



## 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: Marion Heavin

Music: Tracey Smetaniuk

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Reader: Ryan & Rachelle Heavin

### ORDER OF WORSHIP

January 3, 2021

Second 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:**

Praise God, the Creator, who made the heavens and the earth!

**We celebrate in awe of God's beautiful creation.**

Praise God, the Redeemer, who came in flesh to live among us!

**We gather in awe of God's coming to us.**

Praise God, the Spirit, who fills us with hope!

**We follow in awe, sustained for the journey.**

Praise God, one in three, and three in one!

**We worship in awe of God's merciful love.**

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

Triune God of love and light,  
dwell among us as we gather to worship you.  
Shine your light into our life.  
Fill our hearts with your overflowing love.  
Accept our offering of prayer and praise.  
May we truly see you in this place.  
Amen.

**HYMN (VU 82)** *“A Light is Gleaming”*

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

Merciful God, through your Son, Jesus, we have become  
your children.  
Too often we reject this identity;  
we turn away from the parental guidance you offer and the  
unconditional love you have for us.  
Rather than trusting you,  
we follow our ideas and plans.  
Instead of caring for all of your children,  
we seek our advancement instead.  
Forgive us, O God.  
Help us to trust and to return to your loving arms. Amen.

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE:**

The Word became flesh and lived among us, and from his  
fullness, we have received grace upon grace.

Through Jesus the Christ, we are forgiven and freed.

**The true light, which enlightens everyone, has come into  
the world. Through him, may we find peace.**

**PRAYER RESPONSE (VU 7)** *“Hope is a Star” - verse 1*

**SPECIAL MUSIC:** *“As the Deer Pants for the Water”*

- Will Heavin - violin, Alexis Heavin - vocal

## WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD TO US

**THE LORD'S PRAYER (VU 960):** *Sung*

**MINUTE FOR MISSION:**

**SPECIAL MUSIC:** *"Two Carols (New Setting)"*

– Arr. Kirk Theron

- Performed by Ryan, Rachelle, Alexis and Will Heavin

### SCRIPTURE READINGS:

GOSPEL READING:

**MATTHEW 2:1-12**

**LUKE 2:25-32**

**SERMON:** *"Sharing Gifts"* by Brian D. McLaren

THEY WERE CALLED MAGI...we know them as wise men. They were astrologers, holy men of a foreign religion. They had observed a strange celestial phenomenon, which they interpreted to mean that a new king had been born in Judea. According to Matthew's gospel, they traveled to honor him, bringing valuable treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh - precious gifts indeed.

In their giving of gifts they were wiser than they realized. Gift-giving, it turns out, was at the heart of all Jesus would say and do. God is like a parent, Jesus would teach, who loves to shower sons and daughters with good gifts. The kingdom or commonwealth of God that Jesus constantly proclaimed was characterized by an abundant, gracious, extravagant economy of grace, of generosity, of gift-giving. "It is better to give than to receive," Jesus taught, and his followers came to understand Jesus himself as a gift expressing God's love to the whole world.

So, in memory of the wise men's gift-giving to Jesus, in honor of Jesus' teaching and example of giving, and as an echo of God's self-giving in Jesus, we joyfully give one another gifts when we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Not everyone felt generosity in response to this new baby. King Herod was furious about anyone who might unsettle the status

quo. When he deployed troops to the Bethlehem region with orders to kill all infant boys, Joseph was warned in a dream to escape. So the family fled south to Egypt, where Jesus spent part of his childhood as a refugee.

How meaningful it is that members of other religions – the Magi from the east and the Egyptians to the south – help save Jesus' life. Could their role in the Christian story be a gift to us today? Could they be telling us that God has a better way for religions to relate to one another?

Through the centuries, religions have repeatedly divided people. Religions – including the Christian religion– have too often spread fear, prejudice, hate, and violence in our world. But in the Magi's offering of gifts to honor the infant Jesus, and in the Egyptians' protective hospitality for Jesus and his refugee family, we can see a better way, a way Jesus himself embodied and taught as a man. They remind us that members of Earth's religions don't need to see their counterparts as competitors or enemies. Instead we can approach one another with the spirit of gift-giving and honor, as exemplified by the Magi. We can be there to welcome and protect one another, as exemplified by the Egyptians.

Instead of looking for faults and errors by which other religions can be discredited, insulted, and excluded, we can ask other questions: *What good can be discovered in this religion? Let us honor it. What treasures have they been given to share with us? Let us warmly welcome them. What dangers do they face? Let us protect them. What gifts do we have to share with them? Let us generously offer them.*

According to Matthew, when King Herod died, Joseph had another dream telling him it was safe to return to his homeland. But Herod's son still ruled Judea, the region around Bethlehem, so the family went farther north to another region, Galilee. They resettled in Nazareth, Galilee – which would be Jesus' address throughout the rest of his childhood and young adulthood.

So, having been protected by the Magi and the Egyptians, Jesus grew up as a Galilean Jew. The Jews were the descendants of the Judeans who had survived the Babylonian invasion over five centuries earlier. They had not lost their identity while living under exile in Babylon. Nor had they lost their identity over the following centuries, when they survived occupation and oppression by the Persians, Greeks and Romans. Because the Jews had so

courageously survived oppression and mistreatment by others, and because they believed God had given them special blessings to enjoy and share with everyone, no wonder Jewish identity was highly cherished. No wonder it was repeatedly affirmed and celebrated through holidays like Passover and rites of passage like circumcision.

