

◆ 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:

Rev. Sonia Ireson

Music Director:

Alexander Cann

Family Ministries Coordinator:

Meg Chalmers

Custodian:

Kevin Geluch

Office Administrator:

Michelle Millson

◆ Sunday April 26, 2020 ◆
Third Sunday after Easter

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

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

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – Invention No. 14 in B-flat Major, BWV 785 J.S. Bach

* OPENING HYMN – *The Head that Once Was Crowned* VU 190

Commented [M1]:

*1 The head that once was crowned with thorns
is crowned with glory now;
a royal diadem adorns
the mighty victor's brow.*

*2 The joy of all who dwell above,
the joy of all below,
to whom he manifests his love
and grants his name to know.*

*3 To them the cross with all its shame,
with all its grace is given,
their name an everlasting name,
their joy the joy of heaven.*

*4 They suffer here with Christ below,
they reign with him above,
their profit and their joy to know
the mystery of his love.*

*5 The cross he bore is life and health,
though shame and death to him,
his people's hope, his people's wealth,
their everlasting theme.*

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: After a very bad night's sleep, we welcome the dawn, the first streak of morning light. It reminds us that a new day arises and there is hope anew.

All: The risen Christ floods into our hearts bringing divine light and peace.

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: If we close our eyes, and remember, we can see the light beams streaming in through our beautiful sanctuary stained glass windows.

All: Herald the coming of spring and warmer weather.

One: If we close our eyes, and remember, we can see the faces of our dearest friends sitting in the pews beside and around us.

**All: Herald the presence of the Holy Spirit in our pews.
But, we can also from the sanctuary of our homes, open to the presence of that same Holy Spirit flooding into our daily lives.**

One: Come, people of Melrose and those who have joined us from afar.

All: Let us invite the God of love into our worship with joy.

OPENING PRAYER (said together)

Christ, who lives within us, beckons us in as welcome guests. We come from our planting, our weeding, our mowing, or from our baking, sewing, or quiet time of isolation, to worship the one who liberates us. The Spirit who leads us brings us together in virtual community.

We bring our fears, our worries, our doubts to worship the One
who re-forms our perceptions for love.
We come in our need, our hope, and our trust,
To worship the One who roots us in new life.
O God, may we be filled with the humble courage to do your
will. Amen.

A TIME WITH CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US

◆ **SERVICE OF THE WORD** ◆

Readers: Michael and Jonathan Clase

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION:

One: Gracious God, open us to receive the fullness of your word.
Bless our senses so we too may say, like the disciples old,
“We have experienced Jesus! We know the risen Christ.”
Amen.

PSALM: Psalm 116: 1-4 and 12-19

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my
supplications.

Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as
long as I live.

The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid
hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.

Then I called on the name of the LORD: “O LORD, I pray, save my
life!”

What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD,

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones.

O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds.

I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.

I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,

in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!

One: This is the word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION: The Goodness of God

I love God because.... Begins our Psalm and our reflection for this morning. Let's take a moment of contemplation on the ways in which God appears good in all aspects of our lives.

Our awareness of God's goodness begins from a baby's first breath. It remains with us through all the changes and challenges of life. As adults, we note that it begins when we first wake up. God has given us one more day to share in life with friends and family, to experience new things, to be an example for others. It tells us that God is not finished with us yet, we have no idea the possibilities that are in store for us. Life is precious and it is a gift.

God's favour reaches us each day, we often don't think of it as being "God moments." The little blessings that mean so much to us, the kindness that another shares, the joy that comes from a smile, a gesture, or an act of sharing. It is the little things that give our life meaning and purpose.

God goodness protects us sometimes in ways that never reach our awareness. We hear stories of how seconds can change an outcome, distractions can be life-saving, decisions about travel taken or not taken can have dramatic effects, or words that never reach our ears fortunately, have no influence over us.

God speaks to us through prayer. We get one of three answers – no, wait, or yes. God's goodness always has a bigger picture in mind and our answers come when we look for them in the unfolding of our days.

God goodness guides us through the thousands of decisions we make each day. Sometimes we need to decide whether an opportunity or pathway is right for us. Be still and know that I am God. Watch for the signs that tell you in your gut this is the right decision. God is helping you to find your path and live out your purpose.

