

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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Minister:

Music Director:

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Rev. Sonia Ireson

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Kevin Geluch

Michelle Millson

◆ Sunday October 25, 2020 ◆

Twenty First Sunday after Pentecost

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

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

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – *Sarabande, Cello Suite #2,*
Chris Palmer, guitar

J.S. Bach

*OPENING HYMN – *Let Us Build A House*

MV 1

1. *Let us build a house where love can dwell
And all can safely live,
A place where saints and children tell
How hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
Rock of faith and vault of grace;
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this
place.*
2. *Let us build a house where prophets speak,
And words are strong and true,
Where all God's children dare to seek
To dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
And as symbol of God's grace;
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
All are welcome...*
3. *Let us build a house where love is found
In water, wine and wheat:
A banquet hall on holy ground,
Where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
Is revealed in time and space;*

*As we share in Christ the feast that frees us:
All are welcome...*

4. *Let us build a house where hands will reach
Beyond the wood and stone
To heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
And live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
Bear the image of God's face;
Let us bring an end to fear and danger:
All are welcome...*
5. *Let us build a house where all are named,
Their songs and visions heard
And loved and treasured, taught and claimed
As words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
Prayers of faith and songs of grace,
Let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome...*

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: It is amazing how one little pin prick of light can remove the blackness of night.

All: When we are alone and the darkness threatens to overwhelm, we return to image of Jesus Christ as the ever-shining light.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: From the voices of the Prophets we hear that when we call on God, God answers.

All: God will be with us in times of trouble, in times of challenge.

One: God will hug us and hold us. God will heal us. God is the one in whom we can find refuge, strength, and courage for the road ahead.

All: Let us open our hearts to welcome God around us, among us, within us.

★HYMN – *O Jesus Christ, May Grateful Hymns Be Rising* VU 329

*1 O Jesus Christ, may grateful hymns be rising,
in every city for your love and care;
inspire our worship, grant the glad surprising
that your blest Spirit rouses everywhere.*

*2 Grant us new courage, sacrificial, humble,
strong in your strength to venture and to dare;
to lift the fallen, guide the feet that stumble.
seek out the lonely and God's mercy share.*

*3 Show us your Spirit, brooding o'er each city,
as you once wept above Jerusalem,
seeking to gather all in love and pity,
and healing those who touch your garment's hem.*

OPENING PRAYER (said together)

Creator, we come together in community, as one heart and body. Braid us together. Let us be bound in love to one another. We recognize in community that when one of us struggles, all of us struggle.

Braid us together. Let us be bound in love to one another. We join together this morning from our homes with a new desire for understanding those in our midst. Braid us together. Let us be bound in love to one another. Amen.

A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US

Story: Rules

◆ **SERVICE OF THE WORD** ◆

Reader: Tim Webb

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: The word of the Bible is yours, O God. May we listen and learn these lessons and grow stronger in our faith. We welcome the Holy Spirit, so that we may be enriched by the knowledge that there will be new beginnings and new possibilities. Amen.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Deuteronomy 34: 1-12

One: Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain – that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees – as far as Zoar. The Lord said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.”

Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command. He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. The Israelites wept for Moses in the

plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses. Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

One: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION: Moses is no More! Deuteronomy 34:1-12

And so, the end comes to a life born and destined to be one of God's most significant prophets. 120 years Moses lived, breathed and walked in God's ways. He brought the people out of their slavery through forty years of wilderness journey to the very edge of the Promised Land. He braved a bush that appeared to be in perpetual state of burning; he obeyed and listened to God and followed God's commands; he withstood whining and complaints and brought the people's case to God; he spoke to God face to face; and he trained his assistant, Joshua to take over leadership after he was gone.

We don't always get to see the fruits of our labour during our lifetime. Sometimes we are merely conduits in a progression that is much larger than we are. Our Civil liberties attest to this. All

great strides in history build on the backs of others who have begun and put blood, sweat and tears into a passionate movement that escalates when others catch the vision.

Women's vote and rights, abolishment of child labour, acceptance of LGBTs, end of slavery, movement towards racial equality, safe and acceptable working conditions – all began at a point in time by someone who had passion and a vision, but who did not necessarily see the results they had hoped for in their lifetime.

Moses was allowed to bring his people within sight of the Promised Land, but it was to be Joshua, who would lead them to their final destination. Moses' work was done. In front lay the land that had been promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob before him. It was a long way from promise to fulfilment.

We are told that Moses was denied the right to enter the land because of a piece of scripture in Numbers 20 which references the water springing from the rock. God told Moses to speak to the rock in front of the people and water would come forth. There must have been some doubt on Moses' part for he struck the rock twice with his staff. Because he disobeyed God and did not follow exact instructions, we are told God chose not to let Moses be the one to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

To get to our desired accomplishments we forge ahead, we make missteps, we regroup and we try to maintain the momentum to see us through to the end. Sometimes we get in our own way, sometimes the timing is just not right, sometimes the idea just needs to catch on. The Bible confirms for us that life is moving in a progression that is leading to the fulfilment of God's overall

plan for humanity. We trust and we allow ourselves to be swept along. Amen.

PSALM: Psalm 90: 1-6, 13-17

One: Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past, or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning;

in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

Turn, O Lord! How long? Have compassion on your servants!

Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil.

Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper
for us the work of our hands – O prosper the work of our
hands!

REFLECTION: O God Our Help in Ages Past! -Psalm 90

The year 1714 was a troubling time in England. Religious intolerance was at a peak. Isaac Watts took pen to paper and wrote a hymn based on Psalm 90 to calm and comfort a nation in crises. This is a classic hymn for All Saints Day.

It has been played and appreciated during time of war. Sir Winston Churchill had it played for Franklin Roosevelt in 1941 at a time when they met on board a ship to create the Atlantic Charter. It was sung at Churchill's funeral in 1965.

The Psalm and later this hymn have the position, that "humans are caught up in the trials and tribulations of our current crises, but God takes the long view of time. Thus, it is a hymn for any age that is undergoing struggles such as we are now. The hymn contains 6 verses which remind us that God has always been with us throughout time and will remain with us as our hope secure in the future, no matter what we will have to face. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: Matthew 22: 34-46

One: When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it:

‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: “What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”’? If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

One: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

All: Praise to you, O Christ!

REFLECTION: Living Up to “the” Commandment! -Matthew 22:34-46

We come to the third challenge of Jesus’ authority. The Pharisees and the Sadducees try a new way of testing him. How much could this carpenter’s son really know? If he picks one law over another, then he is placing a hierarchy on the laws of the Torah. Which one is the greatest, asks the questioner? Seemingly innocent, but deeper pitfalls lurk beneath the surface.

Jesus’ answer is a teaching moment. He uses their own Shema, the most prominent prayer in the Hebrew tradition. The Shema is the cornerstone of Jewish faith and it gives a clear statement of who God is. Because the Lord your God is **one**, you shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, soul, and mind. This is a love without reservation.

Jesus probably surprised his audience by placing the second commandment on equal footing with the first – you shall love your neighbour as yourself. He is saying the two are not really two at all but an intimate connection between the two. There can be no love of God without love of neighbour.

It is a statement about God which reinforces God as a God who loves the “neighbour,” which is all of humankind. Jesus is quoting from Leviticus 19:18 which is a direct command to require just human relations, including respect for parents, provision of food for the poor and alien. It lays out a societal vision of fair treatment for all.

The second commandment is difficult for the religious establishment to handle. The unclean, and rejected, the foreigners and the outsiders; are we not the chosen ones? Who is this man who speaks with authority and upends familiar tradition?

Instead of choosing one law over another, Jesus chooses the motivation behind all the rules given to us by God as “love.”

If I were to ask you, what lies at the center of your life? What are you making your priority and what is most important to you? When you reflect on your honest answer, and you survey your time and attention, where you actually focus your efforts, do they align, or would it be difficult for anyone to recognize what is most important to you?

We live by rules, spoken and unspoken. They have a tendency to reflect our values, where we place our emphasis on our daily living. They are our grounded center. Jesus points to the true character of God’s laws: designed to help us love and take care of

one another and in this way, love God. God's law is fundamentally about love. Jesus showed us just how much God loves us and ultimately the only way we can love each other, is first to recognize just how much God loves us. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

One: We have been blessed with days that fill our body, mind and soul with your love, Gracious God. It is not just our money we offer to you, but also our very lives in service and in gratitude for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the commitment of congregation who continues to give from their hearts so that we may use these offerings in your service. Amen.

A SHORT STORY ABOUT THE STRUGGLES OF LIFE

"Once upon a time" a daughter complained to her father that life was too hard and she wasn't up to it. She was tired of struggling to make ends meet and solve the problems that kept coming one after the other.

Her father, who was a chef took her to the kitchen and filled three pots with water and placed each on the roaring wood stove.

Once boiling, he placed potatoes in the first, eggs in the second and ground coffee beans in the third.

The daughter was impatient, yet curious. After 20 minutes, the father turned off the burners.

He took each object out of the boiling water and placed it in a bowl. He asked his daughter - "what do you see?" "Potatoes, eggs and coffee," she barked.

