

December 17th, 2023
ADVENT IV
Christmas Cantata “Night of the Father’s Love”

Announcement/Life and Work

Introit “Prepare the Way of the Lord” (VU 10 ×2)

Opening Prayer

Lord God, as we gather this day, we open our hearts to you, seeking your healing and transforming love. Our world cries for justice for all people, yet the leaders seem intent on bantering with one another, unmindful of the peace-bringers and those who would heal and teach the ways of peace. Be with all of us. Prepare us for this bright light of love which you are sending to us, for we ask this in Jesus’ Name. AMEN.

Advent IV: 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 IV Responsive Litany (Read by Melanie Rattai)

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

For those who are forsaken and alone

Christ will bring us love.

For those who are angry and hostile

Christ will bring us love.

For those who have turned away from personal interaction

Christ will bring us love.

For those who are pariahs, touched by scandal

Christ will bring us love.

Advent IV Candle Lighting (Lit by Jen Oster)

Today we light four candles. The first candle lights the way to hope. The second is for a world at peace. The third is for joy of anticipation as we wait for the Christ child to be born. Finally, the fourth candle warms our hearts with the love Christ will bring us.

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.”

Call to Worship

Love has come down to us this Advent Season.

Divine love which heals and transforms our lives.

With great joy, we receive that love and share it with others.

We open our hearts to all God’s children, the last, the least, and the lost, as well as those who feel privileged.

The Lord has done and continues to do great things for us.

Praise be to God who loves us so much and who challenges us to be people of joy in this darkened world. AMEN.

✠ **OPENING HYMN** “Canticle of the Turning” (MV 120)

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Patient and forgiving God, you know how we want to be people of peace and justice, but when opportunities come to participate in groups working for justice, we turn our backs and walk the other way, or we give a token pledge and then ignore further pleas for assistance. We hide our names from appearing on roles of supporters of justice-seeking organizations. Forgive us, O God, when we give only lip service to ministries of justice

rather than pledging our lives to helping all people in need. Free us from our selfishness. Banish our fears and move us in ways of peace and justice, bringing your love and hope to all God's children. We ask these things in God's name. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Rejoice! You who once lived in darkness – on you a new light is shining and the light of God's glory shall brighten your path. You are healed, loved and forgiven. Be at peace! Live in God's love, and bring hope and justice to all God's people. AMEN

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER (VU 959)

Christmas CANTATA "Night of the Father's Love"

✠HYMN: "Joy to the World" (VU 59)

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory (Offering Gathered with Reflection Music)

Doxology VU 236 vs 1

Offertory Prayer

Lord, you have blessed our lives in so many ways. Receive these tokens of our blessings and cause them to work in this world which you have loaned to us to make light shine in the darkness and peace an attainable goal in all conflicts. We offer these gifts in Jesus' name. AMEN.

A NEW CREED (VU 918)

**✠CLOSING HYMN: “Go Tell it on the Mountain” (VU 43)
ADVENT IV Closing Prayer**

O Lord God, there is nothing greater than the love you showed us when you gave your only Son to a world in dire need of his ministry. Help us accept this love freely into our hearts so we can become more faithful vessels of your glory. We pray this in your name, O God. Amen

✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

The trumpet of peace is sounding in the land. We have heard God’s word of healing love and are challenged to go forth into God’s world with the good news of God’s abiding presence with us. Go in peace and may God’s peace always be with you. AMEN.

✠CHORAL AMEN VU 967

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

POSTLUDE: