

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ **Sunday July 26, 2020** ◆
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

* indicates a time to stand, if you are able
congregational responses are in **boldface type**

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – Variation 6, *Goldberg Variations*

J.S. Bach

* OPENING HYMN – *Let Us With a Gladsome Mind*

VU 234

*1 Let us with a gladsome mind
praise our God forever kind;
whose great mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.*

*2 God, with all-commanding might,
filled the new-made world with light;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.*

*3 God has with a gracious eye
looked upon our misery;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.*

*4 All things living God does feed,
with full measure meets their need;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.*

*5 Let us with a gladsome mind
praise our God forever kind;
whose great mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.*

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: We have longer daylight hours in the summer

All: But the hours of darkness still require light. We rely on the light of Jesus Christ to shine through the 24 hours of all our days.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Praise the Lord.

All: Praise the Lord for spring and summer, for warmth and sunshine.

One: Praise the Lord for family and friends, for love and support.

All: Praise the Lord with our prayers and singing.

One: Don't you just feel like breaking forth into singing - Praise the Lord with the Sound of Harps....

All: Praise the Lord on this Sunday morning.

★HYMN - *Take Time to Be Holy*

VU 672

*1 Take time to be holy,
speak oft with your Lord;
abide in him always,
and feed on his word.
Make friends of God's children,
help those who are weak,
forgetting in nothing
his blessing to seek.*

*2 Take time to be holy,
let him be your guide,*

*and run not before him,
whatever betide.*

*In joy or in sorrow,
still follow the Lord,
and, looking to Jesus,
still trust in his word.*

*3 Take time to be holy,
be calm in your soul,
each thought and each motive
beneath his control.
Thus led by his spirit
to fountains of love,
you soon shall be fitted
for service above.*

OPENING PRAYER (said together)

**Holy, Precious God, you show us your steadfast love through
the stories of your son, Jesus.**

You bless your precious ones with grace and goodness.

**Your people rejoice in a love that spreads throughout the
nations.**

**We come on this Sabbath morning seeking your grace and
salvation.**

We join now as the body of Christ.

**Together, we glorify your magnificent name, for you are our
Creator, Redeemer, and sustainer. Amen.**

◆ SERVICE OF THE WORD ◆

Reader: Ian Brisbin

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION:

One: Wrestling with God is something many of us do: to get blessed, to be noticed, or understood, or to hear God. When we gather on our Sunday mornings, as we sit in our quiet time, we wrestle with the meaning of the Scripture, how does it relate to us today. Illuminating God, open to us your Words that we might be instructed in our own lives. Amen.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Isaiah 55:1-5

One: Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

One: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 145: 8-9, 14-21

One: The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down.

The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.

You open your hand, satisfying the desire of every living thing.

The Lord is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings.

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

He fulfills the desire of all who fear him; he also hears their cry, and saves them.

The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.

My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and all flesh will bless his holy name forever and ever.

GOSPEL: The Gospel of Matthew 14:13-21

One: Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said

to them, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." They replied, "We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish." And he said, "Bring them here to me." Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

One: The Gospel of Lord, Jesus Christ

All: Praise be to you, O Christ.

REFLECTION: "Patience"

We live and move in a world that is constantly on the go, noisy and demanding. Sometimes we feel like we are stuck on treadmills working out at the gym, unable to get off. From morning to night we fill our lives with activities allowing no downtime for rest or reflection.

Work, family, social, recreational, spiritual – there are so many choices that compete for our limited time.

Patience is a virtue, we are told over and over again as it evaporates in our endless to do list. It is hard to be patient when we live in overdrive and the days and weeks fly by in an instant. The moments stuck in traffic, and the interruptions that cause us to stop what we are doing, or have to repeat ourselves once again, bring unhealthy frustration and anger. It robs us of our ability to appreciate the moment and we neglect to be the uplifting source for another in desperate need.

When people don't conform to our expectations and we aren't getting our own way we become impatient. However, our expectations are often out of sync with reality. We discover that we have no patience with people, our environment, or the mastery of skills.

People often mistake patience for the ability to wait for something, but it is more than that. It isn't simply waiting for a reward to arrive; it has to do with our attitude while we are waiting. Most things in our society today are at our fingertips, thus we have little tolerance with having to wait. Have you ever sat and waited for a web page to arrive? I find myself sometimes thumping the return button, as if that was going to help, and then, I laugh at myself.

The way we organize our lives to exist in convenience mode sets us up for constant irritation and entitlement.

All the best things in life that give our lives the most meaning require a level of discomfort that comes with waiting patiently. It is in the hours of boredom of hour after hour of slugging that the new ideas and innovations come to us, not in the moment we sit down with the expectation of immediate arrival of our best ideas.

