

WELCOME TO WESTMINSTER

December 21st, 2025

Advent III & IIII



Worship Leader: Brenda McLaren

Music: Cheryl Finnie

“We are a faith community building relationships with God, all people, and our world.”

✝ You are invited to stand as you are able

ANNOUNCEMENTS/LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

INTROIT (VU 6 Vs. 1) ‘A Candle is Burning’

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**

Instead of waiting on presents and Christmas treats

We choose to wait for Christ

Instead of the way of consumerism, capitalism, and individualism

We choose to seek your beloved community

Instead of fear, hate, and complacency

We choose to be bold and courageous in our love

Instead of being bound by the pressures and expectations of traditions

We choose to trust in you

Instead of everything else

We choose to worship you.

Advent III Candle Lighting "Joy"

"Joy is a star. Sparkling, dancing, never quite the same."

"Stars are there in daylight, but only appear in the rich depths of night."

"Always, in our waiting, joy is there."

"Joy is a waiting star."

(Third Candle is Lit)

All: Joy is a star.

Advent IIII Candle Lighting "Love"

"Love is a star."

"A star that lights our way even when love is hard."

"When we let love light our way, our spaces in the world brighten."

"Love is our guiding star."

(Fourth Candle is Lit)

All: Love is a star.

✠ 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 1 'O Come, O Come, Emmanuel'

✠ OPENING PRAYER

Restore us, O God, let your face shine on us. As you have lead Joseph lead us. As you have restored those who have been broken by the cruelty of the world, restore us. As you have shined on our ancestors, shine on us, so that we may be saved. **Amen.**

Prayer of Confession

Beloved, in what ways do you seek restoration this week? How has your light been dimmed? What has tarnished the luster of your bright shining faith? Loving God, receive our silent confessions that we offer to you now.

(moment of silence)

In your love, respond to our deepest need.

Words of Assurance

Our ancestors trusted that but a glimpse of God's shining face is all one needed to be restored in faith and kindle the light that is always within. May the same be true of us. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION (George Allan, Gathering)

Guiding God, help us to sense your message as we receive the words of scripture and carry your love and guidance forward with us throughout our daily lives.

(adapted)

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isaiah 7:10–16

10 Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, 11 'Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.'

12 But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test.'

13 Then Isaiah said, 'Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? 14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. 15 He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, 16 for before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you dread will be laid waste.

One: This is the good news of Jesus Christ.

All: Praise to Christ, the living word.

Matthew 1:18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. 19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet[b] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your

wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife. 25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

One: This is the witness of the Church.

All: Thanks be to God for the Word.

SERMON: The God of Love on the Longest Night of the Year

✠**HYMN: VU 44** ‘It Came Upon the Midnight Clear’

MINUTES FOR MISSION “An Advent Lesson from Children “

Last year, a small gift reminded us just how powerful generosity can be.

We received a cheque for \$125 from a longtime Mission and Service donor. But the money didn’t come from her... it came from her three grandchildren. They had gathered loose change from around their house, rolling loonies, quarters, and dimes. They were told they could spend it on anything they wanted. Instead, they chose to send it all to help children in Ukraine.

Their letter said simply, “They decided to send it to help children in need.”

That story was a reminder of something that already lives within us. We don’t need to be taught how to care. God created us for compassion, and sometimes it takes the perspective of children to remind us of that.

That same spirit of generosity was powerfully echoed at General Council 45, where youth delegates from across the country shared their hopes for the church.

They spoke of a church that is more than buildings, one that adapts boldly to God’s call. They imagined a church that cares deeply about the world beyond its walls and is committed to real change. They envisioned a community that places the needs of the vulnerable first and uses its resources to serve others.

Their voices reflected the heart of Mission and Service: meeting people with compassion, supporting partners who respond to crises, and working for justice and healing in Canada and around the world.

The dreams of these young leaders, and the generosity of children who share what little they have, show the kind of future the church can build when people join their sparks together.

This Advent, Mission and Service invites the church to share sparks of compassion that can ignite fires of change. When generosity is passed from one person to another, it grows into comfort, hope, and lasting impact for those who need it most.

Thank you for supporting [Mission and Service](#) and helping that spark shine brightly this season.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

We offer these gifts to Jesus and his Church, For the sake of his ministry in this broken and needy world.

✠ **DOXOLOGY: VU 544** 'In Gratitude and Humble Trust'

✠ **OFFERTORY PRAYER**

Bless these gifts that we offer with a cheerful and generous heart. Amen.

✠ **A NEW CREED (VU 918)**

✠ **CLOSING HYMN VU 62** 'Once in Royal David's City'

✠ **BENEDICTION/COMMISSIONING**

Come quickly Christ to save us
And bless us as we wait with joy,
As we anticipate your long-awaited arrival, our Emmanuel
Come, Lord Jesus, Come.

✠ **CHORAL AMEN (VU 974)**

✠ **SENDING FORTH HYMN MV 161 Vs. 1** 'I Have Called You by Your Name'

Prayers for this service from: *Advent Unwrapped 2025: Weekly Services for Advent* found under Worship Resources on the United Church of Canada website.