



September 24, 2023

Melville United Church

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

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Pastoral Care Numbers	519-843-3841

Melville United church
Sunday September 24, 2023

Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson
Music Ministry: Colleen Weber

Prelude

Welcome

Good morning! Welcome to worship at Melville United Church. How wonderful to be together—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.

- 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. **Items most needed are:** pasta sauce, Chunky soup (Habitant), small canned soup, pasta side dishes, canned vegetables, canned tomatoes, canned fruit, cold cereal, peanut butter, juice, jam, canned salmon, and canned pasta (beefaroni, etc.).
- **Orange shirts!** Truth and Reconciliation Day is **September 30th**. We encourage you to wear your Orange shirt on that day as well as **October 1st** and **October 15th**.
- **Cozy Closet:** We will be collecting new or gently used, warm clothing, such as coats, sweaters, hats, mitts, socks, pants, snow suits and boots, from **October 1-26**. Items collected will be displayed on October 28 and November 4, here at Melville, where individuals can come in and choose what they need. More details to follow.
- 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>.
- **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. 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.
- **Saturday, October 14th, 11:00am-2:00pm Centre Wellington Fire Rescue Open House.** Come meet your Centre Wellington Fire Rescue Firefighters! Elora Fire Station, 72 Wellington County Road 7. Food trucks and activities on site, with a special performance by the Fergus Pipe Band at 1:00pm!
- **Saturday, October 14th, 1:00-7:00pm** Centre Wellington Mobile Market Presents **The Food Rescue Picnic.** Join us for food, music, and fun! The Skol Huse 24 North Broadway St. Belwood. For more information or to purchase tickets visit <https://www.ticketscene.ca/o/cwmm>
- Join us on Monday **October 16th from 6PM-8PM** for a Fall Fashion Show at [Silveri Jewellers!](#) Join us earlier at 5PM for in-store shopping with 30% off! Over a dozen Raffle Prizes, Refreshments and Hors d’oeuvres, Door Prize! Partnering local Businesses: [Millennium Clothing](#), [Dalia Lingerie](#), [IF Footwear](#) Tickets are \$50 each, with limited availability. Proceeds raised at **this event support the programs and families at Michael House.**
- **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 a candle

in the name of the God who creates life,

in the name of the Christ Presence who loves life,

in the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.

Call to Worship

As the leaves dance before the winds of Autumn...

So our souls dance in the presence of the living God.

As the strings of the harp vibrate from the skilled hand of the harpist...

So our lives vibrate with the creative energy of God.

As the spirit invites us to be still and listen...

So we pause in anticipation of God among us.

God is with us! Come, let us worship!

Hymn: Joyful, Joyful We Adore You VU 232

1. Joyful, joyful, we adore you, God of glory, life and love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before you, opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day!

2. All your works with joy surround you,
Earth and heaven reflect your rays,
Stars and angels sing around you, centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain, flowery meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain, sound their praise eternally.

3. You are giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest!
Source of grace and fount of blessing, let your light upon us shine;
Teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.

4. Mortals join the mighty chorus, which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us, joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward in the triumph song of life.

Gathering Prayer (in unison):

Gracious, ever-present God: once again we gather as your people. We come to praise your name. We come to learn more about your ways. We come to share our faith with one another. We come to give thanks for the week just past, and be blessed with hope for the week to come. Be with us in this place and time. In the spirit of Christ. Amen.

Hymn: I Am a Child of God MV 157

1. I am a child of God, I am a glimpse of God's new creation.
I am a child of God, I am a child of God.

2. I am an endless prayer, I am a yearning for contemplation,
I am an endless prayer, I am an endless prayer.

3. I am an angry voice, I am compassion and consternation,
I am an angry voice, I am an angry voice.

4. I am a cry for peace, I am commitment and dedication,
I am a cry for peace, I am a cry for peace.

5. I am a song of joy, I am the moment of jubilation,
I am a song of joy, I am a song of joy.

Children's Time

Ministry of Music: I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord by Roger C. Wilson *based on the tune "St. Thomas," by Aaron Williams*

Scripture Reading — Matthew 18:21-35

Peter came and said to Jesus, "If another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times."

Then he went on to tell this parable:

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.

So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.

But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe." Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt.

When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt.

