

Westminster United Church

April 6th, 2025

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

INTROIT (VU 114 VS 5) 'Forty Days and Forty Nights'

Fifth Sunday in Lent

When we arrived this morning we entered into the normal bustle of a church on a Sunday morning: friends greeting each other, choir members getting their robes, children bringing their energy and enthusiasm. Now that we are sitting together in the pews, I invite you to close your eyes . . . and consider the word, "sanctuary." A sanctuary is a place set aside for sacred things. It is a place of refuge and protection. This room is a sanctuary. The season of Lent is a kind of sanctuary, extended in time. And one of the things Lent teaches is that you, too, are a sanctuary. There is inside you a place for sacred things, a place where God abides.

(Silent time.)

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of war and oppression in the world.

(A candle is extinguished.)

Let us pray:

Loving God, we open our hearts to you. We invite you into our inmost being, only to find you already there. Strengthen us in our quiet places and then lead us into the work of justice and peace. 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

God has done great things for us, **and therefore we rejoice!**

God is doing great things for us, **and therefore we rejoice!**

God will do great things for us, **and therefore we rejoice!**

With rejoicing, **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 660** ‘How Firm a Foundation’ (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠**OPENING PRAYER**

God of the Wilderness, God of the journey, we rejoice in your presence. As we gather to worship you, soften our hearts and open our ears that we might heed Wisdom’s call. Stir us to vision, to action, that we may extend your love wherever there is need for hope or healing. Amen

Prayer of Confession

God of promise and hope, you call us to trust in your way and set before us paths of faithfulness. Sometimes we hesitate to follow you and make necessary changes in the way we’re living. Sometimes our priorities and commitments reflect short-sighted personal interest rather than your desire for our lives and world (***Time for silent confession***).

Free us, O God, that we might be faithful to you and rejoice in our renewed relationship with you. In the name of Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Anyone in Christ becomes a new person altogether; the past is finished and gone; everything has become fresh and new. Friends, believe the Good News of the gospel: **In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Praise God!**

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Congregational Response

God of all love and every truth, help us to look with open eyes, to see with open hearts.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of call, God of transformation, God of the Lenten journey: help us to discern your still, small voice. Open us to change and growth that we may walk with Christ. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 43:16-21

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

- ¹⁶ Thus says the Lord,
 who makes a way in the sea,
 a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse,
 army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
 they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
 or consider the things of old.

¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.
²⁰ The wild animals will honour me,
the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
²¹ the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

One: This is the good news of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the living word.

Philippians 3:4-14

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

⁴ even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh.

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷ Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, ^[a] the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ I want to

know Christ^[b] and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Pressing towards the Goal

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal;^[c] but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Beloved,^[d] I do not consider that I have made it my own;^[e] but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly^[f] call of God in Christ Jesus.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

ANTHEM: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

John 12:1-8

New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised

Mary Anoints Jesus

12 Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them^[a] with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ 'Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii^[b] and the money given to the poor?' ⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷ Jesus said, 'Leave her alone. She bought it^[c] so

that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.

One: This is the good news of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the living word.

Psalm 126 VU 850

When God brought Zion's captives home,
it seemed to us like a dream.

**But then our mouths were full of laughter,
and our tongues uttered shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations:

'God has done great things for them.'

**Truly God has done great things for us,
and therefore we rejoice.**

Refrain: We praise the One who gave growth, with voices full and strong.

Restore our fortunes, O God, as streams refresh the Negev.

Those who sow in tears shall reap with shouts of joy.

Those who go out weeping, carrying seed for sowing,
shall come home with songs of joy, bringing in their sheaves.

Refrain: We praise the One who gave growth, with voices full and strong.

One: These are the words of the ancient songwriters.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

SERMON:

✠HYMN: VU 642 'Be Thou My Vision' (lyrics on powerpoint)

MINUTES FOR MISSION

“The Next Century: Youth Leading the Way”

“100 years from now, I definitely see the church being a diverse and open space for all because of the program boards that are being put in place.”

These are thoughts from Mariana Muhumuza, one of The United Church of Canada’s Youth Forum Leadership Animators, on her vision for the next 100 years of the United Church of Canada. More of Mariana's thoughts on the United Church’s Centennial can be found on [YouTube](#).

In July 2024, Mariana was among eight passionate youth from across Canada who gathered in Calgary. Together, they worked to lay the foundation for 100 young people under the age of 30 to attend The United Church of Canada's General Council 45 in 2025, coinciding with the church's Centennial commemorations.

This group of talented and diverse youth is committed to developing leadership among their peers. After their time in Calgary, they returned to their local communities and regions to work on learning goals and projects for four weeks, and to remain engaged throughout the year. The group focused on building leadership and guiding their peers as they explore their roles in the church. Their placements in local and regional communities are designed to help them grow and prepare for the future.

Your gifts to [Mission and Service](#) support youth as they inspire communities and engage in leadership. Thank you.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Let us repeat together:

Take my will, and make it thine, it shall be no longer mine; take my heart, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

Take my love: and I will pour at thy feet its treasure store; take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

The offering will be received.

✠**DOXOLOGY: VU 539 Vs 4** 'God of All Good' (lyrics on power point)

✠**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Extravagant God, like the woman who anointed Jesus' feet, you lavish us with love and acceptance and ask that we love and accept others. In offering these gifts, we express our commitment to your way. May they bring hope and peace to this congregation and to your world. In the name of Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

✠**A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

✠**Closing Hymn VU 574** 'Come, Let Us Sing of a Wonderful Love' (Lyrics on powerpoint)

✠**BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

Through Isaiah God declared, "Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. (All living creatures) will honor me, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people I formed for myself, so that they might declare my praise."

May the loving generosity that proceeds from the wounded heart of God sustain us in our being; the presence that Christ imparts grace us in our living; and the response the Spirit awakens in us make faithful all our acting. **Amen.**

✠**CHORAL AMEN (VU 971)**

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