

Westminster United Church
1680 Dougall Avenue,
Windsor, ON N8X 1S3
Tel: 519-258-1471
Email: westmin@mnsi.net
Website: <https://www.westminsterunited.org>

January 14, 2024 – The Second Sunday of Epiphany

Pianist/Accompanist: Michael Oddy
Song Leaders & Soloist: Joanna Novosedlik
Singing Bowl: Wilma Stewart/Sandi McDonald
Reader: David Ouellette
Audio-Visual: Norm Barnoff, Jeanne Stocks;
YouTube Editor, Harold Barnoff
Property: Garry Derbowka
Bulletin: Rose Barkhouse
Minister: Rev. Del Stewart

Worship and Celebration: In-person, Zoom-church and YouTube

*indicates please stand, if able

Gathering Music

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

Westminster's Mission Statement

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

ENTRY INTO WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION - [Rex A E Hunt \(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com\)](http://RexA EHunt(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com)) – adapted - **Responsive**

Min: Among us the Spirit of Creativity-God conceives new life

People: And we feel that new life surging within us.

Min: In our history Jesus the Sage makes gentle entry

People: And we see the light before us.

Min: Within our dreams the truth of our God is revealed.

People: We await the hope of the world...

Choral Response: VU #7, Hope Is a Star (verse 1 & Refrain only)

Words of Awareness [Rex A E Hunt \(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com\)](http://RexA EHunt(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com)) – adapted – **Min**

Sing out happiness upon the morning.
Celebrate the famous sun and the comely earth.
Think upon love, that it may grow within us,
and compassion, that it may call us to its service...

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Opening Prayer [Rex A E Hunt \(rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com\)](http://rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com) – adapted – **Min**

As we gather let us affirm the connection we have: with each other, and
with that creative mystery we call God.

May we remain open to the unfolding of
all that can be celebrated,
all that can be learned,
all that can be done,
all that can be, without diminishing the life of others.
Amen.

***Opening Hymn:** VU 368, Holy Spirit, Truth Divine

A Meditation

“Cosmic Incarnation”– a poem by Brother Jonathan Gardner
(<https://www.poemhunter.com>), adapted

Into the void God’s word went forth.
What was not. Is!

Light and life accompanied God’s utterances
And in response, nature danced in the song of creation.

God formed the man of clay,
and the woman who is mother of all life.
And they too danced in the light of the morning.

Night has now come, and is far spent,
and man and woman crane their necks and gaze upwards.

And their words go forth into the vacuum that is space.
'Is anyone out there?'

Out of the void another answer is heard.
This time, a baby's cry echoes in some dark and dusty street of old.

And in the darkness of the world, words of hope are once more heard.

'My children. Did you think I would leave you as orphans to stray in the night?

I am with you evermore.'

Hymn: VU 288, Great Is Thy Faithfulness

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

"Travelling ON" – a litany by Jan Berry/ssb ([Rex A E Hunt](http://rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com)
rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com) – adapted - **Responsive**

Min: When hope invites us to journey
elusive, beckoning onward
but never in our grasp:

People: God of wisdom and promise
give us courage to travel on.

Min: When dreams glimmer in the distance
fading, clouded and hidden
or shining with new brightness:

People: God of wisdom and promise
give us courage to travel on.

Min: When established patterns collapse
into the uncertainty of the unknown
and security dissolves into a memory:

People: God of wisdom and promise
give us courage to travel on.

Min: When the illusion of success
threatens to divert us and
silence our soul's yearning:

People: God of wisdom and promise
give us courage to travel on.

Min; When we think our journey has ended
in the star-lit glow only to find
the end is a new beginning:

People: God of wisdom and promise
give us courage to travel on...

The Peace

Min: May a heart of peace rest with you,

People: and also with you.

Solo: (Joanna Novosedlik)

READINGS (David Ouellette)

From the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalm: Psalm 29, VU p. 756 – **Responsive**

Genesis 1:1-5 (Inclusive Bible)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
But the earth became emptiness and chaos, and darkness came over the Deep – yet the Spirit of God was brooding over the surface of the waters.

Then God said, “Light: Be!” and light was. God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from darkness. God called the light “Day”, and the darkness “Night”. Evening came, and morning followed – the first day.

