



**Celebrating
178 Years**



September 1, 2024

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. Felicia Urbanski 519-217-6874

Ann Ward

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 September 1, 2024

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

Prelude

Welcome

Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

To worship is to reach beyond ourselves...

And sense a touch of God's good grace.

To worship is to centre our experience...

In the fulness of God's imagination.

To worship is to light a candle in the soul...

And feel the warmth of God's love.

Together, let us worship God.

Hymn — Morning Meditation (tune VU 518) *(lyrics by The Late Rev. Sylvia Dunstan)*

1. How deep the silence of the soul that rests in God's good grace.

How full the gratitude of heart in God's abiding place.

What rich serenity is found, what courage and release,

When wisdom teaches us to seek the gentle path to peace.

2. Like unseen chimes on moving air, like warmth of morning sun,

Like gladdening, greening, growing things,

Like trees with blooms begun,

Such is God's presence in our lives—a touch without a trace,

Until we turn and find ourselves held fast in God's embrace.

Gathering Prayer (in unison):

Eternal God, you grace our lives, warm us with kindness, love us into being...and you call us to love in return. As we turn to you in worship, turn to us, recreate us, energize us for creative, abundant living. In the spirit of Christ. Amen.

Hymn — VU 577 I've Got Peace Like a River

1. I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river,

I've got peace like a river in my soul.

I've got peace like a river, I've got peace like a river,

I've got peace like a river in my soul.

2. I've got joy like a fountain, I've got joy like a fountain,

I've got joy like a fountain in my soul.

I've got joy like a fountain, I've got joy like a fountain,
I've got joy like a fountain in my soul.

3. I've got love like an ocean, I've got love like an ocean,
I've got love like an ocean in my soul.
I've got love like an ocean, I've got love like an ocean,
I've got love like an ocean in my soul.

Children's Time

Ministry of Music: You've Got a Friend *played by Suzanne Flewelling and Rene Crespo*

Gospel Reading — Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.

So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?"

He said to them, "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines. You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, "Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person."

Epistle Reading — James 1:17-18, 22-25

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

Sermon: "It's What We Do That Matters"

The sermon title for this morning is "It's What We Do That Matters."

But let me begin with things that we just don't do.

- Don't go where you're not invited.
- Don't talk about what you don't know.
- Don't interfere with things that are none of your business.
- Don't open the fridge in someone else's house.
- Don't call somebody after 11 pm.
- Don't enter other people's bedrooms without permission.
- If you're a staff member on the Canadian women's Olympics soccer team, don't fly a drone over the other team's practice session. It's called cheating.

I remember a confirmation class I once had. I think we were talking about the Ten Commandments. Going through all the "Thou shalt nots"—the don't do these things. So I asked the class what are some things you just don't do. Dead silence. Then one teenage girl said, "You don't break wind at the dinner table." That's not the way she said it, but you get the point.

A month ago, Julia and I went on a road trip along Number 3 Highway. We went through St. Thomas, Port Stanley, Shedden, New Glasgow, Blenheim, and Wheatley—the town near where I grew up.

The next town is Leamington. Just south of Leamington is where my Uncle Harold built a chicken hatchery and poultry farm. I worked there all through my high school years. In due course, the operation was inherited by his grandson, my second cousin, Ralph.

I wanted to show the place to Julia so I pulled in and drove back the laneway. As we were coming back out the lane, I thought we should stop and see if Ralph and Margie were home. They were, and they were really glad to see us.

There was only one hitch. It was 10 after 6 pm. I hadn't been totally aware of the time. They were right in the middle of dinner. Let's just say it was a bit awkward.

"Gee, I wish we had known you were coming; we would have made dinner for you."

"That's okay. We weren't sure we'd be stopping here until we pulled in."

"Can we at least get you a coffee?"

"Sure. That would be fine."

We had a great time chatting, and left at about 7:15.

"Sure you wouldn't like to stay overnight? We have lots of room."

"No, we'll just be on our way."

As I said, it was a bit awkward. For both them and for us.

That's when I realized that I could add one more thing that you don't do to my list: Don't drop in on somebody at mealtime.

In today's gospel reading, the Scribes and the Pharisees noticed that Jesus' disciples were eating without washing their hands. Even though it was right there in the ceremonial tradition, passed down for generations, that you always wash your hands before eating.

It's tradition. Isn't it interesting how tradition shapes us and what we do?

Michelle Collins, Lutheran minister in the U.S., originally from Kenya, writes as follows: I grew up in Kenya. In Kenya, the practice of offering a hot drink to visitors is a cultural tradition. Whether you're visiting someone in a mud hut in the heat of the desert, or a multiple-building complex in a city, you will be given a hot drink.

The hot drink has nothing to do with being thirsty. In Kenya, hot drinks are a sign of hospitality and community...a sign of relationship and respect. A tradition.

