



UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

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Website: www.melfortunitedchurch.com

Worship Time: 10:30 AM

Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Kim Eskowich

Music: Graydon Eskowich

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Readers:

ORDER OF WORSHIP

June 28, 2020

Fourth 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:

Welcome! In the name of God, welcome.

God's love stretches wide, ready to embrace all with love.

You who are thirsty for the presence of God, welcome.

May your thirst be satisfied.

You who long for a caring touch, welcome.

May you know God's love through the care of this community.

In the name of God, welcome to all; let us drink deeply of God's presence and share this grace with one another.

Come, let us worship.

OPENING PRAYER: *(in unison)*

**God of steadfast love,
today remember Jesus' words:
"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me,
and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who
sent me."**

**We pray to welcome the outcast as we would welcome you,
to do what you can to provide water to the stranger,
and to trust always that you will be there.**

**We pray to know that kindness is brave,
but always worthwhile,
and that where love is,
there you are. Amen.**

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE:

Holy God,

Jesus taught what it means to welcome and show a beautiful and beloved community where there is room for all. For times when we have created our own closed communities,

forgive us.

For times we have excluded others because of who they are, or what they believe,

forgive us.

For times when we think that our way is a better way than other ways,

forgive us.

For the times, we don't want to find things in common with, or love, others who are different from us,

forgive us.

For the times we have become so comfortable in our lives, that we don't want to be uncomfortable by welcoming people who are beyond our doors,

forgive us.

May we extend the welcome we receive through your Spirit, and may we remember that in the holy act of welcoming others,

we welcome you. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

We are born in love, and we live in love.

Each day, the spirit of love speaks anew and guides

in a love that transcends the world's coldness and fear.

SPECIAL MUSIC:

“Let Us Build A House”

– Soloist - Graydon Eskowich

YouTube Link: <https://youtu.be/f6h8eIR45C8>

“There Is Room for All”

– Soloist – Graydon Eskowich

YouTube Link: https://youtu.be/uzNpl118_Mk

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

RESPONSORIAL READING:

PSALM 13 (VU p. 734)

*How long will you forget me,
God?*

HEBREW READING:

GENESIS 22:1-14

The sacrifice of Isaac.

EPISTLE READING:

ROMANS 6;12-23

*The wages of sin is death; eternal
life is a free gift.*

GOSPEL READING:

MATTHEW 10:40-42

*Welcoming and offering a cup of
water.*

SERMON:

Have you ever thought what the church would look like if we really, and I mean really, ministered the way Christ calls his followers to minister? You know, if we did things the way Christ did. It's possible we wouldn't even have church buildings! We would just be out in the world, preaching and teaching about the good news of God's justice and mercy, and the promise of God's coming kingdom! That's what Jesus did, isn't it?

Our gospel reading from Matthew this morning invites us to explore in depth the quality of the welcome that we offer to one another within the Body of Christ, the church. But with it we must also reflect on the

welcome we offer to those who are not yet a part of this body! As Jesus speaks to the disciples here, he is preparing to send them out to preach the message that "the kingdom of heaven is near." He is giving them authority to heal the sick, to raise the dead, and to drive out demons in his name. Christ knows that he is sending the disciples into a difficult situation, as they will surely face much opposition along the way. And so Christ urges others to be hospitable to those who come in his name. During times of persecution, hospitality was especially important, and could even be dangerous; think "harboring a criminal." So Jesus says to all who will hear that those who provide hospitality and show kindness to God's people will be greatly blessed!

So who are God's people? To whom, exactly, are we called to be hospitable? Obviously, this passage implores us to be welcoming to missionaries and those who carry the good news of Christ around the world. But Christ calls us also to serve the poor, the outcaste, the sick, the lost, the sinner. These are all people of God as well, these too are bearers of the Christian message, and they need our hospitality as much as any other!

Have you ever given much thought to what keeps you coming to this church? What is it that you love about this church? There are certainly many different factors that bring us into a certain church. But I think that when it comes to those things that keep us at a church, it boils down to the fact that this is the place where we experience the love of God in Christ Jesus in the most real and tangible ways. ***This is our family.*** They care for us when we are going through difficult times. We hold one another accountable when we are not living our lives in a way that is consistent with our Christian faith. We share with one another the love of Christ in the same way that we have experienced Christ's love ourselves. I think it's fair to say that we experience from one another genuine hospitality.

But just as much as the church is about serving one another, it's even more so about serving the world in Christ's name! If we are really being hospitable and welcoming in the way that Christ teaches us to be, we would extend those acts we do for one another out into the world. We would build relationships with those we don't now know. We would serve our neighbors in the way we serve one another. As

you read this, I imagine that each of you could name people you know who are not attending any church this morning personally or via ZOOM or simply reading the scriptures etc. on their own. And each of you could probably think of as many people who are not in church as there are doing that! That's hundreds of people WE know who are not a part of the Christian community!