From the New Testament

Mark 1:1-11 – The Baptism of Jesus (Inclusive Bible)

Here begins the gospel of Jesus Christ, the son of God:
As it was written in Isaiah the prophet:

“I send my messenger before you to pave your way,
a herald’s voice in the desert, crying,
‘Make ready the way of our God.
Clear a straight path.’ “

And so John the Baptizer appeared in the desert, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. The whole Judean people and all the people of Jerusalem went out to John and were baptized by him in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. John was clothed in camel’s hair and wore a leather

belt around his waist, and he ate nothing but grasshoppers and wild honey.

In the course of his preaching, John said, “One more powerful than I is to come after me. I am not fit to stoop and untie his sandal straps. I have baptized you in water, but the One to come will baptize you in the Holy Spirit.”

It was then that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan River by John. Immediately upon coming out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. Then a voice came from the heavens: “You are my Beloved, my Own. On you my favour rests.”

A Contemporary Reading

“Deep Waters” – a poem by Rev. Bruce Prewer, 2002,
(<http://www.bruceprewer.com>, adapted)

When gates of heaven seem closed to me
and all prayers seem futility
don't come at me with attitude
or cover me with platitude
but let me share the waters awhile
with my Friend from Galilee.

When the church seems to leave me dry
and no god seems to heed my cry
don't look askance and say to me
you'll condescend to pray for me
but let me share the waters awhile
with my Friend from Galilee.

When the blessed Dove seems far away

and words seem stone in their creeds I say
don't think me lost in vanity
or that I speak profanity
but let me share the waters awhile
with my Friend from Galilee.

Reflections on Today's Readings

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

Centering

Let us now prayerfully center our hearts, our minds and our lives
as we listen to this musical meditation played by Westminster's
pianist, Michael Oddy...

Musical Meditation (Michael Oddy)

Sermon: The Day the Heavens Opened (Rev. Del Stewart)

***Hymn:** VU 352, I Danced in the Morning (Lord of the Dance)

A Prayer Today (Thom Schuman, COCU9B.Baptism of Jesus.Epiphany 1B | pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au – adapted -
Responsive

Min: O God – Spirit of Life – grace is the gift which flows from
your heart;
joy is the seed planted deeply within our souls,
so that it might blossom into lives of service to all:

People: And we shout, "Glory!"

Min: Jesus, servant of sinners,

you emerge from baptism's waters,
to embrace us in your hopes:
you take our fears from us and toss them aside
as you lead us into your kingdom;
you shine the Light which brings us out of despair's shadows:

People: And we shout, "Glory!"

Min: Wind upon the water:
you move among us
sweeping aside our petty pride,
and offering us the gifts of humility and servanthood.
You whisper of your yearning for peace and reconciliation,
until it silences our angry voices and unclenches our fisted hearts:

People: And we shout, "Glory!"

Silent prayer

The Lord's Prayer - Unison

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.

THE OFFERING

Invitation (Heather Christensen, <https://www.uua.org>, *adapted*)

Since its formation in 1925, the United Church of Canada has had a grand vision of a world filled with peace and justice, love and joy.

That vision is embodied in this denomination's congregations large, small and in-between.

No matter its size, every local church depends on the generosity of its members.

Each one of you, by your commitment of time, energy and money helps to make that vision a reality.

Individually and together we are followers of Jesus working together to build a world filled with peace and justice, love and joy

***Offertory Hymn:** MV 191, What Can I Do

***Presentation of the Offering**

***Offertory Prayer:** (Carol Penner, <https://carolpenner.typepad.com>, *adapted*)

O God, we worship you with our words and our songs, and we praise you with our money. Everything we have is yours, and these gifts and offerings are signs of your kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

***Closing Hymn:** VU 375, Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

***Parting Words** (P. Leland—Mayer in [Rex A E Hunt
rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com](http://RexA EHunt.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com)) – adapted – **Responsive**

Min: The time has now come for us to leave this sacred place.
As we depart let us embrace the challenges of life and the world.

Let us be nurturers of hope and wisdom,
And let us serve as healers in a wounded world.

All: Grant us wisdom.
Grant us courage.
Grant us peace

The singing bowl is sounded three times

***Blessing** (<https://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au>, adapted) – Min

May the love of God embrace you, the Way of Jesus challenge you, and the wisdom of the Spirit renew you...

***Choral Response:** VU 967, Amen