

Local, National and Global Outreach Committee Newsletter

**Southminster United Church
December 2025**



Introduction

December is a time when many faiths celebrate hope, renewal, and the triumph of light over darkness: *Advent* begins on December 1, a time of preparation and hope, leading to the joy of *Christmas* on December 25. The *Feast of the Immaculate Conception* is observed on December 8, and the *Feast of the Holy Family* follows on December 28. These are occasions that call on us to reflect on God's love, grace, and presence amongst us.

At the same time, our neighbours of other faiths celebrate their own meaningful traditions. The **Jewish** community commemorates *Hanukkah* from December 14 to 22, also recalling the miracle of light.

Buddhists observe *Bodhi Day* on December 8, honouring the *Buddha's* enlightenment.

Hindu families observe *Gita Jayanti* on December 8 (*Jayanti*=Festival), which celebrates the day Lord Krishna delivered the teachings of the *Bhagavad Gita* directly to the Warrior *Arjuna*. They also mark *Pancha Ganapati* from December 21 - 25, to praise Lord Ganesha as the patron of culture, harmony, and family unity.

Around the same time, **Pagans** and **Wiccans** celebrate *Yule* on the 21st, welcoming the rebirth of the sun and the return of longer days, as well as the *Winter Solstice*, on the same day, to mark the shortest day and longest night.

Zoroastrians mark *Shab-e Yalda* that very night, to celebrate the victory of light over darkness.

Sikhs pay homage to *Guru Gobind Singh* on December 31, with a *Jayanti* celebrating his birth, to honour his spiritual leadership, poetry, and the founding of the *Khalsa* (a community symbolized by the Five Ks), and a dedication to defending justice. The Five Ks are sacred articles of faith which baptized *Sikhs* (*Khalsa*) are required to wear at all times: Kesh (Uncut Hair), Kanga (Wooden Comb in Hair), Kara (Steel Bracelet), Kachera (Special Cotton Undergarment), and Kirpan (Ceremonial Sword or Dagger).

Indigenous peoples in Canada mark this time of year with ceremonies, storytelling, and gatherings tied to the *Winter Solstice* and spiritual renewal.

All these observances, diverse yet united by themes of light, hope, and renewal, invite us to remember the sacredness shared by all faith traditions. As Christians, we believe that all people are created in the image of God, and that love and respect for our neighbours are central to our faith.

Recognizing and honouring the diversity of religious observances around us does not diminish our own beliefs; rather, it strengthens them. When we listen, learn, and share kindness across faith traditions, we reflect Christ's love in the world and help build understanding, peace, and goodwill amongst all people.

Local

There are many heartwarming events taking place in Ottawa during the month of December, starting with our own **Southminster United Church** hosting "A Rutter Christmas Feast" featuring the *Ewashko Singers*, on December 5 at 7:30pm. The church is then hosting "The Messiah", featuring *Rideau Chorale*, on the 13th at 7:30pm. A "Christmas Sing-along" takes place at 7pm on the 19th. At 7:30pm on the 20th, "Bach's Magnificent & Vivaldi's Gloria" will be presented by *Ottawa Choral Workshops* and Founding Director *Roland Graham*, with baroque orchestra and soloists from the choir. December 21st at 10:30am is our "Family Christmas Sunday". We wrap up on *Christmas Eve* at 7:30pm with the "Candlelight Communion Service" featuring *Isabelle Lacroix* singing Mezzo soprano and *Keri Hugh* Contemporary Gospel.

Glebe St.-James United Church, a member of our Cluster, located at 650 Lyon Street South, is hosting the "Canterbury Trebles Women's Ensemble Concert" at 7pm on December 6. The "Christmas Advent Music Service" will be on the 7th at 10:30am. On the 18th at 6:30pm, they are hosting a "Blue Christmas Service" for people living with pain, loss, sadness, and grief. There will be a "Family Service" on *Christmas Eve* at 4:30pm, as well as "Lessons & Carols" at 7:30pm.

