

Westminster United Church

January 26th, 2025

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

INTROIT (VU 87 vs 1) "I Am the Light of the World"

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**

Loud talkers and silent worriers, glad-handers and lonely wallflowers:
God gathers us together to be the Body of wonder and joy, of hope and healing.

Bystanders with hands shoved into our pockets, fraidy-cats whose feet are frozen in place:

Jesus calls us to carry grace to outsiders, to walk with all those left behind.

Kids who never offer answers in class, bashful folks whose tongues tie in knots:

The Spirit anoints us to speak up for the voiceless, to partner with the poor to discover their gifts.

✝ **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 312** ‘Praise with Joy the World’s Creator’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠**OPENING PRAYER**

More than any prize we might win, we long for the riches of your joy; more than all the world's empty calories, we hunger for the fullness of your love; more than all the fears promised to us, we embrace the peace of your heart, Anointing Spirit you are our promise, our hope, our fulfillment and so we pray with one voice.

Prayer of Confession

Do we make you laugh or weep, Gracious God? We sing that we are one in your Spirit, but cannot tolerate those who disagree with us. We talk of being one Body, but fight over music or Bible versions or carpet colors. We affirm the giftedness of each person, but we heap honor on just a special few. Forgive us, Creative God, that we disregard your teachings so easily. May the words of our mouths speak peace to the brokenness in our world; may the hopes of our hearts bring wonder to those in despair; and may our love embrace all who are around us, even as we have been welcomed by your grace in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Forgiven, we are filled by God's Spirit, commissioned to be Christ's hope, Christ's people for the world. We can care for one another, weep with one another, serve one another, and live with one another. Thanks be to God. **Amen and Amen.**

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Teaching God as we prepare to hear the scriptures today make our minds ready and open. Ready to hear, open to learn and apply the words we hear to our lives and our futures. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Nehemiah 8:1-3

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

8 ¹ all the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel. ² Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. ³ He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

⁵ And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶ Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen', lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

⁸ So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, 'This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.' For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, 'Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.'

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

Psalm 19 VU 740-741

Refrain:

Glory and praise to God whose word brings life!

The heavens declare the glory of God;
and the vault of the sky reveals God's handiwork.

**One day speaks to another,
and night shares its knowledge with night,**
and this without speech or language;
their voices are not heard.

**But their sound goes out to all the lands,
their words to the ends of the earth. R**

Glory and praise to God whose word brings life!

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun
which comes out like a bridegroom from under the canopy,
like an athlete eager to run the race.

**Its rising is at one end of the sky,
it runs its course to the other,
and there is nothing that is hidden from its heat. R**

Glory and praise to God whose word brings life!

God's law is perfect, refreshing the soul;

**God's instruction is sure,
giving wisdom to the simple;**

God's precepts are right, rejoicing the heart;

**God's commandment is pure
giving light to the eyes;**

God's fear is clean, enduring forever;

**God's judgements are true,
every one of them righteous;**

more desirable than gold, even much fine gold;

**sweeter also than honey,
pure honey from the comb. R**

Glory and praise to God whose word brings life!

By them is your servant warned;

for in keeping them there is great reward.

But who can discern unwitting sins?

O cleanse me from my secret faults.

Keep your servant also from presumptuous sins,
lest they get the better of me.

Then shall I be clean and innocent of great offence. R

Glory and praise to God whose word brings life!

**All Let the words of my mouth
and the thoughts of my heart
be acceptable in your sight, O God,
my strength and my redeemer.**

ANTHEM:

Luke 4:14-21

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry

¹⁴ Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵ He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

The Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth

¹⁶ When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'

²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON:

✝ **HYMN: VU 567** 'Will You Come and Follow Me' (lyrics on powerpoint)

MINUTES FOR MISSION "A Network of Hope"

Becoming a parent or guardian is a life-changing, complex experience that doesn't have a one-size-fits-all answer. As kids, we looked to adults for guidance as we navigated the world with fresh eyes. Now, as adults, we recognize that we're still figuring things out as we go, and there's always an opportunity to grow our skills and minds.

In London, Ontario, Mission and Service partners with the London Community Chaplaincy as they respond to parents and guardians who want to build a network of support, share the parenting journey, and develop new skills as they navigate raising children in a low-income setting. Together, these parents are working hard to build a positive future for their children and families.

Each week, London Community Chaplaincy provides a welcoming and safe social setting for adults to connect and grow as parents. Not only do they learn how to guide a child through critical stages of development, but also how to navigate being a parent or guardian while also managing financial stress, food insecurity, housing complications, and more. Gathering with other adults in a similar situation allows participants to share their struggles and triumphs, further building a sense of community.

Your gifts to [Mission and Service](#) support partnerships like the London Community Chaplaincy as they help empower parents along the parenting journey. Thank you.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We have so much and take so much for granted. God's gifts are for all the world. Let us now return a portion of that which God has given us. The offering will be received.

✝ DOXOLOGY: VU 540 'Grant Us, God, the Grace' (lyrics on power point)

✝ OFFERTORY PRAYER

Though many there are different amounts and ways, when gathered up, our gifts become a food pantry, a rebuilt life, medicine for children, a caregiver to the lonely – God's grace in action. In love we offer these gifts in the name of Jesus.

✝ A NEW CREED (VU 918)

✝ Closing Hymn VU 326 'O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing' (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✝ BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING

Look around you, dear people. God's joy is poured out for you so that you might be a blessing to others. God will continually walk and work with you, relieving your burdens and giving you strength. Go into God's world, rejoicing! **AMEN.**

✝ CHORAL AMEN (VU 974)

✝ SENDING FORTH HYMN: VU 43 vs 1 'Go, Tell It on the Mountain'