



*Celebrating
178 Years*



November 19, 2023

Melville United Church

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Faith Formation & Youth

Ministry of Music Team

Office Administrator

Custodian

Chair of Church Council

Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain

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Melville United church
Sunday November 19, 2023

Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson
Ministry of Music: Suzanne Flewelling

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.

- **Notice:** Rev. Marion Loree has been retained to provide Pastoral Care to the Melville congregation until a more permanent minister is in place. If you or someone you know has a Pastoral Care emergency or concern please call Rev. Marion at 519-835-8605 or email at m.loree@rogers.com. Alternatively, Alison Rainford will also answer calls and/or pass along information to Rev. Marion.
- Our **Cozy Closet** will be open to all, to find free warm clothing, **November 25, 10am-12 noon** and **December 2, 11am -3pm**. Donation still welcome.
- **Memory Angels:** Our Memory Angels will be decorating the Sanctuary this season, in memory of our loved ones. Those who have had Angels in the past can renew your Angel with a minimum donation of \$5 each. Those who are new to this can have a handmade Paper Angel decorate the Sanctuary, with an inscription on the skirt, dedicating this Angel in memory of your loved one, from you, for a minimum donation of \$5. Your year-end statement will include this donation. The Angels stay at Melville safely packed away, until the next season. These Angels bring comfort and meaning to the Melville families during the season, knowing we are remembering our loved ones. Please contact Patty Duncan or Lorna Bevcar as soon as possible.
- The music series **“Mid-Day Music at Melville”** presented by pianist Brad Halls returns on **Wednesday, November 22nd from 12 noon to about 1:00 p.m.** at Melville United Church in Fergus. Brad continues his musical journey through the past 100 years of the Broadway musical, and Wednesday’s concert features classic songs from the Broadway seasons from 1939 through to 1942. The Broadway stage would feature the final shows written by Rodgers and Hart, including their final hit *Pal Joey*. Other shows from the period brought us songs such as Jerome Kern’s *All the Things You Are*, Cole Porter’s *Friendship* and the jazz standard *How High the Moon* and many others. There is no admission cost for these concerts, but a voluntary donation to Melville United Church to help keep the heat on and the piano tuned is always appreciated.
- Our **Kids’ Church and Youth** will provide worship on **December 10th**.
- **Centre Wellington Singers present "The Music of Christmas"** with special guests Kate Wright and the Elora Children's Choir, **Saturday November 25th., 3:00 pm** at Melville United Church. Adults \$20.00 Children 12 and under \$5.00. For Tickets: 519-843-6655 or contact: Choir members: Millie Cumming, Bob and Joanne Mitchell, Lara Johnson, Lillian Gohn.

- **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.).

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

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 (*adapted from the writings of poet Bartie Jones*)

Come with us awhile...and let your day's concerns drift off like leaves that float on fall breezes, or settle in still urns of some forgotten, buried past.

Breathe in fresh breath. Soothe your soul with songs of the Spirit. Be open to grace.

Let all the senses be alert, so that the gifts of God may touch your heart's desire.

Let this new day of God step gently to our side and invite us to new birth.

Awaken! Be on fire! Sense fresh desire for life!

Come with us awhile...and sing praises to our God!

Hymn — We Praise You, O God VU 218

1. We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;

In grateful devotion our tribute we bring.

We lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;

We bless your holy name; glad praises we sing.

2. We worship you, God of our mothers and fathers,

Through trial and tempest, companion and guide.

When perils o'ertake us, you will not forsake us,

But faithful to your promise, you walk by our side.

3. With voices united our praises we offer,

And gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise.

Our sins now confessing, we pray for your blessing,

To you, our great Redeemer, forever be praise.

Gathering Prayer (in unison):

We praise you, loving God, for this day of blessing and renewal. We praise you for the faith that calls us to this house of worship. We praise you for the love that names us, and claims us, as your people. Thank you for this day. May we hold it in the palm of our hands, receive it as gift, and at its end offer back all that makes it up.

Amen.

