



*Celebrating
180 Years*



April 26, 2026

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	Rev. Marion Loree 519-835-8605
Faith Formation & Youth	Ann Ward
Ministry of Music Team	Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber
Office Administrator	Lan Ha
Custodian	Suzanne Flewelling
Chair of Church Council	Lara Johnston
Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain	Alison Rainford 519-843-3841
Office hours	Monday-Friday, 9:00am-2:30pm
E-Mail	secretary@melvilleunited.com
Web Site	www.melvilleunited.com

**Melville United Church
Camping Sunday,
April 26, 2026**

*Presiding: Rev. Dr. Karen Boivin
Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber*

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship – *Sung to the tune of Kumbaya*

**We are gathered, Lord, come be here,
In your presence, Lord, come be here.
As we worship, Lord, come be here,
O Lord, come be here.**

**Make us humble, Lord, come be here.
Make us loyal, Lord, come be here.
Make us courteous, Lord, come be here.
O Lord, come be here.**

Hymn – Called By Earth and Sky MV 135

Refrain

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

*After last verse, repeat twice more;
called by earth and sky.*

1. Precious these waters, endless seas,
deep ocean's dream,
waters of healing, rivers of rain,
the wash of love again.

Refrain

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

*After last verse, repeat twice more;
called by earth and sky.*

2. Precious this gift, the air we breathe;
wind born and free.
Breath of the Spirit, blow through this place,
our gathering and our grace.

Refrain

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

*After last verse, repeat twice more;
called by earth and sky.*

3. Precious these mountains, ancient sands;
vast fragile land.
Seeds of our wakening, rooted and strong,
Creation's faithful song.

Refrain

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

*After last verse, repeat twice more;
called by earth and sky.*

4. Precious the fire that lights our way,
bright dawning day.
Fire of passion, sorrows undone,
our faith and justice one.

Refrain

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

*After last verse, repeat twice more;
called by earth and sky.*

Opening Prayer and the Prayer of Jesus

Children's Time

Ministry of Music: Camping Memories

Scripture Reading: The Good Shepherd and His Sheep John 10:1–10 *Reader: David Gohn*

“Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. ² The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³ The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴ When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵ But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.” ⁶ Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.

⁷ Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. ⁹ I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. ¹⁰ They will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Sermon: A Gateway to Hope

It can be lonely being a shepherd. Before heading out to their respective pastures, two shepherds made a promise to one another to meet and camp together at the next full moon. On that night they came together around the fire under that big moon. The first shepherd asked the second one,

“How’s life been treating you?”

“Not good.” said the second shepherd, shaking his head. “My wife is leaving me because I’m never home. I barely have two coins to rub together. And my body aches so badly that I don’t know how long I can keep doing this.”

“Sorry to hear that,” said the first shepherd, “Try not to lose any sheep over it.”

In the year 2000, at a gathering called the Campbell Seminar at Columbia Theological Seminary, eight theologians and pastors came together and discerned that globally people were losing sleep over the state of the world. And that was before 9/11, COVID, the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, the Ukraine and now the Middle East. They had gathered to consider how the Church should respond to the needs of this new 21st Century. Most of the participants were from the United States but there were others from Cuba, Hungary and South Africa and also the United Church’s own Rev. Douglas John Hall. They spent eight weeks looking for the cause of that global disturbance and how the Church might provide hope. The results of their study were compiled in the book *Hope for the World*.¹ They pinpointed despair, the lack of hope, to be what was keeping folks awake at night. When we think of who might especially be despairing, people in countries where food, housing, education and health care are in short supply come first to mind. Surprisingly, however, it was the Seminar’s conclusion that it was despair within affluent countries that was the most important issue to address. If it was not turned around, there was little hope those countries would provide the help needed by the poorer ones. We

have seen that demonstrated in recent cuts to foreign aid. The Seminar determined that the despair of people in places of affluence comes from the feeling that they are helpless and even guilty in a world with little meaning, including in the entertainment and distractions used to cover over their despair. The Seminar warned that the despair of the affluent was actually dangerous. They pointed out that empires past and present, who had not admitted to their despair have turned instead to violence, militarism, lies, and the scapegoating of minority groups in efforts to prop up their power.² Sound familiar? Many of us have been losing sleep, and feeling helpless and guilty about the suffering inflicted by the bullying tactics of leaders of affluent countries who are ignoring the cries of their own people, and the rule of law in their own countries and internationally.