A second church in our Cluster, **Emmanuel United**, at 691 Smyth Road, is hosting a "Loss to Light Service" (Blue Christmas) at 2pm on December 14. Next is their "Christmas Eve Service" at 5pm, followed by the "Carols & Readings Service" at 7:30pm.

The third Cluster church, **Rideau Park United**, at 2203 Alta Vista Drive, is hosting its "UCW Christmas Candlelight Service" on the 1st at 1pm, and "Cantana Singers" on December 7th at 2pm. The "Christmas Pageant" will be at 10am on the 14th, followed by the "Live Big Band Christmas Concert" at 6:30pm. The "Blue Christmas Service" is at 7pm on the 17th. The "Labrynth Walk" will be held between Noon and 8pm on the 19th. *Christmas Eve* will feature a "Family Service" at 6:30pm and the usual "Christmas Eve Service with Communion" at 8:30pm. Finally, the "Christmas Day Service" will be at 10am.

The fourth Cluster member, **Riverside United**, at 3191 Riverside Drive, will have a “Christmas Singalong” with *Chris White* on December 16 at 10am; at 2pm, they are hosting “A Quiet Christmas Service”. The “Christmas Pageant” will be at 10:30am on the 21st. On *Christmas Eve* there will be two services: “Family Christmas Eve Service” at 4pm, and “Lessons & Carols, with Communion & Candlelighting” at 8pm.

As Keri Hugh announced at our Remembrance Day Sunday Service, **Knox United**, 25 Gibbard Avenue in Nepean, will be hosting “Journey to Bethlehem”, presented by the all-women’s choir, *Lumina*, with a guest performance by *Gracenote*, on December 5 at 7pm. Admittance by goodwill offering.

Our friends at **Trinity Anglican Church**, also in Old Ottawa South, will be hosting “The Bold Voices Presents: Of Light and Love” on December 12 at 7pm, a “Christmas Carol Service” at 4pm on the 14th, and a “Lessons & Carols Service” on December 20 at 4pm. On *Christmas Eve*, the “Carols and Communion Service” will be at 4pm, followed by their “French Service” at 5:30pm and the “Candlelight Choral Eucharist” at 8:30pm. The “Christmas Day Eucharist” will be at 10am.

Our other Anglican neighbours at St. Matthews in the Glebe will be hosting “Nine Lessons & Carols” at 7pm on December 21. The “Nativity of our Lord, with Pageant” will be at 4pm on *Christmas Eve*, followed by the “Nativity of our Lord Candlelight Service” at 10pm. The “Christmas Day Service” will be at 10am.

The “Ottawa Christmas Market” at Lansdowne Park is already open and runs from 10am-10pm through December 30. The hours may be changeable, so it would be best to check online.

On December 1st + 2nd at 7:30pm, at the **NAC’s Fourth Stage**, 1 Elgin Street, the “23rd Annual Christmas GOOSE Concert” will take place in support of *The Ottawa Food Bank*, and there will be a “A Celtic Christmas Celebration” featuring the *Rideau Ramblers* on December 10 at 7:30pm.

The ever-popular **Saunders Farm** is holding its famous “Country Christmas” from December 6-30. Check online for days and times. Their “Holiday Lights Stroll” also runs from 6-30 on Thursdays + Fridays 6-10pm, Saturdays + Sundays 5-10pm. Tickets for both sell out fast, so check online ASAP. The farm is located at 7893 Bleeks Road in Munster.

For children everywhere, the first announced arrival of *Santa Claus* in Ottawa malls has already taken place at **Rideau Centre**, way back on November 14. He will also be appearing at malls at **Billing Bridge Plaza, Bayshore, St.**

Laurent, Place d'Orleans, Carlingwood and Hazeldean. Check online for days and times. There is also a very useful site at “**Where to Get Santa Photos in Ottawa**”. They even include a date dedicated to pet photos!

A “Sensory-Friendly Santa Visits Program”, in partnership with the *Autism Alliance of Canada*, has been initiated at all **Cadillac Fairview** malls. These are on a walk-in basis, no pre-payment needed. For a calmer experience, aim for the early morning slots, or off-peak weekday visits. Check online for booking requirements at each location.