There is a Chinese proverb that "the day you plant the seed is not the day you eat the fruit."

The story of the miracle of the Chinese Bamboo is an extreme lesson in patience.

A Chinese farmer, usually struggling to survive and provide for his family, plants the seed and sets his hope and vision on all it will provide when it towers 90 feet above his head. With a heart towards the future, he digs hole after hole, plants the seeds, then,

begins their care. Day after day he carries water to the spots he has marked. Because he has to feed his family he plants other crops, carefully sewn around “the spots” that contain the real hope for his future.

The farmer comes every day to water them, feeding them carefully and watching.... The Chinese Bamboo seeds contain all his hopes, all his dreams.... Yet his dreams seem so very far away. There is no evidence of life.

His neighbours watch and look on him with scorn as he hauls buckets of water to “the spots.” Is he pouring water, and his life’s energy into something that will reap no reward for him? The first year passes *Nothing*. Still he continues to hope. The second year passes *Nothing*. By now it has become a habit and he cannot stop. He looks at the barren ground and it seems to mock him. He is in despair. Another year goes by, and another 4 years of diligently waiting and hoping. *Nothing*.

Has it died before it even had a chance to grow? His neighbours no longer laugh at him. They don’t even care. The farmer carries on. It’s simply what he does now, with no knowledge of reward – just the straightforward, now unspoken hope that life resides beneath the spots he so carefully tends. He is tired of growing and tending so many other crops to feed his struggling family.

If only he had done things differently, there would be growth. He must not have fed them correctly. Five years pass. *Still nothing*. Tears fill his eyes as he grabs for the last hope residing in his soul and slowly lifts the bucket to pour water on his dream.

Then, comes the morning when the whole village is jolted awake by the cries of joy from the farmer. As his family races back up the road after him, the rest of the village pours from their houses to see what has this crazy farmer so excited. From the edge of the road they can see green sprouts thrusting out from the barren ground.

Everyone in the village comes in amazement to watch the bamboo grow and grow and grow. One foot, two feet, ten feet, twenty feet, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90 feet. The bamboo has grown 90 feet tall in six short weeks. It is truly a miracle. The harvest of the bamboo will provide for his family for generation after generation to come.

The lessons he has learned are far more valuable. He has learned to plant a dream. He has learned to do the things daily that would make his dream come true. He learned to ignore those who said it couldn't happen. He learned to push past his own fear and doubt and to keep taking action. He learned to have faith when there was no reason to have faith. Now he smiles when he walks through the village and everyone is hauling buckets to water their own "spots." Because of him!

They know what can happen because of his willingness to blaze the trail and make his dream come true.

How long are you willing to work? How long are you willing to take action without visible signs of your effort?

The Bible references patience 29 times. Paul tells us it is one of the fruits of the spirit. We are an impatient people. We demand instantaneous results, but God's time is not subject to our whims

of impatience. Our society wants fast food and immediate answers. We are not willing to wait for anything and pay a premium to have something in our hand when we want it.

We live interrupted lives; we jump from one task to another and we have little capacity to tolerate delay, difficulties or annoyance without getting angry or upset.

We blame external triggers as the cause of our anger, but it is really how we deal with what is going on inside that causes us to be angry, not the external factors we are facing. We become impatient when we do not get what we want right away.

Being put on hold on the telephone, waiting in long line ups, being stuck in traffic jams, annoying computer problems, extended waits at doctor's offices and listening to someone take a long time to explain something can be excruciatingly annoying to those who have not learned how to cope with these routine situations.

When we are impatient with someone we have a perceived superiority and ignorance of what is going on. Our patience shows our respect and that we are willing to afford worth to our time and energy.

The patient person is willing to restrain themselves, accept delayed gratification and exhibit self-control until the outcome arrives in due time.

How does one learn to live in contentment by not letting things outside our control take over our emotions? First we become aware that certain situations lead to our impatience and

annoyance. Then, we try to find distractions to overcome them. Traffic delays are an opportunity to switch on the radio and listen to music, or an audio tape, to plan for an upcoming meeting or project, to review the makes of cars if you may be thinking of purchasing one. Thanks to our cell phones we are able to alert someone who may be waiting on our delay.

Standing in a lineup where the cashier and the person ahead are having a social chat can be very irritating, or the person in front is fumbling with coupons or change, or the cashier makes a mistake and has to call someone. We think that our time is so valuable, that our needs override those of others. Too often we fail to extend grace to the one at whom our anger is directed. We have no idea what they are going through, the loneliness, the overload, the loss, the fear, or the anxiety that rests on their shoulders. Their intention is not to deliberately annoy you, they are just trying to get through their day too, as best they know how.

