

**Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario**

**January 25, 2026**

**Third Sunday after Epiphany**

**Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller**

**Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook**

**Reader: Nancy Watters**

**Prelude:**

**Welcome and Announcements**

**Territorial 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**

These short days of January, we yearn for light. We must wake up before dawn breaks, and night descends upon us early in the evening. Oh, how we crave light. Into this reality, has come Jesus the Christ, the One we call the Light of the World. It is with that assurance that we light the Christ candle.

*Laura J. Turnbull, Penticton, B.C.*

Our hearts also yearn for light to shine on all people. Everyone needs to feel loved and bathed in God's brightness. 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

In the quiet darkness of night, God comes to us.

**God calls to us, inviting us to a life of deep spirituality and bold discipleship.**

And so, we respond to God's call by coming and worshipping this day, that we might be inspired, equipped, and sent forth to live the gospel out in the world, by loving and serving our neighbours.

**Let us worship the God made known in Jesus Christ.**

*Taylor Croissant, Southminster U.C., Lethbridge, Alta.*

## Opening Prayer

How we long to understand, O God,  
the simple logic of Light;

The power of a single glow to dispel darkness;  
the capacity of a single spark to create warmth;  
the immense energy in a single drop of sunlight.

It's a simple logic, this message you speak:  
the light shines in the darkness,  
and the darkness cannot overcome it;

We praise you for the light,  
and for it's simple resistance to darkness;  
We praise you for the radiance  
that never ceases to stream into us and our world,

And we praise you for the tinder that you have placed within us  
that waits patiently and quietly  
for us to allow a single ember into our hearts  
so that we might be set ablaze with You.

*John van de Laar, [www.sacredise.com](http://www.sacredise.com)*

## Opening Hymn: We Are One (VU 402)

**We are one as we come,  
as we come, joyful to be here,  
in the praise on our lips  
there's a sense that God is near.  
We are one as we sing,  
as we seek, we are found;  
and we come needful of God's grace  
as we meet, together in this place.**

We are one as we share,  
as we share brokenness and fear,  
in the touch of a hand  
there's a sense that God is here.  
We are one as we care,  
as we heal, we are healed;  
and we share warmth in God's embrace  
as we pray together in this place.

We are one as we feast,  
as we feast, peace becomes the sign;  
in the bread and the wine  
there's a sense of love divine.

We are one as we come,  
as we feed, we are fed;  
and we feel God's refreshing grace  
as we meet at table in this place.

We are one as we hear,  
as we hear, heart and hand unite;  
in the word we receive  
there's a sense that God is light.

We are one as we leave,  
as we love, we are loved;  
and we seek justice in God's ways  
as we move together from this place.

Words: Doreen Lankshear-Smith 1988. Music: Jeeva Sam 1987, arr. David Kai 1995. Words copyright 1988 Doreen Lankshear-Smith. Music copyright ©1995 Jeeva Sam. Arrangement copyright©1995 David Kai.

### **Sufi Prayer for Peace**

Send your peace, O Lord, which is perfect and everlasting,  
that our souls may radiate peace.  
Send your peace, O Lord,  
that we may think, act, and speak harmoniously.  
Send your peace, O Lord,  
that we may be contented and thankful for your bountiful gifts.  
Send your peace, O Lord,  
that amidst our worldly strife we may enjoy your bliss.  
Send your peace, O Lord,  
that we may endure all, tolerate all in the thought of your grace and mercy.  
Send your peace, O Lord,  
that our lives may become a divine vision,  
and in your light all darkness may vanish.

**Send your peace, O Lord, our Father and Mother,  
that we your children on earth may all unite in one family.**

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

#### **Prayer of Confession**

God of Presence and Light,  
We like to imagine that we are bold and strong,  
that there is nothing that can frighten us  
But, we are not strangers to trembling,  
Our doubt leaves us feeling alone and afraid,  
and our hiding brings much rejection to You and to others.  
Forgive us, Lord, **and help us.**

Our self-centredness leaves us feeling deprived and poor,  
and our grabbing results in great need.  
Forgive us, Lord, **and help us.**

Our short-sightedness leaves us uncertain and insecure  
and our lack of listening divides and separates.  
Forgive us, Lord, **and help us.**

Somewhere inside of us we do believe,  
we do trust and we do love;  
The simple gifts of worship and love that we offer now are tokens of this faith;  
signs of our thanksgiving  
and of our longing to be more bold in following You.  
May our gifts and our lives be Your instruments  
of healing and comfort;  
For the sake of all in our world who grieve, all who despair,  
and all who live in want and hatred.  
In Jesus' Name.

