

Westminster United Church

September 29th, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

Announcements/Life and Work of the Church

✝ **Passing the Peace of Christ**

✝ **Introit: “Come Let Us Sing” (VU 222 vs4)**

✝ **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, who knows our needs,
reads our thoughts,
sees into our hearts
and yet accepts us as we are,
be the centre of our worship,
the focus of our praise,
the one to whom we turn,
not only as we meet today
but each day that we awake. Amen

✝ **Procession of Christ Candle**

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.” Not quite so long but

still very long ago, One was born who embodied the light of the Creator. We present this candle to remind ourselves and to celebrate Christ's constant presence. May we always seek His guiding light in our lives, as we are called to carry that light into the world.

Lighting of the Rainbow Candle

Jesus taught us to love one another in a way that sparked a movement and a new understanding of 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."

Land Acknowledgement

Today as we gather to worship let us remember that we worship God on the historic and unceded lands of Treaty 7 and neighbouring treaty 4. Traditional lands of the Metis, Siksika, Kainai, Piikani, Stoney Nakoda and the T'suut'ina as well as the Cree and Ojibwa people. As Christ's people, let us be people of love, 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."

✝ Call to Worship

We have walked with you, O God,
from many parts of the world to this time and place.

**And we will walk with you, O God,
into the world to serve all people.**

We leave behind our old securities;
we leave behind our reliance on worldly goods.

**And we will walk with you, O God,
into the world to live with all people.**

We leave behind all which holds us back;
we leave behind all which keeps us from following you.

**And we will walk with you, O God,
into the world to work with all people.**

We leave behind the fears which bind us;

we leave behind the hurts which damage us.
**And we will walk with you, O God,
into the peace you offer to all people. ****

✠ Opening Hymn: “My Soul Cries Out” MV 120

Prayer of Confession

Called to be your people, Living God - why do we find it so hard to answer? You ask us to speak out against injustice, and we whisper because we are afraid someone might hear us. You ask us to see the pain and poverty around us, but we close our eyes. You tell us that everyone, and each one, is created in your image, yet we persist in noticing the differences between us and others.

Forgive us, God of the Past and Creator of the Future. May we be the ones who go out into the world, bearing your gifts of peace, of hope, of healing, of joy to every one who is broken, even as we have been made whole through the gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.**

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

Touched by the healing hands of our Lord, filled with the grace of our God, led by the compassion of the Holy Spirit, our hearts are opened and we discover we are forgiven and at peace with God.
Those who are created to love the unlovable; those who are created to bear grace; those who are created to embrace all

people: we receive our forgiveness, giving thanks to our God. Amen **

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Lord, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that as the Scriptures are read and your Word is proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today. Amen

Anthem: Living Water, Guiding Spirit

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Esther 7:1–6, 9–10; 9:20–22

Esther 7:1-6

7 ¹ So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. ² On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, 'What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.' ³ Then Queen Esther answered, 'If I have won your favour, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. ⁴ For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate

for this damage to the king.’^[a] ⁵ Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, ‘Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?’ ⁶ Esther said, ‘A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!’ Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

Esther 7:9-10

⁹ Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, ‘Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman’s house, fifty cubits high.’ And the king said, ‘Hang him on that.’ ¹⁰ So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

Esther 9:20-22

²⁰ Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far, ²¹ enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year, ²² as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor.

One: This is the witness of Israel.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

James 5:13–20

The Prayer of Faith

¹³ Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. ¹⁷ Elijah was a human being like us, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the earth yielded its harvest.

¹⁹ My brothers and sisters,^[a] if anyone among you wanders from the truth and is brought back by another, ²⁰ you should know that whoever brings back a sinner from wandering will save the sinner's^[b] soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

Mark 9:38–50

Another Exorcist

³⁸ John said to him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone^[a] casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.’ ³⁹ But Jesus said, ‘Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterwards to speak evil of me. ⁴⁰ Whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

Temptations to Sin

⁴² ‘If any of you put a stumbling-block before one of these little ones who believe in me,^[b] it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell,^[c] to the unquenchable fire.^[d] ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell.^{[e][f]} ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell,^[g] ⁴⁸ where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

⁴⁹ ‘For everyone will be salted with fire.^[h] ⁵⁰ Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?^[i] Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.’

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Christ.

SOLO: “Where Love Is” by Julia McClung

Sermon: God is Love

✠HYMN: VU 216 Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above

Truth and Reconciliation Reading (Debi Hoefling)

Invitation to the Offering

✠Doxology: (VU 538) “For the Gift of Creation”

✠Offertory Prayer

✠A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✠Closing Hymn: (VU 595) “We Are Pilgrims”

✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 971)

✠SENDING FORTH HYMN: (VU 224 vs 4) “Sing a Happy Hallelujah”

POSTLUDE:

****** *used from the Caldwell Presbyterian Church*

