

**MARCH 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

**Announcement/Life and Work**

**Introit (VU 368 vs 5) “Holy Spirit, Truth Devine”**

**Sixth Sunday in Lent/ Palm Sunday**

We have gathered here, week after week, sharing a common quest for a deeper faith and a deeper experience of the divine. I invite you now to close your eyes and let go of the things that distract and concern you. Listen! The time is drawing near. Jesus is preparing to enter Jerusalem. How will we greet him? Will we follow him all the way to the Cross? The power of Jesus is that he lived what he taught, even when it led to his death. He lived with an abiding awareness of God, radiating the light of God in all he said and did. But that light was too much for the world. There are forces today, as there were in ancient Judea, that conspire to put it out. Where are we in this drama? What are we willing to risk to follow Jesus?

*(Silent time.)*

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

*(A candle is extinguished.)*

Let us pray.

**Loving God, there are so many choices before us every day. Choices offered by our friends, our families, our culture, our own past. Some of them encourage the well-being of the earth, ourselves and our neighbors; others are destructive.**

**Help us to distinguish between them. May we learn from the choices of Jesus and embody compassion, justice, and inclusion in all we say and do. Amen.**

### **Opening Prayer (Psalm 118, Philippians 2)**

God of grace and glory, blessed is your Son, Christ Jesus, and blessed is your holy name. As we bless your name and sing with joy, awaken our ears to hear your word; awaken our hearts to listen for your wisdom. As we rejoice in this day that you have made, help us hear even the hard news of Christ's suffering and death. As we celebrate your presence with palms and praises, guide us to live your teachings, even when the path is painful and difficult.

May your presence flow through us into your world. In the name of your Son, Christ Jesus, we pray. 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 (Mark 11, Psalm 118)**

This day is the Lord's, created for joy.

**Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

Hosanna to Christ, the blessed child of God.

**Hosanna to God in the highest!**

Blessed is the one who comes in God's name.

**Hosanna to God in the highest!**

This day is the Lord's, created for love.

**Let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

## **✠ OPENING HYMN (VU 124) “He Came Riding on a Donkey”**

### **Prayer of Confession (Psalm 31, Mark 14–15)**

Gracious God, you know our every sorrow, our every need. Hear us as we remember the times when our strength failed us, when our distress led us onto paths of hopelessness and despair. Forgive us when we betray you, when we deny you, when we deride you, or mock you. Awaken in us a new resolve to be aware of your call and presence in our lives. Help us stay awake, even when the days are hard and the nights are long. Strengthen us to trust in you and to walk with you, even on this path to the cross. Let your face shine upon us, that we may know your steadfast love and trust in your resurrection promises. In Christ’s name, we pray.

### **Words of Assurance (Psalm 31, Philippians 2)**

Know that the Lord is God, and that Christ’s face shines upon us even when we turn away from God’s brightness. Walk in the light, dear friends. Gaze upon the Son and know that in the name of Christ, we are forgiven!

## **Prayers of the People**

### **Lord’s Prayer**

## **CANTATA “Love Divine” Joel Rainey**

**After Message: (VU 169) “Good Christians All, Rejoice and Sing” (chorus changed to “Hosanna, Hosanna Hosanna!”)**

### **Invitation to the Offering (Mark 14)**

Remembering Mary of Bethany, we come now to pour out our gifts to God. May we remember that the poor are with us still, that our kindness and generosity are needed, even now. May we remember Christ in each face of need, in each cry for help, in each yearning for grace.. May we open ourselves and pour out the gifts of the Holy Spirit, living with us, that our gifts may flow with blessing and joy to a world in need.

### **Offertory (Offering Gathered with Reflection music)**

#### **Doxology VU 539**

#### **Offertory Prayer**

Gracious God we pray that the gifts we give will contribute to the world monetarily and physically. Help us to see the future need and reach out to fill it. Amen

#### **The New Creed**

**✝CLOSING HYMN: (VU 109) “Now Quit Your Care”**

**✝BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING (Mark 15)**

Christ is going before us, even now, on the road to the cross. Christ goes before us as the way, the truth, and the life. Let us feel the light of his love, even as we enter the darkness of this Holy Week. Amen

**✝CHORAL AMEN (VU 971)**

**✝SENDING FORTH HYMN “ I Want Jesus to Walk With Me”**

**POSTLUDE:**