

Westminster United Church
August 25, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

Announcements/Life and Work of the Church

Passing the Peace of Christ

✝ **Introit: “Be Still and Know That I am God” (MV77)**

✝ 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 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.”

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 (based on Psalm 84)

One: How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of Heaven’s Armies.

All: I long to enter the courts of the Lord.

One: With my whole being, body and soul, I will shout joyfully to the living God.

All: O Lord Almighty, our King and our God!

One: What joy for those who can live in your house, always singing your praises.

All: What joy for those whose strength comes from the Lord.

One: A single day in your courts is better than a thousand anywhere else!

All: For the Lord God is our sun and our shield. He gives us grace and glory. Let us worship God!

✠Opening Hymn: “Guide My Feet, Lord” (Lyrics on PP)

Prayer of Adoration & Confession

One: God of majesty and mystery, we come before you in wonder and gratitude.

All: Source of all that is, you are beyond our imagining; your creation astounds us with its beauty and power.

One: Word of hope and healing, you embrace us with tender care, drawing near in every situation.

All: Spirit of purpose and possibility, you show us which way to turn when we trust our choices to you. Receive our praise and prayer this day, Source, Word, and Spirit of Life, ever Three and ever One.

One: God of mercy, we face many choices each day and we confess we often choose with no thought of you.

All: Forgive the choices we've made that hurt others, those that ignored our own wellbeing, and those that betrayed your love.

One: We have not lived as your people, marked by the mercy, truth and love of Jesus.

All: Create in us a clean heart and renew a right spirit with us.

Words of Assurance

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS (Read by Marg Taylor)

Epistle: Ephesians 6:10-20

The Whole Armour of God

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For our^[a] struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armour of God, so that you may be able to withstand on that evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, and fasten the belt of truth around your waist, and put on the breastplate of righteousness. ¹⁵ As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ With all of these,^[b] take the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

¹⁸ Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. ¹⁹ Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel,^[c] ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God.

Psalm 84 (VU 801 tune of 331) (Sung by Congregation)

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Reading: John 6:56-69

⁵⁶ Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.' ⁵⁹ He said these things while he was teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum.

The Words of Eternal Life

⁶⁰ When many of his disciples heard it, they said, 'This teaching is difficult; who can accept it?' ⁶¹ But Jesus, being aware that his disciples were complaining about it, said to them, 'Does this offend you? ⁶² Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? ⁶³ It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is useless. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. ⁶⁴ But among you there are some who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the first who were the ones that did not believe, and who was the one that would betray him. ⁶⁵ And he said, 'For this reason I have told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted by the Father.'

⁶⁶ Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. ⁶⁷ So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' ⁶⁸ Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹ We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'^[a]

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON

✠HYMN: (VU 580) "Faith of Our Fathers"

Minutes for Mission "Church Offers Unique Ministry in National Park"

(Read by Marilyn Taylor)

Canadian churches grace unique places: restaurants, storefronts—even movie theatres. Perhaps the most serene of all settings, though, is a national park.

Waterton United Church is situated in the heart of Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta. Although the United Church has had a presence in the park since 1955, the current building was dedicated in 1961. The cathedral window in the sanctuary, designed to frame the mountains, offers a breathtaking view.

“Architect George Watson framed Mount Vimy,” explains Carol Watt, Secretary. “People who aren’t involved in the church but just stop to visit look out captivated by the view of the mountain over the lake. It’s a special thing that happens. It touches something deep within.”

Your gifts through [Mission and Service](#) help the church remain open year-round. In the summer, Sunday services take place from late June through September with support from guest ministers. Other services are offered during holy days throughout the year. Youth groups use the building as retreat space, and the chapel is a popular space for weddings. With a small room and kitchenette behind the sanctuary, the church also draws leaders who want to retreat.

“Providing space for spiritual reflection and retreat is an important aspect of the ministry we provide,” says Watt.

A newsletter reads, “Waterton United offers a unique ministry to the wealth of summer visitors who flock happily into the national park and then find this gem of a United Church of Canada.”

Thank you for supporting churches in remote places that witness in a unique way to the majesty and grace of God.

Invitation to the Offering

✠ **Doxology: VU 581 (verses 1-2)**

✠ Offertory Prayer

One: God of growth and goodness, we offer these gifts to share.

All: Bless our gifts and use them to spread seeds of hope and wellbeing among those whose future is uncertain, for the sake of Christ, the Bread of Life. Amen

✠ **A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

✠ **Closing Hymn: “God Be with You till We Meet Again” (VU 422)**

†BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

†CHORAL AMEN

†SENDING FORTH HYMN: (VU 884) "You Shall Go Out With Joy"

POSTLUDE: