



January 21, 2023

Melville United Church

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

Mailing address: PO Box 41, Fergus, ON N1M2W7

519-843-1781

Team Ministry

Minister of Pastoral Care

Faith Formation & Youth

Ministry of Music Team

Office Administrator

Custodian

Chair of Church Council

Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain

Office hours

E-Mail

Web Site

Rev. Marion Loree 519-835-8605

Martha Duncan

Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber

Lynda Rivet

Suzanne Flewelling

Allan Hons

Alison Rainford 519-843-3841

9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. T., Th. & F.

secretary@melvilleunited.com

www.melvilleunited.com

Melville United Church
Sunday, January 21, 2024

Presiding today: Rev. Marion Loree
Minister of Music: Colleen Weber

* *Congregation please stand as you are able.*

Bold print invites congregational response.

Prelude

Welcome - Come All You People

MV 2 (Marion will sing a capella)

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.

- **Rev. Marion Loree** is here on Fridays during Coffee Hour and is also available for an hour or two afterwards.
- **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, January 24th from 12 noon to about 1:00 p.m.** here at Melville. Brad will continue his musical voyage through the last 100 years of the Broadway musical, and on this coming Wednesday, he will present selections from classic musicals from 1952 to 1954, including popular productions such as Cole Porter’s “*Can-Can*”, the Arabian Nights themed “*Kismet*”, Leonard Bernstein’s *Wonderful Town*, *The Pajama Game* and the classic *Peter Pan* among others. Enjoy memorable songs including *Stranger in Paradise*, *I Love Paris*, *Here’s That Rainy Day*, *Hey There* and 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.
- **Rides needed for seniors:** Can you help? Rides to Wed Piano Concert (Noon - 1pm), Friday Morning Coffee (10 - 11am), and Sunday Service (11am - Noon). Please speak to Lorna Bevcar
- **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.
- Thank you for your donations to the **Food Bank** there is an **ongoing need** of nonperishables, toiletries, or a gift card. Baskets are in the sanctuary.
- The **Centre Wellington Mobile Market** is a local, volunteer-run food rescue organization which has a combined goal of supporting food security while reducing the amount of good food that is wasted. Using nutritious, safe for consumption ingredients that have been offered to by local retailers, farm markets, Second Harvest and the Centre Wellington Food Bank, a team of volunteers cook and prepare individual main course meals that are then frozen and delivered to residents in Fergus, Elora and Belwood on Wednesday afternoons, free of charge. Much of the food preparation takes place in Melville’s kitchen.

Individuals may request 3 meals per week. The meals available each week are posted on the Centre Wellington Mobile Market Facebook and Instagram pages. For families with 3 or more in their household, they offer a family bag of groceries on a weekly basis. Please call 519 -843-1781 x 126 or email cwmobilemarketmeals@gmail.com to request meals. MEAL REQUESTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY MONDAYS AT 5 PM FOR THEM TO BE READY FOR DELIVERY THAT WEDNESDAY. For more information contact Sue McPhedran and Morgan Short at cwmobilemarket@gmail.com.

Land Acknowledgment (on video)

<https://melvilleunited.com/2024/01/19/land-acknowledgement>

Sharing the Light

Call to Worship:

Jesus comes calling, telling us that the time of God's kindom has come near.

We want to be a part of the kindom.

Jesus comes calling, telling us to hear and believe the Good News.

We really need to hear and believe the Good News.

Jesus comes calling, asking us to follow him into the future.

We really want to follow and become disciples of Jesus.

Come, let us follow, worship and offer our praise.

Hymn: Come Touch Our Hearts (Vs 1-3) MV 12

**Come touch our hearts that we may know compassion,
from failing embers build a blazing fire;
love strong enough to overturn injustice,
to seek a world more gracious,
Come touch and bless our hearts**

**Come touch our souls that we may know and love you,
your quiet presence all our fears dispel
create a space for spirit to grow in us.
Let life and beauty fill us,
Come touch and bless our souls.**

**Come touch our minds and teach us how to reason,
set free our thoughts to wonder and to dream;
help us to open doors of understanding,
to welcome truth and wisdom,
Come touch and bless our minds.**

Opening Prayer:

Today we hear the story of Jesus calling his disciples, and we remember times when we have felt called - a sacred guiding toward a new path. We are thankful for the deep yearnings, the Sacred Whispers, the mysterious suggestions that take us in new directions in life. We give thanks for the calls we have heard and followed that have brought us here today. Holy One, open our minds and hearts that our worship may inspire us to follow Jesus more closely. Amen.

Prayer for Inner Healing:

Sometimes you call, God,
and we are too busy to hear you.