Hymn — Though I May Speak VU 372

1. Though I may speak with bravest fire,
And have the gift to all inspire,
And have not love, my words are vain;
As sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

2. Though I may give all I possess,
And striving so my love profess,
But not be given by love within,
The profit soon turns strangely thin.

3. Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
Our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
By this we worship, and are freed.

Children's Time

Ministry of Music — Oceans (Where Feet May Fail) *written by Matt Crocker, Joel Houston, & Salomon Ligthelm performed by Spirit Sings*

Scripture Reading — Matthew 25:14-29

Jesus said, For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. The one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents. His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."

Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours."

But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents.

For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away."

Sermon — "Life in Our Town...How Much Are You Willing to Risk?"

Well, it's been a busy week in Our Town. Lots of things going on at this time of the year. Folks thinking about the Christmas cards they have to write, writing lists of gifts they have to make, checking out the Christmas decorations to see what is still usable. All kinds of stuff to do.

As usual, the snowbirds are getting ready to make their annual migrations south. Arnold and June McFederen and George and Agnes Taylor live next door to each other, over on 5th Street, and every year the two couples fire up their travel vehicles, head to Florida together, and spend the winter in Sunshine Trailer Park, just north of Naples.

For years they both travelled in Winnebagos, but last spring they got real fancy—they traded in the old Winnebagos, bought new Ford F-250 pickup trucks and Golden Falcon 5th wheel trailers. They polished those snazzy outfits up, and left this week.

George went to the Post Office on Thursday afternoon to arrange with Marge for their mail to be re-directed for the next six months. Arnold stopped in on Friday morning, on the way out of town.

"I certainly hope you folks have a good time, Arnold" said Marge, "but going down there's the last thing I'd be doing."

"Why do you say that, Marge? We've done it for years now," said Arnold.

"Didn't you hear about that guy getting tackled by the crocodile, and the only way he got away was by biting the crocodile in the lip?" asked Marge. "If you want to get that up close and personal with a crocodile, you go right ahead, Arnold...but, as I said, it's not the kind of thing I'd be doing."

"Marge," said Arnold, "that crocodile incident was in Australia, not Florida."

"Australia, Florida, it's all the same!" said Marge. "I just don't know, Arnold, why in the world you'd want to spend the winter where there's that kind of danger lurking."

Arnold decided that there wasn't much point in debating the issue, so he just said, "Thanks, Marge, for looking after our mail. We'll see you in April."

Now, Marge mentioned danger lurking. But, as you likely know, Marge sees danger in everything. Marge quit reading the local newspaper, The Bugle, a while back, after she heard

about somebody getting ink poisoning.

Even falling leaves bother Marge. "You just never know what's dropping with them leaves," Marge commented to somebody the other day. "Most likely some new virus. Likely worse even than Covid."

Frank Birstead was just going into the Post Office as Arnold was coming out, and Arnold told him about the conversation with Marge. When Frank went home after morning coffee, he told Myrtle about it.

"Isn't that just like Marge, Myrt! Sometimes I wonder how she manages to get up in the morning. Maybe she has some kind of danger-meter around her bed that indicates whether it's safe to roll back the covers!"

Myrtle chuckled, rocked back and forth in her rocking chair for a few minutes, then said, "Well, Franklin, we all know that Marge is a good soul. She means well. She's just not a risk-taker, that's all."

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

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

Myrtle Birstead noted that Marge isn't a risk-taker. Are you a risk-taker? That's our question for today: How much are you willing to risk?

Let's try something. Suppose that, at this point in the sermon, I told you that you are very fortunate to have come to church this morning! That, in fact, this is your lucky day because you are in the right place at the right time for a special promotion event!

Suppose that I told you that on the way out of church, you will be presented with the 5 following opportunities, and you can choose any one of them.

- Become part of a team forming up to go and climb Mount Everest.
- Join a crew that leaves Tuesday morning on a space voyage to the Saturn.
- Take 10 free sky diving lessons off the coast of California.
- Go on an all-expense-paid trip to the Grand Canyon, providing you take the mule ride to the bottom of the canyon and back.
- Receive a voucher for free lunch at the Goofy Newfie Restaurant immediately after church.

Now, just so the promoters will have a vague idea of what they should plan for...

