



## UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

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

Website: [www.melfortunitedchurch.com](http://www.melfortunitedchurch.com)

Worship Time: 10:30 AM

Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Kim Eskewich

Music: Tracey Smetaniuk

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Mavis Busby

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Reader:

### ORDER OF WORSHIP

**February 21st, 2021**  
**Lent 1 - 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:**

**One:** Through healing waters,  
through troubled waters  
through still waters  
through dangerous waters  
through welcoming waters

**All: God is with us.**

**One:** Come, let us worship.

**OPENING PRAYER:** *(in unison)*

We are grateful, Creator, for sacred water that flows in our  
bodies and through the earth.

Water is a powerful force that both creates and destroys,  
sustains and erodes,  
deposits and washes away.

Yet, water is wasted, polluted, and ignored...

**HYMN (MV 27)** *“Creator God you gave us life*

**PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE:** *(in unison)*

When have you been cast into the wilderness, away from your  
comforts, strengths and supports?

What has tempted you away from God’s life-giving path?

Who have been angels or messengers of God, during your  
wilderness times?

When have you forgotten God, and God’s covenant with us  
all?

For what do you seek forgiveness?

*After a time of silence, continue:*

**One:** It is tempting to think we have all the answers.

**All:** Forgive us, God, for the times we give in to temptations  
and turn away from you.

Lead us in your way, we pray. Amen.

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE:**

A rainbow reminds us and God of God’s promise.

God loves all creation

with a love that that is steadfast and true.

God forgives us

and sets us free to live.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

**PRAYER RESPONSE (MV 154)** *“Deep in Our Hearts”*

**WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD TO US**

**SPECIAL MUSIC:** “*Raindrop Prelude*” - Chopin  
- Performed by Tracey Smetaniuk

**ANTHEM:** “*A Prayer for Healing*” – Joseph M. Martin  
Sung by Melfort United Church Choir

YouTube Link - [https://youtu.be/ NYaxiAsjOA](https://youtu.be/NYaxiAsjOA)

New Anthem purchased for our select choir. This is our COVID prayer.

## **MINUTE FOR MISSION:**

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS:**

#### **HEBREW READING:**

#### **GENESIS 9:8-17**

*The covenant between God and Noah.*

#### **EPISTLE READING:**

#### **1 PETER 3:18-22**

*Baptism now saves you.*

#### **GOSPEL READING:**

#### **MARK 1:9-15**

*The baptism, temptation, and mission of Jesus.*

## **SERMON:     Healing the Earth**

When I found out I was doing the sermon for today, the first Sunday of Lent, I immediately wondered... how out of my league would I be? What will I talk about? It just so happens that some of the messages and questions are directly related to something I have fought most of my working life trying to preserve and are very relevant to the world we live in today. **Thank you to Rev Wanda Winfield for providing the bulk of today’s sermon “Healing the Earth”.**

As we heard earlier in the reading from Genesis, when God makes a deal with us, we call it a covenant. Its supposed to be binding on both parties but in the covenant, God makes with Noah, its all on Gods side. There is nothing in it about what Noah is going to do for God. It is a covenant where God promises that He will never forget us, nor any of the creatures that he made.

It is also a covenant that promises that God will never again destroy the earth because of the sinfulness of man, and as a sign of this covenant - this promise - God creates the rainbow, so that whenever it is raining God and all of us here who see it will remember that promise.

The beautiful thing about this covenant, this agreement that God made is that it has no conditions upon it. God has re-created paradise by saving Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark from destruction. But we need to remember that God created the destruction in the first place. Forty days of unrelenting rain. Not something you really want to hear in agricultural Saskatchewan or anywhere for that matter....maybe that's why the covenant is so one sided.

On the other hand, perhaps God was expecting sheer gratitude on the part of the human beings to maintain this paradise. That rainbow that God placed in the sky wasn't really a reminder to human beings, but so that God "will see it and remember the everlasting covenant." (Geneses 9:15,16)

The obligation, and this is so very important in this day and age, is for human beings to look after this earth, and all that is on it. How are we doing? What do you think?

There is no debate or argument that people are the primary cause of pollution on this earth. Individually or as groups like cities or huge corporations and through government policies, we all contribute. Individually many of us choose to ignore it or not believe it, but the fact is, we are! We ARE responsible. In fact, according to National Geographic, "the planet is warming, from North Pole to South Pole. The heat is melting glaciers and sea ice, shifting precipitation patterns, and setting animals on the move. Ice is melting worldwide, especially at the Earth's poles. The sea level has been rising more quickly over the last century. Precipitation has increased across the globe, on average." Is that what God intended?

These effects are having an unprecedented toll on human life. There are studies upon studies showing the link between water and health across the globe. Evidence Action, a non-profit organization states that "Globally, about 2 million people a year die each year from water, sanitation and hygiene-related causes. An estimated 315,000 children under the age of 5 die from diarrhea each year, often as a result of unsafe water." So when we know that Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them;

for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” What would Jesus say about these little ones?