Sometimes you call, Jesus,
and we are too tired to care.

Sometimes you call, Spirit,
and we are frozen by our fear.

Sometimes you call
and we go, but unwillingly, pulling back every step of the way.

We ask that you would forgive us -
**our busyness, our tiredness, our fear,
and help us to follow. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

God does not leave us alone. All we hope for comes from the Source of all that is. We find strength and comfort when we trust in God. God's way of love is open and beckoning to all.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

Children's Time

Hymn: Simon, Simon, a Fisherman (vs 1,2,4,5) VU 597

**Simon, Simon, a fisherman was he,
Simon, Simon, lived beside the sea,
until the day when Jesus came
and calling Simon by his name, said
"Simon, Simon, follow, follow me."**

**Simon's younger brother Andrew, loyal, brave and true,
Simon's younger brother Andrew followed Jesus too.
They left their ship beside the sea,
to follow and disciples be,
when Jesus calling them by name, said,
"Follow, follow me."**

**Dorcas followed Jesus too, sharing what she had.
Dorcas cared for neighbour folk, making others glad.
And we can share with gift and deed
as Jesus shared with those in need.
'Dorcas, Dorcas, follow, follow me.'**

**You can be like Simon, and follow Jesus too.
You can be like Andrew, friendly, brave and true.
Big and strong or small and shy,
we can follow if we try, when
Jesus calling us by name says,
"Follow, follow me."**

Ministry of Music: Jesus, I Come a tune by George C. Stebbins arranged by Lani Smith.
Performed by Colleen Weber

Scripture Readings -Reader -

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The word of YHWH came a second time to Jonah: "Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach to them as I told you to do."

Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of YHWH. Nineveh was a city large beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah moved on into the city, making a day's journey. He proclaimed, "Only forty days more, and Nineveh is going to be destroyed!"

So the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth, from the greatest to the least.

God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour. And God relented by not inflicting on them the disaster that threatened them.

Mark 1:14-20

After John's arrest, Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God: "This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Change your hearts and minds, and believe this Good News!"

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw the brothers Simon and Andrew casting their nets into the sea, since they fished by trade. Jesus said to them, "Follow me; I will make you fishers of humankind." They immediately abandoned their nets and followed Jesus.

Proceeding a little further along, Jesus saw the brothers James and John, sons of Zebedee. They too were in their boat putting their nets in order. Immediately Jesus called them, and they left their father Zebedee standing in the boat with the hired help, and went off in the company of Jesus.

Psalm 62:1-2,7-12

In God alone my soul finds rest, for my deliverance comes from God, who alone is my rock, my salvation, my fortress: I will never be shaken. Only in God - my deliverance, my glory - my refuge is God. Trust in God always, my people; pour out your hearts before God our refuge. Humankind is but a breath, mortals are just an illusion. Put them on the scales and the balance is thrown off: they weigh less than a breath.

Do not trust in extortion, or put false hopes in stolen goods; do not set your heart on riches even when they increase. For God has said only one thing, only two do I know: that to God alone belongs power, and that you, YHWH, are loving - you repay all people according to their deeds.

Message: Following Jesus

The scripture readings this week are familiar ones that we have heard many times over the years. Always at this time of the year we are, once again, reminded of Jesus' call to follow. We hear about the calling of his first disciples. It sounds like it was an easy job for him. He just said

“follow me” and away they went. I suspect it really didn’t happen all that easily even if Jesus was a very charismatic preacher but, at least, in Mark’s gospel, it sounds like there wasn’t much of a discernment time for Simon, Andrew, James and John.

There must have been something very different that they saw in him to make them drop everything and take up a new way of life. Last week, I think you heard Samuel’s call from God in the middle of the night. And as Tom Watson put it - all of sudden the lights came on - the light of understanding something in a different way, or the light of finally understanding something that had been heard many times before but never really thought about. I believe those moments are one way of Spirit talking to us, or God, if you will. We ‘hear’ something different or differently.

I think that is the way Jesus was. His call was different. It is still God calling of course but it was in a different way. Jesus was a man, a human person, just like us so that makes it different right from the start. People long before Jesus knew about God and followed the rules that were given to them but things changed once Jesus appeared. Before him the focus was on the nation of Israel. The messages that came through the prophets were messages aimed at the whole group. Jesus made it personal. Jesus walked amongst and talked to individuals. He lived and taught personal responsibility. He showed us how to live a spiritual existence based on faith.

