

Westminster United Church
September 1, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

Announcements/Life and Work of the Church

Passing the Peace of Christ (James 1)

You are God's beloved children. Look into one another's face to see the beauty of God's presence. Share the Lord's peace with gladness.

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

✝ Opening Prayer

Creating God, you are the source of summer's splendor—the beauty and fragrance of delicate flowers, and sweet sound of birdsong. We come to you this morning with delight and gladness, grateful for all of your wonders. As the fields produce their harvest, may your love grow within us, that we too may produce a harvest of love, hope, and joy. 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 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."

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Celebrations

✠Call to Worship

L: God has given us this day for praise!

P: Praise be to God for this most generous gift!

L: God has given God's Son to us that we might learn ways of peace and mercy.

P: Let the words of God's own Son, Jesus, enter our hearts and transform our lives!

L: Come, let us worship this great God of abundant mercy and love!

P: Let our songs, our words, and our thoughts reflect God's healing and restoring love.

AMEN.

✠Opening Hymn: "Gather Us In" (Lyrics on PP)

Prayer of Confession (James 1, Mark 7)

God of justice and righteousness, your call beckons to us: to live faithful lives, to turn

from wickedness, to walk in your ways; yet it is so easy to turn aside: to speak a thoughtless word, to ignore those in need, to strike out in anger, to forget your ways. We pray that you will forgive us. We ask that you Implant your word in our hearts and cleanse us from all evil. By the power of your love, our plea is that you save and cleanse our souls, that we might faithfully serve you. Amen.

Words of Assurance (Psalm 44, James 1)

God's word has the power to save your soul.

God's love has anointed you with gladness. Through God's love you are forgiven to live in joy.

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Merciful God we come before you with open minds and hearts willing to hear your message for us on this beautiful day. We pray that your message will resonate with us and we will continue to grow to live our lives demonstrating that we are your disciples. as we remember your gifts to us in the word.

SCRIPTURE READINGS (Read by Debi Hoefling)

Psalm 72 pp.VU790 Part one (1-8)

Part One (1-8)

Hail to God's own anointed, who rules in equity.

Give the ruler your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to the royal heir,
**for judging your people rightly,
and upholding the poor with justice;**
that the mountains may bring forth peace for the people,
and the hills, prosperity with justice. R

Hail to God's own anointed, who rules in equity.

May your anointed defend the cause of the poor
 among the people,
 save the children of the needy and crush the oppressor.

**May your anointed live as long as the sun endures,
 as long as the moon from age to age.**

May your anointed be like rain falling upon the grass,
 like showers that water the earth;

**may your anointed be one in whose days
 justice shall flourish and peace abound
 till the moon is no more. R**

Hail to God's own anointed, who rules in equity.

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.

James 1:17-27

¹⁷ Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.^[a] ¹⁸ In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

Hearing and Doing the Word

¹⁹ You must understand this, my beloved:^[b] let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹ Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

²² But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. ²³ For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves^[c] in a mirror; ²⁴ for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately

forget what they were like. ²⁵ But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

²⁶ If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. ²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The Tradition of the Elders

7 Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, ² they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. ³ (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands,^[a] thus observing the tradition of the elders; ⁴ and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it;^[b] and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.^[c]) ⁵ So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, ‘Why do your disciples not live^[d] according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?’ ⁶ He said to them, ‘Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honours me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
⁷ in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines.”

⁸ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.’

Mark 7:14-15

¹⁴ Then he called the crowd again and said to them, ‘Listen to me, all of you, and understand: ¹⁵ there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.’^[a]

Mark 7:21-23

²¹ For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, ²² adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. ²³ All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

Response to the Word (Song of Solomon 2, Mark 7)

God of abundant love, you delight us with your grace—grace expressed in the beauty of our world.

God of truth and light, you challenge us to live faithful lives— to turn away from evil, to follow your ways,

to serve your people. May your word of truth grow within us this day, that we may bring forth a harvest of peace. Amen.

SERMON**✠HYMN: (MV 1) “Let Us Build a House”****Minutes for Mission “Moments of Connection” (Read by Chris White)**

Have you ever stepped into a forest surrounded by birds chirping, insects calling, and leaves rustling in the wind? The leaders at Mission and Service partner Cave Springs Camp in Beamsville, ON, are encouraging children to leave the hustle and bustle behind to enjoy moments of connection with nature and each other.

Nestled right on the Niagara Escarpment, the joyful sounds of children discovering and playing echo throughout the campgrounds. “I found a salamander!” someone exclaims as other campers rush over to see. Something as simple as “Look at this cool rock!” draws laughter and excitement. These moments of connection are powerful, allowing everyone to be present and supportive.

In such a peaceful setting, the beauty of nature reminds children of the simple joys of friendship and gratitude. This experience can inspire a deep appreciation for the earth and a desire to take care of it. Children make music, worship, explore creativity through art, challenge themselves, and connect with others, all together in nature.

Your support of [Mission and Service](#) allows children to continue connecting in nature at United Church camps. Thank you.

Invitation to the Offering (James 1)

Every generous act of giving, as with every perfect gift, is from above. May God's word of truth, implanted within us at birth, bloom in acts of loving faithfulness. May that word shape our lives so that we become doers of the word, using God's gifts for all.

✠Doxology: VU 581 (verses 1-2)**✠Offertory Prayer (James 1)**

God of light and beauty, every gift is from you. Even our ability to give is a blessing derived from your love. We offer you what we have and what we are. Use our gifts to give birth to a world of righteousness where none are in need and where all draw close to your grace. Amen.

✠A NEW CREED (VU 918)**✠Closing Hymn: "Arise, Your Light Has come" (VU 79)****✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING (Song of Solomon 2, Psalm 45, James 1)**

Arise, my friends, and Go forth in joy to serve with love. Be doers of God's word. God has blessed you forever!

✠CHORAL AMEN**✠SENDING FORTH HYMN: (VU 884) "You Shall Go Out With Joy"****POSTLUDE:**

Prayers were derived from Ministry Matters (adapted)