



*Celebrating
177 Years*



September 17, 2023

Melville United Church

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

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Team Ministry

Minister of Worship, Pastoral Care & Outreach	Rev. Lynda Goy-Flint
Faith Formation & Youth	
Ministry of Music Team	Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber
Office Administrator	Lynda Rivet
Custodian	Suzanne Flewelling
Chair of Church Council	Allan Hons
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Melville United Church
September 17, 2023
Creation Time 2

Presiding today: Rev. Marion Loree
Music Ministry: Colleen Weber

Prelude

Welcome

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.

- Join Ruth Sproule on **September 29, October 6, and 13 from 9 AM to 12 PM** along with Coffee Time to **attach poppies to the netting**, preserving last year's and filling a new piece.
- **We are in need of welcomers and counters.** Onsite training will be provided. Please see Ralph Rainford to volunteer.
- **Friday or Sunday Coffee Time** – We encourage people to sign up to host either a Friday or a Sunday Coffee Time. It is not difficult! We'd be pleased to show you how. Sign-up sheets are at the Parlour Door. Please speak to Lorna Bevcar or Marg Frayne.
- The **Food Bank** is in need of donations, more than ever. Please consider bringing donations of nonperishables, toiletries, or a gift card, to church. Baskets are located in the sanctuary.
- Wellington County Food Access Guide is created to help people facing food insecurity in the region access free or affordable food. This resource provides details on food assistance providers, eligibility, and the services they offer. Access the guide at <https://www.gwpoverty.ca/resources/access-guides>.
- **Rise and Shine Breakfast.** The GrandWay Events Centre 7445 Wellington County Road 21 Elora. Join us on **September 21st, 8:00-11:00am** for a morning of entertainment and support for youth and adults in our community with a Learning Disability and ADHD. Their gifts add so much to our lives and community and this event will help ensure everyone can reach their full potential. For more information and to purchase tickets visit <https://ldawc.ca/rise-and-shine-breakfast.html>
- **Saturday, September 30, 11:00am-3:30pm** Fall into Fall Antique Quilt Show. Knox Presbyterian Church, 51 Church St. E. Elora. **Quilt Show:** \$10. Quilt Draw – September 30, 3:00 pm. Tickets: \$5 each or 3/\$10, 519-846-0680, 519-846-8061. **Lunch** served – Soup, Sandwiches, Dessert, Tea & Coffee – Cost \$10. **Marketplace** – White Elephant, Crafts, Baking, Treasures Galore

- The music series “**Mid-Day Music at Melville**” presented by pianist Brad Halls returns for its second season of concerts beginning on **Wednesday, October 4 from 12 noon to about 1:00 p.m.** at Melville United Church in Fergus **and will continue each Wednesday** thereafter until around the end of April next year. For this season, Brad plans to present a musical journey through the past 100 years of the Broadway musical, beginning in 1923 and continuing to the present day. The first concert will include enduring music from musicals that first debuted between 1923 and 1926, and will include selections composed by George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Vincent Youmans and operetta composers Rudolf Friml and Sigmund Romberg. Come and enjoy popular standards Lady Be Good, April Showers, Someone to Watch Over Me and many others. There is no admission cost for these concerts, but a voluntary donation to Melville United Church to help keep the lights on and the piano tuned is always appreciated.
- **SMART Exercise Instructors Needed.** Are you looking for a fun way to stay active and help your community? VON is seeking individuals interested in helping facilitate community based exercise classes for seniors! All training will be provided and will work to build a schedule that is suitable for you. See the flyer on the Community Bulletin Board outside the Parlour or contact Kelly at Kelly.Gee@von.ca for more information.
- 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.

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:

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

I light the 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:

We come with all our hopes and longings.

We come to find rest for our souls.

We come with all our disappointments and dreams.

We come to gain strength for our lives.

We come to worship together.

Hymn: Make a Joyful Noise (Psalm 100) VU 820

Make a joyful noise all the earth!

Worship your God with gladness.

Make a joyful noise all the earth.

Come to this place with a song!

- 1 Know that your God has made you.
Know it's to God we belong.
And come to this place with joyfulness and praise.
Worship your God with a song! R

- 2 Enter these gates, thanks giving.
Enter these courts with praise.
Sing thanks to your God and bless the holy Name.
Worship your God with a song! R

- 3 Ages through endless ages,
seasons of endless years,
the love of our Maker ever shall endure.
Worship your God with a song! R

Gathering Prayer:

God of all our longings, you are the fire
that kindles our hearts with hope and possibility.