Luke's gospel doesn't tell us about the Magi or the Egyptians. For Luke, the next big event after Jesus' birth came eight days later, when Jesus' parents took him to the Temple in Jerusalem to be circumcised, a primary sign of Jewish identity for every newborn son. You can image his parents' surprise when an old man, a perfect stranger named Simeon, came up to them in the Temple and took Jesus from their arms and began praising God. "This child will be a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and a glory to God's people, Israel," Simeon Said. He was seeing in Jesus a gift for *us* and for *them* both, not one against the other or one without the other.

Old Simeon the Jew in Luke's gospel and the non-Jewish Magi from the East in Matthew's gospel agree: This child is special. He is worthy of honor. He has gifts that will bring blessings to his own people and to all people everywhere.

To be alive in the adventure of Jesus is to know ourselves as part of the tradition, and, through that tradition, to have a history and an identity to enjoy, preserve, and to share. And to be alive in the adventure of Jesus is to see others as part of their unique traditions, too, with their own history, identity, and gifts. Like the Magi, like the Egyptians, like old Simeon...we don't have to see people of other religions in terms of *us* versus *them*. We can see people of other religions as beloved neighbors, us with them, them with us, with gifts to share.

May we who follow Jesus discover the gifts of our tradition and share them generously, and may we joyfully receive the gifts that others bring as well. For every good gift and every perfect gift comes from God.

Copyright: "*We Make the Road by Walking*" – Brian, D. McLaren, Pages 82-84, June 2014, Jericho Books, ISBN 978-1-4555-1400-7

**Reading: Ryan Heavin** "*One Solitary Life*"  
– arr. Fred Bock

## 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)***

**Gracious God, you love abundantly and provide generously. In gratitude, we give our gifts back to you. May these offerings – our time, money, energy, and prayers – nurture and support your children, and represent to all what a joy it is to be counted among your family. Use us, and these gifts, to your glory. Amen.**

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

Throughout today’s texts, we have seen the idea of family, acceptance, and belonging. Invite participants to respond to each petition out loud or in silence.

Abundant God, we come to you today as grateful people.

We thank you for calling us your children, and for loving us as our parent.

You fill us with hope.

Today we pray for your children, our family, and we ask that your healing touch, your unbounded peace, and your astonishing love be made known.

With gratitude, we lift into the light our mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, those whom we have known since birth, and all who have been parental figures to us.

With thanksgiving, we lift into the light our sisters and brothers; siblings and friends who have loved us, cared for us, and helped us become the people we are today.

With concern, we lift into the light those members of our family who are hurting;

those who are living with illness and disease; those who are in pain in mind, body, or spirit.

With awe, we lift into the light those family members who

have answered your call to serve your children and  
accepted the path of ministry and discipleship.  
With humility, we lift ourselves into the light:  
for the places where we fall short;  
for the relationships we have not nurtured;  
for the areas in our own lives that need healing.  
With desperation, we lift into the light our siblings around  
the world;  
your children who are suffering needlessly under pain of  
war, poverty and disease, oppression and persecution,  
injustice and terror, natural and human-caused disaster.  
With hope, we lift into the light the youngest members of  
our family.  
With peace, we lift into the light the oldest members of our  
family.  
With confidence and trust, we pray to you, O God. **Amen.**

## **SENDING FORTH**

**HYMN (VU 87)** *“I Am the Light of the World”*

### **COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:**

Go in peace!  
You are loved by God and us!  
Spread the light and share God’s story  
because you are loved and you are enough.  
Amen!

### **CHORAL BLESSING** *“We Are United”*

– Tannis Schmidt

#### **Refrain:**

We are united, living as one,  
One in \*creation, one in community.  
We are united, living as one,  
One in \*creation, one in diversity.

Hearts and hands,  
Hold one another’s hands

We are all one in \*\*Love  
Hearts and hands,  
Hold one anothers' hands  
We are all one in \*\*Love

**Refrain:**

Spirit and song,  
Sing one anothers songs  
We are all one in\*\*Love  
Spirit and son,  
Sing one anothers' songs  
We are all one in \*\*Love

**Refrain:**

Love and life,  
Lift one anothers' lives  
We are all one in \*\*Love  
Love and life  
Lift one anothers' lives  
We are all one in \*Love

**Refrain:**

Alternate words (\*God's vision, \*\*God))  
[Tannis Schmidt c.2017 All rights reserved) Used with permission.]

**PRAYER RESOURCES:**

*\*Seasons of the Spirit – SeasonsFUSION 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 (January 10, 2021) READINGS**

*Genesis 1:1-5*

*Acts 19:1-7;*

*Mark 1:4-11.*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH

Tuesday, January 5<sup>th</sup>

@ 7 pm – Women Alive

Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>

@ 4:40 pm – Worship Committee Meeting

Friday, January 8<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 January**

The FundScrip deadline for January is Thursday, January 28<sup>th</sup>. It will be ready for pickup on Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Church Office Closed**

The church office will be closed from December 25<sup>th</sup> to January, 5<sup>th</sup>, 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 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the new office hours are  
Tuesday to Friday from 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

#### *Stewardship Seconds*

*By our actions, we receive God's love and reflect it back into the world around us.*