

Westminster United Church
September 8th, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

Announcements/Life and Work of the Church Celebrations

Passing the Peace of Christ

✝ Introit: “Come Let Us Sing” (VU 222 vs.1)

✝ Opening Prayer (Voices United PG 913 - A Thanksgiving)

Gracious and Loving God,
we thank you for the blessings of life.

We bless you for the wonders of the world:

**for the heights of mountains and breadth of prairie,
for diversity of peoples and intimacy of families,
for the goodness of all you have made.**

We bless you for the gift of Jesus Christ,

**who lived and died, and lives again
wherever justice is known, wherever love is found.**

We bless you for your life among us

**forgiving sins, renewing spirits,
and refreshing us in the fellowship of your table.**

Grant, O God, that in the quietness of the evening

and in the hush of night,

**our hearts may be filled with thankfulness
for these and all your blessings;**

In the name of Jesus we pray. **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 pf 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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✠ Call to Worship

✠ Opening Hymn: "O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing" (VU 326)

Prayer of Confession (VU 928)

Holy and gracious God,
gathered as your people responding to your call,
we confess

the self that is not aware of sinning;
the heart that is too hardened to repent;
the pride that dares not admit it is wrong;
the righteousness that knows no fault;
the callousness that has ceased to care;
the blindness that can see nothing but its own will.

God, in your healing love, forgive us;
through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Proverbs 22:1–2, 8–9, 22–23

“A good name rather than riches.”

A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches,
and favour is better than silver or gold.

² The rich and the poor have this in common:
the LORD is the maker of them all.

⁸ Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity,
and the rod of anger will fail.

⁹ Those who are generous are blessed,
for they share their bread with the poor.

²² Do not rob the poor because they are poor,
or crush the afflicted at the gate;

²³ for the LORD pleads their cause
and despoils of life those who despoil them.

One: This is the witness of Israel.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

Psalm 125 (VU p. 849)

“Do good, O God, to those who are good.”

Those who trust in God stand fast forever

Those who trust in God are like Mount Zion,
which cannot be moved but abides forever.

**As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
so, God, you surround your people**

now and forever. R

Those who trust in God stand fast forever

The sceptre of the wicked shall not rest on the land
assigned to the just,

lest the just should put out their hand to do evil.

**Do good, O God, to those who are good,
to those who are upright in heart.**

As for those who turn aside into crooked ways,
our God shall lead them away with evil-doers;

but peace shall be upon Israel. R

Those who trust in God stand fast forever

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

ALL: Thanks be to God.

James 2:1–10, (11–13), 14–17

“Faith without works is dead.”

Warning against Partiality

2 My brothers and sisters,[a] do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?[b] 2 For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, 3 and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please', while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there', or, 'Sit at my feet',[c] 4 have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? 5 Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.[d] Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? 6 But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? 7 Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you?

8 You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' 9 But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. 10 For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

Read full chapter

11 For the one who said, 'You shall not commit adultery', also said, 'You shall not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery but if you murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. 12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. 13

For judgement will be without mercy to anyone who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgement.

Faith without Works Is Dead

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters,[a] if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill’, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? 17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

Mark 7:24–37

“The Syrophoenician woman’s faith challenges Jesus.”

²⁴ From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre.^[a] He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice,²⁵ but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet.²⁶ Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter.²⁷ He said to her, ‘Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.’²⁸ But she answered him, ‘Sir,^[b] even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’²⁹ Then he said to her, ‘For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.’³⁰ So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

Jesus Cures a Deaf Man

³¹ Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. ³² They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. ³³ He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, ‘Ephphatha’, that is, ‘Be opened.’ ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus^[c] ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, ‘He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.’

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON “Faith that Defies Logic” (Based on Mark 7:24-37)

✝HYMN: (VU 593) “Jesu, Jesu Fill us with Love”

Minutes for Mission “It Starts with Education”

Through your generous support of Mission and Service, our partners are nurturing seeds of wisdom and faith in communities across the globe. By supporting educational initiatives, individuals are empowered to explore their spirituality, deepen their knowledge, and build a better future for themselves and their communities.

Imagine a classroom of kindergarteners in a refugee camp where children eagerly gather to learn about the world and their place in it. Picture a young adult discovering the profound teachings of their faith for the first time, safely supported by their peers. Consider a group of parents and guardians gathered in a workshop, sharing their hopes and dreams for their communities, guided by mentors who inspire them to lead with compassion and justice. Imagine people learning and restoring lost languages to preserve precious history and culture.

These moments of growth are at our heart, and they are made possible by your compassion and generosity. As we look to the future, the impact of educational initiatives through Mission and Service partners becomes even clearer. Every lesson learned, every skill acquired, and every relationship built contributes to a larger tapestry of hope and resilience.

Whether it's a child in a rural classroom or an adult in a leadership program, the education provided through Mission and Service partners is a beacon, guiding individuals toward a path of faith, understanding, and service. Together, we are sowing the seeds of a more compassionate world. Thank you.

Invitation to the Offering

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

✠Offertory Prayer

✠A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✠Closing Hymn: “When I Needed a Neighbor” (VU 600)

✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 971)

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

POSTLUDE: