.**

Help us to recognize you

**in words of truth, things of beauty,
and actions of love about us.**

We pray in the name of the One who calls us

to be neighbour and friend. Amen.

Ministry of Music: Who Will Call the Rain? *By Rev. Tom Watson*

VERSE 1

When you gaze upon a water fall, or drift in a canoe,
Or catch a ray of sunshine on a glist'ning drop of dew.
Do you think about the gift of grace within each water store,
And of how much poorer we would be on a day there was no more?

VERSE 2

When you ride upon a horse's back or play with a kitten new,
Or watch the great apes frolic in their playful rendezvous?
Do you think about the wonders that abound in Nature's scheme,
And reflect on all the things that show our God's creative dream?

CHORUS

When the whales swim away, who will move the sea?
When the lions fade, who will prowl the plain?
When the eagles fall, who will guard the sky?
When the trees are gone, who will call the rain?

VERSE 3

When the springs up in the sky have dried and the heavens cry no more,
What will wash our planet clean; so its beauty we adore?
When the lions cease to prowl, and the eagles cease to soar,
When the whales and dolphins no more dance up and down the ocean floor....

CHORUS

When the whales swim away, who will move the sea?
When the lions fade, who will prowl the plain?
When the eagles fall, who will guard the sky?
When the trees are gone, who will call the rain?

Verse 4

Watch the osprey bring the young their food, to their perch in treetop high.
Watch the leopard race the desert, and the old turtle leisure by.
Watch the hawk, borne by wind's thermals glide above the mountain crest,
And then you'll understand why we must protect God's good gifts lest....

CHORUS

When the whales swim away, who will move the sea?
When the lions fade, who will prowl the plain?
When the eagles fall, who will guard the sky?
When the trees are gone, who will call the rain?

When the trees are gone, who will call the rain?

Prayer Seeking Forgiveness

God of healing, God of wholeness, we bring our brokenness, our fears and despair,
and lay them at your feet.
God of healing, God of wholeness, we hold out hearts and hands,
minds and souls, to feel your touch, and know the peace
that only you can bring.

Words of Assurance

Friends in Christ, know this: the mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting, and we are reminded of this surpassing grace – in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Alleluia! Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

God, source of all light, by your Word, you give light to the soul. Pour out on us the spirit of wisdom and understanding, that our hearts and minds may be opened to know your truth and your way. Amen.

Scripture: Mark 7: 24-30, John 4: 1-15

Jesus Honors a Syrophenician Woman's Faith

²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre.^[a] He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ "First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs."

²⁸ "Lord," she replied, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

²⁹ Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter."

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Jesus Talks with a Samaritan Woman

4 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

⁴ Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

⁷ When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.^[a])

¹⁰ Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.”

¹¹ “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Scripture: Matthew 8: 5-13, Luke 10: 29b – 37

The Faith of the Centurion

⁵ When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶ “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralyzed, suffering terribly.”

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Shall I come and heal him?”

⁸ The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

¹⁰ When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, “Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

¹³ Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! Let it be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that moment.

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The Parable of the Good Samaritan

(An expert in the law) asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰ In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^[a] and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

³⁷ The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

Hymn: We Come with Empty Hands, Intent on Sharing by Fred Kaan (*sung to the tune of VU 491*)

We come with empty hands, intent on sharing
our needs, our wealth – but more: all that we are.
We meet as partners for each other caring,
at one with people lacking voice or power.

We come to learn the courage of creating
a world of justice, hope and human worth,
to practice skills and secrets of translating
our words of faith into the life of earth.

We would be true in sharing our resources,
in freedom eager to receive and give,
be open to the Spirit’s gifts and forces,
be broken for the world in which we live.

Then widen, God, our vision and vocation,
our joy in what in Christ you showed and gave;
as still you share your Self with all creation,
help us respond with all we are and have.

Prayer

Sermon: “Interfaith Understanding”

I’m wondering - How many of you are starting to feel inundated with the new song, that new jingle for Burger King’s *butter chicken* sandwich? Or, by extension, the butter chicken sauce that you can put on your poutine?.....or the sauce that Pizza Hut and Pizza Pizza have even put on PIZZA – that butter chicken-y spicy curry sauce as a substitute for the familiar Italian tomato sauce?

