

Westminster United Church
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Sunday, January 28, 2024 – The Fourth Sunday in Epiphany

Pianist/Accompanist: Michael Oddy
Song Leaders & Soloist: Kathleen Paterson & Bev Marshall
Singing Bowl: Wilma Stewart/Sandi McDonald
Reader: Jeanne Stocks
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: Come and worship. Come and celebrate life.

People: We gather as one people.

Min: Bring your gifts.

People: We have different gifts.

Min: But the Spirit provides them

People: Some of us are leaders. Some of us are teachers.

Min: Some have a contemplative spirit.

People: Others among us are passionate -
doing compassion, love and justice.

Min: Some of us are gifted healers,

People: All of us are needed, and of God.

Min: The Spirit provides our gifts. We are God's beloved people.
Praise be to God for our diversity of skills, talents and gifts...

Choral Response: MV 14, Where Two or Three Are Gathered

Words of Awareness (liturgybits.com) – adapted – **Responsive**

Min: We gather seeking inspiration, insight and hope.

People: And Jesus tells us, Abide, Dwell, Stay joined.

Min: We gather; people of the world claiming God's Anointed One – the Christ.

People: And Jesus tells us, Abide, Dwell, Stay joined.

Min: We gather, people seeking to change the world for the better, to bear fruit.

People: And Jesus tells us, Abide, Dwell, Stay joined.

Min: Gathered, let us not only worship the One but live as the One would have us live.

People: And Jesus tells us, Abide, Dwell, Stay joined.

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Opening Prayer (Bruce Prewer, Epiphany 4B,
<http://www.bruceprewer.com>, adapted) - Min

God of flaming truth and burning compassion, give to your people the courage to turn to you with awe yet without craven fear.
As we turn to you, turn to us we pray, and in the light of your Presence let us find our true love, worship and celebration.
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

***Opening Hymn:** VU 334, All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name

A Meditation

“Problem and Promise” by J. Donald Johnston in Beginning Now, p. 6 (in Epiphany Four, <https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com>, adapted) - Min

Life must be shared.
The demand comes from deep inside us.
Our bodies demand it, our minds require it,
our hearts are starved without it.

Yet each one of us lives alone.
This, too, is deeply rooted in our minds and hearts.

We depend on one another
yet are afraid of one another.
We are independent of one another

yet cannot do without one another.

We can be jealous of our independence
and yet sell it cheaply.
We can be so dependent
that the price of independence seems beyond us.

We are problems to one another and within ourselves.
But between us and within us there is also promise.

Quiet reflection

A Hymn from Our Childhood & Youth: VU 365, Jesus Loves Me

A Statement of Faith (Michael Hell, U.K.,
<https://progressivechristianity.org/resources>, adapted) – **Responsive**

Min: There is only one God who is at all times everywhere in creation...

Quiet reflection

Min: Every man, woman and child is a child of God: we all belong to God's family.

People: We therefore say God loves us as parents love their offspring.

Min: Jesus of Nazareth is the man who, both by his life and doctrine, exemplifies the life God wishes us to live. From the Torah he selected two sentences to explain our duty:
namely, to love God with all our might, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

People: We therefore call him the Anointed of God, the Christ.

Min: The Holy Spirit represents the grace of God working within us

People: To help us achieve our human fullness.

Min: This is the God in whom we place our trust – our faith -

People: And to whom I plight my troth...

Quiet reflection

The Peace

Min: May a heart of peace rest with you,

People: and also with you.

Gift of Music: (Kathleen Paterson & Bev Marshall)

READINGS (Jeanne Stocks)

From the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalm: Psalm 111, VU p.833 – Responsive

Deuteronomy 18:15-20 (Inclusive Bible)

Yahweh, your God, will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your people; to that prophet you must listen. It was this that you asked of Yahweh, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, “Let us not hear again the voice of Yahweh, our God, nor see this great fire again, or we will die.”

And Yahweh said to me, “This is well said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their people, into whose mouth I will put my words, and that person will tell them all that I command. If any person will not listen to what my prophet speaks in my Name, I myself will call that person to answer for this. But if a prophet presumes to speak in my Name a message that I have not commanded to be spoken, or speaks in the name of other gods – that prophet will die.

From the New Testament

Mark 1:21-28 (SV)

Then they came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath Day Jesus went right to the synagogue and started teaching. They were astonished at his

teaching, since he would teach them on his own authority, unlike the scholars.

Now right there in their synagogue was a person possessed by an unclean spirit, which shouted, “Jesus! What do you want with us, you Nazarene? Have you come to get rid of us? I know you, who you are: God’s holy man!”

But Jesus yelled at it, “Shut up and get out of him!”

Then the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsion, and letting out a loud shriek it came out of him. And they were all so amazed that they asked themselves, “What’s this? A new kind of teaching backed by authority! He gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him!”

So his fame spread rapidly everywhere throughout Galilee and even beyond.

A Contemporary Reading

“May-Grace” #97 - a poem by Dennis McCarty (in Epiphany Four, <https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com>, adapted)

In living out each moment,
May we be ever mindful
That we have been favoured
With precious gifts.

We have eyes
With which to peer into the darkest corners;
We have ears
With which to listen to the stories
Of our fellow human beings;
We have hands
With which to work towards transformation.

Together, surely,
We are the answer that is “blowing in the wind”.

Reflections on Today's Readings - Min

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 Exorcist" (Rev. Del Stewart)

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

A Prayer for Today (Steve Garnaas-Holmes, Unfolding Light, in [Epiphany 4B](#) | pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au – adapted – Min

God – Spirit of Life - we do not know what burdens people carry, what
demons they wrestle with silently,
what triumph it may be for them to appear 'normal',
to be decent, to show up.

Give us compassion for each person,
aware that spirits haunt us all.
Give us the grace to bless and not to judge,
to heal and not to hurt,
even those who invite hurting.

Free each of us from our own demons,
our egos and their demands on self and others.

We do not know another's inner story,
its landscapes, its dark places, its villains.

We don't know and we don't need to know.

We only know your tremendous love

even for us, and equally for them.

O God, help us to remember...

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 (please feel free to clap as you sing)

***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 343, I Love to Tell the Story

***Parting Words** (Epiphany 4B, <http://www.bruceprewer.com>, adapted)

Min: The time has come to leave this sacred place.
As you go, may the example and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth keep you from all evil.

People: So may it be!

Min: May the Living Spirit of Jesus endow you with great love, and fill you with joy and peace.

People: So may it be!

Min: And may you share your blessings and experience with others you meet this day and every day.

People: So may it be!...

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