

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 Full Order of Service**  
**Lent III**

**Announcement/Life and Work**

**Introit** (VU 368 vs 3) “Holy Spirit, Truth Divine”

**Opening Prayer**

The Psalmist tells us “The law of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul;”

**We come with confidence in the Lord.**

Truly, “the statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart;”

**Our faith in the Lord’s statutes gives us hope.**

**Lent III Meditation (Read by Rev. Helen Reid)**

There is so much during the day that clamors for our attention. Friends, family, work, classes, household tasks. And the noise! We are bombarded with sound, from the clock that awakens us to the telephone, the radio, the television, the conversation that we have or overhear. Where is the time and place to listen for the still, small voice of God? Sometimes it seems that God would have to speak in a whirlwind to be heard above the clamor! Listen now. There is a place of quiet rest, and it is the place where God dwells within you. Close your eyes. Be aware of the place. In Lent we journey to the parts of ourselves known only to God, beneath the clamor. Let the story of Jesus reach us there. Let it teach us wisdom in our hearts.

**(silent time)**

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of violence in the world and to Earth.

**(a candle is extinguished)**

Let us pray:

**All: Draw us together in your love, O God. May our restless hearts not resist you, but continue to search until they find their rest in you. We pray in Jesus' name. 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.”

### **Celebrations**

#### **Call to Worship**

As we gather,

**Let us gather in love.**

As we worship,

**Let us worship in faith.**

As we sing our praises,

**Let our praise be sincere.**

As we give thanks,

**May we know how truly blessed we are. Amen.**

✠ **OPENING HYMN (VU 117) “Jesus Christ is Waiting”**

#### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Loving God,

as we walk the road to the Cross

**help us to see ourselves as you see us:**

**works in progress, worthy of love despite our faults,**

in our struggles against our own temptations,

and striving to be free

even as the systems we’ve built hold us captive.

**Help us to have patience with others and ourselves**

**even as we see the dawn of your kingdom**

**in your Son, our Saviour.**

#### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

#### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

#### **THE LORD’S PRAYER (VU 959)**

## **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Wisdom calls from the Scriptures!  
**May the Word of God enlighten us!**

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS (Read by Marg Laing)**

### **1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25**

#### **Christ Crucified Is God's Power and Wisdom**

<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

**ALL: Thanks be to God.**

## **PSALM 19**

### **For the director of music. A psalm of David.**

<sup>1</sup> The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup> Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.

<sup>4</sup> Yet their voice<sup>[b]</sup> goes out into all the earth,

their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

<sup>5</sup> It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

<sup>6</sup> It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.

<sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup> By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

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

**ALL: Thanks be to God.**

## **ANTHEM: “God So Loved”**

### **JOHN 2:13-22**

#### **Jesus Clears the Temple Courts**

<sup>13</sup> When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. <sup>15</sup> So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>18</sup> The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

<sup>20</sup> They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” <sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**ALL: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.**

**SERMON:**

**†HYMN: (VU 642) “Be Thou My Vision”**

#### **MINUTES FOR MISSION “Accompanying Grandmothers” (Read by Judy Taylor)**

In the Rift Valley of Kenya, 7 percent of the people who live there are HIV positive—nearly 900,000—and many will not survive. Grandmothers whose children have died of AIDS are often left alone to care for their grandchildren, and

to add insult to injury, their church community condemns them, leaving them without support as they raise their grandchildren.

Some pastors in the Rift Valley, as in many other places, believe and teach that faithful Christians cannot contract the disease and that it is a judgment from God—a disease for sexual sinners.

“The pastors had little information about HIV and AIDS; to them, and others in the community, it was a strange disease.... [They believed] HIV was a result of sexual sin and was a judgement from God for the sexually immoral,” writes Esther Mombo of the World Council of Churches.

In partnership with the United Church, Mombo and Pauline Wanjuru of St. Paul’s University in Limuru, Kenya, led a series of workshops in one Rift Valley community that has been hit especially hard by HIV/AIDS. They invited grandmothers and pastors to connect and learn from each other.

One grandmother who attended the workshops was 70 years old. She had lost both her daughter and her son and was left to raise three grandchildren on her own. Instead of stepping up to help, her neighbours refused to visit her because they said her daughter and son had been sexually immoral. Her pastor wouldn’t even attend her children’s funerals because he didn’t want to be seen associating with her family. When she went to church, the pastor preached about the punishment for sexual immorality.

At the workshops, this woman bravely told her story to the pastors who attended. She also shared with them how it felt to be shamed for loving her children and grandchildren. Another grandmother explained that her grandchildren were born with the virus and couldn’t have been involved in any sexual immorality. Yet another spoke of God’s love for everyone. Pastors listened and learned, and ended by making a commitment to extend compassion and offer pastoral care to the grandmothers.

All of us know from our own life experience that when we know better, we do better. Your [Mission and Service](#) gifts gave these grandmothers the opportunity to help their pastors learn to do better by connecting their love for their grandchildren to God’s love for all. Thank you.

### **Invitation to the Offering**

In a world that feels unstable  
we may be tempted to hang onto what we have  
out of our feelings of fear, insecurity,  
or dread of an uncertain future.

Our God is not a god of scarcity, though;  
in all things, our God has demonstrated  
lavish excesses of loving-kindness, mercy, and grace.

**May the gifts we bring to the table  
be inspired by this same Spirit of abundance.  
In Jesus' name, Amen.**

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

**Doxology (VU 539 vs 1) "God of All Good"**

#### **Offertory Prayer**

May these gifts be given  
for a blessing in this world.

**May they be received with joy,  
and with thanks to God,  
the author of all good things,  
on earth and in heaven  
forever and ever, Amen.**

**A NEW CREED (Vu 918)**

**✠CLOSING HYMN: (VU 231) "I Sing the Mighty Power of God"**

**✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

**✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 971)**

**✠SENDING FORTH HYMN "I Want Jesus to Walk With Me"**

**POSTLUDE:**