- How many are for climbing Mount Everest?
- How many are ready to leave Tuesday for Saturn?
- How many are in for the sky diving lessons?
- How many for the mule ride in the Grand Canyon?

It looks as if we'd better call the Goofy Newfie and make reservations for a quite a few, doesn't it?

And I understand.

The space voyage to Saturn—we've got too many things to do to be away that long. And as for scaling a mountain like Everest, or dropping out of a plane at 20,000 feet, most of us have enough trouble getting two feet off the ground on a ladder, let alone do something like that. Well, we might have some takers for the Grand Canyon mule ride, but even that...

The truth is that most of us would opt for the free lunch at the Goofy Newfie because it's safe and predictable...whereas the other opportunities carry risk—maybe too much risk—and, let's face it, we're really not all that big into risks. Especially if it means risking our life!

And that is what makes today's parable rather unsettling. Because the point is that life is about risk! We are given life that we might use it!

Hear again Jesus' story.

One day, a man went away on a journey. But before he went he called his 3 servants to him and entrusted each of them with a sum of money. To one he gave 5 talents, to another 2 talents, and to the third servant, he gave 1 talent.

The one who had been given 5 talents went off and traded with them—bought some camels and sold them at a profit, made some shrewd investments, I'm not sure what, it doesn't matter—somehow he parlayed those 5 talents into 10.

Likewise, the one who had been given 2 talents doubled them into 4.

But the one who had been given 1 talent went and hid it in the ground. Why? Because he was afraid that he might lose it, and then when his master returned he would have nothing to show for it. His theory was that Life is far too risky a business, so you'd better protect yourself as best you can...it's better to be safe than sorry.

What happens when the master returns? He congratulates the first two for their efforts, but he berates the 1 talent man for his over-cautious approach. No...he not only berates him; he takes away the 1 talent he had, gives it to the one who now has 10 talents, and leaves this one holding an empty bag.

And every 1-talent bone in you wants to cry out, "Hey, wait a minute here, Jesus! How come the risk-takers get rewarded? They might have ended up losing the whole thing, you know! How come the sky divers and the mountain climbers and the space travelers get rewarded, and in the end I don't even get my free lunch at The Goofy Newfie?"

You don't have to work at it all that hard to crank up some real sympathy for this 1-talent man. After all, those other two started out with the comparably huge amounts of 5 and 2 talents, whereas he began with the paltry sum of only 1 talent...so how could he be expected to show the kind of results they did? He did the only logical thing—protect what he was given to start with.

But that sympathy only holds until you realize that his starting point wasn't paltry at all. In fact, in those days 1 talent was worth more than 15 years' wages. So, translated into today's economic terms, he began with at least half a million dollars!

And then is when you see that this parable is not about money at all—it's about Life! The question at the centre of the parable is: "What have you done with your life?"

Because, to a person, we have been given much! The 5, 2 and 1 talent numbers are irrelevant. They're all gifts. And all the gifts are huge. So the question is: "What have you done with what you have been given?"

- Where have you spent your life, and where have you hid your life in the ground—guarded it so you didn't lose it?
- Where have you risked yourself, and where have you hunkered down in the basement of your soul, because you were afraid of the cost of the risk?
- What choices have you made? And were those choices made out of a desire to contribute something to life, in joyful thanksgiving for the great gift of life itself...or were those choices made in order to preserve and protect what little you perceived you had?

When the ancient Hebrews stood on the brink of a whole new life in the promised land, they had to decide whether or not to go for it, or to stay back where it was safe. Their leader, Joshua, said to them: "Choose this day who you will serve! Will it be the God who brought you to this time and place, the God who gave you everything you have...or some other god who in the end will do nothing for you at all?"

The same invitation stands for you and me. "What God will you and I serve? Will we serve the God who has given us this tremendous gift of life, and family, and children, and friends, and talents, and abilities, and church, and community, and country...or some other cheap, golden calf idol god that won't give us anything at all?"

5 talents, 2 talents, 1 talent people, all...what have you done with your life? How much are you willing to risk in order to find life at its very fullest?

There is a story that I read a while ago which illustrates this point as well as anything else I know. I don't know who wrote it, but this is the story.