**You fill us with desire for life,
and you hear our voices
whether we shout for joy or cry out with sorrow.**

We trust in you and give thanks
for your presence in all the stages of our lives.

Help us to be open to the movement of Spirit in and around us.

You know us better than we know ourselves, Great Mystery.

You know our hurts and fears and discouragements.

Forgive us when our actions and non-actions cause harm.

**Heal us when we give up hope and allow fear
and shallow self-interest to dominate our lives.**

Help us when we lose sight of who we are

**and forgive us when we make enemies
of those you have given us to love. Amen.**

Words of Assurance:

Listen! You are a blessed child of the Universe.

You are loved more than you can ever know.

Take it to heart! Believe it and let your Spirit dance!

We giving thanks to Holy Presence - the source of all that is.

Chorus: Behold, Behold, I Make All Things New MV 115

**Behold, Behold, I make all things new,
beginning with you and starting from today.**

**Behold, behold, I make all things new,
my promise is true, for I am Christ the way. (Repeat)**

Children's Time: Feeling God

Children' Song: I Can Feel You Near Me God MV 48

**I can feel you near me God. I can feel you near.
Yes I know you're with me God. I feel you here.
I can feel you near me God. I can feel you near.
Yes I know you're with me God. Heaven is here.**

**Refrain: And I'll jump for joy. I'm singing Alleluia
Jump for joy for you.
I will jump for joy I'm singing Alleluia.
Jump for joy for you.**

**I can feel you loving me, yes, I know you care.
God I know you're loving me always everywhere.
I can feel you loving me, yes I know you care.
God I know you're loving me. I know you're there.**

Refrain:

Ministry of Music: "Christus" by Gordon Young

Scripture: Romans 14:1-12

(Whether we live or whether we die, we are God's)

Welcome those whose faith is weak, and don't argue with them. The opinions of people range from those who believe they may eat any sort of meat, to those whose faith is so weak they eat only vegetables. Those who eat everything must not despise those who abstain. The ones who abstain must not pass judgement on those who eat, for God has welcomed them. Who are you to judge someone else's work? It's for the employer to decide if the worker has succeeded or failed - and the worker will succeed, for our God has the power to make it so. One person considers one day more sacred than another, another considers all days equally sacred - and both are equally certain of their own opinions. The person who observes special days does it for our God. Whoever eats meat does it for our God and gives thanks to God. Whoever abstains does it for our God and gives thanks to God.

We don't live for ourselves, nor do we die for ourselves. While we live, we live for Christ Jesus, and when we die, we die for Christ Jesus. Both in life and in death we belong to Christ. That's why Christ died and came to life again - in order to reign supreme over both the living and the dead.

But you, how can you sit in judgement of your sisters or brothers? Or you, how can you look down on your sisters or brothers? We will all have to appear before the judgement seat of God. Scripture says, "As surely as I live" - it is our God who speaks - "every knee will bend before me and every tongue will give praise to God." we will all have to give an account of ourselves before God.

Scripture: Exodus 14:19-31

(God parts the sea for the Hebrews)

Then the angel of God, who was leading the Israelites, moved to their rear - the pillar of cloud left the front of their number and took up position behind them, between the Israelites and the Egyptians. All during the night the cloud provided light to one side and darkness to the other side, so that there was no contact between them.

Then Moses stretched his hand over the sea, and YHWH swept the sea with a strong east wind throughout the night and so turned it into dry land. When the water was thus divided, the Israelites marched into the midst of the sea on dry land, with the water walled up on their right and on their left.

The Egyptians followed in pursuit; all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and charioteers went after them into the midst of the sea. At dawn, YHWH looked down upon the Egyptian forces from the column of fiery cloud, and threw the army into confusion and panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they could hardly turn. The Egyptians turned to flee from the Israelites, saying : "Their God fights for them against us!"

Then YHWH told Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the sea, and let the water flow back upon the Egyptians, over their chariots and their charioteers." So at sunrise, Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the waters rolled back in. As the Egyptians fled, YHWH hurled them into its midst. As the water flowed back, covering the chariots and the charioteers - Pharaoh's whole army who had followed the Israelites into the sea - not one of them survived. But the Israelites passed through, walking dry-shod in the sea, with the water like a wall, on their right and on their left. Thus YHWH saved Israel on that day from the power of Egypt. When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the seashore and beheld the great power that YHWH had shown against them, the people held YHWH in awe; and put their faith in YHWH and in Moses, God's trusted servant.

Reflection: Understanding God

The scripture readings from the Lectionary this week, although familiar to most of us, all involve deep and complicated lessons and truths, so it was hard for me to choose what to talk about. I entitled my message today "Understanding God" realizing that for those of you who were here during the more than 7 years I was minister here might recall how I view God. You may also recall hearing me say many times that although a Bible story may seem simple on first reading most contain deeper and more profound lessons that can take a bit of mining to discover.

That being said we will look at the story from Exodus. I included the reading from Roman's hoping it will remind us that God and the Christ Spirit is with us regardless of our opinions, our beliefs, our judgements of others or anything else we might come up with. How we live and treat others is the ultimate test, the ultimate accounting which each of us has to live with. So - on to Exodus. The story of Moses leading the people out of Egypt after centuries of slavery and the miracle of crossing the Red Sea is an old and familiar story. And on the surface it seems quite simple - the people followed Moses out of Egypt glad to be liberated from slavery, God was present and guided them across the barrier of the Red Sea to safety, the Egyptian army who were chasing them were all drowned and the Israelites carried on their merry way. Sounds like a simple story about good winning out over evil, but is it really as simple as that?

For one thing it raises questions about whose side God is on. My understanding of God is that God is the life-force of the universe that is in, around and part of everything and every one that exists. And that would mean the Egyptians, too. I believe this has always been so and just because it is a more recent

way of describing God doesn't mean that God wasn't always like that. But if we look at this story, and many other stories found in the Hebrew Scriptures (or Old Testament), we see a God who appeared to be on the side of the Israelites only. And so much on their side that God did things like destroy the whole Egyptian army who were chasing Moses and the people who were trying to escape slavery. That part of the story is a problem for me.

What we need to keep in mind, I think, when reading this story, and others in the Bible, is who it was written for originally and what their mind set or world view was at that time. You see, the way we perceive God today is not how people of ancient times viewed God.

Back then, every clan, town, family and city and sometimes individuals had their own gods and usually they had a number of them. There were gods for every aspect and facet of life - there was a god of war, a god of fertility, a god of the earth, the sky, the rain, there were gods for women, for men, for just about anything you could think of.

And each group would be trying to prove that their gods were stronger or mightier than the others. So when someone won a battle they attributed it to their god or gods and that would add credibility to their version of what or who their god was. Society was tribal and so were their gods.

The God of the Israelites was different. First, they were told there was only one God - not a variety of gods for different purposes - but one God. Secondly, this God was more powerful than all of the other so called gods put together. This God could even control the forces of nature when needed. Thirdly, this God was invisible. No one could hold this God in their hand or describe what this God looked like. Fourthly, this God didn't even have a proper name. This God was "I AM" - the living presence.

The God of the Israelites was a revolution in how ancient people spoke about things of the spirit. One God who did not have a name and couldn't be seen or held was a new concept which had never been thought about before and it is important for us to remember that when we read these stories. The God of the Israelites is described as a tribal god because that is the way people thought at the time. It was the way the world of people functioned. It was perfectly normal for the Israelites to claim God as only theirs and attribute everything that happened to their God - that is what everyone did in those times. The human perception of God had not yet evolved to the point of realizing that God was a God for the whole world. That comes later in the scriptures.

When we can remember these things it can help us to look past the violence and those things that bother us and search for the deeper lessons and meaning embedded within the stories.

The story of the Exodus, including the crossing of the Red Sea is foundational to the Jewish faith and so also to us because our Christian tradition grew out of the Judaic tradition. Remember, Jesus and his disciples were Jews.

This story is foundational because it represents the new way of seeing and understanding God. The symbolism is rich. The Israelites were leaving slavery in Egypt - they were leaving old ways behind and moving into a new land - a new way of being spiritually as well as physically. God was before them and behind them in the fire and the cloud - God is always present to guide and protect. All they had to do was look up and they were reminded that God was with them.

Their way was blocked by the Red Sea but they were given a way across - obstacles were removed when they followed and trusted God to help them on their way. Once they were safely across God destroyed those who would harm them - when we follow God the fears and evils which dog us and try to destroy

us will be vanquished. Putting our trust in God protects us from evil. It doesn't mean bad things won't happen to us but it does mean that those things won't destroy us. The evil will not win out if we put our trust and faith in God. This story tells us all of that and more.

You see what I mean about the deeper meaning in the story? It isn't as simple as it appears on the surface and I am glad it isn't because I couldn't put my faith in a God who picks sides and chooses favourites or one who destroys some people while saving others. I believe God is far beyond all of that.

