

December 3rd Service Advent II

Announcement/Life and Work

Introit VU 10 ×2 Prepare the Way of the Lord

Opening Prayer

As the voice cried out in the wilderness, God,
you enter our lives and call to us to be open to hearing
the cries of people who feel lost and alienated,
who feel that no one cares or ever will care about them.
We have been given that opportunity to reach out
through the ministries and mission of our church
bringing hope and peace to all.
Prepare us to become channels of your peace
and life-transforming love.
In Jesus' name we pray. **AMEN.**

Advent II: Hope is a Star

Choir: Hope is a star that shines in the night, leading us on till the morning is bright. Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth giving a promise of safety and worth.

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 II Responsive Litany

In this season of Advent, we remember that Christ is coming to bring peace

For a world overrun with meaningless war

Christ is coming to bring peace.

For brothers and sisters divided by anger

Christ is coming to bring peace.

For a world bound up in political turmoil

Christ is coming to bring peace.

For those of us battling inner turmoil

Christ is coming to bring peace.

Advent II Candle Lighting

Today we light two candles. The first is the light of hope. The second is the symbol of peace. We remember what God said to the shepherds on the night of Christ's birth

promising peace on earth and goodwill to all the people of earth. May we become the instruments to fulfill this promise.

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

In the middle of dark times, our Lord cries out:

“Comfort, comfort my people!”

When it seems as though we cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel,

Our Lord says to us, “ Be at peace, for your time of difficulty has ended.”

Lord, we await the time of comfort and peace!

Lord, we are thankful for your compassion and never-failing love for us. AMEN.

**✠ OPENING HYMN VU 2 Come, Thou Long Expected
Jesus**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Generous, loving God,

we see glimpses of the glory of creation,

we know through Jesus the comfort of salvation,

we sense the restless movement of your Spirit,

yet we do not live as people of peace and compassion.

For the poverty of our worship:

Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.

For our half-hearted attempts to live as your disciples:

Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.

For those times when we have mistaken our church for a building:

Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.

For those times when we have failed to love our neighbours as ourselves:

Forgive us and renew your Spirit within us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear these words of grace:

The Spirit of God lives to set us free.

Through Christ our sins are forgiven.

**May the Spirit of God inspire us
to live as children of God. Amen**

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Wisdom calls from the Scriptures!

May the Word of God enlighten us!

ISAIAH 40:1-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." A voice says, "Cry out!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All people are grass, their constancy is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the Lord blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever. Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good tidings; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings, lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

One: This is the witness of Israel.

ALL: Thanks be to God for the Word.

2 PETER 3:8-15A

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home. Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM: "The Coming of the Lord"

MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

ALL: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON:

✝HYMN: VU 684 Make Me A Channel of Your Peace

MINUTES FOR MISSION “Education in the Wake of Disaster”

The start of a school year brings out a lot of questions from children. Will they like their teacher? Will they make new friends? But for children attending schools in Aleppo, Syria, the start of the academic year in September 2023 brought a welcome sense of normalcy after months of uncertainty.

In February 2023, earthquakes left people in parts of Türkiye and Syria facing the devastating loss of their loved ones, homes, and communities. And with their communities’ schools damaged or destroyed, children had nowhere safe to learn.

In addition to providing basic needs and cash assistance, [Mission and Service](#) partner The Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) was able to rehabilitate five school buildings in Aleppo before the start of the September 2023 school year. In the face of significant struggle, MECC is providing children with the opportunity to learn and grow safely.

Your gifts to [Mission and Service](#) support partners like MECC as they help children and families rebuild and recover in the wake of disaster.

Invitation to the Offering

Friends, we are called to a life of faith and service, to a ministry of loving-kindness and generosity of spirit; let us share the fruits of our blessings with our brothers and sisters. **Amen.**

Offertory (Offering Gathered with Reflection Music)

Doxology VU 236 vs1

Offertory Prayer

In all things, Lord, it is on you that we depend.

By your grace,

your Holy Spirit has inspired us to acts of love and service,

in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

A NEW CREED (Alternately spoken or sung [VU 918])

✝CLOSING HYMN: VU 29 Hark The Glad Sound

Advent II Closing Prayer

O Lord, in this troubled world we live in, bring us peace that was promised through the birth of your son, Jesus Christ. Calm our anxious souls and let us live in harmony with our family, our neighbors and ourselves. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.

✝BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

✝CHORAL AMEN VU 967

✝SENDING FORTH HYMN : VU 424 May the God of Hope Go With Us vs 1

POSTLUDE: