



UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

Office: (306) 752-2288 Email: melfortuc@sasktel.net

Website: www.melfortunitedchurch.com

Worship Time: 10:30 AM

Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Peggy George

Music:

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Readers:

ORDER OF WORSHIP

August 23, 2020
Twelfth after Pentecost, Year A

WE GATHER AS A COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

As we gather for worship today we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 Territory. We honour the Cree and Métis people for whom this place has been a homeland for thousands of years. We respect the sacredness of our home and the ground on which we walk and we are grateful to gather here in peace and hope.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANNIVERSARIES & CONCERNS:

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Hidden in the quiet of our morning there is a blessing for us today.

Sheltered amidst the reeds of a busy world there is new life awaiting our care and attention.

Floating above the currents of trial and tribulation, a peaceful possibility approaches.

Swaddled in the love and compassion of God's grace, a new beginning is preserved.

People of God, the embracing and affirming arms of God are reaching toward us with joy.

For we are God's children, holy and beloved.

Come, let us welcome God's embrace as we begin a new journey.

Let us worship with the confidence of God's abiding presence and rescuing love.

CHOIR ANTHEM: *"Follow"* - Ed Harris

YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PDkuCgJqpU&feature=youtu.be>

OPENING PRAYER: *(in unison)*

Mothering God, midwife of all our experiences and dreams, we thank you for the ways you have brought us into new life over and over again.

We praise you for your protection of us when the threats of life ensue. We honour you for the cunning and ingenuity with which you have crafted our opportunities to grow and thrive.

In humble devotion, we remember your rescuing intervention when the way has been difficult, and the light has grown dim. Gathered as your people, wonderful and diverse, we join as one body in worship – remembering your saving Spirit and embodying your creative purpose. Make yourself known to us as we worship, we pray. Amen.

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE:

Left side: Creator of All, like the Egyptians who had power, yet feared those who were oppressed by it, we confess that there are times when we do not recognize the power and privilege you have given us.

Right Side: Loving Parent, there have been times when our people have been ruthless and oppressive in our treatment of other peoples, based on race, culture, class, or background.

Left Side: We confess that we have not always been creative in seeing a way out of what seems like "no way."

Right Side: We confess that we have not always been willing to risk going against the powers of our world to enable life to thrive.

Left Side: We confess that there have been times when we have imagined ourselves to be small and without agency.

Right Side: And we confess that we have allowed the sins of others to define the world in which we live.

Forgive us and remind us of the ways of those who respond with hope, creativity, and cunning, rather than despair and listless resolution when the world seems constructed with malice. Show us the hidden blessings floating through the rivers of our fatigue and despair. Embolden us to resist the oppression that may be commanded or expected. Forgive us our sins, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

May we always remember: God is the midwife of our lives.
God does not abandon us, even when we abandon each other.
God is our sister and rescuer.
God is with us, forgiving, embracing, loving, renewing.
In this, let us be assured. **Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC: “*Humble and Kind*” – Tim McGraw

YouTube Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awzNHuGqoMc&list=RDawzNHuGqoMc&start_radio=1

WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD TO US

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

RESPONSORIAL READING:

PSALM 124 (VU p. 848)

If God had not been at our side!

HEBREW READING:

EXODUS 1:8-2:10

The baby Moses is adopted by the Pharaoh’s daughter.

EPISTLE READING:

ROMANS 12:1-8

Present yourselves as a living, holy sacrifice to God.

GOSPEL READING:

MATTHEW 16:13-20

Who do you say that I am? asks Jesus.

SERMON:

Some Brave Women and a Baby; Based on Exodus 1:1-10

The sons of Jacob settle in the land of Egypt and had children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Generation after generation, the family grew. They became to be known as Hebrews. As long as the story of Joseph was told, the Hebrews were welcome and respected.

But after many years, a new pharaoh rose to power in Egypt. He did not remember Joseph. When he looked at the Hebrews, he did not see people like the Egyptians. He saw foreigners. Strangers. Outsiders. And he was afraid.

“We have to do something about these people.” He said. “What if there is a war and they all leave our country and join our enemies?”

So Pharaoh made the Hebrew people slaves. He forced them to make bricks and to work in the quarries cutting stones for his building projects. But even that was not enough. He called the midwives and said “When you go to help a Hebrew woman give birth and the baby is a boy, kill it in secret. Don’t let anyone see what you are doing or the Hebrews will be angry and rise up against me.”

The midwives were horrified and couldn’t do what the Pharaoh asked, even though they feared him. They decided to tell the Pharaoh that Hebrew women gave birth so quickly and easily that by the time they arrive to help, the babies were already born. This plan worked for a while but eventually the Pharaoh gave the order to his soldiers. Unlike the midwives, the soldiers obeyed the command.

Can you imagine the fear and grief that took hold of the Hebrew people! A young woman named Jochebed prayed everyday that her child would be a girl, like her older daughter, Miriam. But when the baby was born, it was a little boy. Jochebed held her son close and wept over him. How could she keep him safe from the Pharaoh? Sooner or later, the soldiers would hear him crying.

One day her daughter Miriam said, “I wish we could build him an ark, like Noah did for the animals. Then he would be safe.” Jochebed looked at her daughter in amazement.