Originally, I wasn't planning to preach on today's Gospel reading. The lectionary passage from Acts was a lovely celebration of the fellowship enjoyed among the followers of Jesus after Pentecost. It promised to go well with all the photos you sent in of you all having fun camping together. And to be honest, I've preached a lot of Shepherd and sheep sermons over the years.

But then... Pope Leo took on Donald Trump! Who could have imagined that would happen?! If I'd overheard someone say the Pope took on the President, I'd have assumed they were talking about some funny pairing they'd come up with on *This Hour has 22 Minutes*. But it really happened, and every time I read the combination of religious and political sparring that went back and forth, I kept coming back to this gate to the sheep pen in today's reading from John's Gospel. It kept coming back because Pope Leo and President Trump were arguing about the nature of that gate. Each was standing up for their version of the true way that opens into the world that God desires for us. It would lead to the best and most secure place for the sheep that were meant to be in that pen.

So, is it through the Gospel of Trump? After all, amidst the war of words, he shared a picture of himself as God's anointed. He suggests that the orders he gives to ICE and the military are sanctioned by God. In his administration the gate to a better world involves a God who sides with one country over another; judging who is just in warring, and giving them the victory. As his Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth suggested in prayer, this God guides bullets to their intended targets.

For so long, especially in Canada, there has been a concerted effort to keep religion and politics separate. We don't condone, but we aren't surprised when theocracies, like Iran, use religion to exert power and control. But it has been quite a shock to hear politicians in supposedly democratic countries purport that they have Divine approval to unleash God-like wrath to destroy civilizations.

On the other hand, Pope Leo suggests, as does our reading today, that the gate to a better world is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Only love and the pursuit of peace can build the world up in community and good health.

John's Gospel includes numerous "I am" statements by Jesus. "I am the bread of life", "I am the light of the world", "I am the true vine." These statements are like crystals we turn in our hand. They catch the light of Christ in different ways, to help us understand who Jesus was and through him what is the nature of God. In today's reading Jesus says, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." People who embrace theologies closer to the one being used by President Trump understand the gate to be a dividing line between good people and bad people. If this gate opens up and lets you in, then you are a true Christian sheep with a place in heaven; otherwise, no room for you. Global experience has convinced Christians with more liberal theologies that the gate of God's heart is open to everyone. The gate isn't swinging open and closed for judgement sake; it is showing the way in and out of healthy relationship

with the Divine and with one another and the planet; that peace, love and respect for one another and the earth is the only way through to saving humanity and our planet. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who suggests otherwise is like the robber and thief who jumps in the sheep pen by another way. Unfortunately, a large part of the world is run now by leaders who really have no interest in the egalitarian societies they profess to be building.

John's Gospel is also full of miracles that generally follow a particular format. Jesus performs a public miracle, a discussion ensues amongst the gathered crowd, and then he provides a lengthy theological interpretation of what has unfolded. Miracles only found in John's Gospel include the changing of water into wine at the wedding in Cana, and the healing of the paralyzed man lying by the pool of Bethesda. Our reading today about the gate is so descriptive that, standing on its own, we find ourselves immersed in the smell of sheep. It's easy to forget that it is actually a continuation of Jesus' explanation to the Pharisees of his healing of the man born blind. Witnesses to that event have come forward, but nothing has been able to convince these Pharisees that this man and Jesus are not sinners. In their minds, the gate is firmly shut against these fellows. In fact, the healed man's proclamation that the miracle is proof that God talks to Jesus has literally gotten him thrown out the door. Outside, however, Jesus' discourse on this healing continues with the story about the gate.

