

Westminster United Church

January 5th, 2025

Epiphany

✝ 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

We come from lives scattered by the busyness of Advent, Christmas and New Year's celebrations to this sanctuary, seeking unity in the Spirit, seeking the grace of Jesus Christ, seeking the peace of God. Let us calm ourselves, let us listen, let us worship.

✝ 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 79** 'Arise, Your Light is Come' (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠ **OPENING PRAYER**

O God, in Jesus the soles of your feet have touched the earth. The back street, the forgotten places have been lighted with significance beyond our wildest dreams.

The households of earth have welcomed the Child of heaven. For you have come among us, you are one of us.

May our songs now rise to surround your awesome mystery, as our knees have bent to approach your cradle. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Holy God, in earth, sea and sky, you are there;
in everything we touch; in everyone we meet;
your presence is around us, and we give you thanks.
You, we have not touched, but trampled, in creation;
You, we have not met, but missed, in one another;
You, we have not received, but rejected, in the poor.
Forgive us.

(Time for Silent Confession)

Mother God, Blessed Jesus, Holy Spirit—**hear and heal. Amen**

Words of Assurance

God comes in Jesus, son of Mary, to show us Love incarnate.
In Christ, God forgives us, encourages us, and frees us to love others.
Thanks be to God!

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Eternal God, who caused all scriptures to be written for our learning:

grant that we may so hear them, understand them, and integrate them into ourselves, that by the patience and comfort of your holy Word, we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of eternal life, which you have given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Wisdom 10:15-21 **VU Page 893**

Wisdom rescued a holy people, a blameless race, from nation of oppressors.

She inspired a servant of God, who, with signs and wonders, defied formidable rulers.

She rewarded the labours of the holy people, and guided them on a marvellous journey.

She became a shelter for them by day, a blaze of stars by night.

Refrain: Wisest One, Radiant One, welcome, Holy Wisdom

Wisdom brought the people over the Red Sea, guided them through its deep water.

But their enemies she engulfed, then cast them up again from the fathomless deep.

So the just plundered the ungodly. They sang the glories of your holy name, O God, and praised with one accord your power, their champion.

For Wisdom taught the mute to speak, and made the tongues of infants eloquent.

Refrain: Wisest One, Radiant One, welcome, Holy Wisdom

Ephesians 1:3-14

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ^[a] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,^[b] having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹² so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴ this^[c] is the pledge of our inheritance towards redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

John 1:10-18

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to what was his own,^[a] and his own people did not accept him. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we

have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son,^[b] full of grace and truth. ¹⁵ (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') ¹⁶ From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,^[c] who is close to the Father's heart,^[d] who has made him known.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.

SERMON: Wisdom/Word/Jesus Christ

✠**HYMN: VU 35** 'Good Christian Friends Rejoice' (lyrics on powerpoint)

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Music and laughter, dancing and noise makers, family and friendship, hands and minds curiosity and compassion: what an abundance of gifts we receive during the Christmas season and God gives to us always. All these gifts are symbolized in our offering. Let us commit ourselves to using our gifts in service as we worship God with our offering.

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

✠**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Loving God, Mother of us all, may these gifts, given gratefully, be brought to life through the power of your creative Spirit. Multiply and use them to bring the word and touch of Jesus to your people in this place and throughout the world. Amen.

✠**A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

✠ **Closing Hymn: VU 73** 'The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy' (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠ **BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

Follow the light of hope's guiding star.

Seek the child.

Listen to the words of a heavenly host.

Find the child.

Offer as gifts the best that you have.

Serve the child.

Peace be among us.

God be with us. Amen.

✠ **CHORAL AMEN (VU 974)**

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