God hears me and has inclined his ear to me, the Psalmist says. When we become aware that God is concerned about our lives, and actively listening, we start to watch for the little interventions. The booming voice does not come down out of the sky, it is more of a subtle quiet voice activated in signs of people around us. We become aware of little nudges that encourage us to take certain steps, or move in a particular direction.

There has been many occasions in my life when I have felt moved to pick up the phone and call someone out of the blue and have had them say - You have no idea how much I needed your call right now. Or the many times when I have felt that God has listened specifically to me and answered my prayer.

A number of years ago I was applying for a promotion within the Federal Government and I was about to sit down to a three-hour interview that involved writing up a response to an actual case study. I had never faced such an intense interview requirement before. I was applying for a Financial Policy Analyst position with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in Ottawa. To this day, I can remember the rising panic of wondering how I was going to do this.

I stopped myself abruptly from my escalating fear and began to go into prayer. I asked for clarity and guidance and then I wrote nonstop. I was one of over two hundred applicants and I was picked for the job because of the way I organized the response and laid out the detailed plan of action. I am certain that I was guided by the Holy Spirit not with new or unknown pieces of information, rather I was calmed down to be able to pull out of my own storehouse of life experience and present it in such a way as to be credible.

Dr. Wayne Dyer, now deceased, was a wonderfully inspirational writer and teacher. He loved to relate stories of how God reached out to humans to make things happen.

He told the story of a man who had come from a prayer meeting and offered himself to God to help where he was needed. On his

way home, he had this overwhelming urge to go and buy a bag of milk at a convenience store. He fought it initially, but then decided to give in to it. Again, the sensation came to him to turn down a particular street.

He said God, if this is you speaking, I don't know why I am doing this, but I will try to listen to you. It was after ten o'clock at night when he came in front of a house with darkened windows in a quiet neighborhood and again he felt he was being drawn to the front door.

Fearing that he would disturb the inhabitants and anger them, he cautiously walked up to the door.

He rang the bell, lights came on. A voice called, "what do you want?" He said through the closed door. "I know this sounds crazy, but I have a bag of milk for you." The man opened the door, took the bag of milk and ran down the corridor to the kitchen where his wife was walking a cranky baby. She came back with a filled baby bottle and they explained that the husband had been laid off and they had no money to buy milk for the baby. They had both just been praying to God to help them find a way to feed their child.

The woman asked him, "Are you an angel?"

In a way, he was. He was an earth angel who was also praying to be God's instrument of love, and in that willingness they made a divine connection that amazingly brought human need and human response together.

God listens to us. God uses us to provide "God sightings" that are real and meet our specific needs. God's goodness amazes and

shines for us again and again. All it takes is opening our eyes and being willing to listen. Amen.

THE GOSPEL: Luke 24:13-25

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared!

One: This is the good news of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

All: Praise to you, O Christ.

REFLECTION: An Incognito Jesus

Let's listen in on the conversation of Cleopas and one other, unnamed disciple as they take their seven mile dejected walk home following the events of the Passover. Their week had started out with such high hopes. The memory of the excitement accompanying Jesus on the triumphant entry in to Jerusalem still burned within them. So much had happened since then. How could things have gone so wrong? They had unhesitatingly placed their trust in this captivating prophet with his revolutionary teachings about God. And they were willing to follow him to the ends of the earth. But hanging on a cross with common criminals was not in their plan. They had bet their lives on the wrong saviour.

They have heard from the women who claimed to have found the empty tomb, but they have not yet been able to come to grips with its implications of a risen Jesus. They talk about how their lives will change, will they be able to reclaim their old place in their communities, how they will hold their heads up in view of a failed prophet who made such wild claims.

As they walked along downcast and gloomy, a stranger begins to walk with them. They bring him up to date on the past few days not understanding how he could not have heard. They voice that they had hoped that Jesus was the one to redeem Israel but his death had shattered all their hopes. The stranger provides his own interpretation. Jesus' suffering and death were not an ultimate defeat of God's purpose, rather they were a necessary pathway to new life.

