

Westminster United Church  
October 1, 2023  
World Communion Sunday  
Proper 21/Creation Time 4

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

**The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.**

### **Announcements/Life and Work of the Church**

✝ **Introit:** MV 14 Where Two or Three Are Gathered

### **✝ Procession of Christ Candle**

“Long, long, long ago, before there was anything, before there was a world, before there was light, before there was darkness, there was God: Creator and Source of Life. God moved and God breathed the world into being, and God said, “Let there be light.” We present this worship candle as a visible reminder of the Creator’s great light and love.”

### **Land Acknowledgement**

“Today as we gather to worship let us remember that we worship God on the historic and unceded territory of nations of Treaty 7. As Christ’s people, let us be people of Love, of Truth, and Reconciliation. May we live with respect on this land, and peace and friendship with its people.”

### **Affirming Vision Statement & Lighting of the Affirming Candle**

“As a community church that gathers from many smaller communities in the Medicine Hat area, Westminster United Church publicly declares our commitment to creating a space where people are welcome, safe, and encouraged to participate in the life of the church inclusive of: Sexual orientation, gender identity, two spirited people, differing abilities, age, ethnic background, race, marital status, or economic circumstance.

Participation in the life of the church includes leadership, membership, sacraments, marriage, and celebrating milestones of life’s journey.

We celebrate the richness of diversity, and we commit ourselves to openness, growth, education and to influencing the community for social justice.

In our dedication to living our God's word and with God's help, we devote ourselves to proactive learning and inclusion."

"Not quite as long but still very long ago, One was born who embodied the light of the Creator in a way that sparked a movement and a new understanding God. We light this rainbow candle as a visible reminder of the radical inclusivity shown to us by Jesus, who calls us to follow him."

### **Lighting of Peace Candle**

"We light the candle of Peace to remind ourselves that Christ is the Prince of Peace. We pray for peace for ourselves and for the world."

### **†Call to Worship (Philippians 2:6-11)**

One: Though Jesus Christ was God,

**All: he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.**

One: Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;

**All: he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.**

One: When he appeared in human form,

**All: he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.**

One: Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor

**All: and gave him the name above all other names,**

One: that at the name of Jesus

**All: every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**

One: and every tongue declare

**All: that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

One: Come, let us worship!

### **†OPENING HYMN: VU 371 Open My Eyes**

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

One: Most merciful God, you are slow to anger and filled with unfailing love.

**All: Forgive us for turning away from your goodness and compassion.**

One: With delight you created the world: land, air, water, animals and plants.

**All: Forgive us for not tending creation, but misusing it for gain and waste.**

One: You call us to love our neighbour as ourselves.

**All: Forgive us for our apathy, pride and self-centered focus.**

One: Through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, you broke the chains of sin and evil.

**All: Forgive us for trusting in ourselves and the powers of this world.**

One: In raising Jesus from death, you opened the way to eternal life.

**All: Forgive our entitled attitudes and ingratitude.**

One: Through our baptism, you have made us new.

**All:** Renew our strength, mind, heart and soul, we pray.

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER (alternately spoken or sung [vu 959])**

#### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

One: Almighty God, in you are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

**All: Open our eyes that we may see the wonders of your Word; and give us grace that we may clearly understand and freely choose the way of Christ our Lord. Amen.**

#### **SCRIPTURE READING: Exodus 17:1-7 NLT**

##### **Water from the Rock**

**17** At the Lord's command, the whole community of Israel left the wilderness of Sin<sup>[a]</sup> and moved from place to place. Eventually they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink. <sup>2</sup> So once more the people complained against Moses. "Give us water to drink!" they demanded.

"Quiet!" Moses replied. "Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the Lord?"

<sup>3</sup> But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses. "Why did you bring us out of Egypt? Are you trying to kill us, our children, and our livestock with thirst?"

<sup>4</sup> Then Moses cried out to the Lord, "What should I do with these people? They are ready to stone me!"

<sup>5</sup> The Lord said to Moses, "Walk out in front of the people. Take your staff, the one you used when you struck the water of the Nile, and call some of the elders of Israel to join you. <sup>6</sup> I will stand before you on the rock at Mount Sinai.<sup>[b]</sup> Strike the rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink." So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on.

<sup>7</sup> Moses named the place Massah (which means "test") and Meribah (which means "arguing") because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the Lord by saying, "Is the Lord here with us or not?"

One: This is the witness of Israel.

**ALL: Thanks be to God for the Word.**

**ANTHEM:** "I Love to Tell the Story "

#### **Gospel Reading: Matthew 21:23-32 (NLT)**

##### **The Authority of Jesus Challenged**

<sup>23</sup> When Jesus returned to the Temple and began teaching, the leading priests and elders came up to him. They demanded, “By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right?”

<sup>24</sup> “I’ll tell you by what authority I do these things if you answer one question,” Jesus replied. <sup>25</sup> “Did John’s authority to baptize come from heaven, or was it merely human?”

They talked it over among themselves. “If we say it was from heaven, he will ask us why we didn’t believe John. <sup>26</sup> But if we say it was merely human, we’ll be mobbed because the people believe John was a prophet.” <sup>27</sup> So they finally replied, “We don’t know.”

And Jesus responded, “Then I won’t tell you by what authority I do these things.

### **Parable of the Two Sons**

<sup>28</sup> “But what do you think about this? A man with two sons told the older boy, ‘Son, go out and work in the vineyard today.’ <sup>29</sup> The son answered, ‘No, I won’t go,’ but later he changed his mind and went anyway. <sup>30</sup> Then the father told the other son, ‘You go,’ and he said, ‘Yes, sir, I will.’ But he didn’t go.

<sup>31</sup> “Which of the two obeyed his father?”

They replied, “The first.”<sup>[a]</sup>

Then Jesus explained his meaning: “I tell you the truth, corrupt tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom of God before you do. <sup>32</sup> For John the Baptist came and showed you the right way to live, but you didn’t believe him, while tax collectors and prostitutes did. And even when you saw this happening, you refused to believe him and repent of your sins.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**ALL: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.**

### **SERMON: By Whose Authority?**

**Hymn:** VU 147 What Wondrous Love Is This

### **Invitation to the Offering**

**Offertory**

✠ **Doxology VU 538 “For the Gift of Creation”**

✠ **Offertory Prayer**

One: Loving God, out of the abundance of creation, you have provided for all.

**All: Use our gifts in your healing, reconciling and kingdom work in this congregation, our community, and around the globe. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

## COMMUNION

Invitation to the table:

One: As bread that was scattered on the hillside, was gathered together and made one. So too, we God's people, scattered throughout the world, are gathered together around the table of the Lord, who makes us one.

**All: Let us break bread together.**

**We welcome one another to the table we share with our lord.**

✠ Hymn: VU 469 "We Gather Here"

One: God is with us.

**All: We are not alone**

One: Christ is present here

**All: The Spirit is among us**

One: Let us give thanks to God

**All: We do, in memory and in hope.**

One: It is right and a good and joyful thing... We praise you O God.

**All: We praise you O God.**

One: You created Adam and Eve... We praise you O God

**All: We praise you O God**

One: Yet, even they turned away... We praise you, O God.

**All: We praise you O God.**

One: Jesus came as one of us... we join the angels in their praise:

**All: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

One: We gather at this table... that makes us your people:

**All: You have made us a people with many different skin colours, many different languages, many different lifestyles, many different life experiences, many different abilities and limitations, many different ways to respond to your love in our lives.**

One: Today we unite with people of faith on all continents celebrating the simple grandeur of your grace that includes all of us.

**All: Guide us, we pray, so that the ways we live our everyday lives in all the small things we do and say may be transformed to be exceptional ways that your love and grace may be known in all the places of the world.**

One: As we gather at this table, we remember... In this faith and as your people we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

**All: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

One: Send your Holy Spirit upon us... and to the world through Christ,

**All: with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all glory be yours God most holy forever and ever. Amen**

BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND POURING THE WINE

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

One: Merciful God, you have given us the privilege of eating and drinking with you and one another around this table.

**All: We praise you for including us and all who come in your eternal love. May we be aware of the Risen Christ walking with us this day and always. In Jesus' name we pray Amen.**

✠**CLOSING HYMN:** VU 242 Let All Things Now Living

✠**BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

✠**CHORAL AMEN VU 969**

**SENDING FORTH VU 958 X2**

**POSTLUDE:**