

Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario

November 30th, 2025

First Sunday in Advent

Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller

Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook

Guest Musicians: Margaret and Don Macpherson

Reader: Aidan MacNaull

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

On Sundays and Mondays,

on good days and bad days,

early in the morning and very late at night,

here in this room, and out in the world,

God, we long for you to break in.

Meet us in this space.

Surprise us with your presence.

Fill this room with your good news.

With hope, we sing, we worship, we pray. Amen!

Opening Prayer

Loving and merciful God, we have come together awaiting the birth of peace on earth, goodwill to all people.

This we seek and pray for, time and time again.

Bless us with your love and grace on this day and forevermore, we pray.

Help us to open our hearts to others: family, friends, strangers—neighbours all, even as you welcome us into your loving presence.

Help us to give of ourselves, we pray, in new relationships and in old, that we may reflect your love and peace and grace.

Help us to love, cherish, and share, and to be both loving and loved, today, tomorrow, and forever.

O come, O come, Emmanuel. Amen.

George Allan, Chatham, Ont.

Opening Hymn: All Earth is Waiting (VU 5)

All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,

and open furrows await the seed of God.

All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;

it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,

"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel."

One whose name is "God with us," our Saviour shall be,

through whom hope will blossom once more within our hearts.

Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain,

open new highways, new highways for our God,

who is now coming closer, so come all and see,

and open the doorways as wide as wide can be.

In lowly stable the Promised One appeared.

Yet, feel that presence throughout the earth today,

for Christ lives in all Christians and is with us now;

again, on arriving, Christ brings us liberty.

Words: Catalanian, Alberto Taulé 1972, English trans. Gertrude C. Suppe 1987, alt. Music: Alberto Taulé 1972, barm. Skinner Chávez-Melo 1988. Words and music copyright © 1993 Centro de Pastoral Litúrgica. Translation copyright ©1989 The United Methodist Publishing House Harmony copyright © 1989 Skinner Chávez-Melo. Used by permission of Juan Francisco Chávez.

Passing of the Peace/ Greeting Time

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

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

Words: Brian Wren 1985; Music: Joan Collier Fogg 1987. Words and music copyright © 1989 Hope Publishing Company. Reprinted under OneLicense.net A-717627

Prayer of Assurance

Family of faith, even when we doubt God's presence, even when we fail to notice God's fingerprints in this world, God is always moving closer to us. Hear and believe the good news this Advent season:

**Nothing can keep God's love away. We are seen. We are forgiven. We are not alone.
Amen.**

Prayer for Understanding

Ever-present God, in the time of Moses, you spoke through water in the desert and a pillar of smoke. In the time of the judges, you spoke through the prophets. In the time of Herod, you spoke through angel choruses and unlikely miracles. In every time you have been speaking. So today, in our time, we ask that you would speak again. Break through the chatter and the distraction of our weary minds and speak to us once more. With hope we pray, amen.

Lectionary Readings

Lamentations 3:55-57

I called on your name, O Lord,
from the depths of the pit;
you heard my plea, "Do not close your ear
to my cry for help, but give me relief!"
You came near when I called on you;
you said, "Do not fear!"

Luke 1:5-13

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was descended from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. But they had no children because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years. Once when he was serving as priest

before God during his section's turn of duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord to offer incense. Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified, and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Anthem: Advent Carol - Don Besig with Margaret (violin)

Sermon: We long for the hope God brings

Musical Offering: Gesu Bambino piano trio with Margaret (violin) and Don Macpherson (cello)

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.**

Words and music: Tom Tomaszek, 2003; arr. Sarah Hart and Tom Tomaszek, 2003

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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

Inbreaking God, every time we read the story of Zechariah in the temple, we remember that you are a God that draws near. You are a God that breaks into the messy middle of our lives to offer hope, love, and good news. You are a God who sees our fears and offers words of comfort.

So once more, present God, we bow our heads. Once more we quiet the racing thoughts in our minds. Once more we allow our spirits to lean toward you like trees in the wind. And as we do, we bring you our prayers.

God, today we are grateful for the many amazing things in this world that leave us speechless.

Thank you for the beauty of nature as we welcome a new season.

Thank you for the contagious joy of children.

Thank you for homemade meals and the kindness of strangers.

Thank you for music that buoys our spirits, and scripture that points to your presence.

Thank you for blessing me with the opportunity to serve Southminster United.

It can be hard to put into words how grateful we truly are. However, in addition to prayers of gratitude, gracious God, we also bring you prayers of grief.

We know that Zechariah and Elizabeth were no strangers to grief or longing.

We know that for years they prayed for a child that never came.

So this morning we also pray for those, who like them, have longed for children and found grief instead. God, we lift up the members of this community who have walked similar journeys of infertility.

We pray for those who lie in hospital beds, desperate for good news.

We pray for those who cannot put food on the table and wonder how they'll keep the lights on. We pray for children that feel overlooked, and for adults that feel heartbreakingly alone.

Holy One, we ask for peace in a world of conflict - we send our prayers to the Middle East, to Ukraine, Sudan and Haiti.

God, the hurt and longing in this world is enough to leave us speechless.

So just as you did for Zechariah, speak to us.

Remind us that we are not alone and that our prayers have been heard.

And as you do, and as we wait, we will join our voices together to pray the prayer your son taught us 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: We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection (VU 586)

**We shall go out with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;
tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed:
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within the vision of new life in Christ.

We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping,
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story,
including all in circles of our love.**

*Words: June Boyce-Tillman 1993. Music: Traditional Irish melody, arr. John Barnard 1982. Words copyright © 1993 Stainer & Bell Ltd.
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Benediction and Sending Forth

The word we have been given this day is hope.
May we carry hope on our journey throughout this week, the hope we have encountered
and experienced in this place.
May we offer the vision of hope 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

Tree Trimming and 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: Brian Kinsley/ Donald Tarte
Ushers/Counters: Margaret Isaac & Mona/Jeff McNeil

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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Make a DONATION

Please consider making a donation to assist the operation and mission of the church. This QR code will take you to the donation page on our website or visit southminsterunitedchurch.com/donate



It is with great sadness that we report the death of **Christine Lynn Hewlett**, the daughter of the Reverend Stewart Hewlett, and his wife, Doreen. Reverend Stewart Hewlett was a beloved, long term minister of Southminster.

Southminster extends heartfelt condolences and love to the family.

Further details are available from the Ottawa Citizen, Saturday, November 22nd.
