



**Celebrating
180 Years**



March 22, 2026

Melville United Church
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Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson

Ministry of Music: Suzanne Flewelling

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

Lenten Candle Liturgy *Readers: Suzanne Flewelling and John Cumming*

Lent 5: Extravagant Love

(the Christ candle, three purple and one pink candle are lit prior to worship)

One: The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God will not abandon us even when we are close to despair. God will make a way for us in the

wilderness. God promises us water in the desert and flowers in dry lands.

Two: *(fifth candle is lit)* Thank you God for the blessings of our beautiful earth.

Three: Jesus trusted in God's abundance and calls each one of us to live generous lives. We are challenged to let go of our fear so that we can

become part of the pouring forth of blessing in our world.

One: Let us pray.

All: Gracious God, we give you thanks:

for the gift of Jesus,

for the gift of this new day,

for the gift of the whole creation.

Free us to pour forth our response with grateful hearts and extravagant generosity.

Amen.

Call to Worship

Lent is a time when we contemplate our lives and our faith story...

In light of Jesus' journey towards Jerusalem!

It's a time to ponder...and wonder...

And consider it all in the light of God's love for the world.

Come! Let us sing of God's wonderful love!

Hymn — Come, Let Us Sing of a Wonderful Love VU 574

1. Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,

Tender and true, tender and true;

Out of the heart of the Father above,

Streaming to me and to you:

Wonderful love, wonderful love

Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

2. Jesus the Saviour this gospel to tell

Joyfully came, joyfully came,

Came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,

Sharing their sorrow and shame:
Seeking the lost, seeking the lost,
Saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3. Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
Why do they roam? Why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
Home, weary wanderers, home:
Wonderful love, wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.

4. Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love;
Come and abide, come and abide,
Lifting my life till it rises above
Envy and falsehood and pride:
Seeking to be, seeking to be
Lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Gathering Prayer: Gracious God, enter our lives so that your wonderful love might refresh and renew us. Where we are weak and weary, breathe new life into us. Set us free from anything that might hold us back, and set us on new paths. In the spirit of Christ. Amen.

Hymn — Love Is the Touch MV 89

1. Love is the touch of intangible joy;
Love is the force that no fear can destroy;
Love is the goodness we gladly applaud;
God is where love is, for love is of God.

2. Love is the lilt in a lingering voice;
Love is the hope that can make us rejoice;
Love is the cure for the frightened and flawed;
God is where love is, for love is of God.

3. Love is the light in the tunnel of pain;
Love is the will to be whole once again;
Love is the trust of a friend on the road;
God is where love is, for love is of God.

4. Love is the Maker and Spirit and Son;
Love is the kingdom their will has begun;
Love is the path which the saints all have trod:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

Children's Time

Ministry of Music — "Breath of God"

Verse 1

Breathe on me, Breath of God
Fill me with life anew

That I may love what you would love
That I may do what you would do

Verse 2

Breathe on me, Breath of God
Until my heart is true and pure
Until with you I have one will
As long as life and love endure

Chorus

Holy Spirit fill us, guide our wandering hearts
Fix our eyes on Jesus, evermore
To adore him

Verse 3

Breathe on me, breath of God
So shall I never die
By your side forevermore
To live with you the perfect life

Chorus

Holy Spirit fill us, guide our wandering hearts
Fix our eyes on Jesus, evermore
To adore him

Reading — Ezekiel 37:1-14 *reader Lara Johnston*

The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.

He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. He said to me, "Mortal, can these bones live?" I answered, "O Lord God, you know."

Then he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord."

So, I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.

Then he said to me, "Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.' Therefore prophesy, and say to

them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act," says the Lord.

Sermon: "Small Good Things Bring New Life"

Some time ago, I read an article by a person who had just finished 40 years in ministry and was giving advice to younger ministers. Here are two of the tips he offered.

One: Be More Serious. Humour can get you into a lot of trouble. Life would have been easier if I had been more pious.

So, my advice is to be boring. People expect the minister to be stuffy. It's the best way to hold onto your job.