Someone expressed a concern to me after hearing of a major earthquake somewhere. She said it was natural disasters like that that caused her to question God and whether God is present in the world. I have heard this concern before. It sometimes seems that as long as things are going along fairly smoothly and nothing traumatic is going on it is easy to believe in God and to give thanks and sort of coast spiritually. But then something major will happen - like an earthquake or a hurricane or a tsunami which takes thousands of lives at once and leaves many more homeless and all of a sudden we question - where are you God? Why didn't you do something? How could you let this happen?

My answer to that kind of concern is another question - what is your view of God? It is complicated because if we believe God is an external entity who is in charge of things then we will think that God should act to stop such destruction. After all, if we are in charge of something we do all in our power to keep things going smoothly, don't we? But if God is not 'out there somewhere' but in, around and part of everything then it changes the picture considerably. This view paints a picture of a God who is part of the world and not apart from it. God becomes the spirit of life that is available to all to access whether we are in the midst of a hurricane or enjoying the calm after the storm. God is there, here, everywhere. God is spiritual energy. God is not, in my view, the big guy in the sky who is pulling strings.

That being said it raises more questions - how then can we say "put your trust in God and leave your fears behind"? God/Spirit/Universal Energy dwells within us. We know we are in touch with this spirit by our experience of it. There is a place within each of us, I believe, where we can connect with that spirit - it is that still small voice within, or that place of peace we experience in prayer or that feeling of calm when we simply know we have made a right decision. It is the thought of a friend that comes to mind just before the phone rings and it is them on the other end. It is the hunch that makes us stop in to see someone just at a time when they needed a helping hand. It is an idea that seems to come out of the blue. These are the ways that God works in the world - it is through us. And if we are not open to it and in tune with it we are not living in God's way.

It can be very complicated. All of the stories of the Bible are very complicated. Which tells me that it is not enough to simply read the Bible. We need to study it and think about what the stories are really telling us. It will give us some insight and help us to figure out how we can be in tune and in touch with the spirit of God which is all around us. We can never fully understand what or who God is but we can get an inkling if we continue to study, not only our own Holy Scriptures, but that of other faith traditions, too. After all, no one, not even us, has exclusive knowledge of a Presence that is the foundation of life itself.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn: In the Quiet Curve of Evening VU 278

- 1 In the quiet curve of evening,
in the sinking of the days,
in the silky void of darkness, you are there.
 In the lapses of my breathing,
 in the space between my ways,
 in the crater carved by sadness, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

- 2 In the rests between the phrases,
in the cracks between the stars,
in the gaps between the meaning, you are there.
 In the melting down of endings,
 in the cooling of the sun,
 in the solstice of the winter, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

- 3 In the mystery of my hungers,
in the silence of my rooms,
in the cloud of my unknowing, you are there.
 In the empty cave of grieving,
 in the desert of my dreams,
 in the tunnel of my sorrow, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

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:

**Loving God, accept all of the gifts we bring - money, time, talent.
May they be a symbol of our desire and commitment to play our part
in your unfolding story of love. Amen.**

Sharing Joys and Concerns:

- Birthdays
 - Ann Warren celebrates on Sept. 18th
 - Marlene Murray celebrates on Sept. 19th

- Condolences
 - We offer deepest condolences to the family of Deb Bodiam who passed away Wednesday, September 13th. Deb was a longtime member of Melville and will be dearly missed. Service is at Graham A. Giddy Funeral Home September 21 at 1:00 pm. Visitation prior to the service will be 11:00-1:00.

Prayers of the People:

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 kingdom, the power, and the glory
 forever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: We Are Pilgrims (The Servant Song) VU 595 - vs 1,3,4

- 1 We are pilgrims on a journey,
 fellow travellers on the road;
 we are here to help each other
 walk the mile and bear the load.**
- 3 I will hold the Christ-light for you
 in the night-time of your fear;
 I will hold my hand out to you,
 speak the peace you long to hear.**
- 4 I will weep when you are weeping,
 when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
 I will share your joy and sorrow,
 till we've seen this journey through.**

Sending Forth:

Let us go from here to serve the world God loves
 **We go with hearts full of tenderness and joy
 and minds full of eagerness and hope.**
 And may the blessing of God who both goes with us

and meets us on the way,
surround each one of you, this day and always. Amen.

Prayer of the Week:

Out of the depths we cry to you, O God. And into the depths you accompany us. You hear, even before we find words. You grieve, even as we feel the pain. You love long before we give voice to trust. So we wait and hope in your presence. Amen.

Worship Schedule

September	Presiding	Music Ministry
3rd	Rev. Jeff Hawkins	Suzanne
10th	Rev. Tom Watson	Colleen
17th	Rev. Marion Loree	Colleen
24th	Rev. Tom Watson	Colleen