After all, here we have a Canadian fast food staple – a chicken sandwich, or a pile of french fries, or a pizza – and we smother them with a sauce that is from...a Punjabi region of northern India?

This is hard to imagine, 20 or even 10 years ago!

I happen to love butter chicken, and actually can’t wait to try one of these new rather crazy creations!

Now before you get into your heads that I’m one of those people who have *always* loved East Indian food – that is simply far from true! In fact, when I was a young university student

studying the violin at a university in New York City, I used to supplement my meager income by teaching children.

One boy whose parents preferred that I come teach lessons in their apartment on the Upper West Side, were from India. In fact the child's father was a doctor as well as an amateur viola player, but instead of playing familiar classical music on his instrument, he played ragas and talas – kind of like Ravi Shankar on the sitar! It was fascinating to me. Equally fascinating were the aromas that I smelled coming from their kitchen. Curries and all of these unusual spices that were nothing like what I was used to growing up in Connecticut.

Then – there were the several times that the family invited me to stay for dinner. You would think that I would jump at the opportunity! But no....I was actually too afraid to eat their food. I thought I wouldn't like it, because it would be too unfamiliar. So I made up every possible excuse: I had to get home to study for an exam, or get to another "gig", or that I somehow had other plans. But I didn't.

Years went by, and I eventually returned to New York to work on my master's degree, and I learned that that child's family had moved away. One day, my friends and I decided to go out and try one of the new Indian restaurants on Broadway...due to the fact that they had really cheap specials on certain days of the week...so I figured, sure let's give it a try. And wow, was I pleasantly surprised! I couldn't believe how amazing everything tasted. I was "converted" so to speak – although I still am who I am, just with a wider appreciation of foods and peoples from other cultures. And sincerely disappointed that I never once joined that wonderful family for a dinner.

So I tell you this story to illustrate a kind of process. It may seem a bit over-simplifying, but today I'd like to answer a very important question, that is: How do we as Christians respond to the multifaith society we live in? How do we come to a space of interfaith understanding?

I think that we're all very aware of the current situation in Canada with newcomers coming in from all over the world. I think that Canada has always prided itself on being multicultural – which, by extension, *is* multifaith – but now the situation with so many people being refugees has made the demographics of several regions and municipalities change dramatically. Even thirteen years ago, when I began serving the Erin United Church, some of the townspeople (although hopefully no one from my church) would derogatorily call nearby Brampton the made-up name "Bramladesh". I would cringe whenever I would hear that said or even implied. Or when people would be shocked to learn that white people like me were now officially a *minority* in the city of Toronto – whites are only 49% of the total population. I learned just today that Brampton is has a population of 90% East Asian people (from a visitor at church this morning).

Just yesterday I saw a tall man with a beard wearing a big grey turban standing right outside of the Tim Horton's here on St. Andrew Street. And as we know, this is not Toronto or Brampton, it is little Fergus. So the question becomes what would Jesus do if he were around today?

Well, let's first look at what Jesus actually *did* over 2000 years ago. There were four fascinating stories read from our Gospels today. In each one, we see Jesus encountering either a man or a woman who is from a different ethnic and religious group. When he converses with the Syro-Phoenician woman, he is taken aback by her comment that "even the dogs under the table eat

the children's crumbs". But instead of feeling insulted and put down because she had the audacity to correct his assumption, Jesus actually compliments her and heals her daughter as she had begged him to do.

The next story is also about a woman. The Samaritan woman at the well – another familiar Bible story which is a shortened version today – she is one who again is well aware of the cultural barriers that prevented Samaritans and Jews from ever conversing with one another. Yet she continues to converse with Jesus and learn from him with an open mind.

As well, the story of the Roman centurion shows us a man with pagan beliefs, who nevertheless addresses Jesus as "Lord"! Jesus immediately asks if he wants the servant healed, and the man is so very humble – although he recognizes that in his own circle he has tremendous power.

Finally we hear Jesus' own parable created to answer the question "who is my neighbour?" We too could be asking him that question today: for we have literal neighbours living right beside us, who are just as different from us as the Samaritans were from Jesus' own Jewish community. Yet we have all learned from hearing this parable over the years that it is the Samaritan who demonstrated what a true neighbour is like. The one who gives of him or herself for someone in need.

