

Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario

April 3, 2026

Good Friday

Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller

Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook

**Readers: Valerie Hindle, Janet Sutherland, Conrad Watters, Halayna Temple,
Amber Holdsworth Toller, John Temple, Rev. Susan Toller, David Pringle**

Prelude: Adagissimo from BWV 992 J.S. Bach

Welcome

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the importance of the land, which we call home. Since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have occupied and cared for this land.

We seek to live with respect and gratitude on this land.

We acknowledge the Anishinaabe Algonquin people on whose traditional and unceded land Southminster United Church is built.

We seek to live with respect and gratitude on this land.

We acknowledge the harm and mistakes of the past in our relations with Indigenous people.

We seek to live with respect and gratitude on this land.

We reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to improving relationships and our understanding of all Indigenous people and their cultures.

We seek to live with respect and gratitude on this land.

Lighting of the Candles

We light the Christ candle to remind us of Christ's presence among us. May this flame remind us we are loved and are not alone.

We light the Affirming candle to remind us that everyone is welcome here. We are all God's children and our community includes people of all cultural backgrounds, sexual orientations and gender identities. God loves all of us.

Call to Worship

We come today, remembering the gift of God's son. The Holy One gave us Jesus, So we could learn through the life of a being in human form. Jesus showed us how to love unconditionally, and this made some uncomfortable. On Good Friday, we open up to fear. We try to face our discomfort with the rejection of love. And how this opposition is present today. We are here.

Opening Prayer

Creator, we are here to face truth.

To bear witness to the love you keep shining on us.

We are here to reflect on your gift of Jesus

And celebrate how he opened our eyes.

Help us better understand how love can be taken away

So we might value your daily gifts, and spread your love freely.

Dramatic Reading: Stone Stories (inspired by Luke 19:40)

Jesus was greeted with people waving palms and Hallelujahs when he entered into Jerusalem on "Palm Sunday". Some Pharisees in the crowd asked Jesus to order his disciples to stop their joyful celebration. Jesus answered "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out" (Luke 19:40). This dramatic reading tells the story of Jesus' journey to the cross, through the perspectives of the stones under his feet.

The Triumphal Entry (Valerie Hindle)

I am a simple stone in the road, a cobblestone. The story I can tell you is one that you may already know. It is about Jesus, the Messiah everyone had been waiting for. As he headed toward Jerusalem, the people swarmed to meet him.

Jesus told his disciples to go into the next village and bring a colt that had never been ridden. They did so, and when the owners asked why they were taking their colt, the disciples answered, "Because the Lord has need of it."

The disciples surrounded Jesus, throwing their coats on the colt and on the ground before him as he rode into Jerusalem. It was amazing how quickly the word spread about Jesus. At first, there were just a few people on the streets. Then there were crowds. People were shouting and singing, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heaven."

It felt good to have the parade moving right over me. The cushioning of the cloaks was an added bonus, but I could still feel the vibrations and hear the sounds. I can still tell you what happened.

Most people were celebrating but the religious leaders were angry. They told Jesus to order his disciples to stop the racket, but Jesus answered them, “Truly I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out!”

He couldn't have been more correct. We stones not only wanted to speak, we wanted to shout out that Jesus was here!

Jesus Cleanses the Temple (*Janet Sutherland*)

When we entered Jerusalem, Jesus went directly to the temple. I am a stone in the courtyard where all the havoc occurred. Some will tell you that Jesus was vandalizing the temple...that he was a thug who should be arrested, but I am here to tell you that this man did not go to the temple in order to destroy it but to worship and pray. His righteous anger at those who had made the temple a marketplace was palpable. His cry was heartfelt and full of anger and frustration. “My house should be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.”

Then I heard him teaching about God's love and mercy. The chief priests, the scribes, and the elders all came to listen to Jesus' teachings. They asked him questions to try to trip him up, to discredit him in some way, but Jesus was crafty and wise. He refused to fall into their traps, and he always redirected his teachings back to God as the highest authority, even higher than the Sanhedrin, even higher than Rome.

I felt the Pharisees and the Sadducees whispering to one another. They were afraid of losing their power. And so they began to seek an opportunity to destroy him.