Two: Try and look good at all times. That's the first responsibility of a minister: look good. There's too much ugliness in the world without ministers adding to it. A really ugly minister prompts the question: "Who sinned, this one or the parents, that he looks so awful?"

On the other hand, there is also a danger in looking too good. When I look back at my career, I see that my early problems stemmed from looking too good. Then I lost my hair, and that solved all the problems. Now my looks are just about perfect for the ministry...and for radio.

Now, that has nothing at all to do with the sermon. It starts here!

The book of Ezekiel contains a number of visions that the prophet Ezekiel had. One is where God leads Ezekiel to this vast valley of dried-up old bones and invites Ezekiel to consider the question: "Mortal, can these bones live again?"

And we can ask ourselves the same question: When all around us seems lifeless and hopeless, can we live again? And, if so, how?

I want to tell you a story by American writer Raymond Carver. Carver's story suggests our beginning point to new life comes from "small, good things." The story is about a profound experience in the life of Ann and Howard Weiss, in which small good things like sitting down and eating and talking together...and connecting with each other in small but good ways...turn things around. Here's an abridged version of "A Small Good Thing."

Ann and Howard's son Scotty would be 8 years old on Monday and there was to be a party. So, on Saturday afternoon, Ann Weiss drove to the bakery in the shopping centre and ordered a birthday cake...lettered on top simply "Scotty"...to be picked up on Monday morning. There wasn't much conversation between Ann and the baker. No pleasantries. Just the necessary information.

Ann took note that the baker was a big man. Coarse features. Not at all jolly. Abrupt. Not rude, just abrupt. She thought that someone the baker's age must have children who also had birthdays and birthday parties—there must be at least this in common between them—but

there was obviously no point in trying to be friendly with him. Just leave him to his baking racks and enormous oven, and his country western music that was blaring on his radio.

"Monday morning then?" said the baker.

"Yes," said Ann, "Monday morning."

On Monday morning, Scotty was walking to school with another boy. Without looking, Scotty stepped off the curb at an intersection and was knocked down by a car. He fell on his side. His eyes closed. The car that hit him stopped momentarily but then sped away.

Scotty got up and walked home. But when he sat on the sofa and began to tell his mother about it, he suddenly lay backwards, closed his eyes, and went limp. The birthday party was cancelled. Scotty was rushed to the hospital.

Doctors. Nurses. X-rays. Tests. "No, it's not a coma," assured Dr. Francis. "Soon he'll wake up and come around."

After a time, Howard drove home for a shower and to change his clothes. Ann stayed at the hospital. Just as he went through the door of his house, the phone rang.

"There's a cake here that wasn't picked up!" said the voice on the other end.

"What are you saying?" Howard asked.

"A cake," the voice said. "A sixteen dollar cake!"

Howard angrily hung up the phone. He didn't know anything about any cake.

A little after midnight, Howard got back to the hospital. He tried to get Ann to go home for some rest, and then added, "Just don't put up with this creep who keeps calling. Hang up right away."

"Who's calling?" Ann asked.

"I don't know. Just somebody with nothing better to do than call people. You go now."

"No," Ann said. "I'm fine. I'm staying here."

So they stayed that night. And through the next morning. Nurses came in and did things but wouldn't tell them what or why.

Dr. Francis came and once again assured them that Scotty's condition would improve soon...in spite of the fact that he appeared to Ann and Howard to be getting worse.

Other specialists came. Orderlies took Scotty away for more tests. Just routine medical procedures, everybody said.

They waited all day and into the next night. At 5 o'clock in the morning Ann decided to go home for some rest. And to feed the dog. As she sat down on the sofa while the dog ate, the phone rang.

"Yes!" she answered. "Hello!"

"Mrs. Weiss," the man's voice said.

"Yes!" she replied. "Is it about Scotty?"

"Scotty." The voice said. "It's about Scotty, yes. It has to do with Scotty. That problem. Have you forgotten about Scotty?"

Then he hung up.

She was sick at her stomach. And scared. Who was it that was calling? Was it the man who hit him with his car?

She drove back to the hospital. Howard was standing by the window. "Dr. Francis was here a little while ago. With a neurologist. They're going to run more tests. They might have to operate."

