

Westminster United Church

CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24th, 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”

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

Leader: Light the lamps, prepare the room, God is coming to us!

People: Make our hearts and spirits ready to receive God's most gracious gift, God's son, Jesus Christ.

Leader: Push the darkness away. The light is truly coming!

People: May God's light shine on us, in us and through us that God's glory may be seen. AMEN.

Christmas Eve Candle Lighting

"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. "

(All candles are lit)

Responsive Litany

Leader:

As we gather on this sacred Christmas Eve, we light all the candles, including the center candle, the Christ candle. Together, these candles symbolize the Light of the World coming to dispel the darkness. As we light the Christ candle, may its flame ignite the warmth of God's love within us and spread the message of joy and salvation to all.

Tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the source of our hope.

Let heaven and nature sing.

The Prince of Peace has come to dwell among and within us.

Let heaven and nature sing.

The source of our joy and our salvation is here.

Let heaven and nature sing.

The greatest gift of all, the gift of love, has been given.

Let heaven and nature sing.

Gracious Creator, we thank you for the love that brought Christ into our lives, for the hope his birth represents, and for the peace that his presence brings. As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may this Christ candle illuminate our hearts and minds, drawing us closer to you and to one another. In the name of the newborn King, we pray. 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 60 Vs 1 Latin Vs 1,2,3 & 5 English ‘O Come All Ye Faithful’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠**OPENING PRAYER**

In the rush of preparation for the holiday celebration, we come to this place to be fed by God. We need the peace, hope, love and joy that this season represents. We need to listen again with wonder at the magnificent words of Mary as she proclaims her faithful participation in God’s most miraculous gift. Open our hearts this day, Lord, to receive the words and the blessings, to be fed and then to be those who will share with others as you have shared with us. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. **AMEN.**

Prayer of Confession

It’s getting harder and harder to focus on the true meaning of Christmas, the incarnation of God’s love in the birth of God’s son Jesus Christ. We are caught in the web of festivities, travel, gifts, and glitter. And we have to admit that we really do enjoy all the holiday opportunities. But as we get closer to the big family celebrations and the actual celebration of Christmas, we begin to wonder how we are going to “survive” it all. We say to ourselves, “We won’t let all this stress happen to us next year.” But we know better. We allow ourselves to be continually drawn in to the demands of others, leaving little or no time for ourselves, our families, and especially for You, gracious God. Forgive us. You are all too familiar with our reasons and excuses for what is happening. Help us to make some changes in our lives and our focus, so that this time of celebration may have the deepest sense of joy and purpose, not just be the rush and clamor of yet another holiday

season that disappears all too quickly. Keep us focused on the eternal “yes” response to your call to us, to live our lives as those who would joyfully serve You. Heal and comfort us, Lord, this day and always. For we ask this in the name of Jesus, our Saviour. **AMEN.**

Words of Assurance

God so loved the world that God gave his son, Jesus as a demonstration of that love. Jesus demonstrated to us that love that we may be assured that when we come to God, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

Prayers of the People

THE LORD’S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

On this blessed evening Lord, we hunger and thirst for the words that will bring us closer to you through the love of Jesus, your gift to the world. We pray that our minds will be open to you as we hear the word.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Romans 16:25-27

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

Final Doxology

²⁵ Now to God^[a] who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages ²⁶ but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom^[b] be the glory for ever! Amen.^[c]

One: This is the witness of Israel.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

Luke 1:46-55

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

Mary's Song of Praise

- ⁴⁶ And Mary^[a] said, 'My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

Luke 1:26-38

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

The Birth of Jesus Foretold

²⁶In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, ²⁷to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.'^[a] ²⁹But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. ³⁰The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. ³¹And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. ³²He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. ³³He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.'^[b] ³⁴Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?'^[c] ³⁵The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born^[c] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. ³⁶And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. ³⁷For nothing will be impossible with God.'^[c] ³⁸Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

✠**HYMN:** VU 44 'It Came Upon The Midnight Clear' (Lyrics on Powerpoint)

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

In this season of love and gift giving, remembering God's gift to us, let us now return a portion of that which God has provided for our providence. **AMEN.**

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

✠**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Loving and Generous God, we offer our gifts to you on this Christmas Eve remembering that we received a wondrous gift from you. May our gifts not only help the world but may we give the world the love that you have bestowed upon us. Bless us and our gifts to use now and always. **AMEN.**

✠A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✠Closing Hymn: VU 67 Silent Night, Holy Night (Lyrics on Powerpoint)
VU 59 Joy To the World (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

God of Light and Hope, in whom there is no darkness, cause your light to shine on us and through us to others, that they may know of you and of your Love. Let us witness to your gift of Jesus who came and taught us how to live as children of Light. Go in peace, dear friends, and know that the God of light, hope, peace, and joy goes with you. **AMEN.**

✠CHORAL AMEN (VU 968)

✠SENDING FORTH HYMN: VU 43 Go Tell It On the Mountain