Hymn: God Weeps (MV 78)

Le Cénacle

Je suis une dalle de pierre, le seuil du Cénacle où Jésus est venu partager un repas de Pâque avec ses disciples. Lorsqu'ils se furent rassemblés autour de la table, Jésus prit le pain, le rompit et le leur donna en disant : « Ceci est mon corps, donné pour vous. Faites ceci en mémoire de moi. » Après avoir achevé leur souper, Jésus prit la coupe de vin et dit : « Cette coupe qui est versée pour vous est la nouvelle alliance en mon sang. »

Ils partagèrent ensemble ce repas sacré. Ils se racontèrent mutuellement toutes les paraboles et les enseignements de Jésus, et ils furent remplis d'émerveillement et de crainte. Puis j'entendis Jésus prononcer ces mots : « Celui qui me trahit est avec moi, et sa main est sur la table. » Je frissonnai intérieurement en sachant que l'un de ceux qui avaient posé le pied sur moi en franchissant le seuil de la chambre haute trahirait Jésus, trahirait celui qui est l'espoir du monde.

Praying in the Garden (*Conrad Watters*)

The news about Jesus spread and the crowds grew. Jesus led his disciples away from the crowd, up to the Mount of Olives. After they arrived, he said to them, "Pray that you do not come into the time of trial." Then he moved away from them and knelt down next to me. Many people come to my mount and some even kneel and pray. I think of it as my job to uphold these people, to give them a strong base, a firm foundation so that they can truly open up to God.

Never have I experienced a more honest and heart-wrenching prayer. “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done.” He was so anguished and yet so faithful. His sweat fell like great drops of blood onto my surface. I will never forget that night. I will sing of Jesus’ faithfulness until I have worn away into grains of sand.

L'arrestation de Jésus

La nouvelle de l’arrivée de Jésus se répandit aussi bien parmi ses disciples que parmi ses ennemis. Soudain, une foule arriva, menée par le disciple appelé Judas. Il embrassa Jésus, pour signaler à la foule que c’était bien celui qu’ils cherchaient. Et Jésus demanda : « Judas, c’est par un baiser que tu me trahis ? » Je sentais la semelle de bottes rugueuses sur mon dos... les bottes des soldats qui s’avançaient pour arrêter Jésus, et j’avais envie de crier : « Non ! N’arrêtez pas cet homme... il est l’espoir du monde. » Mais personne ne voulait m’écouter.

Jésus dit aux grands prêtres : « Êtes-vous venus avec des épées et des bâtons pour m’arrêter comme si j’étais un bandit ? Jour après jour, j’étais avec vous dans le temple pour enseigner, et vous ne m’avez pas arrêté. » Les soldats ne répondirent pas. Judas ne répondit pas. Ils emmenèrent simplement Jésus. Et tous les disciples s’enfuirent... même Pierre... Je me retrouvai seule dans le silence, espérant que quelqu’un entendrait mes cris.

Hymn: Bitter was the Night (VU 132)

Peter's Denial (*Halayna Temple*)

The rooster was relentless. He pecked and clucked, trying to get every last bug that tried, without success, to hide beneath my sharp edges. My courtyard was not fancy, not much more than a natural chicken coop, but that is where it happened. There were whispers and finger-pointing. There was fear and tension. "You were with him," accused a woman who sat near the fire. "You are one of them," declared another, pointing at Peter. And another said, "You are a Galilean! I'm sure you were with him." "I don't know what you are talking about. I don't know him!" Peter shouted. I was embarrassed for him, denying Jesus in that way. I'm not even sure he knew what he was doing until the rooster, standing right next to me, crowed. Peter suddenly realized what he'd done. He was so full of shame that he went out and began to sob.

I will forever associate a rooster's crow with the smell of fear and the weeping of a man dealing with deep shame and guilt.

The Trial (*Amber Holdsworth Toller*)

I am a stone in the steps of Pontius Pilate's palace. I felt the high priests dragging Jesus up my steps. The crowd accused Jesus of inciting trouble in their nation. They said that Jesus taught them not to pay taxes to Caesar. They claimed that Jesus said he was a king. But I have to tell you, I heard Pilate ask Jesus, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Did Jesus say yes? I can tell you as one who was there, he did not! He simply answered, "You say so."

Pilate sent Jesus and his accusers away. He tried to pass the buck to Herod since Jesus was from Galilee, which is under Herod's

jurisdiction. I can't tell you what happened at Herod's, but I can tell you what I heard when they returned. It didn't take long for Herod to send Jesus back to Pilate. Herod had asked Jesus to perform a sign. Jesus was not going to be somebody's sideshow so he simply remained silent, or at least that is what I heard when they returned.

The one thing I do know is that Pilate did not want to sentence Jesus to death. He tried hard to keep from having to condemn him. Pilate had Jesus flogged, right there on my steps. It was horrible to hear the crack of the whip, to feel the vicious vibrations, and to witness an innocent man being brutally struck time and time again.

Then Pilate offered to release Jesus instead of the murderer Barabbas. But the people cried out to release Barabbas and crucify Jesus. Pilate repeated his decision: "I have found no ground for the sentence of death. He's been flogged, that is enough. I will release him."

