

## **Westminster United Church**

ADVENT I

December 1, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH**

### **CELEBRATIONS**

#### **INTROIT (MV 71) “When the Winds of Winter Blows vs 1”**

#### **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."

## ✝ PASSING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

### ✝ CALL TO WORSHIP

Advent is a time for waiting.

**We wait for God, who appears like a tender branch growing from a stump.**

Advent is a time for hoping.

**We wait for God, who comes with justice and righteousness.**

Advent is a time to worship.

**We wait for God, praising the One who comes to fulfil promises.**

## **Advent I Candle Lighting “Hope”**

### **“Advents Holy Light” Choir and Congregation**

“As we watch for a dawn of a brighter day, a candle of hope lights the way.

As we look for the signs of the promised birth, of a Savior who brings heaven to earth.

**Lord, we are waiting for peace to reign. Lord we are listening for love’s refrain.**

**For hope peace, and joy and love to unite in the beauty and wonder of Advent’s holy light. “**

**(First Candle is Lit)**

### **Responsive Litany**

Our Advent journey begins today with the lighting of the first candle, the candle of Hope. Like the flame of a candle, may hope be ignited in our hearts, reminding us that brighter days are ahead.

For those of us facing difficult challenges

**Ignite our hearts with hope**

For the end of wars wreaking havoc and pain in our world

**Ignite our hearts with hope**

For safety for those fleeing the tyranny of oppression

**Ignite our hearts with hope**

For the light of forgiveness to shine in our hearts

**Ignite our hearts with hope**

Gracious Creator, in moments of uncertainty, we turn to you with hearts heavy but hopeful. Grant us the strength to navigate challenges, the wisdom to see possibilities, and the courage to embrace the journey ahead. May hope be our guiding light, leading us to a future filled with grace, love, and possibilities beyond our imagining. 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.”

**✝️ OPENING HYMN: (VU 2) “Come Thou Long Expected Jesus”**

## **✝️ OPENING PRAYER**

God of love,

you come to your people to dwell with us.

You come with power to transform all things.

You come with promises to make all things new.

You come with signs of your deep love for the world.

You come, and your truth breaks into our lives shattering lies and half-truths, setting your people free.

Your coming is our hope, and so, we offer you our praise and prayers in gratitude and anticipation.

**Come into our lives again, O God, and show us how to hope in the face of all that is discouraging, for we gather in the**

**name of Hope made flesh, Jesus Christ, your promise and our desire.**

### **Prayer of Confession**

Merciful God,

in your gracious presence we confess our sins and the sins of this world.

Forgive our sleepiness in the presence of your splendour and for when we abandon hope and expect and look for the same old thing in the same old way.

**Forgive us our silence when we ought to have spoken up and our carelessness with your world and each other.**

**Awaken us to your holy, hopeful presence so we may watch and wait for you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### **Words of Assurance**

### **Prayers of the People**

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Wisdom calls from the Scriptures

**May the Word of God enlighten us!**

## SCRIPTURE READINGS

### Jeremiah 33:14-16 (Read by Debi Hoefling)

#### The Righteous Branch and the Covenant with David

<sup>14</sup> The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>15</sup> In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. <sup>16</sup> In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

One: This is the witness of Israel.

**All: Thanks be to God for the Word.**

#### Anthem: "A Voice In the Wilderness"

### Luke 21:25-36 (read by Rev Kristy)

#### The Coming of the Son of Man

<sup>25</sup> 'There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring

of the sea and the waves. <sup>26</sup> People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> Then they will see “the Son of Man coming in a cloud” with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.’

### **The Lesson of the Fig Tree**

<sup>29</sup> Then he told them a parable: ‘Look at the fig tree and all the trees; <sup>30</sup> as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. <sup>31</sup> So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. <sup>32</sup> Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. <sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

### **Exhortation to Watch**

<sup>34</sup> ‘Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, <sup>35</sup> like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.’



One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.**

**SERMON:**

**✝ HYMN: (VU 18) “There’s a Voice In the Wilderness”**

**Minutes for Mission “Nurturing New Beginnings” (Read by Gail Thompson)**

Becoming a new parent can be overwhelming, with the constant demands of caring for a newborn, sleepless nights, and the pressure to make the right choices for your child. The exhaustion and balancing daily responsibilities while navigating the unknowns of parenthood often leaves new parents feeling unsure and isolated. It’s a time filled with great joy, but also uncertainty, as parents adjust to their new roles and work to create a safe and nurturing environment for their little one.

At Fairview Resource Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the New Parents Support group aims to walk with parents as they navigate the complexities of raising a newborn. Once a week, parents gather to meet with a public health nurse who provides education and answers questions. From expectant parents to those with babies up to 18 months, the program

provides resources for those who might not otherwise have access to in-person support or resources.

Parents connect not only with health professionals, but form deep bonds with each other, and some are still in contact many years later. Many of us have heard that “it takes a village to raise a child,” and Fairview Resource Centre is truly taking action to give a positive space for children in the community to flourish. Thank you for walking alongside our Mission and Service partners as they help children and communities grow.

Your support of [Mission and Service](#) is vital to the continuation of incredible programs like these.

## **INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

Loving God,

**we make our offering today with hopeful hearts, trusting that the Holy One who comes to us will bless our gifts and our lives, to make us signs of hope in the world God loves.**

**✝ DOXOLOGY: (MV 191) “What Can I Do?” (X2)**

## **✝ OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Holy and Righteous God,

we offer our gifts with humble hearts, knowing the needs in your world are great and our gifts alone will never fill that need.

**We offer our gifts in hope that you will bless them and use them to help fulfil your purpose revealed in Jesus Christ, Saviour of us all. Amen.**

**✠A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

**✠Closing Hymn: (VU 8) “Lo, How a Rose E’re Blooming”**

**✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

**✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 968)**

**✠SENDING FORTH HYMN: (VU 29 VS 1) “Hark the Glad Sound”**