



*Celebrating
178 Years*



December 3, 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 December 3, 2023

Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson
Ministry of Music: 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.

- Melville is looking for a new **Kid's Church Leader**. If you are someone you know has a passion for helping kids lead a just and spiritually enriching life, then please contact Lynda in the office at 519-843-1781 or secretary@melvilleunited.com. We'll be in touch.
- **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.
- **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.
- **UCW meat pies** are available now. \$5 each. Buy after church or contact Marg 519-843-3274 OR margfrayne@hotmail.com
- The music series "**Mid-Day Music at Melville**" presented by pianist Brad Halls returns on **Wednesday, December 6th 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 in 1946 and 1947. The years following the end of World War II brought a rise in the number of new Broadway productions, and they included memorable shows such as *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Brigadoon* and *Finian's Rainbow* among others. Come and enjoy classic songs including *Almost Like Being in Love*, *That Old Devil Moon*, *They Say It's Wonderful*, *There's No Business Like Showbusiness* and many more. 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.
- The Youth of Melville will celebrate **White Gift Sunday** with a child-centred service on **December 10**. If you wish, please bring a gift that would be appreciated by teens, young adults, or young mothers. The gift should be wrapped in white or in a white bag, if possible. (Ideas for gifts - toiletries, razors, feminine hygiene products, diapers) Thank you!

- **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 Advent Candle (Advent I)

In this season of expectant waiting, we wonder and we hope.

So many marvels. So much that confounds us.

So much that is unique.

So much richness. So many things we can touch, taste, smell, see, hear. Hope rises within us.

Look at life, abundant in growing complexities and with bewildering intricacies.

Look at the variety!

Look how they work together—connected.

Hope bubbles to the surface. We bask in wonder at God's creativity, at blessings showered abundantly while hope flames into promise.

(The first Advent candle is lit.)

Sung Response: "A Candle is Burning" verse 1 (VU #6)

A candle is burning, a flame warm and bright,
 A candle of hope in December's dark night,
 While angels sing blessings from heaven's starry sky,
 Our hearts we prepare now for Jesus is nigh.

Call to Worship

In December darkness the world sits...as if peering out the window...waiting.

Waiting for the Promised One to come.

He said he would come!

How soon? Will it be today? Tomorrow?

In December darkness we peer out our windows...waiting.

Waiting for an angel with rainbow wings to announce the Hope of the World.

Hymn —O Come, Emmanuel VU 1 (vv. 1, 2, 6, 7)

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel
 That mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
 refrain Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. O come, O Wisdom from on high, who ordered all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show and teach us in its ways to go.
refrain Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

6. O come, O Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by your drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
refrain Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

7. O come, Desire of nations, bind all peoples in one heart and mind,
O bid our sad divisions cease and be for us the Prince of Peace.
refrain Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Gathering Prayer (in unison):

God of Advent, God for whom we watch and wait: come now into our December darkness. Prepare our hearts and minds for the birth of a new time—a time when broken hearts are mended, when those bowed low by the weight of living are lifted up, and those weary from walking the same well-worn trails are pointed in a new direction. Once again, God of Advent, we wait. Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Amen.

Hymn —Hope Is a Star VU 7

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night,
Leading us on till the morning is bright.
refrain: When God is a child there's joy in our song.
 The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
 And none shall be afraid.

2. Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
Giving a promise of safety and worth. *refrain:*

3. Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn,
Telling the world that the Savior is born. *refrain:*

4. Love is a flame that burns in our heart.
Jesus has come and will never depart. *refrain:*

**Ministry of Music — Anne Thomson-King "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" from
Weihnachtsgeschichte, Op 10 by Hugo Distler, arr.
by Patrick M. Liebergen, English words by Theodore Baker.**

Scripture Reading — Mark 13:24-37

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

Then they will see "the Son of Man coming in clouds" with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.'

Sermon — "Waiting"

The last time I was here, when Millie read the scripture she said, "I don't like this reading." In a similar vein, I'm not too wild about today's reading. It's a rather strange way to begin Advent.

Strange apocalyptic images of great suffering...sun and moon both going dark...stars falling from heaven...the heavens shaking and quaking.

Sometimes I ask myself: who writes this stuff anyway? And we're heading into Christmas, for heaven's sakes!

Well, truth is, the setting of this text is not Christmas. It's somewhere between Palm Sunday and Easter. And the disciples can sense that something of great significance is about to happen—maybe even the moment for which all history has been waiting—the coming of the kingdom of God.

So they ask, "Is it now, Jesus? Is it about to happen? Now? Tomorrow? Soon?"

And Jesus replies, "Nobody knows. It will come at a time you won't even expect. In the same way a thief comes at night. No advance news. No warning signals. It just steals in on you. It just happens. And therefore what you have to do is wait."

Trouble is we—especially in this day of instant everything—we're just not that good at waiting. But that's always the topic for the first Sunday in Advent. Waiting. Waiting for the coming of the Christ.

Whenever Advent rolls around, I remember an experience I once had with waiting.

My friends—Paul and Rosalind—lived in Aurora. We were to go and visit them on a Friday evening and stay over until Sunday. So we arrived at their house about 5 minutes to 4 on a Friday afternoon. I went to the door and rang the doorbell. No response. So I rang it again. Then I used the door knocker a couple of times. Still no response.

Now, the arrangements we always had with them is that Paul would leave a key in the mailbox, so that we could get in the house if they were late getting home from work. I looked in the mailbox. No key.

Hmmm...they're not home yet, and I guess Paul forgot to leave a key. Oh well, they'll be home before too long, so we'll just wait here in the car until they arrive.

Thus, we began our waiting. Came 5 o'clock. Dark was setting in. Some lights came on over their garage doors and at their front entrance. At the same moment, exterior lights came on on the house next door. "Hmmm," thinks I, "must have their lights on a timer."

Since dark was upon us, it started to get chilly. So I started the car and let it run for 5 minutes or so—just enough to take the chill off.

The waiting continued. And the wondering. Where are they? Did they work late? Has there been an accident on their way home? Why don't they call our cell phone and tell us what the problem is?

Start the car again. Take a short nap. Then more watching for their van coming down the street. More wondering. More waiting.

Is it okay to tell you that waiting is not one of my strong suits? But I'm captive of my circumstances.

Finally, at 25 minutes to 6—after sitting in the car in their driveway for 1 hour and 45 minutes—I started to wonder: You don't suppose they're in there and didn't hear you ring the doorbell when I rang it?

Pretty foolish question, but I'll go and try the door again. So I marched up to the door, rang the bell, heard their little Yorkshire Terrier dog bark, and Paul coming to open the door. I said, "How long have you been home?"

"Since about 3:30. Where have you been? How come you are so late? I was just going to phone you to see where you were."

"Well, you'd have got us on the phone alright. Right here in your driveway, where we have been sitting for an hour and 45 minutes."

Turned out all of us had been waiting. We in their driveway, waiting for them. They inside their house, waiting for us. And everybody tired of waiting. Growing impatient. When do you think they will be coming?

That's the same question the early church was asking, as they waited for God to intervene in history and set up the kingdom. And Jesus' only counsel was: "Nobody knows. So you have to wait. But while you wait, keep awake, be ready!"

Tough counsel for people who have been waiting for centuries. Tough counsel for you and me who would prefer not to have to wait for Christmas, but wish that it would happen right tomorrow. But that's the Advent message. You have to wait.

Well, as much as we don't like waiting, we are all too familiar with it.

- We wait for elevators.
- We wait for traffic lights to change.
- We wait for service people to come—
 - they'll be there sometime between 8 and 6.
- We wait for an important phone call.
- We wait for the doctor to tell us the results of the X-rays.
- We wait for kind words to be spoken and heal the wounds.
- We wait for the baby to be born.
- We wait for the sermon to end, so that we can go home for lunch.

We wait for something good to happen ... or for the worst that we feared to happen.

Much of our life is spent in waiting. So maybe we shouldn't be surprised that Jesus underlines the fact that waiting is a pretty normal thing. In fact, he says, "Be prepared, because the wait might be very, very long. But, in the meantime, keep alert...and watch...and be ready."

In other passages, Jesus also warns about the need to be discerning, to be able to determine whether or not what we have waited for has really arrived. Because, he says, there will be false prophets come, and they will fill you with phony stories. So be discerning! Don't be taken in!

