



**Celebrating  
180 Years**



**March 8, 2026**

**Melville United Church**

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**Melville United Church**  
**Sunday, March 8, 2026**

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*Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson*  
*Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber*

**Prelude**

**Welcome & Announcements**

**Land Acknowledgement**

**Lenten Candle Liturgy** *readers Patti Duncan and Mildred Perkins*

Lent 3: Hungering and Thirsting

(the Christ candle and two purple candles are lit prior to worship)

One: On this third Sunday of Lent, many of us are thirsting for love and comfort. Some of us are feeling abandoned by those we care about most.

We hunger for a phone call, a hug or a kind word.

(the third purple candle is lit)

Two: Things can be different. It's not too late.

Three: Jesus showed us that God's nourishing love is around us, even in the most difficult circumstances. We give thanks for the hunger and thirst which compel us to eat and drink until we are satisfied.

One: Let us pray.

**All: God, we hunger and thirst for you. Help us to have compassion towards others who share this need. Give us the courage to be like gardeners offering our gifts to help the harvest grow. Amen.**

**Call to Worship**

There is a light of God within us.

**Not just in some of us, in all of us!**

So as we let our own light shine...

**And give others permission to do the same.**

Let us celebrate the richness and diversity of life...

**As we come together in this place of worship.**

**Hymn — Praise, My Soul the Wondrous Beauty (tune VU 240)**

1. Praise, my soul, the wondrous beauty

To discover everywhere:

Painted sunset, morning glory,

Cooling rain and breezes fair.

Praises singing, praises bringing

For the wonder that we share.

2. Praise, my soul, the sense of myst'ry,

Knowledge we have yet to find,

Much awaiting our discov'ry,

Life's details of every kind.  
Praises singing, praises bringing  
For the questing, searching mind.

3. Praise, my soul, the deep compassion,  
Freely offered, freely given,  
Care that reaches past the barriers,  
Care that lets the stranger in.  
Praises singing, our lives bringing,  
Joined with all we share a part.

4. Praise, my soul, the sense of justice,  
Seeing others equally,  
Full respect for rights and honour,  
Full respect for dignity.  
Praises singing, our lives bringing,  
T'wards a whole humanity

**Gathering Prayer: Creator God, as we gather on this Annual Meeting Sunday, we pray that our time together will renew our strength, that the stories we share will refresh our courage...that the songs we sing will lift our spirits...that the touch of hands, the sound of laughter, and the sight of faces old and new, will keep alive in us a sense of purpose, and sustain us in faith. Amen.**

**Hymn — Deep in Our Hearts MV 154**

1. Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;  
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;  
Deep in our hearts there is a common story,  
Telling Creation that we are one.

2. Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;  
Deep in our hearts there is a common goal;  
Deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,  
Justice and peace in harmony.

3. Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;  
Deep in our hearts there is a common theme;  
Deep in our hearts there is a common current,  
Flowing to freedom like a stream.

4. Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;  
Deep in our hearts there is a common song;  
Deep in our hearts there is a common story,  
Telling Creation that we are one.

## Children's Time

**Ministry of Music — Bread of Life, Living Water** by *Annette W. Dickman (arr. Danielle Isaacson)*

**Reading — John 4:5-30** reader *John Cuming*

Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria? Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans." Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink', you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband', for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband."

The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshipped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshippers will worship in spirit and truth, for God seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."

Then the woman left her water-jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"

They left the city and were on their way to Jesus.

**Sermon: Living Water**

There are several important aspects to this story of Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well.

The first important aspect is that the discussion is about water.

As Jesus travels through the territory of the Samaritans, it gets to be noon; it's hot under the desert sun; Jesus gets thirsty. He comes to a well known as Jacob's Well, so stops there and sits down. He has nothing with which to draw water so has to wait until someone comes by who can draw some for him.

In due course, along comes a woman of the area. She has come to draw water to take back to her home. Jesus asks her for a drink.

Water, as we all know, is fundamental to life. We can live three weeks without food, but we usually won't live much longer than three days without water. Water is our foremost need.

Water is also an important theme in the Bible. In several New Testament stories, water is the central focus. Especially with the storyteller we know as John who uses water in a number of metaphorical ways.

- Jesus turns water into wine.
- Jesus walks on water.
- Jesus uses water to wash the disciples' feet.

We're currently in the middle of Lent. We remember from two weeks ago that Lent always begins as a time in the desert—a dry, parched place symbolizing little to no life...because it's a place with little to no water.

And here, in this morning's story, we have Jesus needing a drink of water.

The second important aspect has to do with the participants in the discussion. The traditional interpretation of the story is that Jesus, the insider, steps across normal cultural boundaries and talks with a woman who is two things: An outsider...and also immoral.

That's the way the story has generally been told...and with the conclusion being that Jesus tells her to "go, clean up her act, and get right with God."

But that traditional interpretation doesn't square with the story.

First of all, Jesus is not the "insider" here. Jacob's Well is located in Samaria. So Jesus is on the woman's turf. It's the woman who's the "insider." Jesus is the "outsider."

Secondly, there is absolutely no indication in the story that the woman is in any way immoral. Yes, it does say that she has had five husbands, but that does not make her immoral. Unfortunate perhaps, but in no sense immoral.