"So," Jesus said, "God will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

SERMON: Life in Our Town...The Forgiveness Formula

Well, it's been a busy week in Our Town. Typical for this time of year, I suppose. Young folks are back at school, so they're busy. Older folks are busy at...well, some of them feel busy even when they're not doing much of anything at all.

That, of course, doesn't include Our Town's most avid gardener, Bridie Stevenson. She's always busy; it takes a lot of time tending to her favourite garden crop, her zucchini.

You may remember that Bridie had a brilliant idea to help her with hoeing the weeds in her zucchini rows. She bought one of those Roomba vacuum cleaners, had Pete over at the garage weld some sharp claws on it, then went on Amazon and bought a drone.

The idea was to hook up the drone to the Roomba by wi-fi, and then use her iPad to operate the drone by remote control, guide it in and out of rows to do the weeding.

Of course, the first step was to learn how to use the drone. So, she took the drone and her iPad out into her back yard, connected them by bluetooth, and began to experiment flying the drone around...had it hovering over houses several blocks away.

That's when things went south. She lost control of the drone and it smashed through Mabel Barnes' bathroom window just when Mabel was having a shower.

Mabel was so unnerved by the incident that she called Bridie and told her not only wasn't she getting her drone back...she was going to take up a petition to have the Council prohibit the flying of drones anywhere within the town limits.

This was the main topic of conversation among the old guys when they had morning coffee at Al's Café. Until the smashed window incident, the old guys had been marveling at how ingenious Bridie Stevenson was. Now, they were talking about Mabel Barnes' threat to take up a petition and, if she went through with it, it would become a divisive issue in Our Town.

It's interesting how things work—how one day's brilliant idea can turn into another day's folly.

Now...the very next morning Mabel Barnes swung into action. She drafted up her petition; then she began walking door to door to get signatures.

By mid-morning, she had been to 6 houses. As predicted, people were divided. Three said they agreed that it was the only sensible thing to do. After all, drones flying around, all over the place, just wasn't safe. Broken windows were one thing; somebody was going to get hurt.

Three others wouldn't sign. They understood that it wasn't nice for Mabel to have her window smashed, and get scared like she did, but they thought Mabel was making too much of something fairly minor.

Around 11 o'clock, Mabel knocked on the door at the home of Lyle and Evelyn Roper. Nobody answered right away, so she knocked again. The door slowly opened and there stood a woman bent over nearly double.

Mabel had never met this woman before, so was quite shocked to see her. When she explained why she was there, the woman said, "I'm sorry. I don't know anything about this, but I'd love for you to come in and talk."

Mabel went in and sat down. The woman said she'd get them a cup of tea and hobbled off to the kitchen.

When she returned, she explained that her name was Hattie Dunsmore, and she was Evelyn Roper's aunt. "As you can see," said Hattie, "I have this condition. I lived in Ottawa but my condition kept getting worse, and I was no longer able to take care of myself. I couldn't afford to go into a retirement home, so Lyle and Evelyn invited me to come and live with them."

Mabel asked what caused her to be bent over like she was. Hattie explained. "I have what they call 'bent spine syndrome'—a muscular disorder in the spine that causes my lower joints to bend forward. It's also known as 'old folks posture' because it doesn't usually set in until a person is older, but with me it started when I was 60."

"Is there any medication you can take for it?" asked Mabel.

"There is," replied Hattie. "It doesn't help the condition, but it does keep the pain down. However, it's expensive, and it's only partially covered by OHIP. Costs me almost four hundred a month."

They talked on and on, each sharing their life's experiences. Finally, Mabel looked at her watch. "My goodness, Mrs. Dunsmore, it's almost lunch time, I'd better get going."

"Evelyn and Lyle should be home any minute," replied Hattie. "I'd be happy to fix us some lunch if you'd stay. I've so enjoyed talking to you."

"Thanks anyway," replied Mabel. "I think I'd better get going."

"Well, perhaps another time then," said Hattie.

"Sure. That would be good," replied Mabel.

Mabel had just started walking down the street, when Lyle and Evelyn Roper turned in their driveway. She just waved to them and kept going. Deep in thought.

When she got to the corner of the street, she stopped for a few minutes, still thinking about her conversation with Hattie Dunsmore. Then she turned and went home.