This kind of environmental damage is causing a new kind of refugee, those displaced by climate change. According to the United Nations there are estimates of 20 million people being displaced by climate change in one form or another. Where do we find God's grace in the face of this reality? God did not promise that there would not be a disaster again on the face of the earth. God only promised that “the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all life”(Genesis 9:15). That didn't mean that floods would never happen again. The responsibility to care for this earth remains with human beings.....but this means that God must have tremendous faith in us.

In the gospel according to Mark, Jesus begins his ministry with his baptism. He was immersed in the waters of the River Jordan, like so many before him. As he rose from the water, he saw the heavens torn apart. He saw through that thin veil that separates heaven and earth, and the connection that exists. The voice that came to him declared him as “Beloved”. Love is the connection and the reason that we belong both to the earth and to heaven.

But there are consequences to being human and Jesus did not get any time at all to bask in the reflected glory of God. But Jesus is immediately driven into the wilderness, and by the Spirit. He has work to do.

When Jesus returned from the wilderness, he was met with the news that John had been arrested. To anyone else this might have been very discouraging news. The man who had baptized him, the man he had perhaps thought to follow, was gone. But Jesus returns to Galilee, his hometown and from there begins his ministry.

He tells them that the “time is fulfilled”. There is no more waiting around hoping for something to happen. Next he says that “the kingdom of God has come near” or is at hand. He knows this because he has seen it in his baptism. Then he uses the same word that John used, “Repent” which means to turn away from the past....and face the future. Finally, he tells them to “believe in the good news.” The good news is that we are all beloved of God, and that heaven is not far from earth.. More importantly, what we do on earth matters in heaven.

This may sound like some sort of rambling, but this has huge implications for how we treat the earth, and each other. Water is the source of life, and we are all dependant on it. To claim that we care for the earth, we must first care for its water. We are born from water; water sustains us and water unites us, a universal need. We live in God's love like a fish lives in water. We are surrounded by and sustained by it, and yet most of the time many of us hardly notice it much less appreciate it. We take God's gifts for granted when we forget that they provide for our use and even our survival. But it is also a sign of God's blessing, freely given to all. God's gifts are given to us unconditionally, but not without consequences. We are entrusted by God to hold up our end of the bargain. We trust in God...because God first trusted us.

As we begin to journey through Lent, let's use this time to consider what gifts God has entrusted to us. I know that I, myself have many, perhaps more than I deserve. How will we use them and care for them? And what will we give back to God? We cannot make a rainbow for God, but we can become a *rainbow people*, delighting in all the colours, origins, genders, abilities and beliefs of all God's people. Let's make it so.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

## OUR RESPONSE

### **OFFERING:**

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

### **OFFERTORY HYMN (VU 99)**

*"Christ, when for us you were baptized"*

### **PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (in unison)**

**Creator God, in all that we do, all that we say, and all that we give, may we live out your covenant to care for all creation.**

**Amen.**

### **PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:**

To you, O God, we pray. In you, O God, we trust.

For you, O God, we wait.

Lead us, so that we may always follow in your way.

Teach us so that we may remain steadfast and faithful.  
Remind us of our covenant, so that we may be a covenantal people,  
striving to care for all of creation as you care for us.

Where there is brokenness and discord in your creation...  
*name parts of creation that are in unrest – environmental  
and social.*

Where there is death and dying...  
*name people, places and species that have died or are dying,  
including endangered species.*

Where there is isolation, exile, and forced migration...  
*name people, places, and species being displaced.*

Please send reminders of your love and, where possible, help  
us to be your messengers. **Amen.**

## **SENDING FORTH**

**HYMN (VU 560)** *“O Master, let me walk with thee”*

### **COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:**

Love God in all things equally.

For God is equally near to all creatures.

And among these creatures God does not love any  
one person more than any other.

God is all and is one.

All things become nothing but God.

Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things.

If we spent enough time with the tiniest creature  
– even a caterpillar –

we would never need sermons.

So full of God is every creature.

Go and spend time in God’s Creation

and in the amazing presence of God in all things.

**CHORAL BLESSING (MV191)** *“What Can I Do”*

**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 (February 28, 2021) READINGS**

*Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16*

*Romans 4:13-25*

*Mark 8:31-38*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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**THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH**

Tuesday, Feb 23<sup>rd</sup> @10:30 am - Finance Committee Mtg

Wednesday, Feb 24<sup>th</sup> @7 pm – Choir

Friday, Feb. 26<sup>th</sup> @10 am Pastoral Care

**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 for February**

The FundScrip deadline for February is Thursday, February 25<sup>th</sup>. It will be ready for pickup on Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup>.

**New Office Hours – January 2021**

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

***Stewardship Seconds***

*Jesus knows that we are all tempted. We are called to respond to temptation as good stewards*