And that is what being a Christian is all about - living a life of faith. It is not about following a set of rules that someone else dictates. It is not about performing certain rituals or ceremonies. It is not even about believing a certain set of doctrines. It is not about trying to convince other people to believe the same things we do. Being a Christian is supposed to be a way of life. It is supposed to be a way of life based on the life of Jesus and what he taught and what he did. In other words, on how he lived his life. To be a follower of Jesus means trying to live the way he did - with love, acceptance, compassion and authenticity.

Now, that may sound simple to some but we all know that it is not simple to do. In fact, it can be a very hard thing to do. It is hard to do because we are human and we have to live here in this physical world with other humans and human nature is complex. Nevertheless, when we choose to follow the Christian faith we are choosing to ‘follow’ this one we call the Christ. This one in whom people could see and feel the presence of the Spirit so intently that they even said he was God.

It must have been such an experience to be in Jesus’ presence. He must have exhibited such charisma to have crowds following him around hanging on his every word; to have people drop what they were doing and leave everything to go with him - to follow him - not knowing where they were going. His call must have been very compelling.

But we don’t have the advantage of his physical presence to help us follow his way. We have to try to figure it out for ourselves by reading about him in this book we call the Bible. And figuring it out can be hard, too, because this book was written many, many years ago. The Old Testament stories were passed around orally for hundreds of years before they were finally written down and that process took another few hundred years. The New Testament was written down 30 to 100 years after Jesus died - almost 2000 years ago. So when we sit down to read our Bible we need to always remember that life in those times was nothing like life is today.

That means that when we want to find out how to live a Christian life, that is, a life connected to Spirit as Jesus did, we need to read with spiritual eyes. To do that we need to look under the surface of the literal words and mine for the spiritual wisdom that dwells underneath. That is the only way that two or three thousand year-old stories will mean anything to us. It also helps to know a bit about the culture of those days and what life was like because then the meanings in some of what seem like puzzling phrases to us can come alive with new meaning.

Let me give you an example of what theologians call exegesis - or critical examination. Mark's gospel, from which we are reading today, outlines the resistance that Jesus experienced to his mission. This resistance eventually led to his death and the comment in verse 14 that Jesus' ministry began following the arrest of John the Baptist, hints that the Baptist's fate was to foreshadow that of Jesus himself.

When Jesus talks about the kingdom of God it is in direct response to the kingdom that had been and was still being established at that time by King Herod. Jesus sought to contrast the goals of his mission with the goals of Herod the Great who ruled as king because he was placed on the throne by the Roman Senate and who was proving his greatness by building cities and temples throughout the land.

Jesus uses the metaphor of kingdom to indicate how God's 'kingdom' is made evident, not in great buildings, but in how people embrace God's rule through a total reorientation of their lives. In other words, he was saying that the 'kingdom of God' happens when people let God's way rule their lives.

Another interesting tidbit of information. The name Andrew stands out because it was a Greek name and had no equivalent in Jewish circles. A small detail perhaps but one which foretells how Jesus' message would be carried by his disciples beyond the Jewish community to the Gentile world.

The Bible really is fascinating when you start to study it in this way. The other way that the Bible is fascinating and helps us to live a Christian life is in the stories themselves. We can read the stories of both Testaments, but especially the old and see ourselves.

Look at the story of Jonah. First, the book itself is difficult to classify. Is it fable or farce? History or satire? No one really knows. Perhaps the question at the heart of it is the one in verse 9 "Who knows?" Who knows the true character of this strange God who rules over the waves and the creatures; who inspires sacred songs even on the lips of those running from God's presence; who worries over desert bushes and over great cities and over those sent to be stewards and witnesses to both? It is a book that raises questions about God. After all, who among us hasn't wondered about some of these same things? But it is also a book which is very human.

Jonah was a very human character. I have often said that my middle name should be Jonah because, like him, I tried running from God for years. Who hasn't? It is a very human response to want to avoid doing something completely different with your life or that we perceive as hard work. Jonah obviously didn't like the people of Ninevah and did not think delivering a message of doom to them would make any difference at all. He only went because God insisted and even

then it was a half-hearted attempt. He walked only part way into the city and delivered his message. Then, when it worked, he was angry. He had been sitting under a tree on the hill waiting to see the city destroyed and when it wasn't he got very upset with God.

Again, this is a very human response. How many of us haven't been upset because God didn't do something we thought should happen? Or because things didn't turn out the way we thought they should? Or because God doesn't intervene to stop bad things happening? It is hard for us to let go and let God! It is hard for us to follow in Jesus footsteps because we want to know the outcome before we begin. We want to know where it will lead. We want to know what God is doing before God does it and Jesus calls us to have faith. To trust in the Spirit. To trust that the Spirit will lead us to where we need to be.