When she got to her house, she went inside for a few minutes, then came back out and walked over to Bridie Stevenson's home. When Bridie answered her door, Mabel held out her hand.

"Here, Bridie. You said this was yours, so I'm returning it."

"My drone!" exclaimed Bridie. "I thought you weren't going to give it back to me."

"Never mind," said Mabel. "Just take it."

"But," asked Bridie, "what about your window?"

"I'll see to getting it fixed," replied Mabel.

"Will you send me the bill so I can reimburse you?" asked Bridie.

"We'll see," Mabel said, "it's really not that big a window."

With that, Mabel Barnes turned from Bridie Stevenson's door and walked off. When she got to the corner, she didn't turn in the direction of her home. She went the other way, and went back to see the three people who had signed her petition, and told them she had decided to tear it up.

By the time she got home it was 2 in the afternoon. She poured herself her favourite drink—a glass of red wine—made herself her favourite lunch—a cheese and onion sandwich—and sat down in her easy chair to watch the afternoon ball game. Before long, she had fallen fast asleep.

When the old guys met for coffee the next morning at Al's Café, they had heard that Mabel Barnes had called off her petition...but they wondered why.

When Frank Birstead went home for lunch, he was telling Myrtle about the old guys' discussion. "Have you heard anything, Myrt?"

"Well, Franklin," replied Myrtle, "I was talking with Evelyn Roper and she told me about her aunt, Hattie Dunsmore, and Mabel Barnes having a long chat when she came to their house with the petition."

"So, Mabel meeting Mrs. Dunsmore had something to do with her calling off the petition, Myrt?"

"Sometimes, Franklin," replied Myrtle. "hearing someone else's troubles helps keep your own in perspective. And you realize that carrying around a grudge just isn't worth it."

Myrtle rocked back and forth in her rocking chair, and then said, "I was just thinking, Franklin, last Sunday in church Pastor Willy was preaching about forgiveness. His text was from Matthew—the story about Peter's discussion with Jesus about forgiveness. He called his sermon 'The Forgiveness Formula'."

"I'm not clear what that has to do with Mabel Barnes, Myrt?"

"Well, Franklin, my take on it is that, after encountering Hattie Dunsmore, Mabel Barnes realized that a broken bathroom window wasn't that big a deal."

"So, Myrt, you think Mabel Barnes forgave Bridie Stevenson for smashing her drone through her window?" asked Frank.

"Sure sounds that way to me, Franklin," replied Myrtle.

"But where does this forgiving somebody 'seventy times seven' fit in, Myrt?"

"Well, Franklin, there are times when more are needed, but surely all forgiveness starts with just one time, doesn't it?"

With that, Myrtle got up from her rocking chair. "Anyway, Franklin, it's time for lunch. I'll go fix our wieners and beans."

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

It's interesting that Myrtle Birstead mentioned that Pastor Willy had a sermon about forgiveness. By Pastor Willy, she meant Pastor Willy Flugel, the pastor over at The Church of the Reluctant Apostle. And he apparently used as his text the gospel story we heard today.

Peter goes to Jesus and says, "Uh, Jesus, I've got this problem. If another person sins against me, how often should I forgive him? Seven times? Oh...and by the way...this other person is a member of the church."

That last part is important. The offending sinner is a member of your own church. Meaning it's not a stranger, it's not somebody from the other side of town, it's somebody close to you...well known to you. Maybe even a friend. Maybe even a relative.

"What should I do about him, Jesus?" I've told him, and told him, and told him, but he just keeps doing it. How often do I forgive him? 7 times?"

"No, Peter. Not 7 times. Seventy times 7."

"Let's see. Seventy times seven. That's a 4 and a 9...and carry the zero...Jesus, do you realize how many times that is?"

"Yes, Peter. I know how many times that is. It's almost as many times as God has forgiven you. Listen, let me tell you a story..."

What follows is the story we've all heard many times before. About the servant whose master forgave everything he owed, but that servant turned right around and refused to forgive a fellow servant. And by the time you've finished hearing the story there's a little knot that begins to tighten up in the stomach. Because we can sense ourself in the story. Because we know they even though we've been forgiven, forgiving somebody else is not always easy.

Yes, we might, like Peter, be able to muster up 7 times. But then along comes Jesus, and he says, "You stopped too soon."

