Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario
November 29, 2026
Advent 1

Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller
Guest Director of Music: Roland Graham
Guest Musician: Chris White, singer-songwriter
Reader: Sandra Black

Prelude:

Welcome

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge we are gathering on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Anishinaabe Algonquin people.

In recognition of the thousands of years Indigenous people have cared for this land, we open our hearts and minds to the presence of First Nations, Metis and Inuit people who live in and around the Ottawa area. We do this by learning about the culture and teachings of the First Peoples who lived here and who continue to share their traditional territories with us. Some of us attended the Forest Teachings offered by Algonquin teacher Albert Dumont yesterday and opened up to some new ways of understanding the forest, and our relationship with Indigenous people. We were able to reflect on this through art.

Walking beside each other, and listening to each others' stories and lived experiences enriches our lives and makes us all able to practise reconciliation.

Lighting of the Candles

As the days grow shorter, we light this candle to remember that Christ's light is always present in our lives.

We light the Affirming candle to remember that everyone is welcome here. We are thankful for the light we find in people of all cultural backgrounds, physical and mental abilities, sexual orientations and gender identities. God loves all of us.

Lighting of the Advent Candles: Woorim Ha

When the nights are long
and the roads are hard,
we turn our eyes to the stars.

When the work is demanding
and injustice unending,
we stand together, arm in arm.

When fear looms large
and grief weighs heavy,
we cry out to God without holding back.

And when the dawn of tomorrow
feels far away,
we gather together to light the candle
of hope.
(Light candle)
Like the stars above,
may this light shine bright.
May it guide our path.
May it inspire deeper hope.
Until God's promised day, may it be so.
Amen.

Hope Is a Star (VU 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.

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Opening Prayer

Almighty and loving Creator God, we feel your presence this morning as we, your children of peace and love, gather before you.

Stay by our side as we engage the challenges in our world.

Continue to allow us to experience the majesty of your Creation, even as we tend to the mending of Creation.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Robert Partridge, Red Lake Anglican United Church Shared Ministry, Red Lake, Ont.

Opening Hymn: O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (VU 1 v. 1, 2, 6, 7)

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O Wisdom from on high,
who orders all things mightily;
to us the path of knowledge show,
and teach us in her ways to go. *Refrain*

O come, O Dayspring, from on high,
and cheer us by your drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight. *Refrain*

O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,
and be for us the Prince of Peace. *Refrain*

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Passing of the Peace/ Greeting Time

Prayer of Confession

In scripture, we see people cry out to God with honesty and authenticity. The Psalmists pray, "How long, O God?" They beg, "Come and save us," and "Let your face shine upon us." From their raw honesty, we know that we can go to God with just as much honesty about the truth of our lives. So join me in the Prayer of Confession. Join me in this moment of truth-telling. Just as the Psalmists did, let us go to God in prayer. Let us pray:

Holy God,
we have been known—
to bite our tongues,
to work through a broken heart,
to don our favorite rose-colored glasses.
We have been known—
to look for the bright side,
to sweep the pain under the rug,
to choose ignorance for the benefit of bliss.
We have been known to keep the hurt in our heart to ourselves.
Forgive us for filtering our honesty.
Forgive us for ignoring the power of lament.
Forgive us for not turning to you first.
Remind us that you are a God who listens
and you are a God who restores.
With open hearts, we pray. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Family of faith,
whether you pray like the Psalmists—raw and unfiltered—
or you can't remember the last time you were honest with God,
God still loves you. God sees you. And God longs to be in relationship.
So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:
There is nothing we could do or say that will keep God's love at bay.
We are seen, forgiven, and invited—into deeper honesty and deeper relationship.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Gracious God, for generations, we have cried out to you, and you have listened. So as we turn to hear your Word read and proclaimed, give us the ability to listen as well as you do. Give us the ears and the heart to hear your words. In hope we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Isaiah 64: 1-9

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence— as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence! When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down; the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him. You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed. We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. There is no one who calls on your name or attempts to take hold of you, for you have hidden your face from us and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity. Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand. Do not be exceedingly angry, O Lord, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Psalm 80: 1-7, 17-19

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!

Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?
You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.
Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.
But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.
Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.
Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Gift of Music: We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder - Traditional, led by Chris White

Reflection We Lament and Hope

Gift of Music: Cast Your Bread Upon The Waters - by Chris White

Prayers of the People

God who holds us, who hears us,
who knows the rhythms of our heartbeats
and the ache of our prayers— we unfurl before you.
We stretch out our weary hearts. We lay bare the truth of our lives.
We come to you in prayer.
It should be easy to cry out to you, God, for the prophets all did it.
Isaiah said, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"
We hear these words, brimming with honesty, and we are reminded
that there is nothing we cannot bring to you.
We are reminded that, like Isaiah, we can bring our full emotions to you.
Surely there is no plea, no ache, no grief, no joy, no riddle, no wondering, no curiosity
that we cannot name and lift up.
What a gift that is.
So today, Holy One, we will lean on this truth.
In silence, we take a moment to individually name the prayers that rest on our hearts.
Gracious God, hear our silent prayers now.
(Pause for silent prayer, followed by prayer requests)
God who holds us,
who hears us,
who knows the rhythms of our heartbeats
and the of our prayers—

we lay bare the truth of our lives.
Thank you for being a God who hears us when we cry out.
Thank you for being a God who welcomes our honesty with open arms and gracious love.
Together, we blend our voices to pray the prayer your son taught us saying. . .

The Lord's Prayer (Ecumenical Version)

Our Father 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. Amen.

Invitation of Offering

As we think about hope, we invite you to make an offering this morning, so we can share our hope with others.

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

God, where there is despair, hurt and loss, it can be hard to imagine a brighter future. We ask you to use these gifts to open hearts and shine a light on hope, wherever it is needed.

Announcements

Closing Hymn: May the God of Hope (VU 424)

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Refrain:

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

May the God of healing free the earth from fear,
freeing us for peace, both treasured and pursued.
May the God of love keep our commitment clear
to a world restored, to human life renewed. *Refrain*

Words: v. 1 Alvin Schutmaat 1984; 0. 2 Fred Kaan 1993. Music: Argentine folk melody. Words (v.2) copyright © 1993 Hope Publishing Company.

Blessing

As you leave this place, may you speak the truth in love,
may you hold fast to courage, may you be quick to joy,
may you listen for the angels, and may you build each other up,
until we reach God's promised day—
when the lion will lie down with the lamb and the sun will rise over all of us.
That is what we move toward. That is what we dream of.
So look toward the horizon, and go with hope.
Go in peace.

Postlude: Go Tell It On The Mountain - African-American version led by Chris White

Coffee Time

Most of the prayers in this service were prepared 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: Starr Cameron-Wright
Ushers/Counters: Janet Sutherland/ Gerald Ohashi

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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