



**Celebrating
179 Years**



August 17, 2025

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
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, August 17, 2025

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

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

Leaving behind the busyness of daily life...

We draw near to God in this place.

Bringing our thanks and praise, joys and concerns...

We draw near to God in this place.

In this community of faith, let us find the quiet centre...

Where God's spirit can touch ours with new life.

Hymn — Come and Find the Quiet Centre VU 374

1. Come and find the quiet centre
In the crowded life we lead,
Find the room for hope to enter,
Find the frame where we are freed:
Clear the chaos and the clutter,
Clear our eyes, that we can see
All the things that really matter,
Be at peace, and simply be.

2. Silence is a friend who claims us,
Cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us,
Knows our being, face to face,
Making space within our thinking,
Lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking,
Finding scope for faith begun.

3. In the Spirit let us travel,
Open to each other's pain,
Let our loves and fears unravel,
Celebrate the space we gain:
There's a place for deepest dreaming,
There's a time for heart to care,
In the Spirit's lively scheming
There is always room to spare!

Gathering Prayer:

God, light of life—our quiet centre—shine upon us in this place. Surround us and embrace us. Touch us with the spirit of hope that helps us grow each day, that we may become all that you have created us to be. Amen.

Hymn — The Church is Wherever VU 579

1. The church is wherever God's people are praising,
Singing God's goodness for joy on this day.
The church is wherever disciples of Jesus
Remember his story and walk in his way.

2. The church is wherever God's people are helping,
Caring for neighbours in sickness and need.
The church is wherever God's people are sharing
The words of the Bible in gift and in deed.

Children's Time

Ministry of Music — Surely Goodness and Mercy (*Suzanne Flewelling and Rev. Tom Watson*)

Reading — II Kings 5:1-14 *reader Barb Gregory*

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from leprosy.

Now the Arameans, on one of their raids, had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, "If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

So Naaman went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. And the king of Aram said, "Go then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel."

So Naaman went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, "When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his leprosy."

When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, "Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me."

But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, "Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel."

So Naaman came with his horses and chariots, and halted at the entrance of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, "Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean."

But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, "I thought that for me he would surely come out, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and would wave his hand over the spot, and cure the leprosy! Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them, and be clean?" He turned and went away in a rage.

But his servants approached and said to him, "Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, 'Wash, and be clean'?"

So Naaman went down and immersed himself seven times in the Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

Sermon: Overcoming Rejection

I wonder if you heard about the man who bought a donkey from a preacher. The preacher told the man, "Now this donkey—being a preacher's donkey—has been trained in a very unique way.

The only way you can make him go is to shout 'Hallelujah!' And the only way you can make him stop is to shout 'Amen.'

You got it?"

"I got it," replied the man. And he immediately rode off down the road, trying out the instructions the preacher had given him.

- "Hallelujah!" and the donkey trotted along.
- "Amen!" and the donkey stopped dead still in his tracks...until the man shouted "Hallelujah!" again.

Well, the guy was really proud of his new purchase, so he went off on a long run. He journeyed through some mountains, enjoying the scenery as he rode along on his donkey.

- Pretty soon, however, he noticed that they were heading for a cliff. They kept getting closer and closer, and the man started to panic...but he couldn't remember what to say to stop the donkey.
- "Stop!" shouted the man. Donkey kept running.
- "Halt!" he cried. Donkey kept going.

He knew it was some religious word he needed, so he tried all that he could think of. "Bible! Church! Moses!" He even tried "Choir" in his best tenor voice...in case the donkey knew something about music.

Nothing worked. The donkey just kept heading for that cliff.

Finally, in sheer desperation, the man offered a prayer: "Dear Lord, please make this donkey stop or we're on our way over that cliff! Amen!"

Hearing that word "Amen," the donkey came to an abrupt halt. Just one step from the edge of the cliff.

Much relieved, the man threw his arms in the air and shouted, "Hallelujah!"

We don't often bother much with stories from the Old Testament, but there are lots of great stories in Old Testament literature. This morning, we're going to think about one of the best—the story of Naaman, the top general in the Aramean Army.

The time is 800 B.C. Naaman is the commander of the Aramean army. A great man. Highly favoured by the King of Aram. But he has a problem. Leprosy. A disease without a cure. If you got leprosy you were doomed. If it became widely known that Naaman had leprosy, he would be stripped of his general's stripes and cast out of the community, to live in some leper colony.

But Naaman hears, from his wife's slave girl, about a prophet in Israel who can cure him. So he appeals to the King, who sends Naaman off to Israel with 10 talents of silver, 6000 shekels of gold—combined, that's about \$7 million in today's money—and 10 changes of Christian Dior's finest tuxedos...as well as a royal letter of introduction.

And eventually he arrives at the door of Elisha the prophet. But Elisha doesn't even as much as pull open the door to see Naaman. He just sends out his butler to tell Naaman to go and bath 7 times in the Jordan River and he'll be cured.

How do you think Naaman feels about this? He's angry. He feels...rejected.

After all, he's an important guy and this prophet doesn't even bother to take a look at him. No medical examination. No, "Come in here and stick out your tongue so I can have a good look." No, "Chew on 2 cactus roots and come back and see me in the morning." Just, "Go and wash 7 times in the Jordan River and you will be cured."

Understandably, Naaman goes into a sulk. And you can see him walking around in circles and muttering to himself, "Know what? I really didn't ask for that much. Just to be treated with a little dignity and respect. But what do I get? Not even 5 minutes of that lousy prophet's time in order to properly diagnose my situation."

"I can't believe I came all this way for this—some cockamamie prescription to go and wash in that slimy little creek that they call the River Jordan! We've got far better rivers in Damascus. I might just as well have stayed home and took a bath in them...for all the good this is going to do."

So, Naaman is that close to clutching these feelings of rejection to his chest and trotting back home with his leprosy intact. But, fortunately for him, he has some servants who are wiser than he is. And those servants convince him to at least give Elisha's prescription a try.

"Look General Naaman, we agree that bedside manner was not the prophet's strong suit, but we suspect that had he asked you to do some big, complicated thing you would have done it. So, on the off chance that what he suggested might work, why don't you try it?

"Especially after coming all this way. And besides, you really don't have much to lose."

So Naaman goes down to the Jordan River. Dips in the water 7 times. And, lol and behold, he is cured. His skin is restored, the story says, to where it was "like the flesh of a young boy."

Amazing, isn't it? Naaman, doomed to death, rises from the river ready for life. Amazing when a person finds sufficient inner resources to rise above the feelings of anger at being rejected.

I'm sure that all of us have felt rejected at some time or other. I learned it early. Way back in public school. Choosing up teams for some game—baseball, hockey, football—I can still hear the captains calling the names for their sides. Jim. Bob. Gerry. Fred. Chuck. And there I stood. Until at the very last one of them called my name. And even then, had there been somebody else the captain would have chosen him.

And when I went to high school...guess who the girls went to the Junior Prom with? Jim. Bob. Gerry. The guys who were, by now, the football stars. Or Fred and Chuck who could throw the shot-put 85 feet. Big, overgrown, muscle-bound mutants.

And there was 92-pound, 5-foot-nothing me. Not big enough or fast enough to play football...and on the very best of days had trouble throwing that shot-put more than about 3 feet.

I doubt that I'm overstating the case when I say that nobody feels more rejected than a grader 9er with nobody to go to the Junior Prom with. Ah, the cruel tricks that life plays.

- Or there's the job that you had your heart set on that you didn't get.
- Or the starring role in the Little Theatre play that went to somebody else.
- Or the time when you stood in line for 5 hours to get tickets to the Three Big Lulus concert, only to have the Sold Out sign go up and the ticket window close just as you got to it.

Do you know what I mean? Rejection happens. It happened in some of the places where Jesus and his disciples went. And Jesus warned the disciples about it.

"There will be places," Jesus said, "where they will roll out the welcome mat for you. Places where you will be able to stay while you do the work of the kingdom of God—healing the sick, caring for their needs, setting people free to live new lives.

"But there will be other places where there's no welcome mat of any kind—places where you will be rejected.

"So stay where you are welcome. As for those places where you are rejected, wipe the dust of that town from your feet and move on."

And the advice is both clear and practical. Rejection happens. It's a part of life. No use lamenting it. No use lamenting the fact that you don't get what you want. That only leads to death. Put your emphasis on the things that give life.

Life, as we know it, will do some pretty difficult things to us, deal us some pretty terrible blows—reject us, discipline us, humble us, threaten sometimes to do us in, challenge every ounce of courage we have.

But that's life as we know it. Life as Jesus knew it, and as he invites us to see it—life lived forward in faith and hope—can lead to some pretty amazing things. "Shake the dust from your feet of the things that make for death. Concentrate on the things that make for life!"

- We may never make the football team, but there's some other place where we can make our mark.
- We may never get the lead in the Little Theatre play, but the other roles are just as important.
- We may not get the job we thought we wanted, but maybe it wouldn't have been all that fulfilling anyway, and also maybe there's somewhere else that we will find just right for us.

It's a matter of adjusting our attitude and our perspective.

It reminds me of a beautiful story by Robert Fulghum, about the time he was going to play a game called Giants, Wizards and Dwarfs with about 80 children, ages 7 to 10 years old. He gathered them all together in the church hall and explained the game.

It's a large-scale version of Rock, Paper and Scissors, the real purpose being to make a lot of noise and run around chasing other people until nobody knows which side anybody else is on or who won.