And nowhere does it say that Jesus calls upon her to go clean up her act and get right with God. What he does is engage her in a discussion about living water. And in so doing, he proclaims to her that she's already right with God.

Now, what is the living water to which Jesus refers? The living water is in the human connection that is established between the two of them...the mutual acceptance of each other as people of God...the reaching across any boundaries that might divide them from one other, and recognize in each other their common humanity.

In one of our hymns we sing, "All are welcome." And those are important words. "All are welcome! All are welcome! All are welcome in this place!" No matter who we are, no matter who comes through our doors, all are welcome here.

At Jacob's Well, Jesus and the woman welcome each other. They are from different cultures, different backgrounds, different races, and also from different religions. But both are welcome at the well.

Now, on that day, as the woman and Jesus talked at the well, a young Samaritan girl happened upon them. She was a girl who loved stories so she collected them—little stories about kindness, courage, bravery.

She listened for stories everywhere, but most of all at Jacob's Well, because stories seemed to be told there when the women gathered.

And that's where she was when she heard the woman from her village—a Samaritan woman—speaking with Jesus—a Jew. She marvelled at this, for Jews kept to their own people, and Samaritans kept to theirs. That was simply how the world worked.

She slipped behind a fig tree to listen. The Jewish man's voice was gentle, and the woman's face—usually tight with worry—softened as they spoke. The girl watched, astonished, as the woman set down her water jar and ran back toward the village.

The man remained, resting in the shade.

The girl stepped out from behind the tree. She meant to slip away unnoticed, but he looked up and smiled.

"Hello," he said. "I hear you like stories."

"How does he know that?" she wondered. But she nodded.

"Tell me one of your stories," he said.

So she told him a small story. At first she spoke shyly, but her confidence grew, because he listened as though what she said mattered.

When she finished, he said, "You carry stories well. One day they will carry others."

She didn't fully understand, but something in her heart stirred, like a trickle of water finding its way through dry ground.

Just then the woman returned with others from the village. They spoke with the stranger for a while, and then everyone went their own way.

Years later, when the girl had grown to be the storyteller of her community—the one who wove tales at weddings, comforted the grieving, and taught children the wisdom of the generations—she remembered that man at the well.

She remembered how he crossed a boundary simply by listening, and how that small act opened a door inside her.

And whenever she told the story of meeting a stranger at Jacob's Well, she always ended with a quiet line:

“Goodness and kindness begin in the smallest of places—sometimes with nothing more than one person being willing to listen to another. And when we reach across boundaries, and welcome each other—whether friend or stranger—and listen with an open heart, a spring begins to flow in us, a living water we can share with others.”

#### **Hymn — When Hands Reach Out MV 169**

1. When hands reach out beyond divides  
And hope is truly found,  
Each chain of hate will fall away  
And bells of peace shall sound.  
And bells of peace, of peace shall sound  
And bells of peace shall sound.  
Each chain of hate will fall away  
And bells of peace shall sound.

2. When fear no longer guides our steps  
And days of war are done,  
God's dream for all shall live anew;  
Our hearts will heal as one.  
Our hearts will heal, will heal as one  
Our hearts will heal as one.  
God's dream for all shall live anew;  
Our hearts will heal as one.

3. When race and creed blind us no more,  
A neighbour's face we'll see,  
And we shall dance the whole world round  
For love will set us free.  
For love, yes love will set us free  
For love will set us free.  
And we shall dance the whole world round,  
For love will set us free.

## Sharing our Joys and Concerns

- Birthdays

- Allan Hons celebrates on March 11<sup>th</sup>
- Trudy Adsett celebrates on March 14<sup>th</sup>

## 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 — We Are Marching VU 646

We are marching in the light of God;  
We are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching in the light of God;  
We are marching in the light of God.

*(refrain)* We are marching, marching,  
We are marching, marching,  
We are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching, marching,  
We are marching, marching,  
We are marching in the light of God.

Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',  
Siyahamb' eku khanyen' kwenkhos'.  
Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos',  
Siyahamb' eku khanyen' kwenkhos'.

Siyahamba, hamba,  
Siyahamba, hamba,  
Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwen khos'.  
Siyahamba, hamba,  
Siyahamba, hamba,  
Siyahamb' ekukhanyen' kwenkhos'.

#### REPEAT REFRAIN

*(refrain)* We are marching, marching,  
We are marching, marching,  
We are marching in the light of God.

We are marching, marching,  
We are marching, marching,  
We are marching in the light of God.

**Benediction** (*words adapted from a Celtic Blessing*)

May the blessing of light be upon this church...

**Spreading light within and light outside.**

May the blessed sunlight shine on this church like a great fire...

**So that stranger and friend may come and warm themselves at it.**

May light shine out from this church...

**Like a candle set in the window of a house...**

Bidding the wanderer to come in out of the storm.

**And may God's blessing be upon our gathering...**

And upon the meal that we share together...

**So that the love of God will continue to flow in all we say and do.**

Amen!

**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.

**Welcomers:** Larry Broome, John Cuming

**Counters:** Eleanor Johnston, Chris Hopewell

**Worship Schedule**

March 15 <sup>th</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup> in Lent	Rev. Linda Butler
March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup> in Lent	Rev. Tom Watson
March 29 <sup>th</sup>	Palm Sunday	Rev. Tom Watson
April 3	Good Friday	Rev. Tom Watson

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.