

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ **Sunday October 17, 2021** ◆

World Food Sunday

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

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

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

★ OPENING HYMN – *You Embrace All Peoples*

VU 525

*Eternal God,
whose image lies in the hearts of all people,
we live among peoples
 who languages are different from our own,
 whose faiths are foreign to us,
 who ways we fail to understand.*

*Help us to remember
 that you embrace all people with your love,
 that all religion is a response to you,
 that the yearnings of other hearts
 are much like our own, and are known to you.*

*Help us to recognize you
 in words of truth, things of beauty,
 and actions of love about us.*

*We pray in the name of the One who calls us
 to be neighbour and friend. Amen.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT (Dora White)

One: We live and work and worship on treaty land in the heart of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe nation. As we celebrate the rich bounty of harvest from local gardens and from other places – fruits, vegetables, grains from the fields, the last of

the summer flowers and a rich array of autumn leaves – we are reminded that we are called into right relationship with the land and our neighbours within the Upper Canada Treaty. We affirm the need to implement the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples and to strive for reconciliation.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: Sharing in food was an important ministry to Jesus

All: Jesus did not discriminate. He ate with the poor and the cast out as well as the ordinary people. Thanks be to God for the inclusive light of Jesus Christ!

....Christ candle is lit.....

CALL TO WORSHIP (Catherine Tovell)

One: Are you hungry today?

All: We are hungry for meaning in our lives, for hope in our hearts, and for service to others. And we remember all who are physically hungry today.

One: Are you thirsty today?

All: We thirst for right relationships with one another, for justice to be done for everyone, for food to be shared equitably, and for knowledge of God's presence in our lives.

One: You have come to the place where we gather together in honesty and humility to encounter the living God.

All: Let us worship together.

PRAYER OF APPROACH - said together (Beth W. Johnston)

God of many blessings, we give thanks to you for having fed us, sustained and challenged us, with the waters of creation and bread for our journey. We pray that this food will sustain us as

we go from this place to be your people. We pray for food enough, shared enough, to sustain all the people of the world. Amen.

A TIME FOR CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US
Story – Serving the Salt

★ HYMN – *Praise to God*

VU 243

- 1. Praise to God, praise to God, for the greenness of the trees, for the beauty of the flowers, for the blueness of the sky, for the greatness of the sea.
Praise to God, praise to God, now and forever more.*
- 2. Thanks to God, thanks to God, for the gift of friends in Christ, for the church, our house of faith, and for the gift of wondrous love, and for the gift of endless grace.
Thanks to God, thanks to God, now and forever more.*
- 3. Glory to God, glory to God, for the grace of Christ, the Son, for the love of parent God, for the comfort and the strength of the Spirit, holy God.
Glory to God, glory to God, now and forever more.*

WORDS of ASSURANCE (Allan Warren, Appleby United)

One: As a symbol that God provides enough for everyone to be filled, Jesus ordered the crowd to sit down on the grass, then took the five loaves and the two fish and distributed it to the people. God's abundant love and grace calls to us, asking us to live out such abundance so all the world can be fed. May this be so, in our lives and in our world. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

One: Gracious God we know we live in a world of want and abundance existing side by side. Yet we know that is not how it was in the beginning. In the beginning, you planted

a garden with enough food for everyone to eat. Today, O God we realize the earth garden is not as healthy as it once was. Droughts and floods, wild fires and tropical storms have wreaked havoc in the garden so that food supplies are disrupted.

All: We also realize that not everyone has the same access to food. Some are employed; some are unemployed. Some have good access to education while others cannot afford it or it is not available. Some have stores full of food and other supplies while others are met with empty shelves and limited options. Help us, O God, to make it possible for all of us, all the people of the world, to have access to a good education, training, jobs, and food, so that no one goes hungry.

One: As Jesus said at the feeding of the five thousand, "You yourselves give them something to eat." Amen.

Quiet moment...

◆ SERVICE OF THE WORD ◆

Reader: Meghan Webb

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: We hear your Word, O God, and we seek the Holy Spirit's help to really listen to your intent. May we live out of this calling on our lives. Amen.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Job 38: 1-7, 34-41

One: Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind: "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

“Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements – surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? “Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you? Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, ‘Here we are’? Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind? Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together? “Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?

One: The Word of the Lord!

All: Thanks be to God!

PSALM: Psalm 104

VU 826

GOSPEL: Mark 9:38-50

One: James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They

replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

One: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

All: Praise to you, O Christ!

REFLECTION: Why Me, Lord! - Job 38: 1-7 and 34-41

I love a wide variety of music, but deep down in my roots, I have always been a Country and Western fan. I like Kris Kristofferson, but appreciate his composition more than his gravelly voice. He wrote "Why Me Lord," the words of which appealed and spoke to me.

Why me Lord, what have I ever done – wouldn't you expect this to continue with – to have deserved such bad treatment – but that is not the case. He continues with:

To deserve even one of the pleasures I've known
Tell me Lord, what did I ever do That was worth loving you
For the kindness you've shown.

Lord help me Jesus, I've wasted it so
Help me Jesus I know what I am
Now that I know that I've needed you so
Help me Jesus, my souls in your hand.

Tell me Lord, if you think there's a way I can try to repay
All I've taken from you.
Maybe Lord, I can show someone else
What I've been through myself On my way back to you.
Chorus..

So, my reading of Job, his troubles and misfortunes brings me back to the words of this song. No matter what happens to Job, he comes back to the solid rock of his Lord. He counts his blessings, not his losses. Yet, he does not hesitate to question God as to "Why?" He is conflicted, having received blessings on one hand that he knows he hasn't deserved, and on the other hand, the devastating losses, which he also knows he hasn't deserved. So, God, "Why?"

Have you ever found yourself asking "Why?" When the avalanche is crashing over you and your despair is rising. There are so many ways in which life can get you down, make you feel trapped, afraid, unsure of which way to turn. It can seem like there is no way out. You know that you have been blessed, but it seems to be fading, and the darkness is closing in. Money worries, marriage falling apart, children straying on the wrong side of life, a loved one diagnosed with a terminal illness, a death of someone you don't want to let go, a new discovery of an alternate identity in sexual awareness. These, and more topple

your equilibrium and shake your comfort level, leading you to ask – Where is God, and Why is this happening to me?

God finally breaks through from the center of a catastrophic storm to speak directly to Job. His reply never deals with the “Why?” In essence, he says Why is not the right question because there is no possible comprehension of the magnitude of God’s immense creation. He throws out question after question to Job. “Where were you when I set the heavens in place?” When all was aligned and calculated out precisely down to the finest minute detail. Do you even have any idea of the brilliance that surrounds us? We see a similar method of response in many of the stories of Jesus. He never directly answers questions either. Instead, he fires back question after question. It is a method calculated to make you think and work out the answers for yourself, not to provide ready-made answers handed out to you. I see these as teaching moments that are designed to expand our awareness.

Some things we have to take as a “given.” We are surrounded by both good and bad. And we never know from one day to the next what will befall. I think of the major accidents that occur without warning. One leaves their home in the morning expecting a normal day, and does not return to their family at night fall. A sewer grate opens up on the roadway and a child on a tricycle falls through. Freak accidents claim lives and change, in an instant, the family left behind.

The God portrayed in the beginning of the Job story is a manufactured picture of God. God does not pull strings, nor hurl thunderbolts of misfortune against us. God is not complicit in arranging our downfall or punishing us for our mistakes. God has created with imagination, intelligence and wisdom a place for

us to live in harmony with the rest of God's creation. It has both idyllic gardens and pits of barbed wire. Our lives consist of joy and sorrow, moments of elation, and moments of defeat. We look to the pinnacle of God's creation, a land for all peoples, plants and animals to co-exist together, helping, and encouraging, each other but often human greed and fear get in the way.

"Why" is a useless quest; some things just are, as they are meant to be. They are beyond our understanding. Do we presume to tell God that what God is doing is wrong? God runs the universe and all that is in it. We are but specks, yet the miracle is that God loves even the smallest sparrows and God loves us immensely, cares for us and watches over us like a protective mother. Even the most protective parent cannot prevent bad things from happening to their offspring. They can only sit back and watch and hope, and wait.