They talk about things that touch their heart and for a moment they are able to let go of the feelings of gloom. They enjoyed his

company so much that they invite him to stay with them when they get to the village. During the evening meal, he took the bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. It was as if scales had fallen away, their eyes were immediately opened to the truth. The stranger, the incognito Jesus, stood before them in risen power. Then, they understood the unexplained strange warmth and joy that they felt while walking with the stranger on the Emmaus road.

Wherever goodness is shared, tears dried, comfort given, charity done, the Stranger, the Risen Christ, is present.

Father William J. Bausch is a retired American priest and Story Teller. He offers this poem concerning the Emmaus road:

They walked the highway, defeated alone.
A Stranger joined them and lifted the stone.
He unfolded the scriptures, the cup and the bread.
Then they knew him, the Stranger, the man who was dead.
He gave them the answer when love broke the bread.

We are all on a journey. Our paths differ; they converge, and they drift apart. Sometimes we feel like we are forging ahead with no purpose while searching for meaning in our lives. We need the breaking of the bread. It is here that Jesus is made known to us. We know we have not been forgotten. We have not been left alone. "Do this in remembrance of me" – in faith, we too, recognize the Stranger who is disguised until the bread is broken and the wine poured and that is the moment of recognition and we are assured that all will be well. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

Let us continue to support the work of our church as we are able.

OFFERTORY

★ OFFERING HYMN – *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*
VU 541

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures high and low;
give thanks to God in love made known:
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Loving and gracious God we come to you on our Sabbath,
our day of reflection, thoughtfulness and quiet, as we stop
listening to the chaos of the outside world for just a few
moments, to offer thanksgiving for brave and determined
essential workers, for scientists who strive for resolution, for
leaders who thoughtfully plot our next steps, for our
families who love and support us.

In the aftermath of Easter, we celebrate the risen Christ and
look for Jesus to be made known to us where basic needs
are to be met: with homeless people, frightened refugees
fleeing unsafe lives, the gravely ill and dying, the lonely
and afraid, where children denied their daily routine are
schooled in family values and given new opportunities for
growth and learning.

We look for Jesus to be made known to us:
Where those who are apart may overcome the distances
through other means of reaching out,
Where new insights are granted that cause us to stop and
think about what is truly important and good in our lives,

Where we instinctively know that returning to “normal” means letting go of some of our more destructive and disruptive ways,
Where we learn to appreciate so many things that we have taken for granted.

We look for Jesus to be made known to us:
Where our community of faith continues to draw together in faith and fun and fellowship and we renew ourselves in the breaking of the bread,
Where we open our doors and rejoin the neighbourhood in celebrating and rejoicing our spirits of courage, openness and love.

We look for Jesus to be made known to us:
When we speak out on behalf of others who are vulnerable,
When we recognize and help a stranger,
When we take time for prayer and nourishing our spiritual life,
When we listen for and recognize the call of God and decide to follow.

All: Jesus will be known in each one of us, and God will open our eyes to his presence on our life's journey.

One: We pray for Loretta and her family, for Elizabeth and Jeff and Caitlin, for Flo and her family, for Fred and Linda and Shari, for Vic, for Cheryl's mother and her family. We pray for those outside our church community who are impacted in many ways for our current situation. 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 Our 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 – *The Church's One Foundation*

VU 332

*1 The Church's one foundation
is Jesus Christ her Lord;
she is his new creation
by water and the word:
from heaven he came and sought her
to be his holy bride;
with his own blood he bought her,
and for her life he died.*

*2 Elect from every nation,
yet one o'er all the earth,
her charter of salvation,
one Lord, one faith, one birth;
one holy name she blesses,
partakes one holy food,
and to one hope she presses,
with every grace endued.*

*3 'Mid toil and tribulation,
and tumult of her war*

*she waits the consummation
of peace for evermore;
till with the vision glorious
her longing eyes are blessed,
and the great Church victorious
shall be the Church at rest.*

*4 Yet she on earth hath union
with God, the Three in one,
and mystic sweet communion
with those whose rest is won.
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we
like them, the meek and lowly,
on high may dwell with thee.*

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

One: Travel the road of life with love.
Journey the paths of God.
Travel the road of life with faith.
Journey with the risen Christ.
Travel the road of life with hope.
Follow the Holy Spirit wherever it may lead.

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 – cantabile, Sonata #10, KV 330

W.A. Mozart