

**Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario**

**April 19, 2026**

**Earth Sunday**

**Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller**

**Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook**

**Guest Musician: Jeff Holdsworth (guitar)**

**Reader : Aidan MacNaull**

**Prelude:** River Flows in You by Yiruma

**Welcome**

**Land Acknowledgement**

We worship on the unceded and unsundered land of the Algonquin Anishinaabe people. They have cared for this land where we live for millenia.

During this time of the **Maple Sugar Moon**, I have learned to appreciate the teachings of the Anishinaabe people, who have tapped maple trees for a long time before us. My family and I make maple syrup. I have learned to thank the trees for the sweet sap they offer to us, rather than just taking this much coveted resource. Showing reciprocity and gratefulness is something I've learned from Robin Wall Kimmerer through her book "Braiding Sweetgrass".

Let's be grateful for the Algonquin Anishinaabe and the First Nations, Metis and Inuit people who continue to offer their gifts to this area.

## **Lighting of the Candles**

We light this candle to celebrate the light of Christ, the one who showed us how to live and care for everyone and everything in Creation.

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

## **Call to Worship**

Come all who seek the way of love,  
To praise and worship the God of extravagant welcome,  
Come all who seek vitality,  
To praise and worship the God of abundant life,  
Come all who seek connection,  
To praise and worship the God of all Creation.

## **Opening Prayer**

Our kin, the flora and fauna are calling,  
The earth, the sea, and the sky join in,  
Mother earth is hurting they cry  
We need you to act with us they call  
We need you to join us in the restoring Creation  
So that our mother may flourish once more.  
We need you, they plead.  
Discerning God,  
How do we faithfully respond to these calls?  
*(moment of silence)*  
What would you have us do?  
How would you like us to act?

Guide us, we pray and lead us towards transformative actions.  
Amen.

## **Opening Hymn: It's a Song of Praise to the Maker (MV 30)**

### **Passing of the Peace/ Greeting Time**

#### **Litany of Environmental Lament and Repentance From Melanesia**

God of the whole human race. You have given us responsibility to care for each other. But we have exploited and hated each other by our wickedness.

We turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Please help us to look to you and care for each other.

Lord in your mercy

#### **Hear our prayer**

O God of creation. You have created land for us to make our gardens and for trees, animals and all living creatures on the earth. Forgive us for our destruction of the land by logging and poisonous chemicals.

We turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Help us, O Lord to care for the land that you have given us.

Lord in your mercy

#### **Hear our prayer**

God of the universe, the ocean and of love. You have given us the ocean for fish, shells, reefs, whales, waves, corals, and for ships and boats. We have destroyed the ocean and everything in it, and not cared for it.

We turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Please help us to care for the ocean, and to

recognise that it is your blessing for us.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

God of the forest, in which all living things survive and engage their life and move peacefully. You have given us wisdom, knowledge and understanding to use our resources well in a manageable manner. We have been careless, short-sighted, and selfish and failed to share with other people throughout the world.

We turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Please help us to think positively of your

goodness and loving kindness. Please help us to see the needs of others as you have seen us living in your beautiful forest.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

God of the universe, the God who created the atmosphere. By your power of creation, you made the sky so beautiful, the sun to give us light during the day and the moon and the stars to give light during the night. You have given us clouds to bring rain and give life to your creatures.

Lord, we turn to you with a penitent heart for all the destruction we have caused to the atmosphere.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

Merciful God, God of love and everything in this world. You have created the rain, winds, storms, cyclones, earthquakes, volcanoes and floods to renew your creation. Help us to understand their existence in your world.

We turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Please, Father, forgive us for the human activities which have overpowered the weather and caused destruction of our environment.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

God you are our creator, the source of all wisdom and power. You have created humans and animals and you have appointed us humans to be responsible for them.

Forgive us who destroy your creatures. We turn to you in sorrow and repentance. Help us Lord to love and to care for them as you care for us.

Lord in your mercy

**Hear our prayer**

*Written by members of the four Religious Orders in the Anglican Church of Melanesia (Melanesian Brotherhood, Society of St Francis, Community of the Sisters of the Church, Community of the Sisters of Melanesia). The Anglican Church of Melanesia includes 9 dioceses in the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. It is one of the areas of the world most vulnerable to climate change due to sea level rise. To find out more about the impacts of climate change: <https://abcnews.go.com/International/solomon-islands-disappear-pacific-ocean-result-climate-change/story?id=38985469>*

**Affirmation of Faith (Adapted from Romans 8)**

In the end, we believe that love will transform us.