But the cry of the crowd grew louder and louder until it blocked out even Pilate's good sense. The shouts of "Crucify him" overwhelmed him and eventually wore him down until he gave them what they asked for. Pilate turned Jesus over, and they led him away to crucify him.

It was wrong! It was shameful! The lies that the crowd offered, the incessant chanting of "Crucify him!" It still vibrates within me when I remember that day.

Hymn: Were You There (VU 144)

The Crucifixion (*John Temple*)

People followed Jesus as he dragged a huge wooden cross through the streets. Some people laughed, others mocked him, women wept, and his friends cried as he arrived at Golgotha. The soldiers nailed him to the cross, and when they lifted it up, they placed rocks at the bottom to keep the cross upright. I was one of those stones. I felt Jesus cry out, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they are doing." Jesus was crucified between two criminals. The man to one side called out to Jesus, "Why don't you save yourself and us?" And the other said simply, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom," and Jesus replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

I heard his words and I had no doubt that they were true. I felt a deep holiness and reverence when I heard his prayer for others and his assurance that death is not the end. He helped me to believe that paradise is waiting. The life of a stone is much longer than that of human beings, but maybe one day in the far distant future, I can hope that there is a paradise for stones as well.

Hymn: Jesus Remember Me (VU 148)

Jesus' Death (*Rev. Susan Toller*)

I am a stone from the temple, a stone near the Holy of Holies in the centre of the temple. There is a curtain that is used to separate the area off limits to the public. Only the priests can enter the curtained-off area.

Now, the temple has been around for a long time, and I have been a fixture there for many years. I was not at Golgotha where Jesus was crucified, but when he died, the shock reverberated throughout the surrounding area. Right here in the temple, we felt our world shake. The curtain in the temple was torn from top to bottom right in my presence. The whole temple shook and rocks split. I know because I was one of those rocks torn asunder. I didn't understand at first what had torn me apart, but I listened and then I knew. One of his disciples came to the temple to pray and I heard him say that Jesus' last words were, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." It must have been at that moment that I was split right in two, and I will never be the same...the same is true of the world. After Jesus' death, we will never be the same.

**Anthem: Drop, Drop, Slow Tears by Orlando Gibbons
arr. David Blackwell**

Jesus' Burial (*David Pringle*)

I am a large stone. I have been carefully hewn to fit perfectly in front of Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. I can sit in silence and be at peace for years at a time just waiting to be useful. Not too many years ago, Joseph and his sons came and smoothed off all my rough edges so that I could be rolled in front of a tomb's entrance. I was just the right size to cover the opening and seal it completely. The day I felt the ground shake, I had no idea what was happening until Joseph, who was so full of love and grace, came with the body of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus had just been crucified and Joseph asked for the body so that it could be given

a proper burial. What a kind and generous thing to offer his own tomb to this man who had lost his life to a rabid crowd determined to snuff out his light. There were women who came with Joseph to prepare the body. It was Friday night and the sun was setting, which meant that the Sabbath was about to begin. There was no time before the Sabbath to properly anoint the body. It would have to wait through the night on Friday, through Saturday, and until the Sabbath was over at sundown on Saturday night. It would be dark then, so the women decided to return again when there was light to see by on Sunday morning, the third day. I was the only one who was there as Jesus' body lay in the tomb. I will have to wait until Easter to tell you what happened inside and how I was rolled away. There are such amazing stories that I and all the stones have to tell. And if you listen, you will feel the vibrations of our words and thoughts, you will hear us because we will not keep silent. Amen.

Dawn Garrett-Larsen, First Congregational Church, Canandaigua, N.Y.

Instruction

After the prayer feel free to remain in silence while we extinguish the candles and cover the cross. You are free to leave in silence when you are ready, but please remain in the sanctuary as long as you like.

Benediction and Sending Forth

Jesus' life was extinguished on the cross. It is painful to think about his suffering. It is disturbing to consider life without Jesus, as it is for so many people today.

May God bless you and provide you comfort, as we journey through Holy Saturday and wait for the risen Christ to appear. You are not alone. Go in peace.

Veiling of the Cross and Extinguishing of Candles

Exit in Silence

Ushers/Counters: Heather Mcfadden

As the people of Southminster United Church, we affirm and actively support the life experience of all. All persons are invited to take part in every aspect of church life including membership, leadership, celebration of life passages and marriage. We are committed to following Jesus' example as we embrace people of all ages, racialized groups, genders, sexual orientations, gender identities, ethnic origins, economic circumstances and differing abilities and challenges in the ministry and life of Southminster United Church.



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