

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

Sunday, March 10, 2024 – ‘Celebrating Women Here and Everywhere’ on the Fourth Sunday in Lent

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

Message: Marion Overholt, Kathleen Paterson and Wilma 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** (*She Flies On, A Liturgy Inspired by Lydia Gruchy, the 1<sup>st</sup> woman ordained by the United Church of Canada, based on Psalm 122, <https://united-church.ca>, adapted*) – **Responsive**

One: Come to the house of God, and feel God's welcome here.

All: With longing we go to God's own house, and enter with a song.

One: Come to the house of God, and celebrate the women who built these walls.

All: With joy, we go to God's own house and enter with a song.

One: Come to the house of God, and cry with the women who seek justice and compassion for all.

All: With tears we go to God's own house, and enter with a song.

One: Come to the house of God, and with thanksgiving remember the women who have led us here.

All: With gratitude, we go to God's own house and enter with a song.

One: Come to the house of God to worship and celebrate our Mother, Redeemer and Sustainer.

All: With humility, we come to God's own house and enter with a song...

**Choral Response:** VU 381, Spirit of Life

**Words of Awareness** (*Sojourners*, 8 Christian Women Shaping the Church in 2023, <https://sojo.net>, adapted) – Min

During this time of worship and celebration:

May we see women the way God has always seen women;

May we listen to women's voices instead of silencing their speech;

May we recognize that women, too, are image-bearers of God;

May we remember the great cloud of witnesses that surround us;

May we know the strength of God who empowers us to do more than we ever imagined;

And may we be known for sharing the love of God, even toward those who resist us....

*The singing bowl is sounded three times*

**Opening Prayer** (*She Flies On, A Liturgy Inspired by Lydia Gruchy, the 1<sup>st</sup> woman ordained by the United Church of Canada, based on Psalm 122, <https://united-church.ca>, adapted*)

Sophia God,  
we long for the day when we will find ourselves inside your city.

There, all your people will experience justice, peace, and fullness of life regardless of their gender identity, race, age, sexuality, class, or ability;

There, all called to serve will be supported in the work that you have prepared for us.

Until then, as we journey toward 'home' guide and protect all who faithfully serve.

Be our unity, our truth and our peace.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

**\*Hymn:** VU 395, vs. 1, 2 & 4, Part of the Family

### **A MEDITATION**

***In Honour of Women Here and Around the World*** (Stacey Cole Wilson, <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org>, adapted) – **Responsive**

One: with holy reverence, we remember irreplaceable women, O God. We honour those who nurtured us and taught us to honour and love you, O God.

All: May their example of Christian faith help transform us in your image.

One: We honour women who feed the hungry, clothe the unclothed, befriend the lonely, and comfort the comfortless. We bless them for loving your people as you love us.

All: O God, may you continue to meet their needs as they minister to others.

One: We honour women grieving the loss of their loved ones.

All: May you, O God, continue to comfort them with your Word, spoken and blessed. May we learn to encourage them as they have encouraged us.

One: We honour women pregnant with unborn sons and daughters, O God.

All: May you shelter them and the children they bear under the shadow of your loving, caring Presence.

One: We honour our sisters throughout the world who need spiritual, economic, and physical healing.

All: May you meet their needs, Holy One, according to your riches in glory, we pray.

One: We honour all women who have gone before us, named and unnamed.

All: We give you thanks, O God.

One: We bless those who wept for us, rejoiced with us, wiped our tears, prayed for us, and laughed with us.

All: We give you thanks, O God.

One: We bless those undauntedly sacrificed for us.

All: We give you thanks, O God.

One: O God, we honour all those who stand alongside and for these women. We bless those who encourage them to dream, who bring out the best in them, who help them bear their burdens, and who love them rightly.

All: Gracious God, may you watch over and keep all your people, these women and all who love them, with your care.

One: And now, in the name of the countercultural Jesus who valued women and called them to be disciples, let us quietly ponder the words we have just spoken....

*Quiet reflection*

**Hymn:** God of the Women - a hymn by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette;  
Tune VU 642, Be Thou My Vision (with permission)

God of the women who answered your call,  
trusting your promises, giving their all.  
Women like Sarah and Hannah and Ruth –  
Give us their courage to live in your truth.

God of the women who walked Jesus' Way,  
Giving their resources, learning to pray,  
Mary, Joanna, Susanna, and more –  
May we give freely as they did before.

God of the women long put to the test,  
Left out of stories, forgotten, oppressed,  
Quietly asking, "Who smiled at my birth?" –  
In Jesus' dying you show us our worth.