As a Jewish teacher, Jesus may very well have had Pharisees amongst his followers. After all, Paul who joined the followers after Jesus' death was a Pharisee. However, this particular group questioning Jesus represent those who misuse religious and civil authority to maintain power and control. As we have witnessed in the world lately, that control is often exerted using judgement and punishment of any who opposes it, to the point that everyone is afraid to speak out. The Scripture states that the parents of the man who was healed were afraid to say anything because other people who had called Jesus the Messiah had been thrown out of the temple. In the past year we have wondered when other world leaders would hold to account the oppressive actions of those among them who were breaking international law and committing inhuman acts. And because of that we felt the kind of despair the Campbell Seminar warned against. And as that seminar predicted things just kept getting worse. .

However, as our reading points out the sheep do know the shepherd's voice. It speaks of love, peace, morality and respect for human dignity. It means that we can also detect what is not that voice. People have recognized that they are hearing things that are separating people and setting them against one another; that are threatening the planet and the livelihoods of people for the sake of a few. Fear however has kept the world frozen between those two voices; unable to follow the right voice through the right gate into the world God hopes for us. Thankfully we are starting to feel hope in the fact that more people are finally speaking out; they are naming the false voices, the nature of our despair, and what repair needs to be made. Prime Minister Carney opened that door a crack at Davos when he spoke about great powers who were no longer following rules but following self-interest. NATO countries refused to be involved in military operations they had no part in starting.

And now Christians of all stripes, people of other religions, and no religion at all have heard Pope Leo's words as reflective of their own experience of Life and the Divine. It makes us feel less helpless and guilty with his call for "those who have weapons lay them down! Let those who have the power to unleash wars chose peace!" And we have been given more courage to insist that the world is meant to go forward through the gate of love and peace with Pope Leo's assertion that he is not afraid of the Trump Administration.

The verse after today's reading contains one of the most loved "I am" statements. I am the Good Shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep." Here is a final plot twist! The gate to the sheep pen is the Shepherd himself. Poor as they were shepherds were not building the wooden

pens with the gates that we are familiar with today. They piled up stones in the field to make a pen or used a cave in the hillsides. And then, wrapping themselves in their cloak, they would lay down across the entrance to keep the sheep inside and protected. Pope Leo held up Jesus' choice to lay down his life for us on the Cross as proof that "Christ was entirely non-violent." Jesus laid down his life, he became the gate for us, to show us the way to build a world community where people and nature live in harmony and peace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn – The Lord's My Shepherd VU 747

- 1 The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me,
the quiet waters by.
- 2 My soul he doth restore again;
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
even for his own name's sake.
- 3 Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for thou art with me; and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.
- 4 My table thou has furnished
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.
- 5 Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me,
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling-place shall be.

Offering Invitation

Offering Hym: The Church is Wherever God's People 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.

Offering Prayer

All: Through these gifts, O God,

may the open door of Christ's love and care
be discovered and enjoyed by more people. Amen.

Sharing our Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People – Sung Response: Refrain # 2 VU 728

One: ...lead us God.

**All: Lead me, God, lead me in your righteousness;
make your way plain before my face.**

Closing Hymn: He Leadeth Me VU 657

- 1 He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.
He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
By his own hand he leadeth me!
His faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me!
- 2 Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,
sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
by waters calm, o'er troubled sea,
still 'tis his hand that leadeth me. R
- 3 Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
nor ever murmur nor repine,
content, whatever lot I see,
since 'tis my God that leadeth me. R
- 4 And when my task on earth is done,
when by thy grace the victory's won,
even death's cold wave I will not flee,
since God through Jordan leadeth me. R

Commissioning

One: Christ is the gate that opened
and welcomed us here this morning.

**All: Inviting us into the embrace
of this community of love and sanctuary.**

One: Now Christ opens onto the wider community

**All: calling us to promote love, provision,
and protection for God's world and God's people.**

Benediction

Postlude – Lead On, O King Eternal

Tune: Lancashire by Henry Smart - Arranged by Brian Glyncannon

Welcomers: Doreen and Larry Broome

Counters: Chris Hopewell, Phil Brown

Worship Schedule

May 3rd	5th Sunday of Easter	Social Justice Team - <i>(Mental Health Sunday)</i>
May 10 th	6 th Sunday of Easter	Rev. Tom Watson
May 17 th	7 th Sunday of Easter	Rev. Linda Butler
May 24th	Day of Pentecost	Rev. Tom Watson

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