



**Celebrating
179 Years**



May 25, 2025

Melville United Church

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**Melville United Church
Pride Sunday May 25, 2025
God's Love in Colours**

*Melville Social Justice Team
Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber*

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Acknowledging the Territory

We acknowledge that we live on the Traditional land of the Petun, Haudenosaunee, Anishinabewaki, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Odawa and Mississauga people. We gather for worship, Creator, on this land with thanksgiving in our hearts. We acknowledge our responsibility to live in balance with Nature and to forge new relations with those who can teach us so much about respecting Creation.

Lighting the Christ Candle

We light the Christ candle, reminding us that God's light shines among us and we are called to carry that light into the world in beautiful, colourful, loving ways.

Call to Worship

God, ever faithful Creator of us all, we gather together today and welcome your Spirit as we celebrate the diversity and value of all people.

Blessed are those who embrace one another with joy.

God, The Potter, when you crafted and called each of us into being, you delighted in your works. You gifted us with differences that illuminate the breadth of beauty, wisdom, and practices of love in your creation. In whatever ways we still struggle to accept and celebrate our own unique offerings, free us from narrow thinking that confines, constrains, or condemns your good work in us. Amen.

Hymn: Sing Out *Words and Music by Mary-Ellen Kish*

Sing out, sing out for freedom. Sing out united as one.

Sing out, sing out for freedom.

Proudly we are singing.

Stand up, stand up for justice. Stand up for justice united as one.

Stand up, stand up for justice.

Proudly we are standing.

March on, march on for action. March on united as one.

March on, march for action.

Proudly we are marching.

Living, living with purpose. Living united as one.

Living, living with purpose.

Proudly we are living.

Loving, loving out boldly. Loving united as one.
Loving, loving out boldly.
Proudly we are loving.

Gathering Prayer

One: Creating God—God beyond Gender,

**All: who makes no mistakes,
who surprises us always,
who molded the first person both male and female,
who molded the first non-gendered human
who loves all creation.**

One: Help us love the diversity of your creation.

All: Help us accept all varieties of gender in ourselves and in others.

One: Help us celebrate those who are different from us

**All: That we may learn to love each other as you love us,
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, both human and divine.**

One: Creating God—God of Mercy,

All: As we acknowledge the diversity in this amazing world, we must also admit that, at times, we have forgotten the wonders of that diversity.

We have longed for things to be familiar and as they have always been.

We know that those who express their being in ways different than the majority, still suffer prejudice, harm and pain. For this we are truly sorry and ask for your patience, love and guidance as we strive for ways to be more inclusive and celebrate all in this wondrous world.

Amen.

Hymn: My Love Colours Outside the Lines MV 138

1. My love colours outside the lines,
exploring paths that few could ever find;
and takes me into places
where I've never been before,
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.
2. My Lord colours outside the lines,
turns wounds to blessings, water into wine;
and takes me into places
where I've never been before
and opens doors to worlds outside the lines.
- 3, 4 We'll never walk on water
if we're not prepared to drown,
body and soul need a soaking
from time to time.
And we'll never move the grave-stones
if we're not prepared to die,

and realize there are worlds outside the lines.

Time with Children: The Colours of God's Love

Lighting of the Candles

We light the red candle, symbolizing life in all its richness.

- the orange candle, symbolizing healing
- the yellow candle, symbolizing sunlight.
- the green candle, symbolizing nature.
- the blue candle, symbolizing harmony.
- the purple candle, symbolizing Spirit.

Celebration Music: I Was Born This Way

[Born This Way: Met Pride](#) (video)

Scripture: *read by Shawna Mallory-Dunsmore*

Psalm 139:14

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.

Mark 12:28-31

One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD. And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

Reflection "My Journey in God's Grace" Barb Smith-Young

I want to start by telling you about this exciting opportunity in Centre Wellington!

We are having our first local Pride Community Celebration on Saturday, June 14!

I have been on the planning team for this event and we are so excited for our community!

So come and join in this celebration!