"Look closer, and touch the potatoes." She did, noticing that they were **soft**.

"Take an egg and break it." She did, pulling off the shell, she observed the **hard**-boiled egg.

Finally, he asked her to sip the coffee. Its rich aroma brought a smile to her face.

“Father, what does all this mean?”

He then explained that the potatoes, eggs, and coffee had each faced the same hardship, the boiling water. However, each one reacted differently.

The potato went in strong, hard and unrelenting, but in boiling water, it became **soft and weak**.

The egg went in fragile with a thin outer shell, but it came out **hard**.

The coffee beans were unique. After they were exposed to the boiling water, they changed the water and created something new.

“**Which one are you,**” he asked his daughter – and now – I am asking you.....

*OFFERING HYMN – *What Can I Do?*

MV 191

What can I do? What can I bring?

What can I say? What can I sing?

I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.

I'll bring my love. I'll do my share

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

All: Love God and your neighbour as you love yourself. What does this mean in practice?

One: It means taking the time to find out about world issues that confront us - about racial hatreds that divide us, about health practices mandated to protect us, about need in our community that calls out to us.

It means getting involved in the problems of the world, talking with our elected representatives, writing letters of support.

It means engaging in local issues and being part of the solution.

It means talking to our family and friends about political topics and having opinions based on facts.

All: We do love God with heart and soul and mind, and we are prepared to actively love our neighbour.

Love God and your neighbour as you love yourself. What does this mean in practice?

One: Neighbour-loving calls us to express our distaste when the poor are marginalized and the elderly ignored.

Neighbour-loving calls us to make sure that aboriginal persons in remote areas have trusted resources for birthing and educating their children.

Neighbour-loving calls us to address the issue of low-cost housing in our area.

Neighbour-loving calls us to take time to support the sick and stand beside those who grieve a loss of opportunity, of good health, of one of their senses, or a loved one.

All: We do love God with heart and soul and mind, and we are prepared to actively love our neighbour.

Love God and your neighbour as you love yourself. What does this mean in practice?

One: We respect the gifts and skills of our church neighbours and encourage their use in faith community.

We respect the practical needs of our church neighbours and do our best to meet those needs.

We respect the spiritual hunger of our church neighbours and try our very best to ensure that the hunger is satisfied.

We realize that our church neighbours also live overseas, and through mission funds we help those who have no water, no education, and no employment.

All: We do love God with heart and soul and mind, and we are

prepared to actively love our neighbour.

Love God and your neighbour as you love yourself. What does this mean for each of us?

One: It means that we reflect carefully about who our neighbour is at this time and in this place.

It means we turn our concern from the latest trend to the crying needs around us.

It means we re-evaluate our priorities in the light of Jesus Christ.

It means we have the confidence to bring change in spite of opposition or hostility.

It means we laugh at our mistakes and pick ourselves up when we slip on the inevitable banana skin.

All: We are ready to walk patiently and sensitively in our neighbour's shoes.

One: We pray for our community of Melrose, for Loretta, for Vic, and Jeff.

We pray for Cheryl and Tim, Brendon and Megan, in the death of Cheryl's mother, (Margaret Evans) on Thursday.

We thank you God that Cheryl was able to be with her during these past months and at the time of her passing.

We pray for Chris, Nicola, Sam and Audie, in the passing of Chris' mother (Maureen Monica Palmer) in New Zealand on Tuesday. We thank you God that Chris has been able to be with her these past few weeks.

We pray for Lauren, Steve and Kai, Meg's sister and family and the newborn baby that was delivered early by emergency C section on Wednesday. May God tightly wrap them in arms of comfort and love.

We pray for those outside our church community that 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.

We pray for those in our circle who are grieving, who are recovering from illnesses, who are struggling with imperfect relationships, 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 – O God, Our Help in Ages Past VU 806

*1 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
our shelter from the stormy blast,
and our eternal home:*

*2 under the shadow of thy throne
thy saints have dwelt secure;
sufficient is thine arm alone,
and our defence is sure*

*3 Before the hills in order stood,
or earth received its frame,*

*from everlasting thou art God,
to endless years the same.*

*4 A thousand ages, in thy sight,
are like an evening gone,
short as the watch that ends the night
before the rising sun.*

*5 Time like an ever-rolling stream
soon bears us all away;
we fly forgotten, as a dream
dies at the opening day.*

*6 O God, our help in ages past,
our hope for years to come,
be thou our guide while troubles last,
and our eternal home.*

COMMISSIONING

One: Go into the world with the love of God reflecting from your heart. Be not afraid, God goes with us always. Love God; Love your neighbour; nothing else matters.

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