



**May 10, 2026
6th of Easter**

Melville United Church

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Melville United Church

Sunday May 10, 2026

Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson

Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

To be nurtured in faith and hope...

To express our thanks for the daily grace of the living God...

To have our souls refreshed and renewed...

We have come this morning to worship.

Come...God is here among us in our worship.

Hymn: How Great Is Creation Tune 293

1. How great is Creation; in love it is made.
How glorious the Spirit of Goodness displayed.
The power of its beauty pervading my soul
Refreshes my spirit and I am made whole.

2. From depths of my being, Creator I praise
The beauty of morning, Your glorious days.
The promise of birth in the spring's gentle sun,
The seasons unfolding, and new life begun.

3. The Song of Creation is our gift to share,
Our living a tribute to God's loving care.
The Spirit is present in all that we do,
In work and in worship, in Love ever new.

Gathering Prayer

Creating God, in this time together, help us to think beyond the sights and sounds of the world that tend to dull our senses. May we be empowered to look to the future with faith, be unafraid of our dreams, be realistic about our limitations, yet never lose hope in our potential to live courageously today and tomorrow. May it be so. Amen.

Hymn: Faith of Our Fathers VU 580

1. Faith of our fathers, living still
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
O how our hearts beat high with joy,
Whene'er we hear that glorious word:
Faith of our fathers, holy faith,

We will be true to you till death.

2. Faith of our mothers, daring faith,
Your work for Christ is love revealed,
Spreading God's word from pole to pole,
Making love known and freedom real:

Faith of our mothers, holy faith,
We will be true to you till death.

3. Faith of our sisters, brothers too,
Who still must bear oppression's might,
Raising on high, in prisons dark,
The cross of Christ still burning bright:

Faith for today, O living faith,
We will be true to you till death.

4. Faith born of God, O call us yet,
Bind us with all who follow you,
Sharing the struggle of your cross
Until the world is made anew.

Faith born of God, O living faith,
We will be true to you till death.

Children's Time

Ministry of Music: Mother of Mine Text by Veda Jane Walker Green, Music by Martin Green,
Sung by the Melville Choir

Reading: Matthew 5:43-48 Reader: Bob Foster

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of God in heaven; for God makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Be perfect, therefore, as the heavenly God is perfect."

Sermon: Let the Last Word Be Love!

On October 7, 2023, Hamas killed 1,139 Israelis and took 240 into Gaza as captives. In retaliation, Israeli forces have killed over 75,000 Palestinians in Gaza, and it is estimated that perhaps as many as 10,000 bodies remain trapped under rubble.

Just take a moment to feel those numbers: 1,139 Israelis dead...75,000 Palestinians dead.

Since Donald Trump decided to start a war with Iran on February 28, some 6,000 Iranians have been killed and some 25,000 injured.

Again feel those numbers: 6,000 dead, 25,000 injured.

By now, you may be saying, "Today is Christian Family Sunday...or if you're more of a traditionalist, Mother's Day...why is he talking about war on this special day?"

I'm talking about it because those numbers dead and injured were people—moms, dads, children, families. So when tyrants start wars the impact on moms, dads, children, families, is horrible.

On Saturday night, Julia and I went to a Guelph Symphony Orchestra concert at the River Run Centre in Guelph. They had a guest violo soloist—21-year-old Emad Zolfaghari. Phenomenal performer.

Sitting to our left were 5 people. Before the concert started, I chatted a bit with the man next to me. Turned out he was the father of this featured viola soloist. He, his wife and children had come from Michigan to hear his son play.

In a venue that seats 800, what's the chances of sitting next to the father of the featured artist?

I heard that man and the one next to him speaking in a language I didn't understand, so at an opportune moment I asked him what language they had been speaking. He replied, "Persian."

They were Iranian. The man next to the one with whom I had been speaking lives in Tehran, the capital city of Iran, and had come here on a month's vacation.

Put on your thinking hat for a moment. How long do you think it took the man and his wife to get from Tehran to Toronto?

You can't fly out of Tehran. They drove to the border of Turkey, then to Istanbul—that's a total of 2,400 kilometres. Then flew to Paris. And eventually to Toronto. Total time 60 hours.

The man next to me said the bombing has been awful, and that his brother has aged 10 years in the past one year.

When tyrants start wars there is an impact on moms, dads, children, families...and the impact is huge.

Next, I invite you to think about a wedding day...either yours or somebody else's. Then contrast it to what I'm going to read.

The New York Times bestseller novel "The Things We Cannot Say" by Kelly Rimmer is historical fiction set in Poland when the Nazis invaded in 1939.

The setting is a prisoner of war camp in 1942. In the Prologue to the book, Alina Dziak tells the story of her wedding day in that prisoner of war camp

The priest presiding over my wedding was half-starved, half-frozen and wearing rags, but he was resourceful; he'd blessed a chunk of moldy bread from breakfast to serve as a communion wafer.

"Repeat the vows after me." He smiled. My vision blurred, but I spoke the traditional vows through lips numb from cold.

"I take you, Tomasz Slaski, to be my husband, and I promise to love, honor and respect you, to be faithful to you, and not to forsake you until we are parted by death, in fear of God, One in the Holy Trinity and all the Saints."

I'd looked to my wedding to Tomasz as a beacon, the same way a sailor on rough seas might fix his gaze upon a lighthouse at the distant shore. Our love had been my reason to live and to carry on and to fight for so many years, but our wedding day was supposed to be a brief reprieve from all of the hardship and suffering. The reality of that day was so very different, and my disappointment in those moments seemed bigger than the world itself.

We were supposed to marry in the regal church in our hometown—not here, standing just beyond the tent city of the Buzuluk refugee and military camp, just far enough from the tents that the squalid stench of eighty thousand desperate souls was slightly less thick in the air.

That reprieve from the crowds and the smell came at a cost; we were outside, sheltered only by the branches of a sparse fir tree. It was an unseasonably cold day for fall, and every now and again fat snowflakes would fall from the heavy gray skies to melt into our hair or our clothing or to make still more mud in the ground around our feet.

I'd known my "friends" in the assembled crowd of well-wishers at the wedding for only a few weeks. Every other person who'd once been important to me was in a concentration camp or dead or just plain lost.

My groom awkwardly declined to take communion—a gesture which bewildered that poor, kindly priest, but didn't surprise me one bit.

Even as the bride, I wore the only set of clothes I owned, and by then once-simple routines like bathing had become luxuries long forgotten. The lice infestation that had overrun the entire camp had not spared me, nor my groom, nor the priest—nor even a single individual in the small crowd of well-wishers. Our entire assembly shifted and twitched constantly, desperate to soothe that endless itch.

I was dull with shock, which was almost a blessing, because it was probably all that saved me from weeping my way through the ceremony.

Mrs. Konczal was yet another new friend to me, but she was fast becoming a dear one. She was in charge of the orphans, and I'd been working alongside her on compulsory work duties since my arrival at the camp. When the ceremony was done, she ushered a group of children out from the small crowd of onlookers and she flashed me a radiant smile. Then she raised her arms to conduct and, together, she and the makeshift choir began to sing *Serdeczna Matko*—a hymn to the Beloved Mother.

Those orphans were filthy and skinny and alone, just as I was, but they weren't sad at all in that moment. Instead, their hopeful gazes were focused on me, and they were eager to see me pleased. I wanted nothing more than to wallow in the awfulness of my situation—but the hope in those innocent eyes took priority over my self-pity. I forced myself to share with them all a bright, proud smile, and then I made myself a promise: There would be no more tears from me that day. If those orphans could be generous and brave in the face of their situation, then so could I.

After that I focused only on the music, and the sound of Mrs. Konczal's magnificent voice as it rose high above and around us in a soaring solo. Her tone was sweet and true, and she scaled the melody like it was a game—bringing me something close to joy in a moment that should have been joyful, offering me peace in a moment that should have been peaceful, and dragging me back once more to a faith I kept wishing I could lose.

And as that song wound on, I closed my eyes and I forced down my fear and my doubt, until I could once again trust that the broken pieces of my life would fall into place one day.

War had taken almost everything from me; but I refused to let it shake my confidence in the man I loved.

What a story!

War had taken almost everything from me; but I refused to let it shake my confidence in the man I loved.

The impact on her was devastating. Can any of us even imagine having our marriage take place in the circumstances in which Alina Dziak found herself? She was only a teenager when the Nazis invaded her town and put her in a prisoner of war camp.

Real, live people caught in the deadly tentacles of war.

In the midst of all that, there are people who do heroic things. Such as in this story that Art Cutten sent to me recently. The story is called "We Are Human Angels."

When 740 children were condemned to the sea and the world said no, one man said yes.

It was 1942. The world was on fire, and 740 exhausted children were trapped on a ship in the middle of the Arabian Sea with nowhere to go.

These Polish orphans had already survived the horrors of Soviet labor camps, where they watched their parents perish from hunger and disease. They had traveled through Iran to reach the coast of India, praying for safety, but every British-controlled port turned them away. One by one, the doors of the world slammed shut, leaving hundreds of hungry, terrified children drifting toward a certain death.

Among them was twelve-year-old Maria. She held her six-year-old brother's hand tightly, remembering the last promise she made to their dying mother: "Keep him safe."

But as the ship's food ran low and the medicine disappeared, Maria looked at the horizon and saw only rejection. The British authorities, who ruled India at the time, insisted the children were not their responsibility.

It seemed as though these 740 souls were invisible to a world consumed by war. However, news of the wandering ship reached the ears of Jam Sahib Digvijay Singhji, the Maharaja of Nawanagar. He ruled a small princely state in Gujarat. He wasn't a world leader with a massive army, and he certainly wasn't required to help. In fact, by welcoming the children, he would be directly defying the British Empire, which had already said "no."

When his advisors told him the tragic story, the Maharaja didn't ask about the cost or the political risks. He simply asked how many children there were. When they told him "seven hundred and forty," he made a decision that would echo through history. He declared that while the British might control the ports, they did not control his conscience.

In August 1942, the ship finally docked at Nawanagar. The children who walked off that gangplank were skeletal, weak, and too traumatized to even cry. They expected to see soldiers or barbed wire. Instead, they saw a man dressed in white waiting for them on the pier.

The Maharaja knelt down so he could look the smallest children in the eye. Through an interpreter, he spoke words that changed their lives forever: "Do not consider yourselves orphans. From this moment on, I am your father, and you are my children."

He didn't just give them a place to sleep; he gave them a home. In the village of Balachadi, he built a sanctuary. He didn't try to force Indian culture on them. Instead, he hired Polish teachers so they wouldn't forget their language. He made sure they had Polish food and allowed them to practice their religion and sing their traditional songs.

Under the hot Indian sun, these children celebrated Polish Christmas and felt the warmth of a family they thought they had lost forever. For four years, while the rest of the planet was tearing itself apart, the Maharaja funded every doctor's visit, every meal, and every schoolbook from his own personal fortune.

When the war finally ended and it was time for the "children of the Maharaja" to leave, many wept. They were leaving the only place that had treated them with dignity when the rest of the world looked away.

Those survivors have become doctors, engineers, and grandparents. In Poland, there are squares and schools named after Jam Sahib Digvijay Singhji, and he is remembered as a national hero.

Power is not measured by the lands you conquer, but by the lives you protect. When the world closes its heart, your greatest act of rebellion is to open yours. True immortality is found in the kindness that outlasts the king.

That last paragraph emulates the gospel reading from today, in which Jesus turns our natural instincts upside down. We are used to the idea of loving our neighbors—but loving our enemies? Praying for those who hurt us? That's radical.

Jesus isn't asking us to feel affection for people who have wronged us. He is calling us to will their good—to pray for them, forgive them, and wish them no harm. This love isn't emotional; it's intentional. It's not weak; it's courageous.

Why? Because God's love knows no boundaries. The sun rises and the rain falls on everyone—good or evil, just or unjust. And we, as God's children, are called to reflect that same universal love.

This is not about ignoring justice or pretending that evil doesn't exist. It's about refusing to let hate be the last word.

Perhaps that's the lesson for us on this day when we honour Christian Family Sunday—Mother's Day if you will. For the sake of mothers, fathers, children, don't let hate be the last word. Let it, rather, be love.

The tyrant's might control the guns and the bombs...but they can't control who and how much we love.

Hymn: I Am Walking a Path of Peace

1. I am walking a path of peace.
I am walking a path of peace.
I am walking a path of peace.
Lead me home, lead me home.

2. I am walking a path of love.
I am walking a path of love.
I am walking a path of love.
Lead me home, lead me home.

3. I am walking a path of hope.
I am walking a path of hope.
I am walking a path of hope.
Lead me home, lead me home.

4. I am walking a path of peace.
I am walking a path of peace.
I am walking a path of peace.
Lead me home, lead me home.

Sharing our Joys and Concerns

- **Birthday**
 - Richard Wright celebrates May 17
 - Peter Wright celebrates May 17

Prayers of the People

...beginning with poem "We Pray Today" by Ann Weems

O God, we pray today...

For all who have a song they cannot sing...

For all who have a burden they cannot bear...

For all who live in chains they cannot break...

For all who wander and cannot return...

For all who are sick, and all who tend them...

For all who wait for loved ones, yet wait in vain...

For those who live in hunger...

For those who are misunderstood...

And for those who misunderstand...

For those who yearn to hear words of love...

And for those whose words of love are locked within their hearts.

Have mercy, Loving God.

Have mercy on us all.

The Lord's Prayer: Heavenly Father, Heavenly Mother Sung by: Melville Choir

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: Go, Make a Diff'rence **MV 209**

(refrain) Go make a diff'rence. We can make a diff'rence.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

Go make a diff'rence. We can make a diff'rence.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

1. We are the salt of the earth, called to let the people see

The love of God for you and me.

We are the light of the world, not to be hidden but be seen.

Go make a diff'rence in the world. *(refrain)*

2. We are the hands of Christ reaching out to those in need,

The face of God for all to see.

We are the spirit of hope; we are the voice of peace.

Go make a diff'rence in the world. *(refrain)*

3. So let your love shine on, let it shine for all to see.

Go make a diff'rence in the world.

And the spirit of Christ will be with us as we go.

Go make a diff'rence in the world. *(refrain)*

Benediction

As we go about our daily lives...

We know that the road of life has many twists and turns...

Good times and bad times, easy times and difficult times.

In all times, may God empower us to care for one another.

When the road before us divides...

May we feel the presence of God urging us on.

And until we see each other again, may grace, mercy and peace be with each of us always.

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.

Postlude: Hail the Day That Sees Him Rise Arr: Mack Wilberg, Adapted: Brian Richey

Welcomers: Doreen and Larry Broome

Counters: Chris Hopewell, David Gohn

Worship Schedule

May 17 th	7 th Sunday of Easter	Rev. Linda Butler
May 24 th	Day of Pentecost	Rev. Dr. Karen Boivin
May 31 st	Trinity Sunday	Rev. Tom Watson
June 7 th	2 nd after Pentecost	Rev. Jeff Hawkins

Council Meeting June 3. Please reach out to a Council member if there is a concern or question to be shared with Council.