I didn't realize how deeply this tradition had impacted me until I came to the United States one summer and stayed with some friends...and in the two weeks I was with them, they never once offered me a hot drink.

I was somewhat offended and even a little judgmental of them. Didn't I matter to them? Never mind that they were feeding me every day, sharing their home and life with me...they didn't offer me a hot drink.

It was tradition. To let guests sit there without offering them a hot drink dishonored the tradition.

As the writer said, it didn't matter whether you wanted, or needed, a hot drink. The action of offering it was the important part.

It didn't matter whether the disciples' hands were dirty, the ceremonial action of washing them was important. Washing the hands made you presentable to God.

So the Scribes and the Pharisees became very judgmental. Will you just look at those folks over there! Ceremonial cleanliness isn't in the least important to them. They're just not right. They're not faithful people.

It's so easy to be judgmental of other people. And so we draw lines...insiders and outsiders...good people and not so good people...our people and those people...faithful people and unfaithful people.

But then Jesus says, "It's not the washing your hands that determines your faithfulness. It's what's in your heart."

In other words, it's what you do that matters.

The movie *As Good As It Gets* stars Jack Nicholson as Marvin Udall, an obsessive-compulsive author of romance novels. He spends several hours a day writing.

He also spends quite a bit of time making sure he doesn't step on the cracks in the New York City sidewalks, and that no other occupants of the sidewalk so much as brush against him as he walks along the crowded streets.

He insults everyone he comes in contact with. Whether they are his gay neighbor, or the Jewish patrons of his favorite restaurant who dare to sit at his favorite table, he fouls the air with his prejudices against them.

There's one other thing that Udall does. He has a compulsive hand-washing ritual. In his medicine chest, there is row upon row of bars of antiseptic soap, each individually wrapped in cellophane, never before touched by human hands.

During his hand-washing ritual, he goes through several bars of soap. He swipes each bar only once across his palms before discarding it and unwrapping another. Then he rinses his hands in water so hot it nearly raises blisters. It's a must that he keep his hands clean.

Jesus would remind Marvin Udall that it's not the germs that he might ingest if he doesn't wash his hands that should be his concern, but all the verbal garbage that he spews. That's what indicates who he really is.

Why do you do what you do? Because of tradition? Because you believe it will keep you safe? Because it will make you look good?

In the Epistle of James, the writer says, "Be doers of the word, and not merely hearers; otherwise we deceive ourselves."

In other words, we can sit here in church all day, pray from morning to night, listen to countless sermons, sing our hymns, but if we don't put into practice what our faith proclaims...it really doesn't matter a whit.

What matters?

- How you treat other people.
- Whether you try to make a difference in your community, your world.
- Whether you practice faith, hope, love.

I recently saw a piece on YouTube by Tyler Perry—actor, writer, producer, comedian and director. Tyler Perry is Black. He says:

I grew up in New Orleans. My mother worked as a daycare assistant at the Jewish community centre. The man I was told was my father was a carpenter...and a functional alcoholic. He was abusive to my mother and me. Not much more than a baby herself when she married this man, my mother tried her best to protect me from him. But with no life-skills of her own, she did what she knew how to do.

Friday was payday for him, so he would come home happy, but that was short-lived. He would go out, and return a few hours later drunk and angry, yelling and fighting her.

I had a lot of darkness in my life when I was growing up. But as I look back, there were many people who had a hand in shining light into my darkness.

I had just started high school, and in order for me to get there I had to walk through the drug dealers, literally step over the drug addicts, walk through a graveyard, then in the next block past gang members, then go through the projects, then come to a six-lane intersection...and it was always busy. Just beyond that was the school.

One day as I was approaching this intersection, I heard a voice saying, "Will someone help me cross?" He was in a suit. He had a cooler and folding lawn chair in one hand, and his cane in the other. "Will someone help me cross?" he repeated.

People kept ignoring him, walking past with their busy lives. We were poor, but we were always busy. I don't know why poor people are so busy.

I said, in my 13-year-old changing voice, "I'll help you."
He said, "Well, thank you, son. May I have your shoulder?"
I said, "Yes, sir."
He said, "Don't trick me now!"
I said, "No, sir. I won't."

We crossed the street. I asked him where he was going. He told me he was going to my school...to sell praline candies to the kids. So I helped him to the school, and he thanked me. And he told me that God would bless me for my kindness.

His name was Mr. Butler. We became friends. We took that walk together every day.

I came out of school one day, and there he was, sitting in his lawn chair, selling praline candies to the children. And I saw some of the kids trying to buy candy, and they gave Mr. Butler a dollar, and told him it was a five dollar bill. I stepped in and I said, "Mr. Butler, this is a scam. That's only a one dollar bill." Needless to say, I had a lot of enemies at that school.

