

Westminster United Church
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Sunday, March 17, 2024 – Fifth Sunday in Lent

Pianist/Accompanist: Michael Oddy
Song Leaders & Soloist: Jim Kennedy
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

'Turn to God' (Lent 4, Sarah Agnew, Pray the Story, in <https://pilgrimwr.unitingchurch.org.au> – adapted) - **Min**

Turn to God, with honest hearts,
Turn to God, with open hearts,
Turn to God with hungry hearts,
Turn to God with all your heart,
ready to worship and celebrate,
ready to heal and grow...

The singing bowl is sounded three times

Words of Awareness (Lent 5B, <https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com> – adapted) – **Min**

We have come together in this hour –
in a wider search for truth and purpose.
In this quest, may we
greet one another with open hearts and open minds;
inspire each other to consider new questions,
seek deeper meaning,
and cultivate both wisdom and compassion.
Let all who enter this sacred space find comfort and solidarity in
this progressive Christian community-of-faith...

Choral Response: VU 381, Spirit of Life

Opening Prayer (Lent 5B,
<https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com> – adapted) – **Min**

God - Spirit of Life – we give thanks for the signs of love and creativity that surround us and bless us in each moment.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn: VU 357, Tell Me the Stories of Jesus

A MEDITATION

“In Respect for Stephen Hawking” – a poem by Andrew Pratt
(in Lent 5B, <https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com> – adapted)

Beyond impossibility
where concepts such as time and space
evaporate, are meaningless,
there flows an endless stream of grace.

Deep in the darkness laughter rocks
as human minds are changed and swayed,
as concrete truths are shaken down
and doctrines challenged and betrayed.

The greatest minds that have evolved
have opened wonder, filled with awe,
have pointed to infinity
yet left a darkness to explore.

Unmeasured depths of gracious love,
of Godly mischief reach and range,
while new beginnings light our world,
unlooked for, awesome, wondrous strange...

Quiet reflection

A Traditional Hymn Celebrating the Creativity and Love of God: VU 238, How Great Thou Art, vs. 1 & 2, plus REFRAIN

An Affirmation of Faith (S. Kramer, in Lent 5B,
<https://www.rexaehuntprogressively.com>, adapted) –
Responsive

Min: We believe in a sacred power within and around us -
a Divine Source we call by many names and experience in many
ways –
a Source that empowers and heals, and calls us forth.

People: We believe in our creativity,

Min: Making and transforming beauty out of words and notes,
images and colours, lines and pictures...and silence.

People: We believe in doing justice.

Min: Justice that compels and empowers us
to risk whatever we must risk to create a climate
in which all people can be who they are.

People: We believe in our dreams.

Min: We experience the world as it is,
in both its ugliness and beauty,
and we see what it can become.

People: We believe in making peace.

Min: A peace that is based on openness, honesty and
compassion.

People: We believe in hope.

Min: We expect change to continue to occur in our world.
We rely on our courage to continue to bring about these changes.

People: We believe in love.

Min: A passionate love within and around us
that laughs and cries,
challenges and comforts,
a healing love that perseveres.

People:
We believe in potential,

Min: We know who we are,
painful as that can be at times,
yet we continue to call each other
to become more of who we are.

People: We believe in celebrating.

Min: We remember and we commemorate.
We create rituals.
We play and dance, and sing and love well.

People: We believe in our diversity.

Min: We affirm our many shapes and sizes,
colours and traditions,
emotions and thoughts,
differences and similarities.

People: We believe in life.

Min: Life that wells up within, and flows out of us like a steaming fountain.

All: We believe we are good and holy, a sacred part of all creation...

Quiet reflection

The Peace (D. Galston, adapted)

Min: May a heart of peace rest with you,

People: and also with you.

Solo: (Jim Kennedy)

LENTEN READINGS (David Ouellette)

From the Hebrew Scriptures

Psalms , VU 51, p. P. 776-777 (REFRAIN 1) – Responsive

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Inclusive Bible)

Behold, the days are coming, says God, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant they broke, though I was their spouse, says God. But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says God: I will put my Law in their minds and in their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people.

From the New Testament

John 12: 20-33 (Inclusive Bible)

Among those who came up to worship at the Passover festival were some Greeks. They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and put forth this request: "Please, we would like to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew, and together the two went to tell Jesus.

Jesus replied,
"Now the hour has come
for the Chosen One to be glorified.

The truth of the matter is,
unless a grain of wheat
falls on the ground and dies,
it remains only a single grain;
but if it dies,
it yields a rich harvest.

If you love your life
you'll lose it;
if you hate your life in this world
you'll keep it for eternal life.

Anyone who wants to work with me
must follow in my footsteps,
and wherever I am
my worker will be there too.
Anyone who works for me
will be honoured by Abba God.

Now my soul is troubled.
What will I say:
'Abba, save me from this hour?'
But it was for this reason

that I have come to this hour.

Abba, glorify your name!”

A voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.”

The crowds that stood nearby heard this and said it was a clap of thunder; others said, “It was an angel speaking.”

Jesus answered, “It was not for my sake that this voice came, but for yours.

“Sentence is now being passed on this world; now the ruler of this world will be overthrown.

And when I am lifted up from this earth, I will draw all my people to myself.”

By these words Jesus indicated the kind of death he would die.

A Contemporary Reading

An Early Morning Fog – a poem by Ted Kooser (Early Morning Walks, SALT Project, Lent 4B, 2024)

In fair weather, the shy past keeps its distance.
Old loves, old regrets, old humiliations
look on from afar. They stand back under the trees.
No one would think to look for them there.

But in fog they come closer. You can feel them
there by the road as you slowly walk past.
Still as fence posts they wait, dark and reproachful,
each stepping forward in turn.

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: We Too Would See Jesus (**Rev. Del Stewart**)

***Hymn:** VU 371, Open My Eyes, That I May See

A Lenten Prayer for Others (Ann Weems in Spirituality and
Practice, <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com>, adapted)

O God on this fifth Sunday in Lent we pray
for all who have a song they cannot sing,
for all who have a burden they cannot bear,
for all who live in chains they cannot break,
for all who wander homeless and cannot return,
for those who are sick and for those who tend to them,
for those who wait for loved ones, and wait in vain,
for those who live in hunger, and for those who will not share their
bread,
for those who are misunderstood, and for those who
misunderstand,
for those who are captives, and for those who are captors,
for those whose words of love are locked within their hearts, and
for those who yearn to hear those words.

Have compassion upon these, your beloved children.

Have compassion for us all...

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 - 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 - 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 goodness...more justice...more of each of us loving one another. Amen.

***Closing Hymn:** VU 343, I Love to Tell the Story

***Parting Words** (tt (in Lent 5B, <https://www.rexaehuntprogressivelgy.com> – adapted)) – Min

The time has come for us to leave this place made sacred by our presence.

As you depart, may the memories you've gathered here give you hope for the future.

May the love that we've shared here bring strength and peace to your hearts, and may the joy of the Westminster community-of-faith be with you all until we meet again...

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