I have been learning how to trust. It has, and is taking me a lifetime to do it but I am learning. And, you know what? It makes life so much less stressful. Before I answered God's call to become a minister I tried everything that I thought would make me happy. I got married, I had children, I started my own business. But none of it worked. The marriages fell apart, my children grew up and my business was not filling the void that I felt deep within myself. Deep down I knew I was supposed to be doing something else.

Once I said "yes" all else started falling into place. Oh, I didn't have it easy still. Raising children as a single parent while going to school and working two jobs is not easy but, somehow, I was happier in myself because I felt I was doing what I had been born to do. And, somehow the funds to do it always appeared *and* somehow I found caring people to provide moral support *and* when I needed experience in specific areas opportunities opened up and, and, and.... When I look back now I shake my head in wonder and gratitude. My journey has taught me to trust - in God. When we are doing what God wants, the means we need to do it will always be provided - here in this life, on this earth. We don't have to be perfect, we don't have to be anything other than what and who we are. We just need to be open and trust that God knows what is best for us.

And that is how we live a Christian life, that is how we live the way Jesus did. It is not about believing the 'right' things or following the 'right' rules that other people have formulated. It is about living true to what is in our hearts which is what we call authenticity. It is living with integrity and trusting in what the Spirit of God can and will do for and through us - that is how we follow Jesus, as individuals, as a church, as a nation - live in the now, trusting God to lead just as Jesus did. Can't go wrong with that!

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn: Jesus, you Have come to the Lakeshore VU 563

1 Jesus, you have come to the lakeshore
 looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones;
 you only asked me to follow humbly.
 O Jesus, with your eyes you have searched me,
 and while smiling, have spoken my name;
 now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me;
 by your side I will seek other seas.

- 2 You know so well my possessions;
my boat carries no gold and no weapons;
- you will find there my nets and labour. R
- 3 You need my hands, full of caring
through my labours to give others rest,
and constant love that keeps on loving. R
- 4 You, who have fished other oceans,
ever longed for by souls who are waiting,
my loving friend, as thus you call me. R

Minute for Mission

Offering

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.**

Jesus calls us to offer all that we are in following his way of justice, peace and love.
Part of the way we do that is to offer back to God some of what we have been given.
So let us pray together as we present our tithes and offerings.

Offering Prayer:

**Holy Wisdom, guide us as we follow in the way of Jesus, the way of Love.
Spirit, bless our gifts of money, which we offer in service of your mission in the world.
Sacred Presence, bless us as we renew our efforts to be disciples. Amen.**

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- Birthdays
 - Marg Shortt celebrates on Fri Jan 26th

Prayer Prelude: Where Two or Three are Gathered MV 14

**Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there, I am there. (Repeat)**

Prayers of the People:

Lords' Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven.
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom 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,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn: Jesus Christ is Waiting (vs 1,3,5)

VU 117

- 1 Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets;
no one is his neighbour, all alone he eats.
Listen, my Jesus, I am lonely too.
Make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you.
- 3 Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets;
curing those who suffer, touching those he greets.
Listen, my Jesus, I have pity too.
Let my care be active, healing just like you.
- 5 Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets,
'Who will join my journey? I will guide their feet.'
Listen, my Jesus, let my fears be few.
Walk one step before me; I will follow you.

***Sending Forth:**

As we go into the future God has promised,
remember that God is there before us,
God is here beside us.
God is the path we follow and the light that guides us.
As we go into the future God has promised,
God will be with us all, always:
source of life, source of grace, source of love.
Amen!

***Parting Song: You Shall Go Out with Joy VU 884**

**You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace;
the mountains and the hills will break forth before you,
there'll be shouts of joy, and all the trees of the field
will clap, will clap their hands!**

**And all the trees of the field will clap their hands, (clap, clap)
the trees of the field will clap their hands, (clap, clap)
the trees of the field will clap their hands (clap, clap)
while you go out with joy. (Repeat)**

Postlude

Prayer for the Week:

You seek us, Holy One, to be participants in the spreading of love on earth. When we hear your call we sometimes respond with "I can't" resounding in our hearts. May we remember,

always, that with your call comes the promise that we are never alone - you are with us always.
Amen.

Welcomers: Linda and Norm Porritt

Counters: Lynne Lamb and Phil Brown

Worship Schedule

January 28th	4 th Sunday after Epiphany	Rev. Felicia Urbanski
February 4	Black History Month	Social Justice Committee
February 11	Transfiguration Sunday	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
February 18	Lent 1 / Communion	Rev. Tom Watson
February 25	Lent 2	Rev. Felicia Urbanski