A man in great distress entered the hospital ward. His son's condition had taken a grave turn for the worse. Where was the surgeon? He was needed right now to complete a life saving surgery that would save his son. The minutes ticked by. He was told the surgeon was on his way. The moment finally arrived and as the surgeon rushed in, put on his gown and gloves, the man exploded. Where have you been, don't you realize my son could die?

The surgeon did his work. The boy was saved. It was not until after that the nurse on duty explained to the father. The surgeon had come from the gravesite. He was burying his own son. He had left his family and the people gathered, and rushed to the hospital to save the son's life.

Do we really know or care what is going on in the lives of those that we hold to high standards, and can we live up to them ourselves when we are on the other side of the event?

Kindness and compassion become a big part of being a patient person, both with ourselves as well as others.

Ask yourself is there anything that I can change about the situation without making it worse for myself or others? If the answer is *no*, then find the good in the situation. Focus on something pleasant or interesting while you are waiting. It is you, and you alone, who make a conscious choice and effort to pay attention to what is going on in your field of awareness. Remember, this too shall pass. Conditions will change.

Everyone has the right of freedom of expression and we have no right to hinder others from doing so no matter how much we sometimes would like to do so. Everyone is growing just like us and life is a process for all.

Relax, take a deep breath; learn to be still, develop better self-awareness; understand the real value of time. Life is a slow methodical plod towards our destination. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

One: It is indeed a privilege to share in God's mission and to adapt to the needs around us. We are reminded to continue our gifts as we are able in the service of the ongoing work of our church.

*OFFERING HYMN - *Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving* VU 540
*Grant us, God, the grace of giving,
with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: If only everyone in our world shared compassionately, as
Jesus did,
The refugee and the immigrant would be treated carefully,
No child would go without food or shelter or basic
education,
The mentally challenged would not be thrown in jail,
Women would not be afraid to name their abusers,
The powerful leaders would listen to the crying needs of
those most vulnerable and afraid.

**All: Jesus listened compassionately, and no one went away
unsatisfied.**

We, too, will listen with compassion.

One: If only the needs of those who suffer were heard,
Bullying would be dealt with quickly,
The minimum wage would be raised,
Affordable housing would be made a priority,
No physically challenged person would be prevented from
entering a washroom, a store or a hotel,
The undiagnosed would get urgent treatment, and the
bereaved would be comforted patiently.

**All: Jesus listened compassionately, and no one went away
unsatisfied.**

We, too, will listen with compassion.

One: If only members of the faith community would listen and share,
The Bible would be read among friends and questioners,
And the Gospel story would be seen as contemporary and relevant,
The history of the church would be studied and seen in present-day context,
Church buildings would be less important than the gathered peoples,
The call for mission to the neighbourhood would meet with ready response,
We would hear clearly the needs of those in other lands, and respond.

All: Jesus listened compassionately, and no one went away unsatisfied.

We, too, will listen with compassion.

One: If only we would listen and share,
We would hear the insistent whispers for help,
We would be aware of the needs right in front of us,
We would give family and friends the time they need,
If we listened – listened deeply, listened carefully, listened patiently, listened empathetically – we would hear God’s word for us, take it to heart, and act on it.

All: Jesus listened compassionately, and no one went away unsatisfied.

We, too, will listen with compassion.

One: We pray for our community of Melrose. We pray for those outside our church community who have been impacted in many adverse ways from our months of isolation. Lord, we ask that you be with them in the ways that each one needs.

For all those that we hold in our hearts we raise up to you
for their safekeeping.

(Quiet reflection)

Followed by The Lord's Prayer (said together)

**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 that
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,
For ever and ever. Amen.**

*CLOSING HYMN – *Dear God, Who Loves All Humankind* VU 608

*1 Dear God, who loves all humankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind;
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.*

*2 In simple trust like theirs who heard,
beside the Syrian sea,
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word,
rise up, and follow thee.*

*3 O sabbath rest by Galilee!
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!*

*4 Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.*

*5 Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!*

COMMISSIONING

One: Patience is such a difficult task for us. We don't like to wait in lines, for partners in stores, for planned events, for someone to finish talking. As you wind down from this session of worship, ask our loving God, to shore up your supply of patience so that as loving Christians, you may model it for all you meet.

BENEDICTION

One: May God keep us
In our going out and our coming in
In our lying down and our rising up,
In our work and in our leisure,
In our laughter and in our tears,
Until we meet again. Amen.

POSTLUDE