Many years ago, when I worked as a volunteer at Stanford Hospital, I got to know a little girl named Liz who was suffering from a rare and serious disease. Her only chance of recovery appeared to be a blood transfusion from her 5 year old brother, who had miraculously survived the same disease and had developed the antibodies needed to combat the illness.

The doctor explained the situation to her little brother, and asked the boy if he would be willing to give his blood to his sister. I saw him hesitate for a moment before taking a deep breath and saying, "Yes, I'll do it, if it will save Liz."

As the transfusion progressed, the boy lay next to his sister and smiled, as we all did, as we watched the colour returning to her cheeks.

Then the boy's face grew pale, and his smile faded. He looked up at the doctor and asked with a trembling voice, "Will I start to die right away?"

Being young, the boy had misunderstood the doctor. He thought that he was going to have to give his sister all his blood, in order for her to live.

But he was willing to risk it. And, I don't know this, but my hunch is that in that risking he found the truth of what life is really all about to begin with.

It sort of reminds us of Jesus, doesn't it? The one whom we Christians say we follow. The one who said that if we followed his way we'd find ours too.

May all of us find that life...and live it abundantly! And may we be willing to take the risks that help us do so!

Hymn: O For a World VU 697

1. O for a world where everyone respects each other's ways,
Where love is lived and all is done with justice and with praise.
2. O for a world where goods are shared and misery relieved,
Where truth is spoken, children spared, equality achieved.
3. We welcome one world family and struggle with each choice
That opens us to unity and gives our vision voice.
4. The poor are rich, the weak are strong, the foolish ones are wise.
Tell all who mourn; outcasts belong, who perishes will rise.
5. O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace,
Where time and tears will be no more, and all but love will cease.

Poem — "The Book of Your Life" (by James Clarke)

Someone presents you with the 'Book Of
Your Life'. You long to read it all, but it contains
more than you want to know. You're
tempted to close the book but you read on.

It's all there: plots of your old dreams,
negligences and defections along the way,
those small meannesses and missteps you'd
like to forget, the love not given, the good

not done, how sometimes you even allowed
ambition to subvert your good intentions:
compassion for the poor, neglected and
downtrodden. Then you discover many

things you thought too trivial and put out
of mind; the little kindnesses you bestowed on

others, a handful of forgotten good deeds, those
yearly donations to the Food Bank, the time

you helped a desperate woman get out of debt,
and perhaps the most perfect moment of all
when you told someone how much you loved
them. That's when joy rushed into your

life with all its riches, and you realized for the
first time that nothing in life is more beautiful
than love. Gratitude suddenly flooded your
heart and you wanted to shout "Hallelujah."

Prayers of the people and the Prayer of Jesus

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- **Birthdays**
 - Fred Martin celebrates on Mon Nov 20th
 - Heather Howes celebrates on Tues Nov 21st
 - Nancy Kruger celebrates on Fri Nov 24th

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 — Spirit of Gentleness VU 375

(refrain) Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
Blow through the wilderness calling and free;
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

1. You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
Then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
And over the eons you called to each thing;
"Awake from your slumbers and rise on your wings." *(refrain)*

2. You swept through the desert, you stung with the sand
And you goaded your people with a law and a land;
And when they were blinded with idols and lies,
Then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes. *(refrain)*

3. You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
 Then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;
 And down in the city you called once again,
 When you blew through your people on the rush of the wind. *(refrain)*

4. You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes.
 From the bondage of sorrow all the captives dream dreams;
 Our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.
 With bold new decisions your people arise. *(refrain)*

Benediction

Let us go into the world with gentle and caring spirits...

Following the gentle spirit that calls us to life.

And may the grace, mercy, and peace of God—our Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, go with us...

And remain with us always. Amen.

Postlude — Come As You Are by Gary & Lenora Rand performed by Spirit Sings

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

November 26	26 th after Pentecost	Rev. Ruth Brown
December 3	Advent 1	Rev. Tom Watson
December 10	Children’s Christmas Advent 2	Kids’ Church and Youth
December 17	Advent 3	Rev. Jeff Hawkins