Before I begin my story I want to introduce some terms.

Many of you will know what some of these letters represent. Some of you may know what all of them represent. And to be honest, there more letters than what is you see here. But this is the grouping that is most often used at the moment.

2S	Two Spirit
L	Lesbian
G	Gay
B	Bisexual

T Transgender
Q Queer or Questioning
I Intersex
A Asexual
+ includes all the other ways people choose to self-identify

I am not going to explain each letter right now. You can read a bit more definition in the hand out that was provided for those of you attending worship in the building. What's important is what they are about. They represent how someone identifies in terms of their sexual orientation and/or their gender identity and gender expression.

For example, my sexual orientation is to those who identify as male. I am married to someone who identifies as male. Because I am attracted to the opposite gender I am called "heterosexual" or "straight"

For example, I identify as female and I was assigned female at birth. This is called cis-gender. I will explain gender orientation a little more later.

As I speak, I will shorten all these letters to LGBTQ+ because it is a little easier to say but it represents much more than that.

Here is my story:

This is my family – Greg and me and our 2 young adult children, Rachel and Cal

Life is a journey.

Every one of us can look back through our lives and see how we have changed, what we have learned, and how we have experienced God's grace.

This is my story of God's grace.

Let me start with when I was in high school. We never talked about sexual orientation or gender identity. I did not know anyone that identified as gay or lesbian, or so I thought. In reality, I had some very good friends who were gay. But in the 80s in a rural high school, you would never share that. The culture and the Christian community around me framed my beliefs. I believed that God's design was that one must be female or male, and only attracted to the opposite sex. Anything outside of those parameters must not be from God.

When I went to university I had to start to wrestle with what I believed. I had colleagues and friends that identified as gay or lesbian and they were open about it. I loved them dearly. I wanted the best for them. I couldn't reconcile what I thought I believed with what I was experiencing with my friendships.

This wrestling continued in my adult years. The older I got, more and more people who identified as gay, lesbian or trans were in my life. Some of them were Christians who God was using in amazing ways to spread the good news of Jesus. God was teaching me so much about grace.

For a long time I felt like I was teetering on the top of a fence. On one side of the fence, was where I had been, what I had believed. On the other side, was a fully affirming belief. That who you are sexually attracted to and what gender you identify with is all part of God's beautiful creation of you! And God the Creator of us all, is proud of each of us and deeply loves all of us. I wanted to fully embrace this new understanding of my Creator and my fellow human beings.

And then one day I fell off the fence. I fell into the arms of our oldest child, Rachel. In 2016 Rachel courageously told us that she is lesbian, that her sexual attraction is to women, not to men. And in that moment, I couldn't have loved my child more. The courage it took for her to tell us was enormous. And my love for her exploded. As a parent, the selfless love you have for your child is like no other. And you embrace them for who they are. How much more does God, our Eternal Parent love and embrace each one of us for being who we were created to be?

From that moment on, I was wrapped in God's grace as I continued to learn what it meant to support Rachel and support other LGBTQ+ people around me.

We know there are many Christian perspectives on sexuality and gender. And there are things in the Bible to wrestle with.

What guides me on my journey is these words from Jesus in Mark 12:29-31.

Jesus said, "The most important commandment is this: Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important: Love your neighbour as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these."

Whether I am right or wrong is not the most important question for me. Jesus' instruction is for me to love God and also to love my neighbour. Do I truly love my neighbour, especially if they are different from me? If I want to love my neighbour, I need to listen to my neighbour.

Greg and I went to a weekend retreat with a national organization called "Generous Space". Generous Space was a supportive Christian community for LGBTQ+ people, their friends, families, and allies.

At first we wondered if we belonged at this retreat. When we asked others, the answer was "YES!". We listened to their stories of rejection from family and friends and their church. We listened to their pain of not being included in the body of Christ. We listened to their pain of not being allowed to share their God given gifts such music leadership, or serving on boards in their churches, or being ministers. It was heart breaking!

