

Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario

December 7th, 2025

Second Sunday in Advent

Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller

Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook

Reader: Valerie Hindle

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Territorial Acknowledgement

*Adapted from a land acknowledgement by Rev. Mitchell Anderson at Golden Ears United Church

Long ago, all of this land was covered by ice

Clothed in a winter without end

But God our Creator brought back the warmth

Pulling back the ice and revealing this land

Plants and animals returned to the land

And it was good

Then God gave to the land a people

And a people to the land

To care for one another

To live together

And in this time, we acknowledge we worship on Turtle Island.

We are on the traditional and unceded land of the Anishnaabe Algonquin people.

We celebrate all who make this place a home

We celebrate the promise of hope

Hope for a future good beyond imagining

When all will share this land together

in hope, peace, joy and love. Amen

Lighting of the Candles

Call to Worship

Family of faith, God is at work!

God is healing and creating,

redeeming and dreaming,

calling and sending,

listening and loving.

Yes, indeed, God is at work!

So may we worship our God who never gives up.

May we worship our God who holds onto hope.

Amen.

Opening Prayer

Come, Emmanuel, into this heart we share as your people,
as your body in Christ, your church.

Come, Emmanuel, meet us in the frailty of our human flesh.

Come, Emmanuel, find us in our longing and desire for serenity and peace.

Come, Emmanuel, dance with us.

Come, Emmanuel, light up our hearts.

Come, Emmanuel, use us to prepare the way for a new day, where we recognize you and cherish your earth: star and soil, breath and light, this moment and every moment, your gift to each of us in life itself.

Come, Emmanuel, our hope is in you.

Wendy MacLean, Brockville, Ont.

Opening Hymn: Come Touch Our Hearts (MV 12, verses 1 - 3)

**Come touch our hearts that we may know compassion,
from failing embers build a blazing fire;
love strong enough to overturn injustice,
to seek a world more gracious, come touch and bless our hearts.**

**Come touch our souls that we may know and love you,
your quiet presence all our fears dispel;
create a space for spirit to grow in us,
let life and beauty fill us, come touch and bless our souls.**

**Come touch our minds and teach us how to reason,
set free our thoughts to wonder and to dream;
help us to open doors of understanding,
to welcome truth and wisdom, come touch and bless our minds.**

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Passing of the Peace/ Greeting Time

Lighting of the Advent Candles (Hope Is a Star (Voices United 7 vs. 1 and 2))

**Hope is a star that shines in the night,
leading us on till the morning is bright.**

Refrain

**When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.**

**Peace is a ribbon that circles the earth,
Giving a promise of safety and worth. Refrain**

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Prayer of Assurance

Family of faith,
in our honesty,
we are heard.

In our worries,
we are held.

In our failings,
we are forgiven.

In our fear,
we are not alone.

Friends, this is the good news of the gospel!
When we're running out of hope, God is still at work.

Thanks be to God!
Amen.

Prayer for Understanding

Merciful God,
we need bread and we need laughter.
We need music and we need a hand to hold.
We need a chair to sit in and we need work to do.
But maybe more than anything,
we need your Word and a reason to hope.
So move through this space today
and speak to us as only you can.
Speak a word of hope deep into our weary bones.
For we need bread and we need laughter,
but most of all, we need you.
Amen.

Lectionary Readings

Isaiah 43: 19 - 21

I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and

the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Matthew 11:1-11

Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.

Messengers from John the Baptist

When John heard in prison what the Messiah[a] was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, “Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?” Jesus answered them, “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

Jesus Praises John the Baptist

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What, then, did you go out to see? Someone[c] dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet?[d] Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’ “Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem: Kites *written for the Children of Gaza* by Samia Odeh

Sermon: When We’re Running out of Hope, God is at Work

Musical Offering

Invitation of Offering

We make our offering today with hopeful hearts, trusting that the Holy One who comes to us will bless our gifts and our lives, to make us signs of hope in the world God loves.

Presentation of the Offering: Grateful - (MV 182)

Refrain

**Grateful for the life you give us,
thankful for your Holy Son,
joyful in your Spirit flowing over all,
O God of Love.
Grateful for the Bread of Heaven,**

**thankful for your Holy Word,
joyful in your mercy flowing,
we will praise you.**

**You are more than we imagine,
Ancient, Holy, Living Lord.
Even when we doubt your presence
you are faithful to your Word.**

**May our lives proclaim your justice,
may our voices sing your praise.
May our hands work in your service
to the glory of your name.**

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Offering Prayer

Holy and Righteous God, we offer our gifts with humble hearts, knowing the needs in your world are great and our gifts alone will never fill that need. We offer our gifts in hope that you will bless them and use them to help fulfil your purpose revealed in Jesus Christ, Saviour of us all. **Amen.**

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

God of starlight,
there are days when beauty catches us by surprise.
There are days when joy bubbles up inside us,
when hope grows wings and soars beyond us,
when love is so big and so real that it is all we can see.
There are days when all seems right in the world,
but not every day.
There are other days, God, when, like John the Baptist,
we find ourselves wondering where we could possibly go from here.
We find ourselves wondering if we really did make a difference,
or if change was a lost cause all along.
You know the kind of days we speak of, God.
We lament days with ambulance sirens and phone calls from the doctor.
Days of loneliness and haunting news reports.
Days spent at the cemetery or the jail.
Days when the suffering and injustice of the world feels particularly close.
There are so many ways our hope can run dry.

Are there any specific experiences of grief you would like prayers for? You may voice them aloud or express them to God silently.

God of starlight,
when the weight of the world presses in on us,
when injustice and suffering feel like the dominant narrative,
when hope begins to slip through our hands, run toward us.
Remind us of the birds that sing in the morning.
Remind us of the groups of people that have always made a difference.
Remind us of the work this church has done.
Remind us of the work our hands are capable of, and the love our heart already knows.
Are there any prayers of joy and gratitude you would like to share out loud? You may also speak them silently to God.
And just like you, we will continue to remind each other of your presence in our world.
As just as you do, we will continue to tell each other the stories of the hungry being fed,
the sick being healed, the captives being released, and the lion lying with the lamb.
And until that promised day, we will continue to pray, saying. . .

The Lord's Prayer

Our Mother and 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.

Closing Hymn: I am Walking a Path of Peace (MV 221, repeat twice)

**I am walking a path of peace,
I am walking a path of peace,
I am walking a path of peace,
lead me home, lead me home.**

**I am walking a path of love,
I am walking a path of love,
I am walking a path of love,
lead me home, lead of love.**

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Benediction and Sending Forth

The word we have been given this day is peace.

May we carry peace on our journey throughout this week, the peace we have encountered and experienced in this place.

May we offer the vision of peace to all we meet.

May we share the blessing that we have received, this day and always. Amen.

Bill Steadman, Goulais River U.C., Goulais River, Ont.

Postlude

Coffee Time

Most of the prayers in this service are by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

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

**Coffee Host: Valerie Hindle/ Starr Cameron-Wright
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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