





## UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

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

Worship Time: 10:30 AM

Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Gail Forsyth

Music: Jodi Allen Corbett

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Mavis Busby

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Reader:

### ORDER OF WORSHIP

**March 21, 2021**  
**Lent 5 – 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:**

Come and seek God, with your whole heart:

**All: meditate on Christ's teachings,  
fix ourselves on the ways of Christ,  
and delight in God's Holy word.**

Come and worship God.

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

**Loving Jesus, High Priest of our hearts,  
draw us close to you, so we may glorify you  
and proclaim your goodness,**

in all that we are, all that we do,  
and all that we say. Amen.

**HYMN (MV 1)** *“Let us build a house”*

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

Have mercy on us, O God, according to your steadfast love;  
according to your abundant mercy, remove our  
transgressions, take away our iniquity, and smooth the  
paths that will lead us closer to you.

For we know that the brokenness of the world is all around,  
separating us from you, creation, and each other.  
We are born into corruption. You desire all of creation  
to know the truth that we are one in our inward beings.

Teach us this wisdom in our secret heart,  
so we can celebrate with gladness our reconciliation  
with you and your creation.

Create in us a pure heart, O God, and put a  
reconciling spirit within us.

Do not cast us away from your creation,  
and do not take your Holy Spirit from us.

Restore your wonderful creation and sustain your  
Covenant with all Earth. Amen.

**WORDS OF ASSURANCE:**

Be assured that God,  
lives deep within our hearts.  
They will never leave us.  
They will forgive our iniquity and  
no longer remember our sins.

**PRAYER RESPONSE (MV115)**

*“Behold, behold, I make all things new”*

**CHOIR ANTHEM** - *“Alone He Prays”*

- words by John Parker – Music by Joel Raney  
You Tube Link: <https://youtu.be/UzvrUrgZ4fw>

## WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD TO US

### MINUTE FOR MISSION:

### SCRIPTURE READINGS:

#### HEBREW READING:

**JEREMIAH 31:31-34**

*I will write my law on their hearts.*

#### EPISTLE READING:

**HEBREWS 5:5-10**

*Christ did not glorify himself;  
rather he suffered.*

#### GOSPEL READING:

**JOHN 12:20-33**

*Unless a grain of wheat falls into  
the earth.*

### **SERMON:      Written On Our Hearts: Jeremiah 31:31-34**

Credit for Sermon: Pastor Chrissy of Winthrop Congregation Church, Winthrop, Maine.

I remember being in 3rd or 4th grade and taping music off the radio to listen to later. The tape deck didn't work in our radio. I could never get it to record. So, I had to get creative. My family had one of those clunky free-standing tape recorders... it was about the size of one of our hymnals and had really big buttons. I think my mom borrowed it from my uncle Ben when she went back to college. She wanted to tape her class lectures. I wanted to use it to make mixtapes.

I'd take whatever blank, or mostly blank, tape I could find and load up the recorder. Then, I'd turn on the radio, preferably a countdown show of some kind. The songs I wanted to tape were almost always among the current hits. I could nearly guarantee that they'd be on a countdown show. I couldn't hook the recorder into the radio, so I had to hold it as close to the speakers as I could and hope the phone didn't ring or one of my little sisters didn't start talking in the background. Once I got everything set up, I'd lay down in the floor in front of the radio and wait.

If I was lucky and recording during one of the countdown shows, they'd say what the next song that was going to be. If I was just listening to the regular radio, I'd just have to pay close attention and be sitting with my finger at the ready. As soon as I heard the song I liked, I'd rush to smash down the record button. At least 67% of the time, I'd miss a little bit of the introduction of the song. Sometimes I'd stop the song, too early, too, so instead of a gentle fade out (that's when songs still had fade out at the end), there'd just be a click and nothing. Then, the next taped song would have an abrupt beginning a few words into the song. Sometimes you might even hear a phone ring or a two-year-old yell in the background. These were some super high-class recordings.

I wanted to tape these songs because I wanted to memorize them. I wanted to be able to sing along with Richard Marx's "Right Here Waiting For You" while riding in the car with my teenage cousin Larissa. I wanted to belt out the words to "Blame It On the Rain" and "Miss You Much" while dancing in my friend Ashley's basement. I needed to listen to "We Didn't Start the Fire" enough times so I could keep up with fast-paced, complicated lyrics referencing world politics that I didn't even come close to understanding. Just this last Sunday, as I turned on my car to come to church, I heard the familiar strains of "Love Shack" by the B-52's come on the radio. I sang every word. It's been almost 30 years since that song came out, and I still know every clap, breath, and bang, bang, bang on the door. Those lyrics are transposed onto some deep, dark recess of my brain. If you say to me, "Hop in my Chrysler," I'm going to know that it's as big as a whale and it's about to set sail!

My childhood wasn't all pop songs though. I learned some hymns and prayers, too. The Lord's Prayer was probably the first prayer I ever memorized. We had a small wooden plaque with of the prayer that hung on our wall. The same one had hung on my grandparents' wall when my mother was young. Later, as an adult working in hospice, I came to truly appreciate the power of this prayer. I spent much of my time with people whose memories were very poor. In some cases, their dementia was so advanced that they could no longer string together enough words to create a complete sentence. It was during these visits with people in various states of memory loss that I began be more intentional about praying the

Lord's Prayer during our visits. I don't remember if another chaplain suggested I offer to pray it with people or if I just started saying it myself. Most of the people I worked with had been raised in Christian churches. Nearly all of them had learned this prayer as they were children and had repeatedly weekly, if not daily, much of their lives.

Despite some variations in version, like how some people say "sins" and others say "trespasses," nearly everyone knew the words, even if their memories were very poor. At the end of our visits, I would offer prayer. That was a word many people remembered, too. If someone I was visiting said yes, they'd like a prayer, I would begin to say the Lord's prayer. It was amazing. People who could still speak clearly would usually say the words with me. On some occasions, a person might have trouble remembering all the words but could still pick up a few of them... Maybe the "Our Father" or the "on earth as it is in heaven." They usually remembered the Amen. I visited one lady who really couldn't say any clear words any more, but she smiled and laughed a lot and hummed along with music. If I prayed the Lord's Prayer with her, she would mumble and hum along with me, matching the rhythm in which I was praying. She could almost finish with the whole word "Amen." She prayed like this with me during every one of our visits. Even as so many of her words were gone, this prayer was still inside of her... familiar and comforting. I think she was glad to pray it with me.

When I was in college, with the help of grants and student loans, I was fortunate enough to be able to travel to Brazil. Brazil has a racialized history that is similar to the US in many ways. Like with US history, it is impossible to understand Brazilian history without taking into account European colonialism, the destruction of indigenous communities, and the enslavement of millions of Africans. When I was traveling in the northeastern Brazilian state of Bahia, I learned about some parts of West and Central African cultures that managed to survive slavery and colonization. You see, the people who had been enslaved developed a martial art called capoeira. Capoeira looks like a dance and is played like a game.

A capoeira match is played between two people who use a series of movements, including kicks and swipes of legs, flips,

handstands, and spins, to try to trip each other up while also avoiding being touched by their competitor. At the time I traveled to Brazil, I learned that capoeira had developed in this way in order to practice fighting in a manner that looked like enough like dancing that it confused the slave owners. This was one way that people could prepare for a rebellion. But, this practice did more than help them prepare for fights. It helped the people maintain parts of their ancestors' culture in the face of white supremacy. It also allowed them to feel strong when the people who enslaved them needed them to feel powerless. It even helped them create a series of ritual acts that was outside of the culture that oppressed them. Capoeira, and other Western and Central African cultural practices, provided enslaved people a place to be creative and come together in fellowship, reminding one another of their shared humanity in the face of racist cruelty. Capoeira was a more than a game. It was a way to re-inscribe pride and a sense of self that slavery attempted to erase. Many of the people who were enslaved did not survive. For the ones who did, this practice of capoeira was a place where they could feel the beginnings of their liberation... it was a source of a new, and also very old, way of living.

What are the things that are inscribed on your very heart? What instructions from God have curled up around your bones and made you strong? What words and songs and rhythms are keys to the memories that are the foundations of your life? I think people keep reading these prophecies of Jeremiah thousands of years after they were written, because we know something about having words written on our hearts. We know what it means to have ideas so deeply embedded in our behavior that they might as well be the blood that pumps through our veins. The pop songs that taught us something about growing up, the ancient prayers that teach us about staying connected, the movements and dances and rhythms that help us survive unspeakable injustice... all written on the hearts of the people, carried into a new world, a new life stage, a new relationship. What are the things that are inscribed on your very heart? What are the words that shape the foundation of your very being?

Jeremiah knew the people would need help rebuilding after the exile. Jeremiah knew that one word, covenant, was written on the hearts of his people. Their covenant with God is scrawled across the

promise to all creation after the flood, the promise to Sarah and Abraham's descendants, and the promises to the lost and fearful in the desert. At the core of their common lives is the God who promises, who forgives, who holds people accountable, and, most of all, who is faithful. In the midst of the desolation of exile, these words could be lost in the jumble of trauma, destruction, and suffering. In order to rebuild, Jeremiah knew that a new version of this covenant must arise. It will be in the pattern of the old: both parties will be committed. Both parties will tend to the powerless and the fearful. Both parties will be accountable. But, this covenant will also be new. The years of exile will change the people. The covenant can't look quite the same. But, the words will be there. Deep within them. Renewed and moving them to love of God and love of neighbor. These words are here for us, too. What words has God written on your heart? What new creation and liberation are they calling you to today?

## **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)***

**We wish to see the fruits of Jesus' ministry. We want to experience God's reign on Earth. The sharing of gifts is one way we can catch a glimpse of the reign of God. Loving God, open our hearts to a new world. A world where there is no longer least and greatest, rich and poor. A world where there is enough for all, and all treated as beloved children of God. Until that day comes, bless our small contributions of time, talent and treasures and may they work towards the building of your new world. Amen.**

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

Loving God,

We pray for your church and its ministry around the world...

We pray for your faithful followers, our siblings in Christ...

We pray for this community of believers and for all the joys and sorrows we share with you silently or out loud...

God, may the law of love written on our hearts become our song as we journey.

A song with words that comfort when hardships on the road burden us...

a tune that lingers leaving warm thoughts with those whom we meet on the way, and with a rhythm that lilts, buoying our spirits and strengthening our resolve to see the journey through.

You promised to write your law within us, so that no matter where we are, we will always know, deep in our hearts, you and your ways.

Amen.

## **SENDING FORTH**

**HYMN (MV 703)** *“In the bulb there is a flower”*

### **COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:**

Go and embody God’s song to the world.

With your words, sing hope.

With your actions, dance peace.

With your being, play love.

Amen.

**CHORAL BLESSING** *“When you Go From This Place”*

### **PRAYER RESOURCES:**

*\*Seasons of the Spirit – SeasonsFUSION 2021-2022; The United Church of Canada Lent.Easter 2021, Year B, Gathering Resources for Worship Planners.  
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### **NEXT WEEK’S (March 28, 2021) READINGS**

Mark 11:1-11/John 12:12-16

Psalm 118: 1-2, 19-29

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

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### **THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH**

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

Friday, March 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!

### **Stewardship Seconds**

*Stewards pray for a new and right spirit within, and  
serve by following Jesus.*