

Westminster United Church
Proper 4
June 9, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

Announcements/Life and Work of the Church

✝ **Introit: (MV 23) “Come O Holy Spirit”**

✝ 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 traditional territory of the Blackfoot Confederacy: Kainai, Piikani, and Siksika, as well as the Tsuut’ina and the Stoney Nakota nations. We are people of Treaty Seven and neighbours to Treaty 4. We live among the peoples of Metis Nation Region 3. 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 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 (adapted from Psalm 138)

One: We will give you thanks, O Lord, with our whole heart;

All: We will sing your praises!

One: We praise your name for your unfailing love and faithfulness;

All: Your promises are backed by all the honor of your name.

One: You encourage us by giving us strength.

All: We will sing about the LORD's ways, for the glory of the LORD is very great.

One: Though the LORD is great, he cares for the humble.

All: Your faithful love, O LORD, endures forever.

✠ Opening Hymn: (VU 262) “A Mighty Fortress is Our God”

Prayer of Adoration & Confession

One: God of all creation, we marvel at all the detail and grandeur you call into being.

All: You tend the fragile beauty and balance in the world, receiving praise from the depths of the sea to the tops of the mountains.

One: You have seen your Church grow from tiny beginnings into a worldwide community, full of diversity in voice and vocation.

All: Open our eyes to your purposes for each of us and all of us, and for the Church in every location.

One: Awaken us with insights from your Holy Spirit and show us how to fulfill your will;

All: To seek and do what is good and pleasing to you.

One: God of purpose and possibility, you give us work to do and the skills we need to do it.

All: Yet we prefer to follow our own ways. We think we know better.

One: Forgive our stubbornness and selfishness.

All: By the power of your Holy Spirit, create in us a teachable spirit so we can live into new ways to love and serve you. We pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD’S PRAYER (alternately spoken or sung [vu 959])

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READING (Read by Debi Hoefling)

Romans 12:1-5, 9-10 (Good News Translation)

Life in God's Service

12 So then, my friends, because of God's great mercy to us I appeal to you: Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to his service and pleasing to him. This is the true worship that you should offer. ² Do not conform yourselves to the standards of this world, but let God transform you inwardly by a complete change of your mind. Then you will be able to know the will of God—what is good and is pleasing to him and is perfect.

³ And because of God's gracious gift to me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, be modest in your thinking, and judge yourself according to the amount of faith that God has given you. ⁴ We have many parts in the one body, and all these parts have different functions. ⁵ In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body.

⁹ Love must be completely sincere. Hate what is evil, hold on to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another warmly as Christians, and be eager to show respect for one another.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

PSALM 220 "Praise to the Lord Almighty"

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: John 17:6-11 (Good News Translation)

⁶ "I have made you known to those you gave me out of the world. They belonged to you, and you gave them to me. They have obeyed your

word, ⁷ and now they know that everything you gave me comes from you. ⁸ I gave them the message that you gave me, and they received it; they know that it is true that I came from you, and they believe that you sent me.

⁹ “I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those you gave me, for they belong to you. ¹⁰ All I have is yours, and all you have is mine; and my glory is shown through them. ¹¹ And now I am coming to you; I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. Holy Father! Keep them safe by the power of your name, the name you gave me, ^[a] so that they may be one just as you and I are one.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

ALL: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON

✠HYMN: (VU 512) “Lord, You Give the Great Commission “

Minutes for Mission “Advocating for Sexual and Gender Minorities in Other Countries” (Read by Chris White)

We are blessed to live in Canada, a country that recognizes the right to love whoever you want, regardless of their gender or sex. And while we haven't always done what is right, The United Church of Canada now recognizes that all love—including Two Spirit or LGBTQIA+ relationships—is holy and blessed by God. But those rights do not exist in many parts of the world today.

“One of our partners in Kenya has advocated strongly for the human rights of sexual minorities, and that has caused him to be in jail, caused him to risk his life to be able to do that,” says the Rev. Michael Blair. The church's first openly gay General Secretary is now helping to advocate for sexual and gender minorities in foreign countries.

“When we hear these stories, we can see that this is a life and death matter.” Your gifts for [Mission and Service](#) help shelter refugees as they escape repressive governments. As of May 2024, 64 jurisdictions criminalize private, consensual, same-sex sexual activity, and 12 countries have jurisdictions in which the death penalty is imposed or at least a possibility for private, consensual, same-sex sexual activity.

Mission and Service also holds consultations in other countries to discover how we can best work with our partners to protect sexual and gender minorities. “A few years ago, we hosted a consultation here in Canada with several partners and asked how we can be supportive of their work,” Blair says. “They told us we needed to come and help in their context.”

To date, Mission and Service has supported consultations in Latin America and the Philippines.

“We are bringing together leaders to explore how the church can be a place of liberation and life for sexual and gender minorities in those communities. That is happening because of the folks who contribute to Mission and Service,” says Blair.

Thank you for helping to protect sexual and gender minorities. You are saving lives and changing views around the world!

Invitation to the Offering

✝Doxology: VU 538

✝Offertory Prayer

One: God of growing gardens and growing hope,

All: receive our gifts and our gratitude this day.

One: Bless what we bring and what we do,

All: so that we become expressions of your abundant love, in Jesus’ name.

Amen

✝A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✠Closing Hymn:” In the Garden” lyrics on PP

✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 969)

✠SENDING FORTH HYMN: (VU 582) “There’s a Spirit in the Air” vss 1&2

POSTLUDE: