

Full Order of Service for Sunday, February 18th

LENT I

Announcement/Life and Work

Introit (VU 368 vs 1) “Holy Spirit, Truth Devine”

Opening Prayer

The season of Lent is here again and, as with so many times before, we find that we are not really ready for this journey of discipleship. So many things claim our lives and prevent us from being ready to take the steps in faith. As we look at our barrier of readiness, help us to remember that Christ is with us, every step of the way. We are not alone. Christ will help lift our hearts and spirits and direct our paths. Enable us, loving Savior, to take this journey of faith to new life with you. AMEN.

Lent I Meditation

We have come together this morning for renewal-in worship and as a community of faith. We’ve greeted one another, laughed and hugged. But now the time of reflection and stillness is upon us. It is the first Sunday in Lent-the season for journeys of the heart. Close your eyes. Be still. Listen. We are entering a holy time. The Lenten candles have been lit, but over the next six weeks the light will slowly fade into darkness. For we are retelling the story of Jesus’ betrayal and suffering and death. We do this not to be morbid, but because in the

story of Jesus' death and resurrection, God is revealed- in the amazing transformation of death into life, in endings transformed into beginnings, and in dead-ends that become a source for new possibilities.

This is the sacred center of our faith-the truth made manifest in Jesus Christ- that God is in each and every one of us, quietly transforming us and the world. In his pain and suffering, Jesus speaks to every pain and loss you have endured and offers you the promise of transformation. It's an old story, but it still has the power to reveal, to heal, and to redeem. Jesus is at the heart of our faith, in the depth of our souls. He is waiting for us, inviting us to leave ordinary time and follow along with him on the journey that brought him to the Cross. Listen in silence, for Jesus is calling you.

(silent time)

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of injustice in the world.

(A candle is extinguished)

Let us pray:

All: Loving God, as we journey through this holy season of Lent, give us strength and courage to make the changes that are needed in our lives. Open our hearts and minds to your steadfast presence and help us to put our trust in you. Amen.

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

“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

The bags are packed and set for the journey. Are you ready?

Not really. We have so much still to do.

The Lord calls to us now. The Peace of God is at hand.

What will be required of us for this journey?

Open your hearts and spirits. Take the risk of discipleship.

Lord, help us to be ready. Calm our fears as we step forward in faith. AMEN.

✝ OPENING HYMN VU 449 Crashing Waters at Creation

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We have lists of things to do, for all the areas of our lives. Our lives are so time bound and duty bound that we feel imprisoned in them. Now we are challenged by Christ to

take a journey of discipleship. We don't feel ready for this journey. We need more time. And we complain and cry about how much we have to do. Forgive us, Lord, when we place so many "duties" in the path to serving you. Reset our priorities so that we will be ready to commit our lives in your service. Lord, help us to be ready when you call us. Help us to courageously answer the summons you bring. Let us place our trust in you in all things. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

We can be assured that our journey with Jesus on this road to the cross is led by God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Therefore we can move forward with assurance that we are loved and forgiven.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER (VU 959)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of wisdom, send your Holy Spirit to give us open minds and hearts as we hear the story of the road to the cross.

Inspire us to step out with the same courage Jesus had and to follow him, Your Living Word.

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

Genesis 9:8-17

New International Version

⁸ Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹ “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰ and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹ I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹² And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³ I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴ Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵ I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶ Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

One: This is the witness of Israel.

ALL: Thanks be to God for the Word.

Psalm 25:1-10; V.U. p, 752

To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.

To you, O God, I lift my soul; my God, in you I trust.
Let me not be put to shame, nor let my foes gloat over me.

**Let none who wait for you be shamed;
let them be shamed who wantonly break faith.**

Show me your ways; teach me your paths.

**Lead me in your truth and teach me;
for you are God my saviour.**

For you I wait all the day long. R

To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.

Remember your mercy, O God, and your steadfast love,
for they are as old as time.

Do not remember the sins and offences of my youth.

According to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O God! R

To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.

You are upright and good, O God,
therefore you show the path to those who go astray.

**You guide the humble to do what is right,
and teach the lowly your way.**

All your ways are loving and sure
**for those who keep your covenant
and commandments. R**

To you, O God, I lift my soul, to you I lift my soul.

One: This is the witness of the ancient song-writers.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

ANTHEM: The First Nowell

Mark 1:9-15

New International Version

The Baptism and Testing of Jesus

⁹At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Just as Jesus was

coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted^[a] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus Announces the Good News

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

ALL: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON:

✠**HYMN:** VU 313 God Whose Almighty Word

MINUTES FOR MISSION “Leading Generations”

Becoming a parent or guardian is a life-changing, complex experience that doesn’t have a one-size-fits-all answer. As kids, we looked to adults for guidance as we navigated the world with fresh eyes. We looked to teachers for help with schoolwork, and parental figures for managing emotions and fears. Now, as adults, we

recognize that we're still figuring things out as we go, and there's always an opportunity to grow our skills and minds.

In London, Ontario, [Mission and Service](#) partners with the London Community Chaplaincy as they respond to parents and guardians who wish to build a network of support, share the parenting journey, and develop new skills as they navigate raising children in a low-income setting. Together, these parents are working hard to build a positive future for their children and families. Each week London Community Chaplaincy provides a welcoming and safe social setting for adults to connect and grow as parents. Not only for learning how to guide a child through critical stages of development, but also for navigating the complex mental aspects of being a parent or guardian while also managing financial stress, food insecurity, housing complications, and more. Gathering with other adults in a similar situation allows participants to share their struggles and triumphs, further building a sense of community.

Your gifts to [Mission and Service](#) support partnerships like the London Community Chaplaincy as they help empower parents along the parenting journey. Thank you.

Invitation to the Offering

As God has so loved us and walks with us through this Lenten time let us open our hearts to God as we give back a portion of that which God has given us. Amen

Offertory (Offering Gathered with Reflection music)

Doxology (VU 539 vs 1) “God of All Good”

Offertory Prayer

We thank you for the opportunity to give something of value to the church for its wider use. We pray that what we have given today will bring your Glory to the world.

Amen

A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✠**CLOSING HYMN:** (VU 389) “God Is Here, As We Your People”

✠**BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

The first step on the journey, that of readiness, is one of the hardest. We keep thinking that we have forgotten something. God has called you by name, to this journey. You will have all that you need. Go in peace, and know that God is going with you. AMEN.

✠**CHORAL AMEN** (VU 971)

✠SENDING FORTH HYMN : “I Want Jesus to Walk With Me”

POSTLUDE: