

## **Westminster United Church**

March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS/LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH**

**INTROIT (VU 114 VS 3) 'Forty Days and Forty Nights'**

#### **Third Sunday in Lent**

##### **Meditation:**

There is so much during the day that clamors for our attention. Friends, family, work, classes, household tasks. And the noise! We are bombarded with sound, from the clock that awakens us to the telephone, the radio, the television, the conversation that we have or overhear. Where is the time and place to listen for the still, small voice of God? Sometimes it seems that God would have to speak in a whirlwind to be heard above the clamor! Listen now. There is a place of quiet rest, and it is the place where God dwells within you. Close your eyes. Be aware of the place. In Lent we journey to the parts of ourselves known only to God, beneath the clamor. Let the story of Jesus reach us there. Let it teach us wisdom in our secret hearts.

***(Silent time.)***

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of violence in the world and to the Earth.

***(A candle is extinguished.)***

**Let us pray:**

**All: Draw us together in your love, O God. May our restless hearts not resist you, but continue to search until they find their rest in you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.**

**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: Come, Lord, and be one with us. We invite you to open our hearts to receive your love.

**All: Come now, Lord, and pour your love into our lives once again.**

Leader: Come, Lord, and be one with us. We invite you to open our eyes to see your glory.

**All: Come now, Lord, for we are waiting to see your face.**

Leader: Come, Lord, and be one with us. We invite you to open our minds to understand your grace.

**All: Come now, Lord, for we want to experience all the blessings you want to give us.**

Leader: Come, Lord, and be one with us.

**All: Come now, Lord. We are waiting and watching and listening. We are ready to encounter your glory and seek your will for our lives.**

Leader: Come, Lord, and keep us alert to your calling.

**All: Come now, Lord. We are ready to honour you with our very being.  
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 VU 472** ‘Oh Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)

### ✠ **OPENING PRAYER**

#### **Praise (from NLT)**

Leader: Let all that I am praise the Lord. O Lord my God, how great you are! You are robed with honour and majesty. You are dressed in a robe of light. You stretch out the starry curtain of the heavens.

**(Psalm 104:1-2)**

**People: Give thanks to the Lord and proclaim his greatness. Let the whole world know what he has done. (Psalm 105:1) He is the Lord our God. His justice is seen throughout the land. He always stands by his covenant, a commitment he made to a thousand generations. (Psalm 105:7-8)**

Leader: Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever. **(Psalm 106:1)**

**People: For the Lord is high above the nations; his glory is higher than the heavens. Who can be compared with the Lord our God, who is**

**enthroned on high? (Psalm 113:4-5)**

Leader: O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. **(Psalm 139:1)**

**People: I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. (Psalm 139:7-8)**

Leader: Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honour at God's right hand...

**People: Lord, help us to Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.**

**Prayer of Confession**

Leader: Loving Father God, we want to get our Christian living and our discipleship in perspective. We recognize your desire for us to strive for a likeness of Jesus your Son and we have heard the call to holy living. What a privilege it is to walk in holiness, pure in thought and deed!

**People: Yet we would confess our failings and seek your forgiveness, for we have often neglected to emulate Jesus. Thank you for loving us despite our failings and seeing us as worthy to be your children.**

Leader: We are sorry for not being alert to your Spirit when you have sought to show us your glory. Keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, our light in the darkness, who leads us to where the spiritual action is taking place

and even uses us to shine light for others to see the way forward.

**People: How wonderful it is, Father, that you have freely given us new life with Christ! Your salvation and love have overwhelmed us and humbled us. As we now live as children of your Kingdom, we want to share in this adventure of mission and evangelism, of service and obedience, of sharing and compassion. Keep us faithful, keep us joyful, keep us alert to your Spirit's voice and obedient to respond. Involve us in the action; encourage us to be bolder and fearless, so that we may share in the glories of life in Christ. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.**

**Words of Assurance  
(2 Chronicles 7:14)**

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

**Prayers of the People  
THE LORD'S PRAYER**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS**

**Isaiah 55:1-9**

**New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised**

**An Invitation to Abundant Life**

**55** Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labour for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;

<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;

let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

**All: Thanks be to God for the Word.**

## **Psalm 63:1-8**

### **New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised**

## **Psalm 63**

### **Comfort and Assurance in God's Presence**

#### **A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.**

- <sup>1</sup> O God, you are my God, I seek you,  
my soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- <sup>2</sup> So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,  
beholding your power and glory.
- <sup>3</sup> Because your steadfast love is better than life,  
my lips will praise you.
- <sup>4</sup> So I will bless you as long as I live;  
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
- <sup>5</sup> My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,<sup>[a]</sup>  
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
- <sup>6</sup> when I think of you on my bed,  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
- <sup>7</sup> for you have been my help,  
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
- <sup>8</sup> My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

One: These are the words of the ancient songwriters.

**All: Thanks be to God for the Word.**

**ANTHEM:** Amazing Grace/My Chains are Gone



## **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

### **New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised Warnings from Israel's History**

**10** I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea,<sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,<sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food,<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did.<sup>7</sup> Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.'<sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.<sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ<sup>[b]</sup> to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.<sup>10</sup> And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.<sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come.<sup>12</sup> So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall.<sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

One: This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

**All: Praise to Christ, the Living Word.**

## **Luke 13:1-9**

### **New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised Repent or Perish**

**13** At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

### **The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree**

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" <sup>8</sup> He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

One: This is the witness of the Church.

**All: Thanks be to God for the Word.**

**SERMON:** Finding Satisfaction in the Lord

✠ **HYMN:** VU 229 'God of the Sparrow' (lyrics on powerpoint)

### **MINUTES FOR MISSION "Springtime of the Spirit "**

First come the tiny snowdrops, bravely peeking out over the melting snow. Then, the crocuses with their delicate purple petals, followed by the buttery-yellow daffodils. By the time I'm bundling up for Easter service, tulips in every colour of Joseph's splendid coat are blooming.

Spring reminds us of renewal, of hope, of life returning. And in this Easter season, I see that same renewal in the Mission and Service work that your generosity makes possible.

Because of you, Mission and Service partners are like the first flowers of spring—blooming where they are needed most. Your compassion takes root and becomes warmth and care for those in crisis, hope for those facing hardship, and new possibilities for communities near and far. Like the crocuses and tulips, our shared ministry blossoms in many forms, responding to the needs of different communities in the ways that will help most. Your support makes this possible, and for that, we are deeply grateful.

This Easter, may you be like the first flowers of spring—vibrant, alive, and bringing joy to those around you. In this time of renewal, know that your generosity through [Mission and Service](#) will help even more seeds of hope take root and grow. Thank you.

## **INVITATION TO THE OFFERING**

✝ **DOXOLOGY: VU 539 Vs 3** ‘God of All Good’ (lyrics on power point)

✝ **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

✝ **A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

✝ **Closing Hymn VU 332** ‘The Church’s One Foundation’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✝ **BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

✝ **CHORAL AMEN (VU 971)**

✝ **SENDING FORTH HYMN VU 506 vs 1** ‘Take My Life and Let It Be’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)