

Westminster United Church
Easter 6
May 5, 2024 Full Order of Service

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

Announcements/Life and Work of the Church

✝ **Introit: (Vu 412 vs 1) "This is the Day"**

✝ **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

Anyone celebrating a birthday, anniversary, or any other event that you'd like to share with us, please come forward to add to our “Sand Art” of Celebrations.

✝ Call to Worship

One: Christ is risen!

All: He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!

One: Let us sing to the Lord a new song,

All: for God has done marvellous things.

One: Let us make known the Lord's victory,

All: for God's steadfast love covers the whole earth.

One: Let us sing joyful praises,

All: and join all creation to worship God's holy name.

✝ Opening Hymn: (MV 1) “Let us Build a House”

Prayer of Adoration & Confession

One: Holy God, the power of your love is beyond comprehension,
the breadth of your compassion without measure,
the depths of your wisdom knows no bounds.

All: In Jesus Christ, you meet us in the midst of life's joys and challenges to show us what it means to love and be loved.

One: And so we offer you our love and loyalty, and our prayers and praise;
through the power of your Spirit,

All: draw us closer to you and closer to each other as friends and followers of Christ, our Risen Lord.

One: Merciful God,
We often find it difficult to love others as you command.
We seek our own security before the wellbeing of others.

All: We fulfill our own desires rather than act for the common good.

**Forgive us. Reorder our priorities,
and renew our commitment to live out your love,
even when that demands more of us than we expect.**

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER (VU 959)

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Scripture Readings (Read by Debi Hoefling)

1 John 5:1-6 (NLT)

Faith in the Son of God

⁵ Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ^[a] has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too. ² We know we love God's children if we love God and obey his commandments. ³ Loving God means keeping his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome. ⁴ For every child of God defeats this evil world, and we achieve this victory through our faith. ⁵ And who can win this battle against the world? Only those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

⁶ And Jesus Christ was revealed as God's Son by his baptism in water and by shedding his blood on the cross^[b]—not by water only, but by water and blood. And the Spirit, who is truth, confirms it with his testimony.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

ALL: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

ANTHEM: “How Gentle God’s Commands”

Gospel Reading: John 15:9-17 (NRSV)

As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹² “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants^[a] any longer, because the servant^[b] does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

ALL: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON

✝HYMN: (VU 710) “Shall We Gather at the River”

Minutes for Mission ‘A Beacon of Hope’ (Read by Marg Taylor)

When we hear of a global emergency, our minds often jump to “How can we help?” Your gifts to Mission and Service enable partners to immediately get to work providing crucial basic needs: food, water, shelter, and medication. But after the initial response, and after headlines fade away, the emergency and urgency remain.

After the immediate shock lessens, people living in the wake of a disaster can have difficulty imagining what life will look like down the road. In these times, hope is essential. By giving us the motivation to keep moving forward, hope is a powerful force that inspires us to keep going.

Mission and Service partner the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) continues to be hard at work providing hope. People in Syria are still experiencing the devastating aftermath of the February 2023 earthquakes.

From retrofitting buildings and providing medical equipment to education and trauma healing, MECC is dedicated to sustainable relief.

In Aleppo, MECC rehabilitated four schools before the academic year launched in September 2023, providing children with a safe place to learn.

Thank you for supporting the work of our Mission and Service partners. Your generosity is a beacon of hope during challenging times.

Invitation to the Offering

Offertory

✝Doxology (VU 532 vs 2)

✝Offertory Prayer

One: God of Resurrecting Grace,

All: we offer our gifts with grateful hearts.

One: Empower these gifts to spread hope and joy.

All: Heal the world you love, in the name of your greatest gift, Jesus Christ. Amen.

✝A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✝CLOSING HYMN: (VU 820) “Make a Joyful Noise”

✝BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 974)

✠SENDING FORTH HYMN (VU 958 X2) “Halle, Halle”

POSTLUDE: