

Worship on the Day of Our Annual Congregational Meeting – February 18, 2024 – First Sunday in Lent

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In-person, Zoom and YouTube

Pianist/Accompanist: Michael Oddy
Song Leader & Soloist: Joanna Novosedlik
Singing Bowl and Reader: Wilma Stewart/Sandi McDonald
Audio Visual: Jeanne Stocks and Norm Barnoff
Property: Garry Derbowka
Bulletins: Rose Barkhouse

Minister: Rev. Del Stewart

Gathering Music (Michael Oddy)

Pre-Worship Reflections

Westminster's Mission Statement

Westminster United Church is an inclusive church for Progressive Christians...
creating something beautiful for God.

Acknowledgement of Territory

Westminster United Church sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Ojibwa, the Odawa, and the Potawatomie. We respect the longstanding relationships with First Nations people in this place in the 100-mile Windsor-Essex Peninsula and the straits – *les detroits* – of Detroit.

Welcome and Announcements

Entry Into Worship and Celebration (Thomas Shuman,
<https://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au>, adapted) - Responsive

Min: On this day of our Annual Congregational Meeting,

we gather as the faithful of God;
we come to listen to what God has to say to us.

People: God has invited us to this place;
may our faces reflect our hopes and hearts.

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Min: We gather as the faithful of God,
people of the new covenant of hope and promise.

People: We boldly enter into the presence of God,
hoping to be transformed into new people.

Min: We gather as the faithful of God,
our fears melting away into the heart of God.

People: We come to share in the freedom of the Spirit,
we come to praise God's holy name...

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Opening Prayer (Carol Penner, <https://carolpenner.typepad.com>, adapted)
- Min

God of the open road,
God of the twisting path,
God of the narrow and upward way,
on this day of our Annual General Meeting,
the people of this congregation
have gathered in-person and virtually.
In this time of worship and celebration,
give us provision for the journey,
courage and faith, compassion and endurance,
to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.
Open our eyes to see you walking beside us,
protecting us, encouraging us, loving us.
We pray this in the name of Jesus
who calls and moves us. Amen.

***Opening Hymn:** The Church's One Foundation, VU 331, vs. 1, 2, 4 & 5

A New Creed (United Church of Canada, 1968, <https://united-church.ca>) –
Unison

We are not alone,
we live in God's world.
We believe in God: who
has created and is creating,
who has come in Jesus,
the Word made flesh,
to reconcile and make new,
who works in us and others
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:
to celebrate God's presence,
to live with respect in Creation,
to love and serve others,
to seek justice and resist evil,
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,
our judge and our hope.
In life, in death, in life beyond death,
God is with us.

We are not alone.
Thanks be to God.

Quiet reflection

The Peace - Responsive

Min: May the joy of our Companion Jesus be with you all.

People: And also with you.

Solo: - Joanna Novosedlik

The Offering – please leave your offerings in the offerings' plates which are on the ushers' table at the back of the sanctuary

***Offertory Hymn:** MV 191, What Can I Do (you're invited to clap along)

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Offertory Prayer: (St. Jacob's Mennonite Church, <https://www.sjmc.on.ca>, adapted)

O God – Spirit of Life and Generosity – how good it is when we share our gifts of money and material things to further the way of love, hope, and justice in this community and around the world.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Readings (Michael Oddy)

From the New Testament

Mark 1:9-15 (SV)

During that same period Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan River by John. And just as he got out of the water, he saw the skies torn open and the Spirit coming down toward him like a dove. There was a voice from the skies: "you are my favoured son – I approve of you."

And right away the Spirit drives him out in the wilderness, where he remained for forty days, being put to the test by Satan. While he was living there among the wild animals, the heavenly messengers looked after him.

After John [the Baptist] was locked up, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming God's Good News.

"The time is up: God's imperial rule is closing in. Change your ways, and put your trust in the good news.

Acts 4:32-35 (Inclusive Bible) – *Followers of Jesus Share Their Possessions*

The community of believers was of one mind and one heart.
None of them claimed anything as their own; rather everything was held in common.

The apostles continued to testify with great power to the resurrection of Jesus Christ,
and they were all given great respect; nor was anyone needy among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them and give the money to the apostles.
It was then distributed to any members who might be in need.

From the United Church's "Song of Faith" (2006, <https://united-church.ca>)

We sing of a church
seeking to continue the story of Jesus
by embodying Christ's presence in the world.
We are called together by Christ
as a community of broken but hopeful believers,
loving what he loved,
living what he taught,
striving to be faithful servants of God
in our time and place...

The church has not always lived up to its vision.
It requires the Spirit to orient it,
helping it to live an emerging faith while honouring tradition,
challenging it to live by grace rather than entitlement,
for we are called to be a blessing to the earth.

We sing of God's good news lived out,
a church with a purpose:
faith nurtured and hearts comforted,
gifts shared for the good of all,
resistance to the forces that exploit and marginalize,
fierce love in the face of violence,
human dignity defended,
members of a community held and inspired by God,

corrected and comforted,
instrument of the loving Spirit of Christ,
creation's mending.

Reflections - Min

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May these words bless us,
and may our words be a blessing to others.

Meditation: The Church in a Non-religious Age - **Rev. Del Stewart**

Hymn: VU 686, God of Grace, God of Glory

A Prayer for Westminster United Church (based on Jason Goroncy,
<https://jasongoroncy.com>, *adapted*)

God - Spirit of Life -
as we face the future as a community of your people in this place,
may we know afresh your faithful love,
and see afresh your loving faithfulness.
May it be these – may it be You –
for whom we yearn in every season.
May it be your words of life for which we listen,
and by which alone we live.

With respect for our congregation's past,
and with hearts of flesh,
help us with courage and wisdom and freedom
to welcome and to pursue and participate
in the new things you are doing
in and around and despite us, and beyond.
Continue to raise up leaders who will serve your people with humility,
and with deep humanity bear witness to Your Good News.

May we dare to dream and to risk
what we have never imagined –
free, compassionate, unencumbered, joyous and just.
And along the way,
save us from empty slogans,
from senseless controversies,

and from the delusion
that we alone are at the centre of Your work around here.

For all that has been – we give thanks.
For all that will be – we say “Yes”...

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Silent prayers

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day, our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

***Concluding Hymn:** MV 1, Let Us Build a House

Parting Words: (Rev. Dr. Gerry Deverell, <http://www.deverell.net>, adapted)

The time has come for us leave this service of worship,
and attend our Annual Congregational Meeting.
May God go before us to show us the way;
May God shine above us, to lighten our world;
May God lie beneath us, to bear us up;
May God go beside us, to companion our journeys...

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Blessing: (Rev. Dr. Gerry Deverell, <http://www.deverell.net>, adapted)

May the grace of God – Wisdom, Word and Spirit – rest and abide within
your heart on this holy day...

Grace: VU 552, For Food in a World

We go to our Annual Congregational Meeting