You will also find *Santa* at smaller malls and numerous surprising locations during the month. The old boy certainly gets around!

National

For many **Indigenous** peoples across Canada, December is a time of reflection, rest, and renewal. The *Winter Solstice* holds deep spiritual meaning. It marks the longest night and the return of the sun, symbolizing balance, healing, and the renewal of life. Ceremonies and gatherings may include drumming, singing, feasting, and storytelling, often guided by Elders.

In some **First Nations** and **Métis** communities, this season is also part of the winter storytelling period, when sacred stories — especially those explaining creation, values, and the natural world — are shared only during the cold months (because winter is traditionally viewed as a time of reflection, when the land rests and stories can be told with proper respect). These traditions remind communities of their connection to the land, to one another, and to the *Creator* or *Great Spirit*.

There are three culturally-significant national celebrations observed during December:

1) *National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women*, solemnized on December 6, commemorates the 1989 École Polytechnique tragedy and calls on Canadians to confront gender-based violence in all its forms. Many churches, synagogues, and community groups hold vigils.

2) *National Observance of Human Rights Day* on December 10, is acknowledged in Canada as we are a member of the United Nations. Many faith-based organizations highlight prayers for justice, or host educational evenings.

3) *International Migrants Day* on December 18 is widely recognized in Canada. Churches, mosques, temples, and intercultural centres often participate in events supporting immigrant communities.

Global

World AIDS Day is observed world-wide on December 1. It honours those lost to HIV/AIDS, supports people living with the disease, and renews the global commitment to prevention, treatment, and ending stigma. The day is respected by vigils, memorial services, and interfaith gatherings.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities is celebrated on December 3 by many faith communities.

Winter Solstice Celebrations, running between December 21–22, are observed world-wide in various cultural or spiritual ways: **Pagan/Yule** traditions (see **Introduction**); **Scandinavian St. Lucia Festivals**; and **East Asian Dongzhi Festival** (family gatherings and ancestor honouring).

Kwanzaa (December 26 – January 1) honours African cultural values through principles like unity, creativity, and collective responsibility, uplifting community strength and shared heritage. It is considered important in the U.S. and is observed in several other countries. Some churches host *Kwanzaa*-related events.

Mission and Service

Update on Southminster's Givings:

As of the end of October, total M&S Givings were \$9,388.63. This represents 63% of our \$15,000 goal for 2025 (based on the same goal for 2024).

The breakdown of Givings is as follows:

Congregation	\$8,714.88
Easter	\$570.00
Thanksgiving	\$0.00
<u>M&S via Canada Helps</u>	<u>\$103.75</u>
Total	\$9,388.63

Thank you for your generous and thoughtful support of the church's work in Canada and overseas.

As usual, there will be a Christmas appeal beginning a few weeks before Christmas and advertised in STW. As well, you may be interested in looking at the “Gifts with Vision” catalogue as you prepare for Christmas. The link is: [Gifts with Vision | A Giving Catalogue from the United Church – Gifts with Vision - The United Church of Canada](#)

Here are some facts about one of the United Church’s partners mentioned in the last newsletter.

In 2024, M&S partnered with Astha Sansthan, an NGO in India. This organization *“was established in the year 1986 by a group of visionaries and philanthropists with long years of experience and interest in education, development and participatory practices of development. They believe in people’s strength and their capacities and strongly believe that, if people have been given an opportunity, they will be able to change their lives. They collectively dedicated their lives to addressing tribal and women’s issues in the southern part of Rajasthan.”*

Areas of work include: Access to quality and inclusive education, Climate Change and Environmental Regeneration, Women Empowerment, Work with “Differently Abled People”, Sustainable Livelihoods, Linkages to Government Social Security and Welfare Benefits, Strengthening Local Communities and their institutions, and work with Single Women.

If you have criticisms of, or suggestions for, items that might be included in this ongoing monthly newsletter, please send your ideas to:

LNGO@southminsterunitedchurch.com

Your LNGO Committee: Linda MacDonald, Paul Mullin, Heather Macfaden