

Westminster United Church

ADVENT II

December 8, 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

Pastor: O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant

People: O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem

Pastor: O come and behold Him, born the King of Angels

People: O come, let us adore Him

Pastor: O come, let us adore Him

People: O come, let us adore Him

All: Christ the Lord

Pastor: Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning

People: Jesus, to Thee be glory given

Pastor: Word of the Father, Now in flesh appearing

People: O come, let us adore Him

Pastor: O come, let us adore Him

People: O come, let us adore Him

All: Christ the Lord!

Advent II Candle Lighting “Peace”

“Advents Holy Light” Choir and Congregation

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

(Second Candle is Lit)

Responsive Litany

Leader:

We continue our Advent journey today with the lighting of the Hope candle and the second candle, the candle of Peace. Let the gentle glow of these candles symbolize the tranquility we seek in our hearts and homes, fostering a sense of peace that transcends the chaos of this world.

In a world filled with conflict and confrontations

We humbly seek the gift of peace.

For the storms that sometimes rage within us

We humbly seek the gift of peace

As we rush and hurry our way through busy lives

We humbly seek the gift of peace

And for those around us we know are carrying heavy burdens

We humbly seek the gift of peace

Gracious Creator, in the quiet moments may we find solace in your presence, and in the noisy chaos of life may your peace prevail. Calm the storms that rage within and around us. May we be instruments of your peace, fostering understanding, compassion, and harmony in our hearts. 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:** ‘Soon and Very Soon’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠ **OPENING PRAYER** VU Page 930

**God of the heavens and the earth,
with joy we praise you,
we thank you, we honour you.**

**Because you have made us like yourself,
made us to be creative in your world,
we praise you.**

**Because you have freed us through Jesus
freed us to be people of light and love,
we thank you.**

**Because your Spirit is present with us,
present to guide and renew
we honour you.**

**God of the heavens and the earth,
with joy we praise you,
we thank you, we honour you forever. Amen.**

Prayer of Confession VU Page 928 A

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 to 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

1 John 1: 8-9

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us

⁹ **If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Malachi 3:1-4

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised
The Coming Messenger

3 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. ² But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?

For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; ³ he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the LORD in righteousness.^[a] ⁴ Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years.

One: This is the witness of Israel.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

Canticle of Luke 1:68-79

⁶⁸ 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them.

⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty saviour^[a] for us

in the house of his servant David,

⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.

⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,

and has remembered his holy covenant,

⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,

to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,

might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness

before him all our days.

⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon^[b] us,
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

³ I thank my God every time I remember you, ⁴ constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, ⁵ because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart,^[a] for all of you share in God's grace^[b] with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight ¹⁰ to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, ¹¹ having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler^[a] of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler^[b] of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler^[c] of Abilene, ² during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the

forgiveness of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.

⁵ Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;

⁶ and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON: "You ARE a Christmas Present!"

✝ **HYMN:** VU 25 Lo He Comes With Clouds Descending

Minutes for Mission “Helping Refugees”

This past year, Wesley supported over 1,000 newcomers from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other countries.

This is the story of one family of refugees.

Christine is a courageous and resilient mother who has been through unspeakable danger and sorrow to ensure the safety and success of her family. Christine, her children, and her grandchildren can teach us about self-sacrifice, endurance, and dedication to those we love. Initially from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Christine and her family fled to a refugee camp in Zimbabwe after a violent attack in their village. They lived through deplorable conditions and danger for ten years before finally being granted asylum in Canada.

When Christine and her family arrived in Canada, they were exhausted and emotionally drained from their long journey and years of unrest. Their first stop was Wesley's Newcomer Reception Centre, where they found support from Wesley staff and a comfortable place to rest. With the help of Wesley's programs and services, the family is rebuilding their lives in the Hamilton region.

Christine's dream for her children and grandchildren is to have a safe and bright future filled with opportunities. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, Wesley can provide supportive programs to newcomers, those experiencing homelessness, addiction and mental health barriers, and local families experiencing poverty.

With your support of [Mission and Service](#), we can change lives.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

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

✝ OFFERTORY PRAYER

✝ A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✝ Closing Hymn: VU 20 On Jordan's Bank the Baptist's Cry

✝ BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

✝ CHORAL AMEN (VU 968)

✝ SENDING FORTH HYMN: VU 29 vs 1 & 2 Hark the Glad Sound