



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: Jeanette Stevenson

Music: Jodi Allen Corbett

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Reader: Marion Heavin

ORDER OF WORSHIP

December 27, 2020

First Sunday After Christmas, Year B

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:

From Psalm 148

One: Praise God, angels in heaven; praise God, you creatures of earth!

All: Praise God, sun and moon; praise God, all you shining stars!

One: Praise God rushing waters; praise God, you fish in the sea!

All: Praise God, fire and hail; praise God, you snow and frost!

One: Praise God, animals and cattle; praise God, you creeping things and flying birds!

All: Praise God, young men and women; praise God, old and young together!

OPENING PRAYER: *(in unison)*

We have come to praise you, O God.
Your presence among us
is a long-awaited gift –
for us and all creation.
May the reality of this gift
be greater than our human expectations
as we receive this gift anew today.
Amen.

HYMN (VU 58) *“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”*

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE *(in unison)*

Saviour of all,
your gift of salvation is made known
in the presence of your people.
We confess that this gift is often dampened
by our lack of attention and neglect.
Fill us with your Spirit, we pray
so we will recognize the spark of holiness
in one another and the world around us.
Divine Giver of Light,
your presence burns brightly
for us and all of creation.
Yet we are quick to shield this light
and keep it to ourselves.
Open our hearts
and give us the means to shine
beyond this community into the world.
Mysterious One,
you reveal the inner thoughts
of all who draw near to you.
We confess it is easier to keep you at arm’s length
than to allow you to transform our hearts.
Draw us near to your truth

and comfort us with your eternal love
as we learn to live as children of the light.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

The gift of Jesus Christ,
the ultimate gift of God's love,
burns within the heart of this community.
Through this gift,
we come to know forgiveness, joy, and peace
that transcends our present struggles.
May we open this gift among us
and shine with the love of God
in this community and into the world.

PRAYER RESPONSE (MV 48)

"I can feel you near me God"

SPECIAL MUSIC "O Holy Night" – A. Adams

Soloist – Terri Rubbert

YouTube Link - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoxqaZPIHMO>

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD TO US

THE LORD'S PRAYER (VU 959)

Duet – Shelly and Emily Mooney

YouTube Link - <https://youtu.be/rbvB2ij6lqA>

MINUTE FOR MISSION:

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

HEBREW READING:

ISAIAH 61:10-62:3

*God clothes me with salvation
and righteousness.*

EPISTLE READING:

GALATIANS 4:4-7

*No longer a slave but a child of
God and an heir.*

GOSPEL READING:

LUKE 2:22-40

Jesus is presented in the temple

SERMON:

The message this morning is from three different sources: Reflections by The Venerable Rod Andrews that appeared in the Country Guide magazine thirty five years ago, some material from the Canadian Bible Society, and The Miracle of Christmas by Billy Graham, as well as some of my own thoughts.

Advent is over and the twelve days of Christmas have begun with the birth of Jesus. For most people, but not for all, it is a time of celebration.

"What a lot of excitement! What a wonderful time of year!" Or: "What a lot of hard work and expense! Everyone else seems happy at Christmas, but I am not into it!" I'm sure you have heard remarks like this, or maybe you have even said them yourself, at one time or another. Perhaps you don't embrace any of these expressions about Christmas, but everyone has some kind of feelings about this season of the year.

Christmas for some people is a wonderfully nostalgic time, a time of childhood memories of family, happy celebrations, and full churches. For others, it recalls feelings of pain and loss. When everyone else seems happy and surrounded by loved ones, some are alone, dealing with grief and disappointment.

This year has been different than any I've ever experienced. For most of us, the Covid Pandemic has played havoc with how we normally live. We have been asked to take extra precautions - to wear masks, to distance, and to avoid big gatherings. If we are following these guidelines, we have to stick to our immediate households. For some of us, that means being alone. Our social lives are practically none existent. We are not having in person church services. Never before have we been in a position where we cannot have visits from family and friends. Things are definitely different than what we're used to.

Perhaps we expect too much at Christmas time. When

we reflect on the story of the birth of Christ, we realize this is not a fairy story. It is real, ordinary, commonplace. Christmas is about sharing love and understanding and seeking peace. What could be simpler than that? If we seek to live in God's way and to do His will, every day will be like Christmas day. The secret is to take the ordinary and raise it to a new and higher level. And that can be done whether we are surrounded by people or whether we are alone.

God used ordinary things to reveal himself - a carpenter, the pain of a young woman, the cry of a baby, a barn full of animals. The story of Jesus Christ is something we can easily identify with. Jesus came to proclaim the coming of God's kingdom - but most of his life was spent at home, at work, and going to synagogue Sabbath after Sabbath. When Jesus wanted to express confidence in God, he described the way a farmer sowed his grain. To make the point that God loves everyone impartially, he told a story of workmen grumbling over their wages. When it came time to give his followers their central act of worship, he took bread, the common food, and wine, the usual drink.

Normally, we use ordinary things to celebrate his birth - food, family gatherings, plays, joyous singing, and gift giving. This year, we cannot do that to the same extent as usual. Perhaps we would enjoy Christmas more if we placed the emphasis on the basic elements of why we celebrate.

