

Westminster United Church
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Sunday, January 21, 2024 – The Third Sunday in Epiphany

Pianist/Accompanist: Michael Oddy
Song Leaders & Soloist: Jim Kennedy
Singing Bowl: Wilma Stewart/Sandi McDonald
Reader: Marion Overholt
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 (liturgybits.com)
– adapted – **Responsive**

Min: Why church? What's the point?

People: We come to connect with one another.

Min: Why church? What's the point?

People: We come to find healing and hope in a world of hurt, hate, and disregard.

Min: Why church? What's the point?

People: We come because we strive to be better people.

Min: Why church? What's the point?

People: We come to be reminded that Jesus calls us to take the Good News into the world.

Min: Why church? What's the point?

All: We are the church. We are God's people created and called to take the Good News to the poor, proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind. We are called to

liberate the oppressed and proclaim the grace revealed in the year of divine favour.

Min: But why?

People: We are the church. God requires us to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with our God...

Choral Response: VU 579, The Church Is Wherever God's People

Words of Awareness (Bruce Prewer, Epiphany 3, <http://www.bruceprewer.com>, adapted) – **Responsive**

Min: It is time to become focussed not on our wants or complaints but on God.

People: In the silent places of my soul I turn to God, for God alone is our rock and salvation.

Min: Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the Good News of God, saying the time has come, the realm of God is at hand.

People: The realm of God is not very far from any one of us, for in God we live and move and have our being.

Min: Jesus said: repent and believe the Good News.

People: The time has come.
In the silent places of my soul I turn to God
for God alone is our rock and salvation...

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Opening Prayer (Bruce Prewer, Epiphany 3,
<http://www.bruceprewer.com>, adapted)– **Min**

God of Jesus and our God, delighted with our good fortune, we
come to accept the gospel invitation.

Your deliverance surpasses the loftiest visions of the biblical
prophets,
Your generosity exceeds the wildest expectations of the psalm-
singers,
Your grace outstrips the hopes of the great lawgivers as the sun
outshines a campfire.

Glorious are you, God of unspeakable Good News!

With every breath of our being, we come to give thanks and
praise.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

***Opening Hymn:** VU 562, Jesus Calls Us

A Meditation

“Litany of the Circle” (Tom Hanson and Loretta Whalen in Make
a World of Difference, <https://worshipwords.co.uk/> - adapted) -
Responsive

Min: Every part of this earth is sacred,
Every shining pine needle, every sacred shore.

People: Every mist in the dark woods.
Every clearing and humming insect is holy.

Min: The rocky crest, the juices of the meadow,
the beasts and all the people,

People: All belong to the same family.

Min: Teach your children that the earth is our mother.

People: Whatever befalls the earth befalls the children of the earth.

Min: The water's murmur is the voice of our father's father.

People: We are part of the earth, and the earth is part of us.

Min: The rivers are our brothers; they quench our thirst.

People: The perfumed flowers are our sister.

Min: The air is precious,
for all of us share the same breath.
The wind that gave our grandparents breath
also receives their last sign.
The wind gave our children the Spirit of Life.

People: This we know: the earth does not belong to us;
we belong to the earth.

Min: This we know: all things are connected, like the blood that
unites one family.

People: All things are connected.

Min: Our God is the same God,
whose compassion is equal for all.

For we did not weave the web of life;
we are merely a strand in it.

People: Whatever we do to the web
we do to ourselves.

Min: Let us give thanks for the web in the circle that connects us.

People: Thanks be to God, the God of us all...

Quiet reflection

A Hymn from Our Childhood & Youth: VU 296, This Is God's
Wondrous World

An Affirmation of Faith (Stephen Best, U.K.,
<https://worshipwords.co.uk>, adapted) – Responsive

Min: The world is full of good things

People: As well as things that could be better

Min: We are full of good things

People: As well as things that could be better

Min: Today, whether we feel full of good things

People: Or full of things that could be better

Min: God's open arms

People: Sweep us up again in a mighty catch, all of us

Min: God's big love -

People: Costly, extravagant and wasteful, cherishes us

Min: God's lively spirit

People: Restores us and makes us fresh again

Quiet reflection

The Peace

Min: May a heart of peace rest with you,

People: and also with you.

Solo: (Jim Kennedy)

READINGS (Marion Overholt)

From the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalm: Psalm 62, VU p.779 – Responsive

Jonah 3: 1-5, 10 (Inclusive Bible)

The word of Yahweh came a second time to Jonah: "Get up! Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach to them as I told you to do."

Jonah set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of Yahweh. Nineveh was a city large beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. Jonah moved on into the city, making a day's journey. He proclaimed, "Only forty days more, and Nineveh is going to be destroyed!"

So the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and dressed in sackcloth, from the greatest to the least.

God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behaviour. And God relented by not inflicting on them the disaster that threatened them.

From the New Testament

Mark 1:14-20 (Inclusive Bible)

After John's arrest, Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God.

"This is the time of fulfilment. The reign of God is at hand. Change your hearts and minds, and believe this Good News!"

While walking by the Sea of Galilee, Jesus saw the brothers Simon and Andrew casting their nets into the sea, since they fished by trade. Jesus said to them, "Follow me; I will make you fishers of humankind. They immediately abandoned their nets and followed Jesus.

Proceeding a little further along, he saw the brothers James and John Bar-Zebedee. They too were in their boat, putting their nets in order. Immediately Jesus called them. And they left their father Zebedee standing in the boat with the hired help, and went off in the company of Jesus.

A Contemporary Reading

"Full Nets" – a prayer-poem based on Mark 1 by Rev. Lisa Ann Moss Degrenia (<https://revlisad.com>, adapted)

Jesus,
You call me from what I know to something new
From a life on this sea with this family
From the nets of generations before me

You call me to a new beginning
A new being and doing
You call me to follow
To move and become

Help me turn towards you
Help me follow
Help me believe and trust you fully
Immediately
Help me live into my chosen-ness
To lay down what I know and pick up the new

Empower me to go out with you
Across, beyond, into the deep
Bringing in your wild, shining kingdom
Full, full nets
Full, full net
Full, full nets.
Amen.

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: Called to Follow Jesus (Rev. Del Stewart)

***Hymn:** VU 567, Will You Come and Follow Me

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 (**based on** 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 563, Jesus, You Have Come to the Lakeshore

***Parting Words** (Nathan Nettleton, Epiphany, 2012, <https://re-worship.blogspot.com>, adapted)

The time has come for us to leave this sacred place.
Go now, follow where God calls you and proclaim in word and deed the message God gives you.
Wait in hope for God.
Avoid becoming bound up in the busy-ness of the world,
but live in readiness for the in-breaking of God's sacred realm...

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