God of the women who ran from the tomb,  
Prayed with others in that upper room,  
Then felt your Spirit on Pentecost Day –  
May we so gladly proclaim you today.

O God of Phoebe and ministers all,  
May we be joyful in answering your call.

Give us the strength of your spirit so near  
That we may share in your ministry here.

**An Affirmation of Faith** by Dorothy McRae-McMahon, (Lent 4,  
<https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com>, adapted) –  
**Responsive**

One: God is with us. This we celebrate.  
For we have seen the signs of grace  
in every place, in every generation.

All: the beauty of creation, in all its pristine wonder, is not the only  
dwelling place of creativity.

One: This, our God, is born again in cities  
as well as country stables.

All: Is found in holy places and the supermarket,  
sits with us in coffee shops,  
and by the one who hopefully sings a song  
on the streets of this day.

One: The Spirit dances on concrete

All: And holds in comfort those  
who walk with briefcase or shopping bag.

One: The God who is more than we can ever name or know

All: Is beside us in every workplace and  
every hidden home of our body, mind and soul.

**A Hymn Celebrating the Divine Feminine:** ‘She of the Dance’  
by Rebekah Myers (Tune: VU 352, I Danced in the Morning)

I danced in the morning when the world was begun  
I danced in the moon and the stars and the sun  
I created the heavens, I created the Earth  
I am She who gave them birth.

#### REFRAIN

Dance, dance around my holy tree  
I am the Queen of the Dance, said She  
And I'll lead you all, whomever you may be  
And I'll bless you all in the dance said She.

I danced for my people, both the he and the she  
Yet as time went on, he wouldn't honour me  
And he cut me out of the story of our life  
And he caused much pain and he caused much strife.

#### REFRAIN

Still I kept dancing for the dance must go on  
And my daughters remembered and they danced along  
They arose from the shackles and they cast off the chains  
And they taught their brothers to dance again.

#### REFRAIN

Though he put you down, I will raise you high  
For I am the Life that will never, ever die.  
I'll live in you, if you live in Me  
I am the Queen of the Dance, said She!

#### REFRAIN

### **LENTEN READINGS (Bev Marshall)**

#### **From the Hebrew Scriptures**

**Psalms 107, VU p. 831 – Responsive**

## **Isaiah 58: 6-9 (Inclusive Bible)**

[Through his prophet Isaiah God spoke these words:]

This is the sort of fast that pleases me:

Remove the chains of injustice!

Undo the ropes of the yoke!

Let those who are oppressed go free,

and break every yoke you encounter!

Share your bread with those who are hungry,

and shelter homeless poor people!

Clothe those who are naked,

and don't hide from the needs of your own flesh and blood.

Do this, and your light will shine forth like the dawn –

and your healing will break forth like lightening!

Your integrity will go before you,

and the glory of God will be your rearguard.

Cry, and God will answer;

call and God will say, "I am here" –

provided you remove from your midst

all oppression, finger pointing and malicious talk.

## **From the New Testament**

### **Luke 1: 46-55 (Inclusive Bible)**

Mary said:

"My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,

and my soul rejoices in you, my Saviour.

For you have looked with favour

Upon your lowly servant, and from this day forward

all generations will call me blessed.

For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,

and holy is your name.

Your mercy reaches from age to age

for those who fear you.

You have shown strength with your arm;  
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;  
you have deposed the mighty from their thrones  
and raised the lowly to high places.  
You have filled the hungry with good things,  
while you have sent the rich away empty.  
You have come to the aid of Israel,  
mindful of your mercy –  
the promise you made to our ancestors –  
to Sarah and Abraham  
and their descendants forever.

### **A Contemporary Reading**

From *She Flies On*, a liturgy inspired by Lydia Gruchy, the 1<sup>st</sup>  
woman ordained by the United Church of Canada - adapted

Darkness is a wonder to be explored,  
full of Holy Mystery.  
In the dark, we can find comfort and rest.  
In the night, we are reminded of how  
a candlelight is small and a mighty flicker  
of resilience and resistance.  
We have gathered this day to celebrate women, here in this  
congregation and the world over,  
and to worship the One who surprises us with wonder,  
who challenges our comfort, and supports our resilience.

We follow the One who says,  
“I am the light” –  
Always.