Some parents feel Christmas is a big whirlwind. Caught in all the activities and preparations, they sit down to Christmas dinner weary and exhausted. Why not spend some time reflecting on how you celebrate Christmas? Is it necessary to make a perfect Christmas for others? Children want their parents to be happy too. It is difficult to share love in meaningful ways when we are overly occupied. What is really essential to celebrate Christmas?

I've heard it said that Christmas should be cancelled this year. How can you cancel something that has already happened? Christmas came over 2000 years ago. It has been with us ever since then and it will continue to be here. We cannot cancel it but we can disregard it. Or, we can celebrate it

as best we can and then wait for better times.

We all know what it is to wait- for relief from pain, for family to be healed, for the suffering to ease, for a break from loneliness, for peace in the heart and mind, for graduation, for marriage, for a new baby to arrive, for appointments. The list can go on and on.

Just as Simeon waited to see the Christ, the Messiah (Luke 2), so we wait in our daily lives. The good news is: our salvation - our healing - our consolation - lies in a PERSON. And HE is already here.

Whatever our history, whatever our circumstances, Immanuel is here - God with us - in every situation, in every yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Perhaps we can turn the unfortunate circumstances of this Christmas season into a blessing. We cannot have Christmas in our usual manner. Our days are not filled with all kinds of festive activities, visiting, and food preparations. That gives us a chance to take time to concentrate on the true meaning of this season. Christmas is not really the visiting, the eating and drinking, the gift giving. It is about the coming of Christ into our lives. It is about LOVING each other. We can concentrate on that whether we are alone or with other people, today, during this entire Christmas season, and throughout the whole year.

Lord. I pray that this Christmas season will be devoted to contemplation and believing, rather than celebration. May we take this time to look away from the troubles of this earth and concentrate on the star of hope. In spite of the Covid pandemic and all the other problems plaguing us today, the story of the Christ Child is still as bright, as inspiring, and as near to us as it was when the Angel of the Lord first announced His coming. For those who truly believe in the miracle of Christmas, any place can be a modern Bethlehem and a humble heart can be a place where Jesus the Christ Child is born again. Let us approach His birth clear-eyed and openhearted to the wonder of the great gift God has given us out of His love. Amen.

HYMN (VU 44) *“It Came upon the Midnight Clear”*

Soloist – Emily Mooney

YouTube Link - <https://youtu.be/uLHRL0kBgjc>

OUR RESPONSE

OFFERING:

(Please use the offering box at the front/back of the Sanctuary as you exit. Thank you!)

OFFERTORY HYMN (VU 538) *“For the Gift of Creation”*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: *(in unison)*

Generous Creator, giver of every good gift:

May our offerings keep the life of those gifts circulating.

**Accept, we pray, these tokens of our gratitude for all we
have received.**

**May they be of use in extending the work of our community
to the world beyond our walls. Amen.**

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:

God of light and darkness,
our world needs your presence.

We, your people, long to experience you
in all our being, with all our senses.

Shine your light in us, O God,
that we might shine for others.

Help us not to stay focused
on the infant Jesus in the manger or the temple.

Help us instead to hear the message
of the living Christ, who calls us to discipleship.

Shine your light in us, O God,
that we might shine for others.

By your Spirit, guide us to take the message
of unconditional love and to share it
with all the world,
especially those who are in need,
hurting and disillusioned,
who have given up.

Shine your light in us, O God,
that we might shine for others.

SENDING FORTH

HYMN (VU 45) *“Joy Is Now in Every Place”*

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

The world awaits the gift of love.

We will go forth with the love of God.

The world awaits the gift of grace and forgiveness.

We will go forth with the grace of Christ.

The world awaits the gift of friendship and peace.

We will go forth together in the Spirit.

Go, and know that God’s Spirit has gone before you
gifting the people of earth with love, and grace, and peace.

Thanks be to God!

CHORAL BLESSING (MV 212)

“Sent Out in Jesus’ Name”

PRAYER RESOURCES:

**Seasons of the Spirit – Seasons FUSION Advent • Christmas •
Epiphany 2020–2021; The United Church of Canada Advent •
Christmas • Epiphany 2020-2021, Year B, Gathering Resources for
Worship Planners. Used with permission*

NEXT WEEK’S (December 24, 2020 – Advent 4) READINGS

Isaiah 9:2-7;

Titus 2:11-14;

Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH

Church Office is Closed starting Tuesday, December 27th
And reopens Tuesday, January 5th

Church Office Closed

The church office will be closed from December 25th to January, 5th, 2021. Donations for 2020 will still be accepted during this time. You can drop the donations in my mailbox or mail them to Box 1064. I will periodically check the voicemail and email over the holidays if you have any pressing concerns.

New Office Hours – January 2021

Starting January 5th, 2021 the new office hours are Tuesday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

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!

UCW Annual Report & Annual Congregational Report

If you have a submission/report for either of the 2019 Annual Reports please email or drop it off at the church office by Thursday, December 31st.

Stewardship Seconds

We are called on to share our tangible gifts, and also the intangible ones—joy, laughter, compassion.