

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

86 Homewood Avenue ◆ Hamilton, Ontario ◆ L8P 2M4

905 522 1323 ◆ melrose@melroseunited.ca

◆ www.melroseunited.ca ◆

◆ www.facebook.com/melroseunitedchurch ◆

◆ Twitter: @melroseunited ◆

◆ Instagram: @melroseuc ◆

Youtube channel: Melrose United Church Virtual Service



Minister:

Music Director:

Family Ministries Coordinator:

Custodian:

Office Administrator:

Rev. Sonia Ireson

Alexander Cann

Meg Chalmers

Kevin Geluch

Michelle Millson

◆ **Sunday September 6, 2020** ◆
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

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

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – Menuet 1, *Cello Suite #1*
Chris Palmer, guitar

J. S. Bach

*OPENING HYMN – *Joyful, Joyful We Adore You*

VU 232

*1 Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, life and love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive our fear and doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.*

*2 All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heaven reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
sound their praise eternally.*

*3 You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
wellspring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest!
Source of grace and fount of blessing,*

*let your light upon us shine;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.*

*4 Mortals, join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us,
joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music lifts us sunward
in the triumph song of life.*

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: September days bring a new flurry of activity, return to school, with all its stresses, new fall programs; life, in spite of Pandemic moves on.

All: Whether we languish at home, concerned for safety or venture outside back into somewhat normal activity, we need only look for the light of Christ to steady our ground. There is nothing that prevents its shine in our midst.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Come into our worship this last Sunday of Summer, the day before we celebrate Labour Day.

All: We come in anticipation of a year ahead filled with times of faithful activity, hopefully successful control of the relentless Pandemic leading to refreshing renewal, and quiet contemplation.

One: Come to encounter once again the living God among us.

All: We come, ready, willing, and excited to encounter the God who dwells with us and among us. We are ready for worship to begin. Amen.

★HYMN: *Fight the Good Fight*

VU 674

*1 Fight the good fight with all your might,
Christ is your strength and Christ your right;
lay hold on life, and it shall be
your joy and crown eternally.*

*2 Run the straight race, through God's good grace,
lift up your eyes and seek Christ's face.
Life with its way before us lies;
Christ is the way, and Christ the prize.*

*3 Cast care aside, lean on your guide;
God's boundless mercy will provide;
trust, and the trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.*

*4 Faint not nor fear, God's arms are near;
God changes not and you are dear.
Only believe, and Christ shall be
your all in all eternally.*

OPENING PRAYER (said together)

**As the warmth of the summer turns to the coolness of autumn,
And leaves turn from green to brilliant shades of crimson, gold
and orange,**

May we know your presence, beloved Son of God.

**As the planting of the summer turns to the abundance of your
harvest,**

May our hearts turn with gratitude to you,
Creator of all. Amen.

◆ **SERVICE OF THE WORD** ◆

A TIME FOR CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US

Story: Conflict through Differing Perspectives

A teacher gives a lesson in math. On the board she draws four mangoes two on one side and two on the other with a plus sign in between. How many mangoes do you have she asks? One boy puts up his hand – Five he answers. The children laugh. She lays them out on the desk – one, two, three, four.

Lets try something else. She draws four strawberries on the board. Two on the left and two on the right with a plus sign in between. How many strawberries do you have? The boy puts up his hand and answers – Four.

The teacher is perplexed. He gets the answer right with the strawberries but not with the mangoes. She doesn't understand.

Technically she is right, two plus two equals four. But practically, he is right, for what she cannot see or know, is that he already has one mango in his lunch pail. Therefore, with the four she offers, he now has five.

Many of our conflicts are like that. Our perspectives are not the same and we do not understand where the other is coming from. The difference is not always obvious. Sometimes you need to have patience and a willingness to listen in order to understand the other's point of view.

Reader: Margaret Duff

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION:

One: Your Word comes to us through Holy Scripture. We listen to the story of your people, our ancestors, and we apply it to our lives where appropriate. Thank you, God for getting our attention and for making the ancient text relevant today. Amen.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Exodus 12: 1-14

One: The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your

staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the Passover of the Lord. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

One: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION: "The Past becomes Present" - Exodus 12:1-14
God said to Moses and Aaron, "this month is to be the first month of the year for you." The chapter sets out the ritual of smearing blood on the doorposts to prevent the angel of death from striking down the first born of the household. This is the tenth and final plague God delivers on the Egyptians because the Pharaoh refuses to let the Israelites go from their years in captivity as slaves.