More and more we find that people are drifting away from church; that young people are growing up without the love and unconditional acceptance which is experienced in the church of Christ. Children are raised thinking that "Jesus Christ" is a curse word and nothing else! So the question for us today is, as the faithful of Christ, how are we going to follow his example and serve those beyond these walls? Welcome others as we have been welcomed? Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, "How can I help?" That's exactly what Jesus did. He didn't make it easy for himself by avoiding people's troubles. He waded right in and helped! This too is genuine hospitality, and it is the kind of radical hospitality that Christian churches should practice!

We are called by Christ to welcome others and practice hospitality because people are messed up and lost. And the only way to get straight and become un-lost is through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We practice hospitality because we care. There is a right way and there is a wrong way. There is life and there is death. There is only one way to be in relationship with God, only one way to change lives, only one way to live in community with others. And when we are truly being Christ's hands and feet in the world, we open that way to everyone we meet! We welcome them in the same way that we have been welcomed by Christ! We serve them in the same way that Christ has so sacrificially served us!

This is not just a membership drive! Hospitality means we pray, plan, prepare, and work toward the purpose of helping others receive what we have received in Christ. Hospitality is more than simple politeness to newcomers, name tags for greeters, or a few visitor parking spaces, though these things are important. Radical hospitality is a spiritual act, the practice of genuine graciousness and love that has nothing to do with self-interest.

Let's face it; we are comfortable here because this is where we are loved and accepted. But if we are being the church in the way that Christ envisions the church in this world, we would also feel a bit uncomfortable, restless, if you will. And we should feed such restlessness because we realize that so many people do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Do we have that restlessness?

We live in an inhospitable world. People simply do not go out of their way for one another. Many folks go to workday after day with little or no satisfaction from a job well-done. Whenever something goes wrong, we find someone to blame. Everyone is so busy taking care of themselves, they don't have time to worry about anyone else. There has to be a place where people know they are welcome, loved, respected, wanted, and needed. And that place is the church, Melfort United Church! Are we up to the task?

If we are welcoming to others in the ways we are welcoming to one another, it means that we will work together with an ever-present awareness of the person who is not present, our neighbors, our friends, and our co-workers who do not know Christ as Savior and Lord! In every ministry, we work on how to reach those who are not yet here. There is no place for the self-satisfied attitude that thinks, "Now that my needs are met, I'm happy." No, we offer ourselves to Christ by offering Christ to others in everything we do! Good intentions aren't enough! Too many churches want more young people as long as they act like old people, more newcomers as long as they act like old-timers, more children as long as they are as quiet as adults, more ethnic families as long as they act like the majority. We can do better. Little changes have big effects.

How are we doing with our hospitality? How can we make it more like the radical hospitality we see in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ? Jesus has invited us all to join him in the Kingdom; he died in order to make that invitation possible. The least we can do is extend the invitation to others that he died extending to us! This is a great opportunity for you to extend an invitation to any and all who are not yet a part of a church family. Such simple invitations should come naturally. We have no problem telling others where we get our hair cut, where we get our car fixed, where we like to eat.

When someone new starts at work or school or someone moves into the neighborhood, in addition to the regular gestures of welcome, let's add: "And if you're looking for a church, I'd be happy to tell you about mine. I love it, and it's meant the world to my family, and we'd love to have you come with us sometime." At other times, when we know someone is facing a difficulty in their marriage or is suffering the grief of loss, let's not be afraid to say, "Something that helped me was talking to my pastor. I know (he or she) would be willing to talk to you, too. If you want their name or would like for me to call for you, I'd be happy to help and I know they would too."

We pray to God for those people who are in our lives. Why not invite them so that they can have the kind of relationship to God that we have? Every member of the Body of Christ is the fruit of someone's ministry and faithfulness. Who is the fruit of yours? It's never too late to start...

[Adapted from Clair Sauer, Wesley Memorial United Church]

OUR RESPONSE

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:

God of courageous love, we come today prepared to serve our neighbours.

Help us to keep a clear mind and a firm heart.

We pray to hear the promise and calm that lives at the heart of your being.

We pray to recognize how that same voice lives in us.

When we choose the braver path of love, let us know that we live in you.

We pray to turn away from worldly riches and toward inner joy.

You, O God, long for a world in which the last shall be first, in which the lowly are cared for.

We trust in your vision, and long to make it so.

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

COMMISSIONING & BLESSING:

Live as a testament to God's welcome and grace. Look for life not in the promise of status or fame, but in the still, small voice of radical love.

Go in peace and love, listening to the voice of God amid the blur and noise of the world, offering nourishment to neighbour and stranger, and remembering the love of a humble but mighty God.

We go with renewed hope and a braver faith.

PRAYER RESOURCES:

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

NEXT WEEK'S (July 5, 2020) READINGS:

Genesis 24:34-38, 42-49, 58-67;

Psalm 45:10-17;

Romans 7:15-25a;

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH

Church Office Hours:

The church office is closed the week of June 29th – July 2nd and will reopen on Wednesday, July 8th