The current climate emergency compels us to act for the love of Creation.

Our faith teaches us that acts of love, no matter the size, strengthens the love that we share with one another and with Creation.

While our hope and love can be tested, it cannot be measured.

No act of sincere love is ever wasted.

We believe that in all things, we are strengthened through Christ who loves us and all of God's Creation.

And with this strength, we are convinced that there is nothing  
neither death nor life  
neither angels nor rulers,  
nor suffering, nor fear,  
nor things present, nor things to come  
nor powers, nor height, nor depth,  
nor anything else,  
that will be able to separate us from our Creator and their Good  
Creation.

### **Prayer of Illumination**

Holy Love, open our hearts, our minds, and our lives to the living Spirit, that we may appreciate the wonders of your Creation. Amen.

### **Scripture Reading**

#### **Genesis 1**

When God began to create the heavens and the earth, the earth was complete chaos, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And God saw that the light was good, and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the

dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.” So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the

waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth.” And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, “Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.” And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

**Anthem: Let Justice Roll like a River - Marty Haugen**

**Reflection**

## **Hymn: O Beautiful Gaia (MV 41)**

**Mission and Service Story:** Paul Mullin

### **Invitation of Offering**

We so often take for granted the breaths we take, the sips of water we drink, and solid ground beneath our bodies holding us up, yet we are deeply grateful for each breath, each sip, each patch of earth we share. In gratitude, we give our offering.

*David Lander, while at Castleton-Grafton P.C., Grafton, Ont.*

### **Presentation of the Offering: Sing, Thanks to our God (TLUS 58)**

#### **Offering Prayer**

With our time, with our talents, with our treasures and with our trust, we respond to the cries of Creation. Bless our actions in this offering, and may they bear fruit beyond our imagining. For the sake of your Creation. Amen

#### **Prayers of the People**

Many of us were taught to pray by bowing our heads and folding our hands. In some faith traditions, people pray with their eyes open or with a rocking motion. Some kneel or bow with their head to the ground or cross themselves. In all these movements, we recognize that our bodies are also part of our prayers.

As you are comfortable and able, I invite you to close your eyes and place your hands on your face, very gently. Feel or imagine your hands cupping your face, as if it is being held with great love. Let this very gentle touch declare to you that you are beloved. You are held in love by God. Your life is sacred, a gift of God.

*(a time of silence)*

Now I invite you to imagine the hands of God holding the great, round earth with the same love, the love that lives and moves in all life. Earth is sacred, a gift of God. The earth is God's body, our body, the body of Christ, the church of all creation. May we live as beloved, honouring this trust, this call, this relationship. We join in this ongoing prayer together, sharing the power of love:

Holy One, Tender Life of All Life, Spirit of Gentleness, receive the prayers of our heart. We pray as a community, joining our prayers to the prayers of the forests, who pray in leaf and flower; joining our prayers to the prayers of rivers, flowing to the source; joining our prayers to the prayers of planets and stars, in languages of light and darkness.

We pray as members of one human family, longing for healing.

We pray as the followers of Jesus who travelled on dusty roads, teaching and sharing the good news of your life in us and with us.

We pray together, not because we are good, but because you love us and our earth needs us.

*Wendy MacLean, Brockville, Ont.*

As we lift these prayers to the Divine, let us sing the words Jesus taught us:

### **The Prayer of Jesus - VU 959**

**Our Creator in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil  
for the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,  
now and for ever.**

*Music copyright © 1986 G.I.A. Publications, Inc*

## **Announcements**

**Closing Hymn: Where the green will rise again (TLUS 157)**

## **Benediction and Sending Forth**

May we have the wisdom to discern,  
The courage to act,  
And the compassion to serve.  
May our faithful loving actions  
protect God's reaction,  
reflect Christ's justice, and  
share the Spirit's hope to present and future generations.  
And May the abundant Grace of God  
The extravagant love of Christ  
And the transformational power of the Holy Spirit be with us all  
As we act each day for Creation.

*(Parts of this blessing are adapted from a prayer by Rev. Shepherd Munikwa)*

**Postlude: "Fireweed" from *Canadian Floral Emblems* by Beverley McKiver**

## **Coffee Time**

*Many of the prayers and inspiration for this service are from "Easter Sunday Prayer Service 2026"  
(United Church of Canada)p. Scripture readings are from the New Revised Standard Version  
(Updated Edition) of the Bible.*

**A special thank you to Jeff Holdsworth for sharing his  
music with us.**

**Coffee Host: Starr Cameron-Wright  
Ushers/Counters: Heather Macfaden/ Paul Mullin**

**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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