

Westminster United Church November 17th, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

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

L: Come, let us celebrate the goodness of God.

P: God has blessed us with God's great love.

L: Let us come to this time, letting go of our worries.

P: Let us come to this time praising God.

L: Come, now is the time to worship.

P: We come rejoicing, for God is so good to us.

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:** “Canticle of the Turning”(MV120)

✠ **OPENING PRAYER**

We come this day, rejoicing, in the presence of the King of Kings, Jesus Christ. At his birth the angels proclaimed his name to be Emmanuel, God with us. Today in this place, in this time of worship, may we truly feel the power and presence of Jesus Christ in our lives. May our hearts and spirits be warmed and challenged to proclaim with our lives, "Christ is Lord!". AMEN.

Prayer of Confession

We have trouble believing in a King in our lives. Early in our nation's history, we rejected monarchy as something undesirable. Yet, this day we are called to recognize Jesus Christ as the King of our lives, our sovereign ruler. His kingdom is based on the laws of love; loving God as God has truly loved us and loving our neighbor as we ourselves want to be loved. That love extends beyond the borders of

our lives, into a world in which there is fear and alienation, hunger and disease, hopelessness and darkness. Jesus, our sovereign ruler, our friend, our Master and guide has asked us to reach out to feed the hungry; give drink to the thirsty; clothe the naked, visit the sick and those imprisoned; welcome the stranger. These words are not unfamiliar to us, yet somehow we have treated them as nice words but not an active part of our life of faith. Forgive us, Lord, for the meagerness of our faith and the weakness of our witness. Rule our lives again with your powerful love, that we might truly be worthy disciples of yours. Help us to find the forgiveness which you have given to us and to do your will. AMEN.

Words of Assurance

Even though we have often failed to do as our Lord Jesus has asked, yet there is eternal forgiveness and a chance to again follow his ways. Be assured, dear friends, that the love of Jesus Christ will never leave you. Be his witnesses throughout the world. AMEN.

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of all, we come seeking the truth. We come seeking direction for our lives. Our hope today is that the words we hear as we listen to the scriptures will resonate with our actions and our faith. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS (Debi Hoefling)

Psalm 132:VU 855 Part One

Arise, O God, make this the place where in your name shall dwell

O God, remember David and all the hardships he endured,

how he swore an oath to you,

a promise to the Mighty One of Jacob.

'I will not enter my house, nor will I climb into my bed,

I will not give sleep to my eyes, not even let my eyelids droop

until I find a place for God,

a dwelling for the Mighty One of Jacob.' R

Arise, O God, make this the place where in your name shall dwell

At Ephrathah we heard God's ark was there;

we found it in the region of Jaar.

'Let us approach the place where the Most High rests,

let us kneel in worship at God's footstool.'

Arise, O God, and enter your resting-place,

you and your mighty ark.

Let your priests be clothed with righteousness;

let your faithful people shout for joy. R

Arise, O God, make this the place where in your name shall dwell

For your servant David's sake, do not reject your Anointed.

You made a sure promise to David,

a promise that will never be revoked:

'One of your own children I will set upon your throne.

And if they in turn keep my covenant,

the teaching that I give them,

their descendants too shall sit on your throne

in succession for ever.' R

Arise, O God, make this the place where in your name shall dwell

One: This is the witness of the ancient song writers

All: Thanks be to God

Revelation 1:4b-8

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed^[a] us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and made^[b] us to be a kingdom, priests serving^[c] his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Look! He is coming with the clouds;
every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

⁸ 'I am the Alpha and the Omega', says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

John 18:33-37

³³ Then Pilate entered the headquarters^[a] again, summoned Jesus,

and asked him, ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’ ³⁴ Jesus answered, ‘Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?’ ³⁵ Pilate replied, ‘I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?’ ³⁶ Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.’ ³⁷ Pilate asked him, ‘So you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON:

✠HYMN: “God Weeps” (MV 78)

Minutes for Mission (Read by Chris White)

“Supporting Community Resilience in Zimbabwe”

In Zimbabwe, severe drought and food shortages continue to take a toll on communities, but the Zimbabwe Council of Churches is leading efforts to provide support. In partnership with Mission and Service and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Scaling Up Resilience Project focuses on practical, long-term solutions. By emphasizing climate-smart farming, gender equality, and community-driven

initiatives, the project is helping families strengthen their resilience and work towards a more secure future.

The challenges facing Zimbabwe are immense, with frequent droughts, unpredictable rains, tropical cyclones, economic instability, and outbreaks of diseases like cholera all contributing to severe food insecurity. In the Bikita and Gutu districts, up to 60% of people are affected, with many families struggling to put food on the table, send their children to school, and are at risk of gender-based violence. Crop failures, especially due to El Niño, have worsened conditions, leaving communities in urgent need of solutions.

The Scaling Up Resilience Program addresses these issues by building on the success of previous humanitarian efforts. It will provide training in gender-sensitive, climate-smart agriculture, strengthen disaster risk management systems, and revive essential community assets, such as water conservation works and irrigation schemes. By promoting gender equality, supporting financial resilience through savings and loans programs, and ensuring that all community members, including the elderly and those with disabilities, are included, the project is creating a brighter future for thousands of people.

Your gifts through [Mission and Service \(opens in a new tab\)](#) have provided crucial support to partners like the Zimbabwe Council of Churches as they work toward a secure and sustainable future. Your continued support is deeply appreciated.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Lord God you have blessed us over and over again. We are grateful and wish to be generous as well. Today we give what we can to show our gratitude and to bless others.

✝ DOXOLOGY: (VU 538)**✝ OFFERTORY PRAYER**

With gratitude for all the blessings you have poured into our lives, Lord Jesus, we come bringing these our gifts that they may be used in service to those in need. Bless these gifts and those who have given them, that they may truly be a blessing in your holy name. AMEN.

✝ A NEW CREED (VU 918)**✝ Closing Hymn: “O Worship the King” (VU 235)****✝ BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

Go now in peace. Bring the good news of God's eternal love, the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit to all you meet. Go in peace. AMEN.

✝ CHORAL AMEN (VU 969)**✝ SENDING FORTH HYMN: “Halle, Halle, Halle” (VU 958)**