

**March 17th, 2024, Full Order of Service & Annual
Congregational Meeting**

Lent V

Ministry of Word: Rev. Bob Wallace

Music Director: Chris White

Volunteers:

Elder in Charge: Melanie Rattai

Scripture Reader: Marg McCulley

Sound Operator: Pat Evans

Greeter: Betty Sidlick

Coffee Hosts: Linda Kisell & Marg McCulley

PowerPoint Operator: Kathy Nielsen

Lenten Reading: Linda and Caeden Kinvig

~

Annual Meeting Chairperson: Marg Taylor

Taking of Meeting Minutes: Patty McFarlane

Announcement/Life and Work

Introit (VU 368 vs 4) "Holy Spirit, Truth Devine"

**Lent V Meditation (Read by Linda Kinvig and her grandson
Caedon)**

When we arrived this morning, we entered into the normal bustle of a church on a Sunday morning: friends greeting each other, choir members getting their robes, children bringing their energy and enthusiasm. Now that we are sitting together in the pews, I invite you to close your eyes...and consider the word, "sanctuary." A sanctuary is a place set aside for sacred

things. It is a place of refuge and protection. This room is a sanctuary. The season of Lent is a kind of sanctuary, extended in time. And one of the things Lent teaches is that you, too, are a sanctuary. There is inside you a place for sacred things, a place where God abides.

(silent time)

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

(a candle is extinguished)

Let us pray:

All: Loving God, we open our hearts to you. We invite you into our inmost being, only to find you already there. Strengthen us in our quiet places and then lead us into the work of justice and peace. 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 ⁱ

This is the day God has promised: the day of the new covenant.

We are here, because our hearts are filled with love for our God.

No longer carved on cold stone, this covenant is engraved on our hearts.

Our hearts are open so God's Word can shape us.

We will reach out to our neighbors, our friends and family, even to strangers.

Our hearts are ready to serve God and all of God's people.

✠Opening Hymn (VU 120) “O, Jesus I Have Promised”

Call To Confession

If we would see Jesus, we must open our eyes to the ways we have not followed him as disciples. If we want God to create new hearts within us, we must speak of the old ways

in which we continue to live. If we seek God's mercy, we must confess all that keeps us from living as God's children. Join me, as we come to the One who will forgive us.

Unison Prayers of Confession

O Heart which seeks our own: we yearn for your presence in our lives, yet turn away from you time and again. We want to serve others, but become obsessed with our own desires. We need your Word to fill our emptiness, yet let it be silenced by the noise of our world. Our hearts are clogged with the foolishness of our lives, and often struggle to beat in rhythm with your own.

In this silence, and in the depths of our hidden souls, come to us and make us whole, Steadfast Love. Write grace upon our hearts, so we might be more forgiving people; write mercy on our hearts, so we might become more welcoming people; write hospitality upon our hearts that we might become more like Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, who came for all people, even us. Amen.

Silence is kept

Words Of Assurance

A new heart, a generous spirit, a fresh start: these are the gifts our God gives to us.

Through Christ, we are cleansed; through Christ, we are healed; through Christ, we become new people. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Prayer For Illumination

Holy One, your Word became flesh and lived among people just like us. May these readings from your Holy Story help us to hear you speak in our day as you did to our ancestors long ago. Open our ears. Open our minds. Open our hearts, for we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Scripture Readings (Read by Marg McCulley)

Jeremiah 31:31-34 ⁱⁱ

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

Anthem: “God So Loved the World”

Gospel Reading

John 12:20-33

²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to

see Jesus.”²² Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.²³ Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit.²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷ “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say: ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.²⁸ Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”³⁰ Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine.³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people[a] to myself.”³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Response To The Readings

Ancient Words! Holy Word! Listen to what Spirit speaks to Church.

We listen! We really listen! And listening, we hear God speaking as was heard long ago. We hear again God’s promises. Amen.

Reflection

✠HYMN: (MV 1) “Let us Build a House”

Prayers of the People

The Lord’s Prayer (VU 959)

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory (Offering Gathered with Reflection Music)

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

Offertory Prayer - in Unison

As you write upon our hearts, soften them with your compassion. As you soften them, open us to the needs of those close to us, as well as those in every corner of your world. As you open us to the hurts and heartaches of your children, give us the grace to be as generous with our gifts as you are in blessing us. Take these gifts and use them to share peace, love, grace, and joy with all of your people. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

✠Closing Hymn: (VU 713) “I See a New Heaven”

✠Benediction/Commissioning

God sends us forth as people of the covenant.

Our hearts are filled with compassion which we will share with others.

Jesus call us to share hope with all we meet.

Our hands will bring food for the hungry and build shelters for the homeless.

The Spirit of hospitality is engraved upon our spirits.
We will welcome everyone we meet with the grace which is written large upon our hearts

✝Choral Amen (VU 971)

**✝Sending Forth Hymns “I Want Jesus to Walk With Me” &
(MV 212) “Sent Out in Jesus Name”**

POSTLUDE:

Annual Congregational Meeting

ⁱ Liturgical portions of the service are © Thom Shuman, 2024; used by permission.

ⁱⁱ New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.