They went and stood at Scotty's bedside. Suddenly he opened his eyes. Then closed them again, cried out with a loud cry, and breathed his last.

Ann and Howard wept with each other, and then slowly, reluctantly, and in a daze, drug their feet to the parking lot and drove home.

At home, they sat on the sofa sometimes, walked around aimlessly sometimes, made coffee, cried some more. The phone rang. Ann answered.

It was the same man again. "Your Scotty. I got him ready for you. Did you forget him?" "Who is this?" shouted Ann. "You evil...! How can you do this, you evil...!" "Scotty," the man said. "Have you forgotten about Scotty?" And then he hung up.

The phone rang again about midnight. Howard answered this time. But the line went dead. "It was him," said Howard, "I'm sure of it." And Ann replied, "I'd like to kill him!"

Then it occurred to her. "I know who it is! The baker! He's calling to harass us for not picking up the birthday cake!"

They drove to the bakery. It was closed but they could see him working inside. They banged on the doors. The baker unlocked the door and opened it. "What do you want at this hour? It's midnight! Are you drunk or something?" Then he recognized Ann. "It's you," he said.

"Yes, it's me. Scotty's mother. And this is Scotty's father." Ann stared at the baker fiercely. Her fists were clenched. There was a deep burning inside of her.

"Oh, you want your cake, don't you. There it is. 3 days old now. I'll give it to you for half of what I quoted." He paused. "No. It's no good to me anyway. Just take it and go. It's late, and bakers have to work at night."

"I know bakers work at night. They also make phone calls at night. You evil..." The baker squirmed. He clenched his rolling pin and tapped it against his hand.

Finally, Ann said, coldly, "My son's dead. He was hit by a car Monday morning. He's dead, Mr. baker. He's dead!" She leaned against the wooden table, put her hands over her face and began to cry.

"Shame on you," Howard said to the baker. "Shame...on...you!"

The baker undid his apron and threw it on the counter. He shook his head slowly. He pulled out a chair. "Sit down, please."

Ann wiped her eyes and looked at him. "I wanted to kill you," she said. "I wanted you dead."

The baker pulled out 2 more chairs. They all sat down. "Let me say how sorry I am," said the baker. "I didn't know. I'm just a baker. So busy being a baker that I'd forgotten how to be anything else. I don't have any children myself so I can only imagine what you must be feeling."

He spread his hands out on the table and turned them over to reveal his palms. "I'm sorry for your son, and for doing what I did. Forgive me if you can. I'm not an evil man. I just don't know how to act anymore."

The baker found some cups and poured some coffee. He put some cream and sugar on the table. "You probably need to eat something. Maybe some of my hot rolls. You have to eat and keep going.

Eating is a small good thing at a time like this."

He served them cinnamon rolls, just out of the oven. They were hungry. Ann ate 3. Then they began to talk.

Howard and Ann nodded when the baker spoke of loneliness, and what it was like to be childless all these years. What it was like to repeat day after day with the baking ovens endlessly full and endlessly empty. Thousands of wedding cakes with tiny wedding couples stuck in them, and icing knuckle-deep.

But then he added, "But it's good to be able to feed people. Here, have a taste of this." He handed them a dark molasses loaf. They ate what they could.

They talked on into the early morning. Just the three of them. Talking there at the baking table. And they did not think of leaving.

(end of story)

A small good thing: Ann and Howard Weiss and the baker eating cinnamon rolls and dark molasses bread and drinking coffee together. Finding, as they talked, something to share in their common humanity. Bridging their grief and their anger and their loneliness through some small good thing shared together.

The baker, so caught up in the daily task that he had forgotten how to live and how to act, becomes the Christ figure who gives communion to 2 people angry enough to wish him dead. A moment so profound that "they did not even think of leaving."

In this moment all 3 people discover that other things had overtaken them. For the baker, it was his daily agenda. For Ann and Howard Weiss it was their grief and anger. But in this small good thing of eating together, they re-discover the human values that bind them one to the other.

I wonder...can we, too, get so caught up in other things—our daily agendas, our grief, our loss, our loneliness, our fear, our whatever—so caught up that we forget that more important than

anything else are the human values that bind us to each other? That we forget that we are all in this business of living together?

Stand, for a moment, with Ezekiel...out there in that valley of dry bones. No matter where you look there's no life at all. Just a bunch of dried up, wizened old bones.

You know what that's like. Out there in life's barren place where there's that sense that everywhere you look it's just a valley of dried-up old bones.

I suspect you do know what it's like.

- For various reasons, the things we had worked so hard on don't pan out, and our energy slowly but surely drains away. The capacity we once had is gone. And we're left feeling lifeless.
- Something totally unexpected suddenly wallops us from the blind side, taking us by surprise, and leaves us shaking with disbelief.
- A terribly wet fall and the crop we had counted on is left in the field.
- Without any warning whatsoever, our job is terminated. We're...downsized. Cut adrift.
- With no inkling at all, the relationship we had staked our life on falls apart.
- Someone we care deeply about: "I've been to the doctor...and they've done some tests...and..."

And we feel as if we're living in that valley of dried up old bones, with the question God asks Ezekiel ringing in our ears: "Mortal, can these bones live again?"

Yes, they can, says Ezekiel. What is required is remembering the sense of common humanity that binds us all together as brother and sisters of one planet.

And, as Raymond Carver's story reminds us, sometimes it's some small good thing that comes along...and these old bones of ours rise up...and we're brought to life again.

Hymn — Breathe on Me, Breath of God VU 382

1. Breathe on me, breath of God;
Fill me with life anew,
That I may love what thou dost love
And do what thou wouldst do.

2. Breathe on me, breath of God,
Until my heart is pure,
Until my will is one with thine,
To do and to endure.

3. Breathe on me, breath of God,
Till I am wholly thine,
Until this earthly part of me
Glows with thy fire divine.

4. Breathe on me, breath of God,
So shall I never die,
But live with thee the perfect life

Of thine eternity.

Sharing our Joys and Concerns

- **Birthday**
 - Shawna Dunsmore celebrates March 28
- **Concern**
 - We extend our deepest condolences to the family of Barbara Lynden who passed away March 17th. Please keep the family in your prayers. More details to follow.

Poem — "Wild Mercy"

The times we live in tremble beneath
gathering danger. People in positions
of power seek to control and divide us,
stretch the fabric of our lives until they
threaten to unravel.

But instead of allowing ourselves to
be snared by the tentacles of despair,
we must lean toward the things that
bring light and life, nurture our spirits
and give us hope.

Embrace the connections of wonder
found in art and music, poetry and
stories. Listen to the songs the trees
sing of the great wild mercy threading
its way through our world.

Set the imagination free to envision
our lost dignity and strength reclaimed,
the fraying fabric of our communities
rewoven into a thriving wholeness
shaped by this wild mercy.

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

Hymn — To Show by Touch and Word VU 427

1. To show by touch and word devotion to the earth,
To hold in full regard all life that comes to birth,
We need, O God, the will to find
The good you had of old in mind.

2. Renew our minds to choose the things that matter most,
Our hearts to long for truth till pride of self is lost.
For every challenge that we face
We need your guidance and your grace.

3. Let love from day to day be yardstick, rule and norm,
And let our lives portray your word in human form.
Now come with us, that we may have
Your wits about us where we live.

Benediction (from an Irish Blessing)

May there always be work for your hands to do.

May your purse always hold a coin or two.

May the sun always shine on your windowpane.

May a rainbow be certain to follow each rain.

May the hand of a friend be always near you.

May God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.

Departing 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 — "We Shall Overcome" (Suzanne Flewelling and Rev. Tom Watson)

Welcomers: Doreen and Larry Broome

Counters: Kaillie Rawn, Norm Porritt

Worship Schedule

March 29 th	Palm Sunday	Rev. Tom Watson
April 3 rd	Good Friday	Rev. Tom Watson
April 5 th	Easter Sunday	Rev. Karen Boivin
April 12 th	2 nd Sunday of Easter	Rev. Jeff Hawkin

Council Meeting Apr 1, May 6, & Jun 3. Please reach out to a Council member if there is a concern or question to be shared with Council.