"What do you mean stopped too soon? Isn't 7 times enough?"

"No! Seventy times seven."

That's the forgiveness formula: Seventy times seven.

True enough, as Myrtle Birstead said, it all begins with just one time. But the point remains: forgiveness isn't easy. It takes work. It takes deciding to let go whatever it is that has hurt you. But when you do that, the rest falls into place...and the result is that it makes a difference.

The late Reverend Doctor Sang Chul Lee was elected Moderator of the United Church in 1988...at the General Council meeting in Victoria, BC. I was privileged to be there when he was elected...and I have always remembered a story he told.

Sang Chul and some other Koreans were living in China when World War II broke out. They had been meeting in the basement of a school in order to keep their Korean language alive. But when Japan invaded China, their meetings appeared dangerous to the occupying forces, so they were put in prison.

Every morning at daybreak, the commander had them hauled out onto the parade square and beaten. The commander was a mean, mean, man.

The war ended. They were released. One day, Sang Chul Lee was walking down a road. A man was walking toward him, and as he got closer Sang Chul recognized him. The commander. "Here was the man I hated," said Sang Chul, "and all alone. He no longer had the weight of his army behind him. Just one man. All alone. And all I had to do was pick up a rock and kill him. And I wanted to."

But as the man got closer, Sang Chul realized that would accomplish nothing. So he held out his hand to his enemy and said, "We must be friends." The commander replied, "How is it possible?" Sang Chul said, "I don't know. But for the sake of the future it must happen."

We have no way of knowing what difference that act of forgiveness made in that commander. But we do know the difference it made in Sang Chul Lee. It made all the difference in the world.

Now...I wonder...do you or I know anyone we need to forgive?

Hymn: Make Me a Channel of Your Peace VU 684

1. Make me a channel of your peace:

Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your healing power,
And where there's doubt, true faith in You.

2. Make me a channel of your peace

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy.
O Spirit grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console,
To be understood as to understand,
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

3. Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving to all that we receive,
And in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Poem — "The Poverty of Words" (by James Clarke)

Our lives take place in tiny cells under
a baffling blizzard of stars, trying to
get to know and love one another, but
rarely well. In the dreamlike state
we call awake, we're a mystery to ourselves
and others, most everything that
happens to us beyond our awkward words.

There are poems we do not choose to
write, diaries of hidden grief we dare
not open. The ritual words of comfort
we borrow will often betray, and what
we ought to say remain unsaid. Invisible
sorrows inside our tongue-tied hearts
defy translation and do not fade away.
Occasionally, the old gods who know
our fears and wintered souls take pity,
spur us in our dreams to write letters
to our beloved dead.

O Lord, whose words are spirit
and life, anoint our hearts and tongues
with infinite tenderness, help us to
heal and rejoice again.

Prayers of the people and the Prayer of Jesus

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- **Birthdays**
 - Rachel McIntosh celebrates on Thurs. Sept. 28th
 - Shannon Rawn celebrates on Sat. Sept. 30th
- **Anniversaries**
 - Cathy & Robert Foster celebrate 31 years on Tues. Sept. 26th
 - Edith & Dennis Hons celebrate 51 years on Sat. Sept. 30th

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

Minute for Mission

Hymn: We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection VU 586

1. We shall go out with hope of resurrection,
We shall go out, from strength to strength go on,
We shall go out and tell our stories boldly,
Tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted,
We'll dream our dream of hurts that can be healed,
We'll weave a cloth of all the world united
Within the vision of new life in Christ.

2. We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken,
We'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed,
We'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
Expressive love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who are still weeping,
Raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
We'll leap and dance the resurrection story,
Including all within the circles of our love.

Benediction

With faith for the journey that is life...

With the assurance that God walks beside us...

With the support and companionship of family and friends who share life's journey with us...

We leave this worship time.

May the grace of Christ accompany us wherever we go!

And may God's spirit fill each moment with imagination and zest.

Amen!

Postlude

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

October 1	World Communion Sunday	Rev. Tom Watson
October 8	Thanksgiving Sunday	Rev. Felicia Urbanski
October 15	World Food Sunday	Social Justice Committee
October 22	Anniversary Sunday	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
October 29	Halo Study 2 nd half of Service	Rev. Tom Watson