So how do we as Christians respond? We can, and many of you are already helping those in need, no matter who they are or where they have come from. As well, there are those who have taken the time to make friends with someone from a different culture or religious background. I think you know how valuable it can be to get to know a human being one-on-one, so that you recognize your common humanity and can relate on a deep human level.

For me, I've learned that *interfaith* is just as important as *intra-faith*. What's the difference? Intra-faith means *within* one's own faith community. It's like Protestants learning from Catholics, and Catholics learning from Protestants. We're all Christians, and we've come a long way in recent times to finding some kind of common ground.

However, *inter-faith* means having those same kinds of conversations with people who are not Christian. Perhaps they are Muslim, or Hindu, or Jewish, or Sikh, or any of the many diverse world religions which are converging right here in Canada. Or even conversing with Humanists and Atheists, about topics such as doing social justice work.

Now this is not to say that any of this is easy all of the time. In fact, there can be some very difficult and challenging situations.

My own experiences have included my working with a group in Kitchener-Waterloo called "Interfaith Grand River", or IGR. They are the group that produced the brochures that I handed out today. I have been involved with them in various capacities since 2006, which was only 5 years after they formed, coincidentally on the day just after 9-11. It is an amazing group of people, which, at certain times, have even included those who have gone on to do amazing things – like to be elected to Parliament.

I encourage you to read this brochure, and to try to implement even just a few of its suggestions in your own life. How to talk to someone from another faith community can certainly be a

challenge to many of us – as well as wondering how do I start? This brochure will give some down-to-earth and practical suggestions. And as I've learned, it's a long-term process.

I'd like to conclude with a personal story told by a Christian scholar, one who teaches at Harvard University and has been on the World Council of Churches. Her name is Diana Eck, and what I find very helpful in her writing is her explanation of some key *words* describing how people can think about and engage in interfaith dialogue. Those key words are Exclusive, Inclusive, and Pluralist. Let's hear her story. She writes:

Several years ago, I spent an afternoon in Nairobi with the parents of a Muslim colleague. They were followers of the tradition of Islam led today by the Aga Khan. We visited the large mosque and Islamic Centre in Nairobi and enjoyed a meal at a Gujarati restaurant before they put me on the evening train to Mombassa. Just as they were getting me settled in my compartment, we heard the evening call to prayer. My friend's father glanced at his watch and said to me, "It is time to remember God in prayer. Excuse us." We closed the compartment door and as he and his wife sat down to pray, I sat with them. "In the name of God, the Almighty, the Compassionate, the Merciful..." I recognized the first few lines of the Qur'an in Arabic. I bowed my head and entered into the spirit of prayer with them, although I did not know the words they spoke. Is our God the same God? Frankly, the question did not occur to me then. I simply took it for granted.

What we take for granted in our experience is the very stuff of theological reflection. What allowed me to feel so natural in entering into a spirit of prayer with my Muslim friends?....

Allah is not "the Muslim God", but simply the Arabic word for God. Allah is none other than the one we know as God and is the name that Arabic-speaking Christians also use when they pray...

I concluded that there were at least three alternatives. There cannot be two Gods, the one we call God and the one Muslims call Allah, so the first possibility was that there could be one God, ours, with Allah being a false God. This would be a form of *exclusivist* thinking; that is, our way of thinking about God excludes all others.

The second alternative could be that we see God in God's fullness and that the Muslims see the same God less clearly. Muslims no doubt would see it the other way around. This would be an *inclusivist* view – our way of thinking includes the other, somewhat less adequate conception.

The third and perhaps the most satisfactory alternative would be to insist that there is only one God whom Christians and Muslims understand only partially because God transcends our complete comprehension. As Muslims put it, "*Allahu akbar!*" This means not only "God is great", but "God is greater!" That is, greater than our understanding, greater than any human idea of God. This would leave room for the self-understanding of both Christians and Muslims and would be a *pluralist* view.

So, for me as a Christian, I've been trying to work towards this Pluralist view of things. I believe that the Christian path is the right one for me, as it is for many other people across the globe.

Yet, there are others who are different, yet just as sincere and worthy. In dialogue, I can even *learn* from them. I can be changed – and that’s a good thing, not something to feel threatened by.