It reminds me of the story about a grandmother who was telling her 9 year old granddaughter a fable that she loved as a child. It was the story of The Beautiful Princess and the Frog.

"Once upon a time," said the grandmother, "there lived a beautiful prince who had a golden ball. One day the golden ball fell into a well. But an ugly frog came along and retrieved it for her.

"The beautiful princess was so grateful to the frog that she took the frog home to her bedroom in the palace. And during the night, there in her bedroom, the ugly frog turned into a handsome prince."

At that point in the story, the little girl began to fidget. She looked very impatient and skeptical. "What's wrong?" asked the grandmother. "Don't you believe the story?"

"No," replied the little girl, "I don't believe that story. And I don't think the princess' mother believed it either!"

"So be discerning," Jesus said. "Don't be taken in by foolish claims, for about the day and the hour no one knows."

And in the meantime we wait. Wait patiently. Wait faithfully. But part of what it means to be God's people is to continue to live faithfully and creatively, in anticipation of God's future that breaks in at any given moment in time.

And while you are waiting, bring about goodness. Do helpful things. Do healing things. Be gentle. Be generous. For that too is what it means to be God's people. To believe that as much goodness exists right now as there ever has been or every will be...and to do your part to bring about that goodness. And for that goodness we never have to wait. For that goodness the time is always right, and the time is always now!

Amen.

Hymn — Eat This Bread **VU 466**

1. Eat this bread, drink this cup,
Come to me and never be hungry.
Eat this bread, drink this cup,
Trust in me and you will not thirst.

2. Come and eat, come and drink,
You are welcome here at this table.
Come and eat, come and drink,
This table's been set for you.

We Celebrate at the Table

The Invitation to the Table

Lift up your hearts!

We lift them up to our God!

Let us give thanks to God!

It is right to give God thanks and praise!

The Consecration of the Elements

Sharing the Bread and Wine

(People will come forward to receive the communion elements)

Poem — "First Coming" by Madeleine L'Engle

He did not wait till the world was ready,

Till men and nations were at peace.

He came when the Heavens were unsteady,

And prisoners cried out for release.

He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
Turned water into wine.

He did not wait till hearts were pure.
In joy he came to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
He came, and his Light would not go out.

He came to a world which did not mesh,
To heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
The Maker of the stars was born.

We cannot wait till the world is sane
To raise our songs with joyful voice,
For to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came..with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!

Prayers of The People and The Prayer of Jesus

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- Birthdays
 - Marg Frayne celebrates on Wed Dec 6th
 - Macbeth McLean celebrates on Wed Dec 6th
- Anniversaries
 - Vivian & Havey Andrews celebrate 72 years on Wed Dec 6th
 - Ruth & Gary Sproule celebrate 46 years on Sat Dec 9th
- Condolences
 - We offer deepest condolences to the family of Ann Warren who passed away Saturday, November 25th. There will be a celebration of life being held at The Graham Giddy Funeral Home, 280 St. David Street South in Fergus on Monday December 4th between the hours of 1-3pm in the Wellington Room.

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 — People, Look East VU 9

1. People, look east. The time is near
Of the crowning of the year.
Make your house fair as you are able,
Trim the hearth and set the table.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the guest, is on the way.

2. Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,
One more seed is planted there:
Give up your strength the seed to nourish,
That in course the flower may flourish.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the rose, is on the way.

3. Birds, though you long have ceased to build,
Guard the nest that must be filled.
Even the hour when wings are frozen
God for fledging time has chosen.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the bird, is on the way.

4. Stars, keep the watch. When night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim,
Shining beyond the frosty weather,
Bright as sun and moon together.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the star, is on the way.

5. Angels, announce with shouts of mirth
Christ who brings new life to earth.
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east and sing today: Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Benediction

As we go about our annual journeys in this Advent season...

May we hold tightly to each other...

Keeping alive faith and hope for each new day that comes...

And trusting the gracious spirit of God to guide us always.

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

December 10	Children's Christmas Advent 2	Kids' Church and Youth
December 17	Advent 3	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
December 24 th 11:00 am	Advent 4	Rev. Felicia Urbanski
December 24 th 7:00 pm	Advent 4	Rev. Ruth Brown
December 31st	1 st Sunday after Christmas	Rev. Jeff Hawkins