



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: Kelly Copeland & Judy Meier

Music: Jodi Allen Corbett

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Mavis Busby

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter:

Scripture Reader:

ORDER OF WORSHIP

March 7, 2021
Lent 3 – 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: The heavens are telling the glory of God,

All: we gather to proclaim God's handiwork.

One: God's laws are perfect.

God's decrees are sure.

God's precepts are right.

God's commandments are clear.

God's ordinances are true.

God's awesomeness is pure.

All: We gather to worship God.

OPENING PRAYER: *(in unison)*

As we gather for worship this morning,
may the words of our mouths,
and the meditations of all our hearts,
be acceptable to you,
Our God, rock and redeemer.
Amen.

HYMN (VU 642) *“Be thou my vision”*

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE: *(in unison)*

One: Merciful God,
the earth is telling of the sinfulness of our ways:

**All: Our laws are imperfect;
our decrees are doubtful;
our percepts are subjective;**

**our commandments are unclear;
our ordinances are misguided.**

One: Although our intentions are pure,
we are often more foolish than we are wise,
more harmful than we are helpful.

**All: Help us to pay attention to the moans of creation,
and motivate us to change our ways so that we may live
faithfully together. Amen.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

Take heart, for God’s foolishness is wiser than human
wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.
We are acceptable, accepted, free to begin again.
Free to run our course with joy.

PRAYER RESPONSE (MV62) *“There is room for all”*

SPECIAL MUSIC – “10,000 Reasons”

- performed by Madison McAvoy
- accompanied by Tracey Smetaniuk

WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD TO US

MINUTE FOR MISSION:

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

HEBREW READING:

EXODUS 20:1-17

The Ten Commandments.

GOSPEL READING:

JOHN 2:13-22

Jesus clears the temple.

SERMON: The Ten Commandments for the 21st Century

The Ten Commandments – generations of children have memorized them in Sunday School. The Lord’s Prayer, the Beatitudes and the Ten Commandments, right? And how many of us remember being enthralled by Cecile B. DeMille’s 1956 extravaganza with Charlton Heston called, of course, “The Ten Commandments”. It’s an oldie goldie but is still viewed almost 70 years later.

But in the superfast, connected, messy and chaotic world we live in today, are they even still relevant? Perhaps the commandments brought down from Mount Sinai by Moses are now simply a relic from the past, somewhat quaint perhaps, just something to think about once every three years when the Lectionary comes around to them. After all, we aren’t living in the time of Moses; we are simply trying to get on with our lives as best we can, trying to survive as things constantly change and new rules swirl around us and new expectations bombard us. However, they are the Scriptures for today so let’s take a look at them to see how relevant they actually still are, all these centuries later.

The Ten Commandments are divided into religious and social laws. The religious section instructed the Israelites to love God with all their heart and worship no other God. Back in the time of Moses, there was competition for gods. Different groups of ancient peoples followed other religions and worshipped pagan gods but the Israelites were monotheistic. They had one god and were instructed to resist the temptation to worship the gods from these other religions. But is that law relevant to us in the 21st century? Surely not! We don’t have all sorts of pagan gods nowadays. Or do we? Perhaps if we broaden our idea of “other gods” to include anything that distracts us from pursuing the love of God and God’s world, we can

easily find 21st century replacements for the pagan gods of the ancient world. How about money? How about the endless pursuit of new stuff? Power? Celebrity? When these things become the motivator in our lives, I think we've found new gods.

The next group of commandments were societal laws intended to help the ancient Jewish people live more cooperatively and harmoniously. Things like murder and stealing tend to be universal laws governing societies throughout the centuries and it's easy to see why. I doubt very many people would endorse eliminating those laws. But God included other laws such as adultery, coveting, disrespecting parents and lying. Breaking those rules might not land a person in jail but they can cause heartache, fracturing of families, misunderstandings, depression, jealousy, anxiety and many other sorrows that make navigating through life so much more difficult and challenging.

None of what I have just said will be controversial. But the truth is that life is much more confusing and complicated and challenging than simply following the ancient laws handed down in the Old Testament. Sometimes, life interferes, doesn't it? We are, when all is said and done, imperfect people who mostly do our best but often stumble and fail. We do sometimes lie or cheat, our marriages do break down in spite of our best intentions and efforts, our thoughts and words are sometimes unkind and uncharitable. We don't always help others when we should, as children we do sometimes yell at our parents. And we sometimes forget to revere and protect God's earth, choosing instead to abuse it and abuse Earth's creatures for our selfish desires.

Does that mean that we are bad people who have disappointed God and are unworthy of God's love? Absolutely, unequivocally not!!! There is nothing we could do to lose the love of our God. I really believe that. The Ten Commandments are a guide for us; in a perfect world, everyone would follow each and every law. There would be no murder, theft, ill will or duplicity. But that doesn't happen. It didn't happen thousands of years ago and it sure doesn't happen nowadays. The best we can do is try day by day to fulfill God's plan for this world. That means remembering to put God's plan for us ahead of our plans for us when our plans require breaking his commandments. When we slip, God will help right us, when we fail, God has already forgiven us. And what God does for us, we must do for others. Together, let's use the ancient laws brought down from

Mount Sinai as a guide for good living. But they are just a guide. The world we live in today is vastly different from the ancient world of Moses. People were stoned to death, poor people depended on charity for survival, physical handicaps were feared so those people were sometimes ostracized, conformity was the rule even if a person had to live their entire life as a lie. Those times weren't so good in many ways and I doubt any of us would want to live that way. Our society has come a long, long way over the centuries. We are more accepting of cultural differences. We are more forgiving of those who need help because we recognize that everyone needs help at different times in their lives. We understand that we aren't cookie cutter people, all the same, round pegs fitting into round holes. We are each unique and special, trying to find our way. We have made so much progress in understanding the value of every life but there is still much more work to be done. Each one of us is a child of God and we are called to see all others as children of God regardless of station in life, skin colour, sexual orientation, abilities or race.

The Ten Commandments have been an important guide for God's children throughout the centuries. Let's do our best to follow them with love in our hearts – but 21st century style.

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, bless these, our gifts.
May they be a beacon of light. Amen.**

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:

We thank you, God,
for you created stories that spark the imagination,
laws that revive our souls,
commandments that enlighten our hearts,
and traditions that make us hunger and thirst for justice.

We thank you for the miracles in our daily lives that renew our spirits and remind us of your steadfast goodness.

We thank you for Jesus of Nazareth, who loved you, your dream, and all your people fiercely.

As Jesus wept for his friends, may we also weep with those who cry out in grief for those we name to you now

As Jesus protested the abuse of your laws, may we also question practices, customs and traditions that are not in line with your teachings and covenant.

We thank you for this Lenten journey, may we never forget why we journey and what we are journeying towards. Amen.

SENDING FORTH

HYMN (MV 173) *“Put peace into each other’s hands”*

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

Go into the world ready to be kind when others are unkind, and to be passionate when others are complacent.

Be fearless, for the grace of God, the love of Jesus, and the abiding friendship of the Holy Spirit go with you, now and always. Amen.

CHORAL BLESSING (MV214)

“May God’s Sheltering Wings”

PRAYER RESOURCES:

**Seasons of the Spirit – SeasonsFUSION 2021-2022; The United Church of Canada Lent.Easter 2021, Year B, Gathering Resources for Worship Planners. Used with permission*

NEXT WEEK’S (March 14, 2021) READINGS

Numbers 21:4-9

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 3:14-21

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH

Wednesday, March 10th @7 pm – Choir

Friday, March 12th @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.

Stew Supper

Take Out Stew Supper March 17th, 5 pm – 7 pm
Register – ggmf@sasktel.net or call 752-2605
\$15.00 per meal
150 meals available

Short Introduction of Our New Minister

Jonathan Worrall is currently a student minister in Shellbrook and will be completing his SME in June, 2021. He brings with him many gifts, one of which is pastoral care, and his ability to make the Bible and the teachings of Jesus relevant to today. He will be starting his ministerial position on July 1st, 2021, taking his vacation entitlement for the month of July to settle in and recharge. We are excited to welcome him.

Notice of Death

Patricia Joan (Casswell) Farquharson, of Saltcoats, Sask.
Wife of Rev. Walter Farquharson
Date of Death - February 24, 2021

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

*Every one of us has the power to help
someone who is powerless.*