But it didn't matter. I was glad to do it. You see, Mr. Butler was one of the first men in my life to see me. See me! See who I really was. And that made it all the more special was that he was blind. But he was a point of light.

One morning I was late meeting him, and as I walked up to the intersection I could see Mr. Butler standing there, not saying a word. So I tiptoed up behind him...and I started to say something, but then I thought, I'm just going to wait and see what happens.

He said, "I know you're there, son." I said, "Yes, sir, I am."

I said, "I didn't hear you saying, "Will someone help me cross.""
He said, "No, I was listening for you."
I said, "You were?"
He said, "Yes. Sometimes in life, son, when you pray and you said all you can say, all you have to do is stand...and wait...and listen."

What a point of light he was.

There are many people in this world who are wanting, waiting, saying, asking, begging, hoping, "Will someone help me cross?"

We all have the power to be a point of light. Like Mr. Butler was to me. To help somebody cross.

It's not the ceremonial things—the washings, all the other stuff we do—that matter. It's whether we take the time and the trouble to help somebody cross—to be a point of light to

them.

It's what we do that matters.

Amen.

Hymn: Draw the Circle Wide MV 145

(refrain) Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.

Let this be our song, no one stands alone.

Standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

1. God the still-point of the circle, 'round whom all creation turns;
Nothing lost but held forever in God's gracious arms. *(refrain)*

2. Let our hearts touch far horizons, so encompass great and small;
Let our loving know no borders, faithful to God's call. *(refrain)*

3. Let the dreams we dream be larger than we've ever dreamed before
Let the dream of Christ be in us, open every door. *(refrain)*

Poem — "On the Tattered Edges of Life" by Tom Watson

He sits on a bench in the city square,
Shoulders striving to remain erect
But struggling in vain against something unseen.
His eyes are languid—limp from the weight of living—
Yet not hardened in either anger or despair.
One of a generation's forgotten, he sits
On the tattered edges of life.

He smiles as I walk by. I nod.
"Bit of a chill in the air," he says. I nod again.
He holds his hand out. I steel. For the touch I know is coming.
"Can you spare a minute?" he asks, smiling again.
An unusual request. Can I spare...not money...just time.
And not a lot, just a minute. One leftover minute
For someone on the tattered edges of life.

Another day, another place, a woman gets on a condo elevator,
Half-slumps against the side. "Are you okay?" I ask.
She sighs. Then, "I have to go to the hospital."
"Would you like me to take you?"
"I don't want to trouble you. You see...
I'm an alcoholic. I need a drink first. Or I won't make it."
She's teetering...on the tattered edges of life."

What has led them to this place?
The forgotten man, the addicted woman?
Is this their destiny—to remain forever
On the tattered edges of life?

Or is there something that will offer hope?
Treatment? Touch?
Or maybe just one minute of time.
Will I spend it—that one minute—
And make a difference?

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- Birthdays
 - Ken McCorquodale celebrates his 90th on Sept. 1st
 - Marjorie Lister celebrates her 93rd on Sept. 1st
 - Larry Broom celebrates on Sept. 1st
 - Kaillie Rawn celebrates on Sept. 5th

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer

Offering Invitation

Offering Hymn: VU # 541 Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow

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

Hymn: God Speaks to Me (tune VU 625) (lyrics by S. R. Purchase)

1. God speaks to me in varied ways while on life's path I tread;
From sunlit peak and crested wave, my hungry soul is fed.
In dappled skies, in coloured leaf, the seasons cast their spell
Like magic carpets on the earth. With God all things are well.
2. God speaks to me in varied ways—through parent, teacher, friend,
Who through my daily pilgrimage their gifts of love extend:
The constant care, the steadfast hope, the witness that they show
In sacrificial ways, that a fuller life may know.
3. God speaks to me in varied ways, that I may hear the voice
Of One who comes to be the Way, the Truth, the Light, the Life.
The name is Christ—my guide and friend—his daily help I seek
To give me strength and health and joy, that of God I may speak.

Benediction (sung, tune Morning Has Broken MV 409)

New life has bloomed here, God's love has warmed us;

Now the world calls us to go spread that love.
God's peace go with us, may it sustain us,
And bring us together, to praise God again.

Postlude: We Shall Overcome sung by Tom Watson, accompanied by Suzanne Flewelling and Rene Crespo

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.

Welcomers: Vivian and Havey Andrews

Counters: Karen Smillie, Mary Lloyd

Worship Schedule

September 8	Creation Time Begins	Rev. Felicia Urbanski
September 15	17 th Sunday after Pentecost	Rev. Linda Butler
September 22	18 th Sunday after Pentecost	Social Justice Committee
September 29	National Day of Reconciliation	Rev. Jeff Hawkins