After all, Jesus never acted threatened or fearful or defensive. Pauline Chakkalakal, a Catholic nun from India, reminds us that “Jesus of Nazareth remains the model and inspiration for true theological discourse. Despite his Jewish upbringing, he transcended the narrow boundaries of Judaism reaching out to others outside of his own culture.”

I wonder if you and I can transcend our own narrow boundaries and reach out to others outside of our own culture. Can we truly believe that following the ways and teachings of Jesus can lead to experiencing sacredness, wholeness, and unity of life, even as we recognize that the Spirit moves in beneficial ways in many faith traditions?

Like Diana Eck, we might even find ourselves able to pray with someone else who is very different from us. We don’t have to think: Well now, *my* concept of what is Ultimate Reality is the superior one, and all others are inferior. That would be *exclusivist* thinking. Similarly, we don’t have to say to ourselves, “Okay, my vision is perfectly clear and makes the most sense – all the others are just kind of fuzzy and undeveloped.” This would be the *inclusivist* perspective. Rather, – if we *really* want to consider ourselves true pluralists – then we can at some point realize that what another person loves with all their heart and with all their soul and with all their mind and with all their strength is *greater* than any human understanding.

May it be so. Amen.

Hymn: Interfaith Prayer for Peace by Howard Maple

Let all your people gather
with humble hearts, O Lord;
let prayers be now uplifted
for peace to be restored.
Reveal to warring nations,
consumed with selfish pride,
the upward path to freedom
where trust and hope abide.

The turmoil and destruction,
the orphan in distress,
instills in us a longing
that words cannot express.
Yet, through the devastation,
God’s still, small voice is heard;
new hope for understanding
in every heart is stirred.

Behold! God’s light within us
foretells a brighter day
when all may walk together
along the narrow way.
No darkness can surround us;
our steps are firm and sure.

God's purpose is accomplished
when peace and love endure.

Joys and Concerns

- Birthdays
 - Elsie Smith celebrated 90-years on Tues July 25th

Prayers of the People

God of all people, open our hearts to understanding other faith traditions. We are all made in your image and seek to know and follow your ways, to praise you, and to be instruments of your Holy presence. May we respect those who are different from us, who follow a different faith tradition than us. May we seek to know the truth of your Word and find common ground among the many faith traditions and recognize that we share a common humanity. Help us to be people of compassion and understanding, creating a path to a peaceful coexistence among all people. Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kin-dom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Offering Invitation

As the church, we are committed to doing God's work in our community and around the world. We are invited to offer our gifts toward that end. Therefore, friends, let us join together in our morning offering.

Offering Hymn: What Can I Do

MV191

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

You have given us so much, God of love and generosity. Help us as we respond to your gifts: with our gifts of time, talent and treasure. We dedicate these offerings to your work and our lives in your service. Amen.

Hymn: Draw the Circle Wide
Refrain

MV 145

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

1. God the still-point of the circle,
'round whom all creation turns;
nothing lost, but held forever,
in God's gracious arms.
2. Let our hearts touch far horizons,
so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders,
faithful to God's call.
3. Let the dreams we dream be larger,
than we've ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us,
open every door.

Commissioning and Blessing

New life beckons,
peace holds out its arms!
Begin your week
knowing that you are walking
straight into the embrace of God.
Go now in peace.

Household Prayer

God of social graces
be with me in this gathering today.
In every interaction, stand by my side.
When words are needed, help me find them.
In the give and take of conversation,
help me to give carefully and take freely.
When others choose to put me down,
be with me in humiliation's slow burn.
Keep me from returning evil for evil
and teach me the way of compassion.
In the rough and tumble of mingle and chat,
in the grapple and embrace of sustained discussion,
you are my centre of gravity, my steadying force,
the ground beneath my feet. Amen.

PRAYERS in today's service are by Carol Penner, www.leadinginworship.com

Postlude: We Are Called - *Words and Music by David Haas*

Worship Schedule

August 6	10 th after Pentecost	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
August 13	11 th after Pentecost	Rev. Felisha Urbanski
August 20	12 th after Pentecost	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
August 27	13 th after Pentecost	Rev. Tom Watson