“Quickly, go down to the river and gather some reeds. We will build our own ark” Jochebed said. Miriam and Jochebed wove a

basket out of papyrus reeds and made it watertight. Then they put the baby inside. It was hard for them to let him go. But it was his only chance for a new life.

The little ark with the baby inside floated away down the Nile. Miriam followed it. After a while, it got caught in some bulrushes. Miriam wondered if she should sneak out and push it free. But at that moment, she heard voices. A group of women had come down to the river to bathe.

The women retrieved the basket and found the baby inside. A woman cried "It's a baby! It must be one of the Hebrew babies someone has set afloat on the river to hide from my father."

Miriam's brother had fallen into the hands of the Pharaoh's daughter, what a disaster! But then the Princess said "What a beautiful child. He must be kept safe. I will keep him. My father will not dare touch him if I say he is mine".

Miriam's thoughts whirled in her head. She had an idea, but it was very risky. She stood up and called "Your Highness, you will need a woman who is able to feed the baby. I know someone who could help you".

"I'm sure you do" she said. "Perhaps you could give tell her the baby is safe. If she will nurse him, I will pay her well".

The Princess and other women walked back to the palace. Filled with wonder, Miriam ran to tell her mother the good news.

Wow – what a story. Suffice to say, I'm really glad I live in these times and in the freedom of Canada. But as always, we are to look beyond our personal lives to determine what lessons can be learnt from scripture and put into practice today.

So is this story to teach us it's ok to lie? Have you ever lied or kept a secret? I admit I have.... How else could I have given a surprise birthday party or present.

But perhaps the point in this parable is about the women who feared God more than the Pharaoh. Through the daring action of Moses mother, sister, the midwives and the Pharaoh's daughter, many lives were saved through letting Moses live. Stories like this remind us that there is a time when we must not submit, nor even merely observe, but must actively resist injustice to ourselves and to others.

Perhaps it's a lesson in "watch what you wish for". The very things that Pharaoh fears and seeks to avoid nevertheless happen,

as a result, in part, of his own efforts. His attempts to control the Hebrew population lead to its increase instead! His plan to keep the Hebrews from escaping the land moves God to commission Moses (3:8) to bring the people out. Pharaoh's desire to kill the boys spurs the women to action. With gracious defiance, the women shelter and nurture the boys, among them the one boy who will become the future rescuer of the people.

This story also tells of the necessity of demonstrating God's grace and generosity to one who is not only an enemy, but also of a different race, culture and religion. Pharaoh's daughter, a woman of colour, of Egyptian culture, did just that when she included the stranger Moses.

Each person in the Exodus story had a particular part to play. Keeping that story and the players in mind, let's fast forward to 2020 and ask ourselves, 'what part is God asking us to play, be it in our family or community or country'. What gifts has he given us to help us do your part. One thing I know for certain, we all have gifts, we all have a part to play and when we are all working together all things are possible. There is always a bigger picture than the one we can know or see. Being faithful means discerning what our part is and responding with gratitude.

Link to Sermon on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTcnBS4nL1M>

OUR RESPONSE

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:

O God, there are ways in which we have felt pressed down and hopeless, threatened by the realities of our times.

Protecting God, be with us as we drift amidst the waters of injustice, struggle, and pain.

Abiding Presence, there are times when our futures seem dim, and the possibilities feel limited.

Protecting God, deliver us to a new shore.

Sustaining Life, there are places in our world in need of your transforming grace.

Protecting God, give us the compassion and courage to share our blessings with others.

Providing Parent, people are suffering and striving for new life.

Protecting God, help us to reach out with swaddling love as the agents of healing you have created us to be. Bring us to new life; bring us to healing shores; bring us to courage and compassion, we pray in the name of Jesus the Christ, the one whose power was embodied in love. Amen.

THE LORD'S PRAYER: *(in unison)*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive
- us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power,
and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

SENDING FORTH

CHOIR ANTHEM: "*Just One Small Voice*" – Besig & Price
YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxP5ATeCvW8>

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

People of God, go now with courage! Use your cunning and creativity to forge a way in this world. Allow compassion to flow, as God's compassion flows over you. Go in peace. **Amen.**

PRAYER RESOURCES:

**Seasons of the Spirit – Seasons FUSION Pentecost 1, 2020; The United Church of Canada Pentecost 2020 Year A Gathering Resources for Worship Planners. Used with permission.*

NEXT WEEK'S (August 30, 2020) READINGS:

*Exodus 3:1-15;
Psalm 105;
Romans 12:9-21;
Matthew 16:21-28.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH

Church Office Hours:

Tuesday to Thursday 9 am – 2 pm

Pastoral Care - Contact Information

Should you need emergency pastoral care please call Ron Nielsen
@ 306-921-7794 or 306-752-4119.

Transfer or Applying for Membership

If you wish to transfer or apply for membership in our church,
please contact the church office or a member of the
Membership Committee.

Changes to Contact Information

If you have changed your address or phone number, please advise
the Church Office so that we can keep your information current.

Thank you!

FundScrip Over the Summer

The next FundScrip deadline will be in September.

Stewardship Seconds

*Stewardship means learning how to receive as well as
how to give. God's gifts can come from the most unlikely
places; when we recognize and accept them for what
they are, everyone benefits.*