

Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario

March 15, 2026

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller

Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook

Readers : Aidan MacNaull

Prelude: Morning Prayer from Album for the Young - Tchaikovsky

Welcome

Land Acknowledgement

When we come together we gather in a time and place. This place is the unsundered, unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. This land has been a source of life and wisdom for this community(ies) long before settlers arrived here.

With an intention of truthfulness, we also acknowledge the ways settlers have erased the unique gender identities and sexualities of Indigenous nations on Turtle Island. As we seek to decolonize our life and worship we acknowledge that white-settler culture has done significant harm to both Indigenous and white-settler communities, by imposing rigid ideas, gender norms and sexual identities. It is after acknowledging these two truths we enter into worship this morning.

Lighting of the Candles

We come to celebrate the love of the Creator—for us, for this community, for all Creation. This love reaches into our lives, inspiring us to reach out across social divides—around the corner and around the world. Will we answer the invitation to share this love to make a difference? We light this candle to celebrate the light of Christ, the one who offers unconditional love and acceptance.

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 from many places, with different stories and hands ready to work.

God who made us calls us to weave life together.

Let us worship in the delights of diversity, and to God who knits community from thread and grace.

We come to craft community, to listen, to heal, to commit.

Come let us worship God who calls us together today.

Opening Prayer

Holy God,
We ask you to open our minds to the gifts of Creation and the joys of diversity.
You made us as a reflection of you.
Yet sometimes we don't see you in each person we meet.
Lift us up from this blindness, and help us celebrate all of your children.
Amen.

Opening Hymn: Draw the Circle Wide MV 145

Refrain:

**Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.**

**God the still-point of the circle,
'round whom all creation turns;
nothing lost, but held forever,
in God's gracious arms.**

**Let our hearts touch far horizons,
so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders,
faithful to God's call.**

**Let the dreams we dream be larger,
than we've ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us,
open every door.**

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1998 Wood Lake Books

Passing of the Peace/ Greeting Time

Prayer of Confession

**Living God, it can be hard
to walk the path ahead of us.
There are potholes and barriers,
storms and sweltering heat,
even hecklers throwing stones.
Standing firm and walking tall
can be a scary thing.
It's all too easy to hunch our backs,
to hide our faces**

**and shuffle our feet.
But you gave us one another.
Companions, to wrap arms around weary shoulders,
to walk in solidarity with one another.**

Words of Assurance

Be assured, friends, that we are not alone;
never alone in this family of God.

Jesus tells us to come,
all who are tired and overwhelmed,
and we will find rest and
companionship together.

For that we say:

Amen.

Anthem: Ubi Caritas - Ola Gjeilo

Scripture Readings and Reflection: PIE Day

Prayer of Illumination

Holy God, open our hearts and minds to your Word. May our souls respond with gratitude.

Colossians 3:12-15

Therefore, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

Reflection

1 Corinthians 12: 12-26

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose.

If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect, whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

Reflection

Isaiah 58: 6–12

Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you;
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.

The Lord will guide you continually
and satisfy your needs in parched places
and make your bones strong,
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water
whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;

you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to live in.

Reflection

Celebration of Diversity

Hymn: There is Room for All (MV 62)

**There is room for all in the shadow of God's wing;
there is room for all, sheltered in God's love.
And I rejoice and sing,
"My refuge and my rock, in whom I trust."
There is room for all, there is room for all!**

Repeat

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Invitation of Offering

We make our offering as a way of showing our commitment to the light that is needed in our communities and in the world around us. Please give as you are able. We recognize that many people give their skills and talents, and that some people contribute online. Let us now pass the offering plate around.

Presentation of the Offering: What Can I Do? (MV 191)

**What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.**

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Offering Prayer

As followers of Jesus, we give you this offering, O God. We trust the talents and gifts we contribute this week will help those who are suffering, and lift up the richness of diversity in your kin-dom.

Prayers of the People

Living and Loving God,

May our mouths and hands be tools of justice.

Parent, Teacher and Spirit...

We pray for those harmed by bad theology, carelessly spouted from pulpits, pews and dinner tables. We know that these ideas hurt and kill. Protect your children, God, surround them with a phalanx of strength and compassion. Raise up a community around them, our community, who will shield them under our wing.

Living and Loving God,

May our mouths and hands be tools of justice.

We pray for those turned away from their homes because of who they are, who they love, or the ways they express their authentic selves. Open up new homes and communities for them where they are fully accepted. Draw them to you with the warm glow of your loving hearth. Raise up a new dwelling place for them, our community, who will welcome and embrace them as one of our own.

Living and Loving God,

May our mouths and hands be tools of justice.

We pray for those searching for their true self and purpose in a confusing world. Allow the person you created them to be to break through the noise and competition, allowing them to live fully into their intended self. Manifest in them your Spirit of confidence and creation. Raise up a mirror for them, our community, where they can see their wondrous self reflected.

Living and Loving God,

May our mouths and hands be tools of love.

Transform us, Creating and Recreating Spirit, in your ever-divine image. An image expressed in the diversity of the created world. Allow us not to be held back by past versions of ourselves, but to find liberation in the unfolding of our lives. While growing in us compassion and understanding for who we once were. Help us to honour our past, present and future selves.

Living and Loving God,

May our mouths and hands be tools of justice.

Reveal your radical Kingdom, not just a little more each day, but in great sweeps of justice and mercy. Opening up new paths in front of us, strengthening our weary limbs when we feel rundown. We want to see your dream for our world revealed in our life time, kingdom come and will be done. We want to be a part of your Great Working of Love.

Living and Loving God,

May our mouths and hands be tools of justice.

We also name specific concerns and joys from our community now... [take time to name]

Living and Loving God,

May our mouths and hands be tools of justice.

The Prayer of Jesus - Alternate Version (VU 916)

**Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo
through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed
by peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done
by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.
With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
For you reign in the glory of the power that is love,
now and for ever. Amen.**

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Announcements

Closing Hymn: Queerly Beloved (TLUS 31)

**Queerly beloved, we have assembled,
Joining in wonder, singing in praise.
Lifting our eyes, raising our voices,
Trusting in hope, in love, and in faith.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, God is great.**

**Queerly beloved, we have been hated,
Treated as outcasts, ragged and rough.
Still we persist, joyous and grateful,
Trusting that grace is ever enough.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, God is love.**

**Queerly beloved, we have discovered
Love that is perfect, ending our fear.
There is a truth waiting to claim us.
There is a call so strong and so clear.
Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, God is here.**

*Words and music: Amanda Udis-Kessler, 2019, after I John 4:18. Arrangement: Jason D. Locke, 2024. Words and music
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Benediction and Sending Forth

As you leave this place,
when you meet anger, speak with love.
When you meet fear, speak with hope.
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.
But no matter what, speak this good news.
For the good news of the gospel is
love and justice for all.
It is joy that surprises,
and nonviolence that transforms.
The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,
so go forth speaking.
For if you won't, then who will?
Thanks be to God
for this good, good news.
Amen.

Postlude: Du, O schönes Weltgebäude! (You, O beautiful building of the world!) by Dame Ethel Smyth

Coffee Time

Scripture readings are from the New Revised Standard Version (Updated Edition) of the Bible.

Most of the prayers and inspiration for this service came from Tori Mullen and Jane Thirikwa, United Church of Canada

Coffee Host: Paul Mullin
Ushers/Counters: Gerald Ohashi/ Janet Sutherland

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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