

Westminster United Church

ADVENT IIII

December 22nd, 2024

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

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

One: God who gives songs of praise to sing, receive our joyful praise.

People: God who loves beyond measure, we are here to worship You with hearts yearning for love.

One: Together let us worship God, as we gather in the Name of our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer. Amen

Advent III Candle Lighting “Love”

“Advents Holy Light” Choir and Congregation

“As we watch for a dawn of a brighter day, a candle of love 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. “

(Fourth Candle is Lit)

Responsive Litany

Leader:

Today the fourth candle, the candle of Love, joins the candles of Hope, Peace, and Joy. Like the combined glow of many candles, let this season remind us of strength found in unity as we come together to love and uplift one another. Let the warmth of love illuminate the connections that bind us together and foster us in a deep sense of belonging.

Love creates the bonds that provide us with deep meaningful relationships.

The greatest of all gifts is love.

Love inspires random acts of kindness and generosity.

The greatest of all gifts is love.

Love causes us to only look for the best in others.

The greatest of all gifts is love.

Love allows us to be accepted for who we are, flaws and all.

The greatest of all gifts is love.

Gracious Creator, we gather in your presence today, hearts brimming with gratitude for the extraordinary gift of love you have bestowed upon us. May the celebration of love extend beyond our immediate circles, creating ripples of compassion and unity in the world. In recognizing the beauty of love, may we become vessels of your light, shining brightly for all to see. Amen.

“Advents Holy Light” Choir

✠ 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 6 vs 1-4 ‘A Candle is Burning’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✝ **OPENING PRAYER**

Prayer of Confession

One: Merciful God, in Your gracious presence we confess our mistakes, errors, and sins.

People: We have found love in Christ. Yet we are a people divided against ourselves, and against one another. We have too often been careless with our words, our bodies, and how we treat others. We have not loved as You love us.

One: And I invite each of us now to enter into a moment of silence for self-reflection and private confession...

Words of Assurance

One: Hear again the Good News: your sins are forgiven, and you are a new creation! The old is gone, and the new has come. Now have the courage to forgive others, just as you have been forgiven in Christ.

People: AMEN.

Prayers of the People

THE LORD’S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

OLD TESTAMENT

Micah 5: 4-5**Good News Translation**

⁴ When he comes, he will rule his people with the strength that comes from the Lord and with the majesty of the Lord God himself. His people will live in safety because people all over the earth will acknowledge his greatness, ⁵ and he will bring peace.

One: This is the witness of Israel.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

EPISTLE**Hebrews 10: 5a; 9-10****Good News Translation**

⁵ For this reason, when Christ was about to come into the world, he said to God:

“You do not want sacrifices and offerings . . .” ⁹ Then he said, “Here I am, O God, to do your will.” So God does away with all the old sacrifices and puts the sacrifice of Christ in their place. ¹⁰ Because Jesus Christ did what God wanted him to do, we are all purified from sin by the offering that he made of his own body once and for all.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

GOSPEL:**Luke 1:46-55****Good News Translation**

⁴⁶ Mary said, “My heart praises the Lord; ⁴⁷ my soul is glad because of God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has remembered me, his lowly servant! From now on all people will

call me happy, ⁴⁹ because of the great things the Mighty God has done for me. His name is holy; ⁵⁰ from one generation to another he shows mercy to those who honor him.

⁵¹ He has stretched out his mighty arm and scattered the proud with all their plans.

⁵² He has brought down mighty kings from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away with empty hands.

⁵⁴ He has kept the promise he made to our ancestors, and has come to the help of his servant Israel. ⁵⁵ He has remembered to show mercy to Abraham and to all his descendants forever!"

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON: "Opening Our Hearts to Love: The New Psychology of Welcoming Change"

FOLLOWING SERMON: Invitation to Light Candle of Love

✠**HYMN:** VU 14 To a 'Maid Whose Name Was Mary' (lyrics on powerpoint)

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

✠**DOXOLOGY:** (MV 191) "What Can I Do?" (X2)

✠**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

✠**A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

✠**Closing Hymn:** VU 9 'People, Look East' (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 968)

✠SENDING FORTH HYMN: VU 29 vs 1 & 4 Hark the Glad Sound