There are consequences to our choices; some have obvious outcomes; even not doing something, or not taking an action is a choice. Sometimes we are surprised to learn that continuing to follow the same pattern will not produce new results. When we fall victim to an aggressive illness, or find ourselves at the mercy of a devastating loss, there is no answer as to "why." There are no black clouds hovering, waiting to deal out bad luck. We are not being manipulated by a malevolent force that likes to watch us squirm. We are overseen by a loving God who comforts and walks with us.

I believe that some of our ideas that we attribute to God needs to change. Do we need to have a God that is all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present, and all-good? Have we placed too much of our human expectations on our Deity? When bad things happen

and we think that they should have been under the control of God, but God didn't do anything to change them, we become disillusioned and angry. Perhaps, God has created in such a way that some things are outside God's control to change.

When there appears to be a miraculous intervention that is outside the realm of explainable in rescuing and saving lives, is that a personal, specific action by God, or is all part of the unexplainable "why" of the Universe.

Why me, Lord? What have I ever done?

You have blessed me beyond my wildest expectations.

You have given me life to experience and enjoy.

You have placed me in a loving family with good friends surrounding me.

You have given me a roof over my head and food on my table.

You have taught me to love and care for others and I am grateful for all that I am and all that I have.

Why me, Lord? If we feel the need to ask "why" then let it be through Kristofferson's perspective on life. Amen.

INSTRUMENTAL

INVITATION TO OFFERING

One: In today's gospel reading, Jesus reminds us that "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve." Knowing that, may we show ourselves to be faithful followers of Jesus, the great servant, by also serving others with our gifts and our actions, and in so doing draw closer

to God thank the people of Melrose for their ongoing support.

★ OFFERING HYMN – *God Whose Farm is All Creation* VU 300
*All our labour, all our watching,
all our calendar of care,
in these crops of your creation,
take, O God: they are our prayer.*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

One: Holy God, we come before you in prayer, asking for your ear of patience and perseverance.

We pray for all who are persecuted and oppressed that they may receive justice, freedom, and peace. We are late in saying so, but we give thanks for the safe return home of the two Michaels.

We pray for healing, comfort and hope for those who are afflicted with sickness or sorrow.

We pray for vision, strength and joy for all who work for the good of the community. We pray for faithfulness, patience and love for all who humbly serve the last and least.

Be with each of us in our struggles and our celebrations.

Help us to not turn a blind eye on the needs of our communities. Guide us in our daily walk with you, we ask in confidence of your affirmative response.

We pray for our United Church of Canada for its work in Mission and Service throughout the world.

We pray for the Church of Palermo in this week's Regional Council Prayer Cycle – for their minister, their lay leaders, and their congregation that they may carry out their mission in the world.

We pray for our community of Melrose, for Loretta, for Vic, and for Sylvia and for Fred and Linda and Shari. We pray for all our home-bound, and for all who are still grieving loss of their loved ones. We pray for all our members who are travelling and away from home.

Lord, we ask that you be with them in the ways that each one needs. Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people and grant what we ask in faith. Amen.

(Quiet reflection)

followed by The Lord's Prayer – *Ecumenical version* (said together)

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done

On earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread;

Forgive us our sins,

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,

And deliver us from evil;

For the kingdom,

the power and the glory,

are yours now and for ever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN – *O Love that Wilt Not Let Me Go*

VU 658

*1 O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in thee;
I give thee back the life I owe,
that in thine ocean depths its flow
may richer, fuller be.*

*2 O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to thee;
my heart restores its borrowed ray,*

*that in thy sunshine's blaze its day
may brighter, fairer be.*

*3 O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
and feel the promise is not vain,
that morn shall tearless be.*

*4 O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
and from the ground there blossoms red
life that shall endless be.*

COMMISSIONING (Robin Wardlaw)

One: May the God who cares about the welfare of each sparrow
and feeds all living things grant you the fruits of the Spirit:
wisdom, joy, compassion, and strength so that you may feed
the world. May the presence of the risen Christ sustain you
and give you new life, now and evermore. Amen.
Go now in peace.

BLESSING – *Lead Me, O God*

VU 662

*Lead me, God, lead me in your righteousness;
make your way plain before my face.
For it is you, and you, God only,
who makes me to dwell in safety.*

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