Families are to have a ritual meal within their own households at the same time as everyone in their community. Many generations resided within one household and they were to be part of this historic communal meal. They were to select animals without flaws, sheep or goats, (preferably sheep, but goats were more plentiful) one year old, because they had the most desirable meat. Males only, because females were kept for breeding. Also, in this

patriarchal culture which valued males more than females, they felt it was an appropriate sacrifice for a meal honouring God.

God set aside a specific date for this slaughter to occur. It was to be on a night of full moon to provide light for the meal and to assist in their escape. They did not have refrigeration so the meat had to be fresh. Their instructions were to sprinkle the blood on the door posts and the lintel (upper beam) prior to the meal while the sacrificial animal is still fresh. One commentator remarked that God chose blood, the life of the animal, to preserve the lives of the Israelites.

This was to be a hurried meal in preparation for leaving that very night when it was finished. Instructions covered using unleavened bread which does not require time to rise and even what they were to wear in order to be ready to leave immediately after the meal. There was great significance in the meal itself as the preparation for the arduous journey. Bitter herbs were included such as lettuce, endive or chicory, believed to commemorate the bitterness of slavery. What was not eaten was to be burned; nothing was to be left over to tempt one eating possibly tainted meat. This was seen to be food for the soul as well as the body.

Yahweh delivers the tenth plague striking down all the first born human and animals in households that were not marked by the blood on the doorposts. This was the final and successful attempt to break the Pharaoh's hardened heart to let the Israelites go.

This Passover, as it became known, was to be a perpetual ordinance. It is celebrated to this day by devout Jews. It is actually a 7 day period of time in which no work occurs, homes

are purged of leaven and the traditions are followed to remind them of their origins and Yahweh's perpetual care.

Scholars wrestle over the complicating background of some of the festivals but they are in agreement that the escape from the tenth plague was no accident.

Why is the history of the Passover of interest to us? Because Jesus was brought up fully Jewish and he celebrated the Passover every year with his family, and later his disciples. It was ingrained in his tradition and as such, it becomes the foundation for our Eucharist. It was during the Passover, that he broke bread with his disciples and demonstrated the ritual of giving thanks while sharing the communal meal. It is in this most intimate setting that God meets us in the sharing of the bread and the wine.

The central purpose of the Passover ritual is also the central purpose of all ritual and worship in biblical tradition. It serves to pass on the core beliefs and stories of the community, allowing for new generations to come to know God more fully. The day spent in remembering, is primarily directed to children so that they may grow up in the faith.

As Jewish children were asked to recite and remember, we too have been given the admonition "to remember me" in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup. Thus, the past becomes present, and tradition is honoured and preserved. The saving acts of God are central to the development of our Christian faith. Amen.

PSALM: Psalm 149

Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the faithful.

Let Israel be glad in its Maker; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King.

Let them praise his name with dancing, making melody to him with tambourine and lyre.

For the Lord takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with victory.

Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy on their couches.

Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands,

to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples,

to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron,

to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the Lord!

GOSPEL: The Gospel of Matthew 18: 15-20

One: "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence

of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

One: The Gospel of Lord, Jesus Christ

All: Praise be to you, O Christ!

REFLECTION: “The Power of Two or Three” - Matthew 18:15-20

Today’s gospel passage is in the midst of instructions for believers. The prominent leaders must be humble; members must be radically scrupulous about their behaviour; believers must care for one another; and boundless forgiveness must be offered without limitation. Continuing in the same vein, Jesus tells his disciples how to deal with someone who sins against them. In Jesus’ kingdom, love and justice are at the center and its goal is to become the family of God.

Paul informs us that each member is of equal value in the body of Christ, not a hierarchy of greater and lesser leaders, thus all are schooled in the discipline and leadership of Jesus Christ. The church is a place of mutual interdependence, where each member is incomplete without each other and where the suffering of one is the suffering of all. Conflict not only affects those who are directly involved, it also affects the whole church. As you have been well aware there is nothing more damaging than escalating conflict in a church.

We often think that as Christians we should not be in conflict, but Jesus takes it for granted that human relationships are such, that conflict will occur, therefore, it is how we resolve them that marks us as Christians. We are called to a higher task of reconciliation as part of being who we are as Christians.

Jesus' method for dealing with conflict is simple. Approach the offending party first, without shaming them, just the two of you in a loving manner determined to reach reconciliation and forgiveness; if this does not work, bring another church member to listen and try to resolve the conflict; finally, a public airing of the grievance within the larger church is recommended. All actions are sought to try to bring healing and reconciliation so that the full body is not damaged, wherein the emphasis remains on trying to reclaim the offender, not to punish them. The church initiates an outreach to care for one another even when injured or offended.

Our experience of differences within the church have often resulted in one or more members leaving the church in anger. The congregation carries the scars for many years. Lest we interpret Jesus' words to "shake off the dust" as a licence to shun or excommunicate, we had better look closer at his own association with tax collectors and sinners. They were the very people to which he was drawn. He was unlikely to ever have wanted us to give up on them.

One scholar offers that "If we as a church do not forgive and heal, who on earth is going to do it? If two or three believers agree in Christ and seek prayerfully to do the will of God, then God will respond because Jesus will be present." He is not setting up a

minimum number for attendance, or even declaring that God automatically answers prayer when two or three ask in his name. Rather, he is saying when trying to discern the way through conflict and two or three prayerfully seek to find the best resolution, God seems to trust the wisdom of their deliberations. There is power in the focused effort to achieve a graceful resolution for all. The promise is that leaders of the church can trust in God's guidance. Humble prayer leads to patient kindness and grace in which punishment gives way to forgiveness.

This passage could be less confrontational if individual members were to ask not who has offended me, but whom have I offended? Then the words become a call to discipleship and a way to lessen the impact of internal conflicts. Each member takes responsibility for their own behaviour and constantly checks to see that they are living up to their calling as disciples.

Given our individuality with differing opinions and ways of seeing things, it is unlikely that we humans could live without conflict being a part of our everyday life. However, as we strive to be more Christ-like, how we handle that conflict with grace and kindness, marks us as followers of Jesus. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

One: Melrose is thankful for your financial support during this difficult time. You help us to continue to carry on a vital ministry in furthering the mission of Jesus Christ.

*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

All: God of endings and beginnings, we come before you.

One: We need fresh starts in our world.

We pray for a peaceful end to world conflicts.

We pray for the beginning of world peace that is effective,
and

We pray for an end to hostilities that cause persons to flee
their homelands as refugees.

We pray for the realization of nutritious food for each child,
education, and safety from exploitation and sexual abuse.

All: Just and loving God,

**With you new beginnings come to life and work out
purposefully.**

God of endings and beginnings, we come before you.

One: We need fresh starts among the suffering.

We pray for access for all to diagnostic facilities and an end
of fear that prevents persons from seeking timely medical
help.

We pray for understanding when memory loss has distorted
the normal patterns of living.

We pray for positive attitudes towards those who are
mentally ill and those who care for them, and an end to the
prejudice that results in their inferior care.

We pray for an end of the emptiness and desolation that
comes with grieving, and the beginning of life that is again

enjoyable, through the support of good friends and counsellors.

We pray for members of our family and our church family who are going through troubled times.

**All: Just and loving God,
With you new beginnings come to life and work out purposefully.**

God of endings and beginnings, we come before you.

One: We need fresh starts within the church.

At this end to the summer and the long ordeal we have been faced with during the Pandemic, we are moving into a new church year, but wonder if there will be some respite from our concerns about transmission of the virus.

We pray for those who have been part of bringing Worship to the congregation members since March and for continued participation in worship as we face reopening.

We pray for our leaders in the wider church for their faithful work encouraging and providing resources during these past months.

**All: Just and loving God,
With you new beginnings come to life and work out purposefully.**

And we aware of our personal need for fresh starts.

One: As we remember the personal conflicts that seem never ending. We pray for the beginning of fresh understanding and a new direction.

We pray for energy and enthusiasm to start new ventures that fulfill us.

We pray for an end to the fears and memories of events long past that haunt and depress us, and beginning of feeling joy and excitement in the everyday moments of life.

All: Gracious and ever-loving God, in our endings and in our beginnings we look only for your purpose and for the will to fulfill your purpose.

One: We pray for our community of Melrose, for Loretta, for Vic, for Jeff, for Cheryl's mother and family. 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, who are travelling away during the summer. We pray for those affected by the California wild fires that relief may be in sight. 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 - *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

VU 333

*1 Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.*

*Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.*

*2 Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy life receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.*

*3 Finish then thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee,
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

COMMISSIONING

One: In all our gatherings, let us remember that Christ is in our midst. Our prayers are made stronger by joining them with those of others. Let us go out in His name into a world where His love is desperately needed.

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