They were happy we were there. Because we represented hope. As parents who celebrate our lesbian child, we represented their hope for acceptance in their families. As ministers who supported them, we represented their hope of full inclusion in the body of Christ. We listened and learned, and the Holy Spirit filled us with grace. And we worshiped the Creator of all of us! I have experienced a lot of worship experiences in my life but when I worshiped with my LGBTQ+

siblings in Christ at this retreat, it was the most Holy Spirit filled worship I have had ever experienced! Was God present. Yes indeed!!

This weekend was teaching me to listen. To listen to my neighbour. To listen to the Holy Spirit. And through it all God's grace was transforming me.

Remember the scripture I shared earlier...love God, love your neighbour...God was teaching me so much about love.

This led Greg and me to join with some others in our Centre Wellington community, to form a Generous Space group. We want to be a safe space for others in our community who are LGBTQ+ (or are parents or allies) and who are Christian or curious about the Christian faith.

This is the poster for Fergus Elora Generous Space. I have these available and business cards, which you can pick up after the worship service. And I am happy to tell you more about this group.

Now back to my story.

My journey continues as I learn from so many around me. Yes, Rachel, but also friends, colleagues, my community, the youth I work with and so many more. God keeps placing wonderful people in my life and I keep learning by listening to my neighbour

One of those neighbours is our youngest child, Cal. About a year ago, Cal told us they are "non-binary". Cal was realizing that neither a male identity nor a female identity fits them well. Cal wanted to be free of those gender expectations. The child, and now young adult, who we had always called Caleb, wanted to be known as "Cal". Instead of using pronouns such as he/him – Cal preferred we use they/them, neutral pronouns that don't indicate a specific gender.

Remember back at the beginning I talked about "gender identity" – this is where "non-binary" fits in. It's about what someone knows about themselves on the inside. It may not match the gender they were assigned at birth. I like to think of gender identity and gender expression as a line.

"masculine-----feminine"

Different people would place themselves at different points on the line. For example, I am anatomically female and mostly identify and express myself in traditionally feminine ways but I am not always into all that "girly" stuff so I would put myself somewhere on the line but closer to feminine.

Cal would be somewhere on the line closer to the middle.

Cal is Cal, not defined by gender roles and expectation we may place on them.

This was a lot to take in as parents! But God's grace shone through this and just as my love exploded for Rachel, my love exploded for Cal as they courageously shared this all with us.

Nothing can change the fact that Cal is our beloved second child who God has beautifully created. They are the child who God “knit together in my womb”. This didn’t erase all that we had experienced with Cal as a younger child. In fact it enhanced it. That’s not to say it was easy. We stumbled a lot over Cal’s name and pronouns and we still do. But Cal is gracious and forgiving as we continue to learn and grow.

You, here at Melville United Church, are a community of faith who are also continuing to learn and grow and striving to outwardly show more of God’s grace and love our neighbour. Thank you!

Most Christian communities are not easy to be part of if you are a member of the LGBTQ+ community. We have caused much pain over the years. We have not acted with God’s love and grace. We have not loved our neighbour.

I know Melville is striving to do better. Thank you!
And with God’s grace you will do better!
Keep striving to be a community where everyone belongs. Where everyone is valued. And where everyone is celebrated as God’s beautiful creation.
Before I end, I want to go back to the beginning.
Remember me as a youth, a young adult?
I had no idea the journey God was going to take me on.
But every step of it was bathed in God’s grace.

Now I wear this t-shirt “Proud Mom” with the pride flag.
I am a proud mom of 2 amazing young adults!

And in 6 days we will celebrate the marriage of Rachel and Jessy!

That makes me a proud mom of 3 amazing young adults!

All 3 of them show me over and over what it means to love, to serve, to work for a better world.

And I will continue to learn how to follow Jesus instruction – to Love God and to Love my Neighbour.

Thank you God for the journey! Amen.