Fulghum writes:

The excitement of the game had reached a critical mass. I yelled out, "You have to decide now who you are—a Giant, a Wizard, or a Dwarf!"

While the groups huddled in frenzied, whispered consultation, a tug came at my pant leg. A small child stands there, looking up, and asks in a small, concerned voice, "Where do the Mermaids stand?"

Where do the Mermaids stand? A long pause. A very long pause. "Where do the Mermaids stand?" says I.

"Yes. You see, I am a Mermaid."

"But there's no Mermaids in this game. There are only Giants, Wizards and Dwarfs."

"I can't be a Giant or a Wizard or a Dwarf, but I can be a Mermaid."

The little girl knew her category. She knew where she fit in. Mermaid. And she was not about to leave the game and go stand over against the wall where a loser would stand. She intended to participate, wherever Mermaids fit into the scheme of things, and she took it for granted that I would know where that would be.

Well, where DO all the Mermaids stand? All the Mermaids? All those who are different? Those who do not fit the norm?

What was my answer at that moment? Every once in a while I say the right thing. "The Mermaid stands right here by the King of the Sea!" says I...even though, right then, I felt like the King of the Fools.

So there we stood, the little Mermaid and I, hand in hand, reviewing the troops of Giants and Wizards and Dwarfs, as they rolled by in wild disarray.

Rejected, as she understood it, from the categories of Giants and Wizards and Dwarfs, she found the inner strength and courage to create her own place. A place that meant life for her.

Amazing what happens when we, like this little girl, and like Naaman, the great Aramean general, discover that even our limitations and our rejections can lead us to new life.

Hymn — Oh, Sing to Our God VU 241

1. Oh sing to our God, oh sing out a new song.

Oh sing to our God, oh sing out a new song.

Oh sing to our God, oh sing out a new song.

Oh sing to our God. Oh sing to our God.

2. Oh dance for our God and blow all the trumpets.
Oh dance for our God and blow all the trumpets.
Oh dance for our God and blow all the trumpets.
And sing to our God, and sing to our God.

3. Oh shout to our God, who gave us the Spirit.
Oh shout to our God, who gave us the Spirit.
Oh shout to our God, who gave us the Spirit.
Oh sing to our God. Oh sing to our God.

Sharing our Joys and Concerns

- **Anniversaries**

- Lorri and Richard Wright celebrate on August 23rd

Poem —A Whisper of Autumn *(by Rev. Tom Watson)*

The sullen, hazy days of August
 remind me of my growing-up years—
drawing spring-cold water from
 the pump by the old wooden barn,
then sipping it slowly on the
 swing tied to a maple in the backyard,
listening to the hush of breeze
 threading through the gnarled
branches overhead.

Though heat still clings to the air,
 things are quietly changing—
something in the morning light
 whispers autumn is not far away.
Soon the lilac blooms will vanish,
 the grass will pale, and nature will
wrap itself in brittle browns and
 bleached golds.

And yet, sometimes, in the stillness
 before the leaves begin to fall, I can
still taste that cold water,
 feel the swing beneath me, and hear
the breeze in the branches above.

Prayers of the people and the Prayer of Jesus

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 — I Feel the Winds of God Today VU 625

1. I feel the winds of God today; today my sail I lift,
Though heavy oft with drenching spray and torn with many a rift;
If hope but light the water's crest, and Christ my bark will use,
I'll seek the seas at his behest, and brave another cruise.

2. It is the wind of God that dries my vain regretful tears,
Until with braver thoughts shall rise the purer, brighter years;
If cast on shores of selfish ease or pleasure I should be,
O let me feel your freshening breeze, and I'll put back to sea.

3. If ever I forget your love and how that love was shown,
Lift high the blood-red flag above; it bears your name alone.
Great pilot of my onward way, you will not let me drift;
I feel the winds of God today, today my sail I lift.

Benediction

When we leave this place, and go wherever our lives lead us...

May we feel the winds of God lifting us.

In the daily unfolding of life...

In the sharp pain of growing...

In the darkness of confusion...

In the pleasant valleys of happiness...

In the quiet places of peace and rest...

May we feel the winds of God lifting us.

This day and always.

Amen!

Hymn — 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, within, around, above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude — Precious Lord, Take My Hand by Thomas A. Dorsey performed by Suzanne Flewelling & Rev. Tom Watson

Welcomers: Alison Rainford, Barb Gregory

Counters: Phil Brown, Chris Hopewell

Worship Schedule

August 24th	11th after Pentecost	Rev. Linda Butler
August 31st	12th after Pentecost	Rev. Felicia Urbanski
September 7 th	13 th after Pentecost	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
September 14 th	Creation Time Begins	Social Justice