

**December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**ADVENT III**

**Announcement/Life and Work**

**Introit "Prepare the Way of the Lord" (VU 10 ×2)**

**Opening Prayer**

**Advent III: Hope is a Star**

Choir: Joy is a song that welcomes the dawn, telling the world that the Saviour is born. Love is a flame that burns in our hearts, Jesus has come and will never depart.

**Congregation: When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid, none shall be afraid.**

**Advent III Responsive Litany (Read by Debi Hoefling)**

In this season of Advent, we remember that Christ's coming will bring us great joy.

For those who are suffering and in need

**Christ will bring us great joy.**

For those who have experienced personal loss

**Christ will bring us great joy.**

For those who battle daily with inner demons

**Christ will bring us great joy.**

For those who endure deep disappointment

**Christ will bring us great joy.**

**Advent III Candle Lighting (Lit by Linda Kisell)**

This morning we light three candles. The first symbolizes the hope of Christ's coming. The second shows us the peace that Messiah will bring us. Lighting the third candle signals the joy that is soon to spread throughout the world.

**Choir/Congregation: When God is a child there's joy in our song. The last shall be the first and the weak shall be strong, and none shall be afraid, none shall be afraid.**

### **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**

"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."

### **Lighting of the Affirming Candle**

"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."

## **Celebrations**

### **Call to Worship**

One: On this Third Sunday of Advent, we have been invited to a special gathering called church.

**All: To be here we set aside our busy schedules and other commitments.**

One: All are invited here by God. Together let us worship God! We gather in the Name of our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Amen.

**✠ OPENING HYMN "O, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (VU 326)**

## **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

One: God of infinite forgiveness, we ask You this day to forgive those many times in which we have turned our backs on You by turning away from the needs of the voiceless, the hopeless, and the helpless.

**All: We let ourselves get distracted by our own problems. We doubted we had enough energy for our own lives, let alone to consider the needs of others.**

One: I invite each of us now to enter into a moment of silence for self-reflection and private confession . . .

One: Spirit, renew our strength of heart, mind and body. Challenge us again to be Your people – a people of action. Heal our wounds of indifference and apathy; bring us together in faith, hope and love, with You, family, friends, and our neighbours.

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

One: The mercy of our God is from everlasting to everlasting. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. We are set free to live in the renewing power of the Spirit. Therefore, be at peace with God, with yourself, and with one another. And be assured, you are forgiven.

**All: Amen.**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

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

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

### **SCRIPTURE READINGS (Read by Rev. Helen Reid)**

Isaiah 61:1-4

Good News Translation

**61** The Sovereign LORD has filled me with his Spirit.

He has chosen me and sent me

To bring good news to the poor,

To heal the broken-hearted,

To announce release to captives

And freedom to those in prison.

<sup>2</sup> He has sent me to proclaim

That the time has come

When the LORD will save his people

And defeat their enemies.

He has sent me to comfort all who mourn,

<sup>3</sup> To give to those who mourn in Zion

Joy and gladness instead of grief,

A song of praise instead of sorrow.

They will be like trees

That the LORD himself has planted.

They will all do what is right,

And God will be praised for what he has done.

<sup>4</sup> They will rebuild cities that have long been in ruins.

One: This is the witness of Israel.

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

**Epistle**

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
Good News Translation

<sup>16</sup> Be joyful always, <sup>17</sup> pray at all times, <sup>18</sup> be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> Do not restrain the Holy Spirit; <sup>20</sup> do not despise inspired messages. <sup>21</sup> Put all things to the test: keep what is good <sup>22</sup> and avoid every kind of evil.

<sup>23</sup> May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> He who calls you will do it, because he is faithful

One: This is the witness of the Church.

**All: Thanks be to God.**

**ANTHEM: “Mary Did You Know?”**

**Gospel:**

Luke 1:46-55  
Good News Translation

<sup>46</sup> Mary said,

“My heart praises the Lord;

<sup>47</sup> my soul is glad because of God my Savior,

<sup>48</sup> for he has remembered me, his lowly servant!

From now on all people will call me happy,

49 because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me.  
His name is holy;  
50 from one generation to another  
he shows mercy to those who honor him.  
51 He has stretched out his mighty arm  
and scattered the proud with all their plans.  
52 He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly.  
53 He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away with empty hands.  
54 He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors,  
and has come to the help of his servant Israel.  
55 He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham  
and to all his descendants forever!"

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

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

**SERMON: "I Can Do All Things Through Christ, Who Strengthens Me."**

**✠HYMN: "Lo, how a Rose E're Blooming" (VU 8)**

**MINUTES FOR MISSION "Update: The Holy Bible in Mohawk"(Read by Debi Hoefling)**

**Invitation to the Offering**

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

**Doxology VU 236 vs 1**

**Offertory Prayer**

**A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

**✠CLOSING HYMN: "Hark the Glad Sound" (VU 29)**

### **ADVENT III Closing Prayer**

**Gracious God, the remarkable joy that the birth of your son brings is light to brighten our personal darkness and a reason to give all humankind a reason to rejoice. May this feeling of gladness and wonder fill our days throughout the year. We pray this in your holy name. Amen**

**✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

**✠CHORAL AMEN VU 967**

**✠SENDING FORTH HYMN “May the God of Joy Go with Us” (VU 424 vs 1)**

**POSTLUDE:**