

**Westminster United Church  
November 19, 2023**

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

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

✝ **Introit: (VU 402) “We Are One” vs1**

✝ **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** (Based on Psalm 123)

One: We lift our eyes to you, O God, enthroned in heaven.

All: We keep looking to the LORD our God for his mercy, just as servants keep their eyes on their master, as a slave girl watches her mistress for the slightest signal.

One: Have mercy on us, LORD, have mercy, for we have had our fill of contempt.

All: We have had more than our fill of the scoffing of the proud and the contempt of the arrogant.

One: Let us delight in the law of the LORD, meditating on it day and night.

All: Then we will be like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season.

One: Let us worship God!

### ✝ **OPENING HYMN: (VU 333) “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”**

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION (based on Psalm 23)**

One: O Lord, you are our shepherd,  
All: And yet we are dissatisfied, wanting more and more.  
One: Too often we lie down when we could act,  
All: We incite division and controversy when we could offer peace,  
One: We wander tempting paths instead of following you.  
All: We seek courage and comfort in earthly things rather than in you.  
One: We hate our enemies and refuse to break bread with them,  
All: We see scarcity even when you offer us abundance.  
One: We pray for forgiveness, for your goodness and mercy,  
All: So that we might dwell in You, in your grace, forever.  
Amen.

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER (VU 959)**

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

One: God of the generations, the Scriptures are a legacy to us from your faithful people over many centuries.  
All: Just as your Spirit inspired poets and prophets, evangelists and epistle writers,

One: and guided their translators again and again,  
All: send your same Spirit to inspire our understanding of your Word and our response to live by its wisdom, for the sake of Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS (Read by Anna-Marie Hancock)**

### **Judges 4:1-7**

New Living Translation

#### **Deborah Becomes Israel's Judge**

**4** After Ehud's death, the Israelites again did evil in the LORD's sight. **2** So the LORD turned them over to King Jabin of Hazor, a Canaanite king. The commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-haggoyim. **3** Sisera, who had 900 iron chariots, ruthlessly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years. Then the people of Israel cried out to the LORD for help.

**4** Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophet who was judging Israel at that time. **5** She would sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would go to her for judgment. **6** One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. She said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: Call out 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. **7** And I will call out Sisera, commander of

Jabin’s army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him.”

One: This is the witness of Israel.

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

### **Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:14-30**

New Living Translation

#### **Parable of the Three Servants**

<sup>14</sup> “Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. He called together his servants and entrusted his money to them while he was gone. <sup>15</sup> He gave five bags of silver<sup>[a]</sup> to one, two bags of silver to another, and one bag of silver to the last—dividing it in proportion to their abilities. He then left on his trip.

<sup>16</sup> “The servant who received the five bags of silver began to invest the money and earned five more. <sup>17</sup> The servant with two bags of silver also went to work and earned two more. <sup>18</sup> But the servant who received the one bag of silver dug a hole in the ground and hid the master’s money.

<sup>19</sup> “After a long time their master returned from his trip and called them to give an account of how they had used his money. <sup>20</sup> The servant to whom he had entrusted the five

bags of silver came forward with five more and said, 'Master, you gave me five bags of silver to invest, and I have earned five more.'

<sup>21</sup> "The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!<sup>[b]</sup>'

<sup>22</sup> "The servant who had received the two bags of silver came forward and said, 'Master, you gave me two bags of silver to invest, and I have earned two more.'

<sup>23</sup> "The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let's celebrate together!'

<sup>24</sup> "Then the servant with the one bag of silver came and said, 'Master, I knew you were a harsh man, harvesting crops you didn't plant and gathering crops you didn't cultivate. <sup>25</sup> I was afraid I would lose your money, so I hid it in the earth. Look, here is your money back.'

<sup>26</sup> "But the master replied, 'You wicked and lazy servant! If you knew I harvested crops I didn't plant and gathered crops I didn't cultivate, <sup>27</sup> why didn't you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.'

<sup>28</sup> “Then he ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one with the ten bags of silver. <sup>29</sup> To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. <sup>30</sup> Now throw this useless servant into outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

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

**SERMON: What have you been given?**

**✠HYMN: (VU 506) “Take My Life and Let it Be”**

**MINUTES FOR MISSION “Kindergarten in a Refugee Camp”  
Read by Sharon Clay**

Being a child in a refugee camp means facing lots of uncertainty at a very young age. In addition to food and water being scarce, education is generally not easily accessible. Some children were born in the camps, while others fled with their families at a very young age. Either way, living in a refugee camp means children may not learn crucial cognitive and social skills.



Since 1950, the Joint Christian Committee for Social Service (JCC) has provided skills training and services to refugees living in a refugee camp in Lebanon. One of their incredible initiatives is a kindergarten program where children can engage in learning in a happy and secure place. Hundreds of children have graduated from JCC's kindergarten program with the skills they need to thrive. After graduating, children continue in schools that welcome the basic knowledge and values they have learned. Your generosity through Mission and Service helps keep children learning all around the world. Thank you.

## **Invitation to the Offering**

### **Offertory (Offering Gathered with Reflection Music)**

#### **✝Doxology (VU 544)**

#### **✝Offertory Prayer**

One: Faithful God, we offer humble thanks today

All: for your generosity to us through the Church that bears Christ's name.

One: Receive our gifts as tokens of our love and loyalty.

All: Use them to sustain the mission of the Church in ways we cannot yet imagine,

One: in a future that you are creating through Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

**✠A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

**✠CLOSING HYMN: “Rain Down” (Lyrics on PP)**

**✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

**✠CHORAL AMEN: AMEN!**

**✠SENDING FORTH HYMN: (MV 212) “Sent Out in Jesus’ Name”**

**POSTLUDE:**