### **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)**

**Message:** "Celebrating the Life and Ministry of Lydia Emilie Gruchy" - **Marion Overholt & Kathleen Paterson**

**\*Hymn:** VU 707, For the Faithful Who Have Answered

**A Poem: 'The Woman Next to You'** - (Source: SNJM website, IWD, March 8, 2024 - adapted) – **Wilma Stewart**

Look around, look around you!

The woman next to you is an inexhaustible reservoir of possibility...

With possibilities that have never been completely realized...

Full of necessity and possibility...dread and desire...smiles and frowns...laughter and tears...fears and hopes...

all struggling to find expression.

The woman next to you is striving to BECOME something in particular, to arrive at some destination...to have a story...a song...to be known and to know...

The woman next to you believes in something...lives for something...runs toward something.

The woman next to you...has problems and fears...wonders how she is doing...and often doesn't feel good about it...is often disorganized and sometimes close to chaos...but endowed with great toughness in the face of adversity...and able to survive great difficulties.

The woman next to you has something she can do well...  
something she can do better than anyone else in the whole  
world...  
there is something that she and she alone can do well...but she  
may not speak of it to you.  
The woman next to you can live with you, just not alongside of  
you...  
she can live, not just for herself, but for you also...  
she can comfort, encounter, understand you, if that is what you  
want...and in turn she wants to be understood, too.  
The woman next to you...can never be fully understood...  
she is more than any description or explanation...  
she can never be fully controlled, nor should she be.  
The woman next to you is a mystery...  
So look around!

**Solo:** (Joanna Novosedlik)

**Prayer for Women Here and Around the World** (Source: St.  
Hilda's Anglican Church in [www.sthilda.ca](http://www.sthilda.ca) and  
<https://www.godspacecommunity.com> - adapted) – **Responsive**

One: God, make me an instrument of your peace:  
Bless all women who daily strive to bring peace to their  
communities, their homes, and their hearts.  
Give them strength to continue to turn swords into ploughshares.

All: Where there is hatred, let me sow love:

One: We pray for all women who face prejudice, inequality, and  
gender disparities. Help us to see and to face the discrimination  
against women in all the many forms it may take.

All: Where there is injury, pardon.

One: Comfort all women who suffer from the pain of war, violence, and abuse. Help them to become instruments of their own reconciliation and peace.

All: Where there is division, unity:

One: Forgive all women and men who let differences breed hate and discrimination. Let your example of valuing all of creation help us to see that we are equal partners in the stewardship of your world.

All: Where there is darkness, light; where there is untruth, truth:

One: Comfort all women who struggle in the darkness of abuse, poverty, and loneliness.

May we stand with them in light to acknowledge their suffering and strive to remove the burdens of shame or embarrassment.

All: Where there is doubt true faith:

One: We pray for all women who live in fear of their husbands, fathers, and forces that control their lives. Help us empower them to be their true selves through your everlasting love and faith.

All: Where there is despair, hope:

One: We pray for all women who live in the despair of poverty, violence, trafficking, slavery and abuse. May the light of your love bring them hope.

All: Where there is sadness, new joy:

One: Help us to see the strength and goodness in all women and men. Transform our hearts to celebrate the love and grace of all people, everywhere...

## *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** (International Women's Day Worship Resources,  
[www.globalwomensproject.org](http://www.globalwomensproject.org) - *adapted*)

We know that money cannot buy love. We know that money does not purchase peace. No matter how much money we save, or give, or spend, there will still be voices who cry out in need. What can we offer, in addition to money, that can take these voices of pain and transform them into shouts of joy?

We must give more of ourselves than our pocketbooks allow. We must give our humility, our hearts, our humanity. As you gave your monetary gifts this morning, please consider how you can give of yourself to the lives of others.

**\*Offertory Hymn:** MV 191, What Can I Do (please feel free to clap along)

**\*Presentation of the Offering**

**\*Offertory Prayer** (International Women's Day Worship Resources, [www.globalwomensproject.org](http://www.globalwomensproject.org) - adapted)

God of all things, we give this money as a token of what is important to us. May this money go to do good. May this money go to do justice. But also, may the giving of this money help guide us into paths of awareness, recognizing that what this world needs is not more money, but more good...more justice...more of each of us loving one another. Amen.

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 380, She Flies On

**\*Parting Words** (April Fiet, Worship Resources for Celebrating Women in Ministry, <https://www.faithward.org>, adapted) – Min

The time has come for us to leave this sacred place.  
Go now, inspired by grace and the faithful women in your lives.  
Go forth from this place,  
ready to serve,  
ready to listen,  
ready to answer God's call...

*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