

Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario

February 22, 2026

First Sunday of Lent

Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller

Guest Musicians: Neema Mugala and Chris White

Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook

Readers: Valerie Hindle

Prelude: Land of the Misty Giants - Oscar Peterson

Welcome

Land 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

We light the Christ candle to remind us of Christ's presence among us. May this flame remind us we are loved and are not alone.

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

The good news of the gospel is:

manna in the desert,

water turned into wine,

love after loss,

forgiveness after pain.

The good news of the gospel is:
release for the captive,
hope for the hopeless,
mourning turned to dancing,
and strangers turned to friends.

So come on in.

There's no time to waste!

This surprising good news is here for you.

Let us worship this good-news God.

Opening Prayer

God of abundance and generosity, you call us to celebrate your love each and every day, so love will overcome divisions and build a bridge to unity.

You call us to lift our hearts in prayer and praise and to raise our spirits in holy song.

Lift our worship to greater heights this day.

Make our prayers deep enough to plumb the depths of our souls and bring us to your throne of overflowing grace. Amen.

Beth W Johnston, Bridging Waters P.C., Nipawin, Sask.

Hymn: Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho - African-American spiritual believed to have been composed by enslaved people in the United States during the early 19th century - led by Chris White and Neema Mugala

Passing of the Peace/ Greeting Time

Prayer of Confession

Loving God,
somewhere along the way we picked up the message that in order to be faithful,
we have to be serious.

We have to pray on our knees without ceasing.

We have to be somber in worship and quiet in our studies.

We have to check our wiggles and our questions at the door.

But then you say the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed—unruly and untamed.

You turn water into wine—surprising and extravagant.

And all of a sudden, we wonder:

Can we be like that mustard seed?

Can we be faithful and unruly?

Can we be playful and curious?

Can we be messy and still be yours?

We know the answer already.

The Spirit whispers: of course, of course, of course.

**Forgive our doubt.
Pull us closer into your embrace.
With faith like a mustard seed, we pray.
Amen.**

Words of Assurance

God's grace is wild and unruly.
God's mercy is abundant and surprising.
God's love is expansive and unending.
So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?"
the answer is and always will be:
of course, of course, of course.
This is the good news of the gospel.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Prayer of Illumination

Holy One,
it is easy to see the mustard plant and forget to marvel at the seed.
It is easy to taste good wine and not appreciate it.
It is easy to miss the holy that is in our midst.
So as we turn to your text today, we pray,
surprise us.
Speak to us.
Move through us.
Draw us closer to your good news.
We wait with bated breath.
Amen.

Lectionary Readings

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the person in charge of the banquet." So they took it. When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), that person called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the

guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.” Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

Matthew 13:31-32

He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Thanks be to God.

Offering of Music: Singing for Viola - A song Chris White wrote about civil rights activist Viola Desmond

Reflection: Chris White

Offering of Music: William Andrew, *from Inner Voice* - by Chris White: The story of Chris's Black grandfather

Invitation of Offering

As we present our offerings, may we be reminded of the sacrifices that others have made to build the kingdom of God here on earth. May we be reminded of our struggles in following the good news in all our ways of living. And may these offerings be a blessing for any who need blessing in their lives. Let us present our offerings.

Jim McKean, while at Severn Shores U.C., Severn, Ont.

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

Patient and empowering God, bless these gifts and use them for your purpose in the world. Bless our own gifts and inspire us to see your path for our service. Guide us to let hope prevail where despair has taken hold, to let compassion grow in the place of

judgment, to let peace flourish and heal the fractures of the world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Gill Le Fevre, 2022

Prayers of the People

Joy-spreading God,
we love to imagine you at a wedding,
your throat hoarse from laughter, feet tired from dancing,
brow damp from the warmth of the day.

We love to imagine you turning water into wine,
people passing glasses, quenching their thirst,
delighting in every joy-filled, holy moment.

We love to imagine that this is how your ministry began—
with celebration and joy, with banquet tables and laughter—
because we crave more of those moments ourselves.

[Please offer any prayers of gratitude]

We live in a world that seems to run out of joy.

The news is a rotating blur of heartache.

Our hearts carry fear and grief, anxiety and loss.

For example, we find ourselves praying for those who are caught in war-torn areas.

For those who are spending their Sundays in a hospital room.

For those who push through waves of depression every day,
or struggle to manage illness or addiction. . .

[Please offer any prayers of concern]

Holy God, we live in a world that is overflowing with hard news, and we crave a piece of your joy.

So on our lowest days, and in our bleakest moments, remind us that your ministry started with a small miracle.

On the longest nights, remind us that we are never alone.

When joy wears thin, remind us that you call us by name.

When hope flickers, remind us that you hear our prayers.

And when the weight of the world feels too heavy,
remind us that the heart of the gospel really is good news.

Until that promised day, when we will once again find ourselves dancing until our feet are sore and gathering around the table with our neighbors, we will pray the prayer you taught us to pray, singing. . .

The Lord's Prayer (TLUS 70)

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.

Announcements

Closing Hymn: Shine on Me - trad. African-American spiritual

Sing Amen (Asithi: Amen) VU 431

Sing amen: Amen, we praise your name, O God.
Sing amen: Amen, we praise your name, O God.
Sing amen: Amen, amen, amen, amen,
amen, we praise your name, O God.

Words: S. C. Molefe 1977. Music: S. C. Molefe 1977; arr. Dave Dargie 1977. Words and music copyright © 1991 Lumko Institute.

Benediction and Sending Forth

As you leave this place,
when you meet anger, speak with love.
When you meet fear, speak with hope.
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.
But no matter what, speak this good news.
For the good news of the gospel is
love and justice for all.
It is joy that surprises,
and nonviolence that transforms.
The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,
so go forth speaking.
For if you won't, then who will?
Thanks be to God
for this good, good news.
Amen.

Postlude: When The Saints Go Marching In- African-American spiritual - Led By Chris White and Neema Mugala

Coffee Time

*Scripture readings are from the New Revised Standard Version (Updated Edition) of the Bible.
Most of the prayers are by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

Many thanks to Chris White and Neema Mugala for sharing their music and stories with us today. For more information about Neema and her outstanding musical career and personal life please see:

<https://blackottawascene.com/in-conversation-with-neema-mugala-founder-of-sifa-choir/>

Two different versions of Chris's song "William Andrew": are found here:

<https://chriswhite2.bandcamp.com/track/william-andrew-2>

and on the Afro-Métis Nation's 'Constitution' album here:

<https://chriswhite2.bandcamp.com/track/william-andrew>

**Coffee Host: Valerie Hindle
Ushers/Counters: Margaret Isaac / Bernie Ducker**

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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