Ministry of Music: Find A Home Here *Words and music by Mary-Ellen Kish. Arranged by Gwen Chapman. Performed by Spirit Sings.*

Invitation of Offering

Offertory Hymn: What Can I Do MV 191

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I’ll sing with joy. I’ll say a prayer.
I’ll bring my love. I’ll do my share. (x2)

Offertory Prayer

Mission Story: Protecting Love Around the World *read by Heather Halls*

"This is a life and death matter." Published On: May 14, 2025

We are blessed to live in Canada, a country that recognizes the right to love whoever you want, regardless of their gender or sex. And while we haven't always done what is right, The United Church of Canada now recognizes that all love—including Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ relationships—is holy and blessed by God. But those rights do not exist in many parts of the world today.

"One of our partners in Kenya has advocated strongly for the human rights of sexual minorities, and that has caused him to be in jail, caused him to risk his life to be able to do that," says the Rev. Michael Blair. The church's first openly gay General Secretary is now helping to advocate for sexual and gender minorities in foreign countries.

"When we hear these stories, we can see that this is a life and death matter."

Your gifts for [Mission and Service](#) help shelter refugees as they escape repressive governments. As of May 2024, 64 jurisdictions criminalize private, consensual, same-sex sexual activity, and 12 countries have jurisdictions in which the death penalty is imposed or at least a possibility for private, consensual, same-sex sexual activity.

Mission and Service also holds consultations in other countries to discover how we can best work with our partners to protect sexual and gender minorities. "A few years ago, we hosted a consultation here in Canada with several partners and asked how we can be supportive of their work," Blair says. "They told us we needed to come and help in their context."

To date, Mission and Service has supported consultations in Latin America and the Philippines.

"We are bringing together leaders to explore how the church can be a place of liberation and life for sexual and gender minorities in those communities. That is happening because of the folks who contribute to Mission and Service," says Blair.

Sharing our Joys and Concerns

- **Birthdays**
 - Bunny Russell celebrates on May 27th
 - Marion Main celebrates on May 31st
- **Anniversaries**
 - Mary & Bruce Lloyd celebrates on May 26th

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

As we pray in silence, we take a moment to express our personal prayers for loved ones and ourselves. For those amongst us who have personal challenges, have family members who are ill and need support, or anyone who is under stress, we pray that God's gentle Spirit will bring peace, spiritual and physical healing.

Empowering, passionate God, may your Spirit guide us in our personal celebrations and concerns. As a body of faith-filled people, may we also be guided in the celebrations and concerns of the gathered body. We celebrate and reflect on the story told by Barb, today, and are grateful for the movement of your Spirit of love, understanding and inclusion here at Melville, Hope Springs, other churches in Centre Wellington. and within the United Church and Canadian society. We pray for wisdom and careful consideration of the topics as we discuss them together in the days and months ahead. We pray that all people who feel excluded by families, faith communities, and society because of who they are may experience your love in their lives. We pray for peace and respect for all in this community, this country, and this world.

We pray for spiritual and political leaders at all levels as they struggle to make the world a better place. We pray that the teachings of Jesus and those of other world faiths will work together to meet the challenges of our world today.

In all of these celebrations and concerns, we are grateful that we can turn to the one who guides us in our lives, saying together...

..the Lord's Prayer

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

Commissioning

This morning we have seen that God's light shines in many different colours, through us. We are called to share this rainbow of colours in our lives—in the conversations and interactions in our lives at home, at work, and at play—as we go out into our community and the world to share the message that God's love is for everyone!

Sung Blessing: Go Now in Peace

Go now in peace. Never be afraid.

God will go with you each hour ev'ry day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: The Rainbow Connection

Welcomer: Doreen and Larry Broome

Counters: Kaillie Rawn, Chris Hopewell

Worship Schedule

June 1 st	7 th Sunday of Easter	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
June 8 th	UCC 100 th Anniversary	Rev. Tom Watson & Lisa Leffler
June 15 th	Trinity Sunday	Rev. Tom Watson
June 22 nd	2 nd after Pentecost	Rev. Linda Butler

Council Meeting June 4th. Please reach out to a Council member if there is a concern or question to be shared with Council.