Amen.

*John van de Laar, [www.sacredise.com](http://www.sacredise.com)*

#### **Prayer of Assurance**

Family of faith,  
The darkness loves to parade itself,  
to draw our attention and steal our energy,  
with fearful threats  
and dire prophecies of doom;  
and we all too easily give it just what it seeks.

But, if we can just drag our gaze away  
we discover that there is another reality;  
that God's light shines undimmed,  
that God's care is undiminished,  
that God's strength and protection  
are unfailing.

And so, even in the midst of pain, suffering, evil  
even when it seems the light of the Holy One is almost out,  
we choose to remain under the shadow of the wings of the Divine;  
to trust in God's salvation,  
to speak God's words,  
and to dispel the darkness  
by lighting the flame of faith again  
in our hearts.  
Amen.

*Adapted from John van de Laar, [www.sacredise.com](http://www.sacredise.com)*

### **Prayer of Illumination**

O you, who enlighten the rational with the knowledge of your greatness, enlighten, O my Lord, my thoughts that I may meditate upon your holy and divine Scriptures at every hour, O Lord of all, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit for ever.

*(From "Prayers of The Hallowing of Addai and Mari Disciples of the East," English translation M. J. Birni)*

### **Lectionary Readings**

#### **Isaiah 9:1-4**

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined. You have multiplied exultation; you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

#### **Matthew 4:12-23**

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles— the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in

the region and shadow of death light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Anthem**

### **Sermon: Jesus as Light**

### **Hymn: A Light is Gleaming (VU 82)**

*Refrain:*

**A light is gleaming, spreading its arms  
throughout the night, living in the light.  
Come share its gladness, God's radiant love  
is burning bright, living in the light.**

**When light comes pouring into the darkest place,  
it hurts our eyes to see the glow.  
Sometimes a word of hope reminds us of our fears,  
our memories and tears. *Refrain***

**When night is round us and every shadow grows,  
a star is there to light our way.  
It tells a story of Jesus who came near to say:  
"God's light will ever stay." *Refrain***

**And Jesus showed us a brighter path to walk.  
He showed us things we hadn't seen.  
Now we, like Jesus, can help creation shine,  
and this will be a sign. *Refrain***

**So let us live in the brightness God has giv'n,  
and let us rise to see the dawn.  
We trust that God is here asparkle and ablaze,  
-warming all our days. *Refrain***

Words: Linnea Good 1992. Music: Linnea Good 1992. Words and music copyright © 1992 Borealis Music.

## 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: Ev'ry Day is a Day of Thanksgiving (MV 185)

Ev'ry day is a day of thanksgiving, God,  
you've been so good to me.

Ev'ry day you're blessing me.

Ev'ry day is a day of thanksgiving.

I will glorify you, O my Lord, today!

*Repeat*

You keep blessing me, blessing me, blessing me.

You opened the door that I might see,  
you're blessing me.

And you keep blessing me, blessing me, blessing me.

I will glorify you, O my Lord, today!

*A lively gospel song from the African-American tradition. Words and music: Leonard Burks.  
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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 more light emerge from darkness.

## Prayers of the People

It is a prayer practice in churches all over the world to give people a star word during Epiphany Sunday. There are many reasons behind this tradition.

First, we know that the Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us, including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year, to move closer to Jesus.

Secondly, we trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us with a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.

Finally, we know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. However, this prayer practice invites a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.

So in just a moment, you will be invited to draw a star word.

However, as we prepare our hearts and minds for this centering moment, let us pray. . .

## Prayers for the People

God of starlight,

There has always been something holy about stars for us.

We wish on them. We look for them.

We celebrate when we see them streaking across the sky on summer nights.

We map out their designs, and consider glimpses of the Milky Way holy enough for bare feet. There has always been something holy about stars.

We know that. You know that. The Magi must have known that.

So today we come to you in prayer, trusting that if you can paint the stars in the sky,  
Then surely you can hear us over the noise.

So first we pray for people wishing on stars, the people of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen, and particularly:

- women and others in these countries who are deprived of basic freedoms and human dignity
- those who misuse or exploit religious identity for extremist political ends
- the wise use of the benefits of oil and other natural resources for the sake of all
- the emergence of stable democratic societies based on the rule of law, social justice, and respect for religious and other freedoms.

However, at the same time,

We also say a prayer of gratitude for all the stars you have left for us this last year—

The signs and mile markers of hope on the horizon for the people of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

We are thankful for:

- the ancient cultures and religions that have been sustained in this area for millennia
- those who continue to pursue peace in the midst of ethnic strife and terrorism
- the faithfulness of Muslims in expressing their faith and working with others
- Christians who practice their faith even when they are a small, often discriminated minority.

In so many ways, 2025 was a turbulent year, and in so many ways, you were there, leaving stars in the sky, painting hope on the horizon.

So today, in this new year, we ask that once more you would give us a sign.

Pour out a double portion of your Spirit on these star words that we will receive,

So that these words might provide us a glimpse of something more.

For like the Magi, we are seeking you. Like the Magi, we are looking up.

Like the Magi, we just need a sign.

Guide our feet. Show up in the mundane and the extraordinary.

Be in the stars in the sky and in our everyday lives.



Hear our prayers.  
We are hopeful, O God. We are hopeful.  
And so with the confidence of children wishing on stars,  
We pray the prayer you 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.

God of ink black skies and starry nights,  
Like the Magi so many years ago,  
We are here, seeking you.  
Step by step, we have wandered into this space  
With the hope of feeling you in our midst.  
And step by step, you have claimed us, loved us, and fed us.  
Today we have all drawn star words.  
For some of us, these words are full of meaning, challenge, and invitation already.  
For others, these words are a blank canvas—inviting you into our lives.  
So as a new year dawns, we pray that you would be in our dreams and in our waking.  
Allow us to use these star words as a tool to see you in our everyday life.  
May they guide us, as the star guided the Magi.  
May they illuminate your path, as light always does.  
And in a year, may we find ourselves here, together again,  
With a mouth full of praise for the ways in which you have been present to us.  
With hearts full to the brim,  
Together we pray,  
Amen.

*Adapted from a prayer by Sarah Are / A Sanctified Art LLC / sanctifiedart.org*

## **Closing Hymn: Shine Jesus Shine**

**Lord the light of Your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness shining  
Jesus Light of the World shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth You now bring us  
Shine on me shine on me**

### *Chorus*

**Shine Jesus shine  
Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze Spirit blaze  
Set our hearts on fire  
Flow river flow  
Flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth Your word  
Lord and let there be light**

**Lord I come to Your awesome presence  
From the shadows into Your radiance  
By the blood I may enter Your brightness  
Search me try me consume all my darkness  
Shine on me shine on me**

**As we gaze on Your kingly brightness  
So our faces display Your likeness  
Ever changing from glory to glory  
Mirrored here may our lives tell Your story  
Shine on me shine on me**

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## **Benediction and Sending Forth (a prayer during the Mecca pilgrimage)**

Shine light into our souls. Bring us out of darkness into light  
O my God,  
bring us out of darkness into light.  
Illumine our hearts with your wisdom.  
Give us light to guide us to you.  
O my God,  
shine light into our hearts...  
light into our ears,  
light into our eyes,  
light on our tongues,

light at our right hand,  
light at our left hand,  
light above us,  
light beneath us,  
light before us,  
light behind us.

Flood us with light.  
Lord, expand our hearts,  
and prosper our work.

*(A Prayer during the Mecca pilgrimage. In: Noticias del Arca, summer 2005)*

## Postlude

## Coffee Time

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

<p><b>Coffee Host: Edie Fraser/ Donald Tarte</b> <b>Ushers/Counters: Heather Macfaden/ Bernie Ducker</b></p>
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**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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