

**Southminster United Church, Ottawa, Ontario**

**January 18, 2026**

**Second Sunday after Epiphany**

**Worship Leader: Rev. Susan Toller**

**Director of Music: Sarah Westbrook**

**Reader: Eugene Oscapella**

**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**

Why are we called to this place?

**To be God's people.**

What is required of us?

**To seek justice,  
to love kindness,  
to live humbly with God.**

And how shall we do this?

**With our prayers,  
with our thoughts,  
with our actions,  
and with our love.**

Then, as people who are both blessed and blessing:

**Let us worship God!**

*Richard Bott, Grace U.C., Burlington, Ont.*

### **Opening Prayer**

Gracious and loving God, we turn to your light as a beacon of hope in troubling times. We ask that you guide us along the way so that we may find the road ahead a little easier to bear. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

*Tony Tuck, First U.C., Mount Pearl, Nfld. and Lab.*

### **Opening Hymn: Come All You People (MV 2)**

**Come all you people, come and praise your Maker, (3X)  
Come now and worship the Lord.**

Words: Alexander Gondo, Zimbabwe; English paraphrase: I-to Loho. Music: Alexander Gondo, Zimbabwe, notated by I-to Loh; Arrangement: John L. Bell, 1995 Words, music and English paraphrase copyright © 1986 World Council of Churches. Used by permission. Arrangement copyright © 1995 by WGRG, Iona Community, Scotland, admin. GIA Publications, Inc., excl. N. American agent. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

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

#### **Prayer of Confession**

Dear God, we come to you today, though many of us are tired and discouraged.

**Give us relief from our distress.**

Lord, we ask for your guidance and intervention,  
**so that we may be reconciled and made new.**

We put our trust in you. You know our innermost thoughts and aspirations.

**We ask you to shine your face upon us and fill our hearts with joy.**

Let us put our troubles aside.

**We lay our burdens to rest, safely held in your care. Amen.**

*Aaron Palmer, St. Paul's U.C., New Liskeard, Ont.*

### **Prayer of Assurance**

Family of faith, God is with us. We may live in difficult times, when it is hard to see kindness and love, yet God always finds a way. We just need to keep opening our hearts so our Maker can come in. Thank you for always finding us, God.

### **Prayer of Illumination**

Rest on us lightly this day, dear God, like snow on a branch. Settle into the cracked and gnarled places that surround our tender inner self with the wisdom of darkness and the wrinkles of light. By your grace, help us to discover the wonder of your story holding our story as we find our souls yoked with love and all creation. Rest in us lightly this day as we find ourselves part of the ancient mysteries of falling and melting into you. Amen.

*Wendy MacLean, Brockville, Ont.*

### **Lectionary Readings**

#### **Psalm: 40:1-11**

I waited patiently for the Lord;  
he inclined to me and heard my cry.

He drew me up from the desolate pit,  
out of the miry bog,  
and set my feet upon a rock,  
making my steps secure.

He put a new song in my mouth,  
a song of praise to our God.  
Many will see and fear  
and put their trust in the Lord.

Happy are those who make  
The Lord their trust,  
who do not turn to the proud,  
to those who go astray after false gods.

You have multiplied, O Lord my God,  
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;  
none can compare with you.

Were I to proclaim and tell of them,  
they would be more than can be counted.

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,  
but you have given me an open ear.

Burnt offering and sin offering  
you have not required.

Then I said, "Here I am;  
in the scroll of the book it is written of me.

I delight to do your will, O my God;  
your law is within my heart."

I have told the glad news of deliverance  
in the great congregation;  
see, I have not restrained my lips,  
as you know, O Lord

I have not hidden your saving help within my heart;  
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;  
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness  
from the great congregation.

Do not, O Lord, withhold  
your mercy from me;  
let your steadfast love and your faithfulness  
keep me safe forever.

**Gospel: John 1:29-42**

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Chosen One."

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah". He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas".

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem:**

**Sermon: Who Will We Follow?**

**Hymn: Will You Come and Follow Me (VU 567)**

Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see  
if I but call your name?  
Will you set the prisoners free  
and never be the same?  
Will you kiss the leper clean,  
and do such as this unseen,  
and admit to what I mean  
in you and you in me?

Will you love the "you" you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

Christ, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you

**and never be the same.**

Words: The Iona Community 1987. Music: Scottish traditional; arr. The Iona Community 1987. Words and arrangement copyright © 1987 WGRG, The Iona Community (Glasgow, Scotland), G.I.A. Publications, Inc., Chicago, Illinois, exclusive agent.

### **Invitation of Offering**

Yesterday, we received with gratitude.  
The gifts of today, we receive with gratitude.  
Tomorrow, we again will receive with gratitude in our hearts.  
Yesterday, we gave as followers of Jesus.  
Today, we give as followers of Jesus.  
Tomorrow, we again will give as Jesus' disciples.  
We present now our offerings.

*Bill Perry, Belleville, Ont.*

### **Presentation of the Offering: In the Bleak Midwinter (VU 55 v.4)**

**What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him — give my heart.**

*Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti ca. 1872. Music: Gustav Theodor Holst 1906*

### **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 your world emerge and add to the beauty of Creation.

### **Prayers of the People**

This is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Prayer is at the centre of the ecumenical movement. As a united and uniting church, we work toward Jesus' prayer that all may be one (John 17:21). When we pray together, we affirm our solidarity with Christians around the world.

The World Council of Churches' has developed an Ecumenical Prayer Cycle so we can pray for every region of the world over the course of a year. This week we have been asked to pray for the people of Iran, Iraq and Syria. This seems very appropriate due to the political turmoil and violence being experienced in this region.

We are thankful for:

- the resilience of the people who remain in their homelands even when they face constant threats and ongoing violence
- the relief and assistance that has been provided to so many
- those who have made a new home for refugees fleeing from these countries
- those who have worked continually for peace, justice and reconciliation.

We pray for:

- an end to the violence racking these battlefields of global powers
- political leaders emerging in these countries who will pursue peace, the common good, and human rights of all groups
- the international community to pursue policies that will result in acceptable, just peace for all involved
- greater openness to welcoming those displaced or fleeing from these lands, desperately seeking safety and wellbeing

We will offer three different prayers, a litany from Iraq, a prayer of praise from Iran and a prayer of lament from a Syrian-Canadian. Let us pray with our hearts and souls as we embrace the hopes and fears of the people in these three countries, knowing they also resonate with what is needed in our local community, as well as in troubled areas such as parts of the United States, Ukraine, Palestine and Israel, and Sudan.

### **Litany for Iraq**

For lasting peace in this ancient land –

**from you, O Lord.**

For wisdom and compassion for all in authority –

**from you, O Lord.**

For comfort of families separated or bereaved –

**from you, O Lord.**

For the release of captives –

**from you, O Lord.**

For safety and security for minority communities—

**from you, O Lord.**

For refreshment for the weary and healing for the sick –

**from you, O Lord.**

For continuing faithfulness of the ancient churches of this land –

**from you, O Lord.**

For tenacity of spirit for small Christian groups –

**from you, O Lord.**

For the mutual enrichment and support of those of different Christian traditions –

**from you, O Lord.**

You, Lord of all, we confess;

You, Lord Jesus, we glorify;

For you are the life of our bodies

And you are the Saviour of our souls.

*The response in the litany and this hymn both come from the Chaldean liturgy. The ancient hymn celebrates Christ the source of resurrection in all situations of death and deprivation. (in: With All God's People, p. 21 + 22)*

### **Prayer of praise (from Iran)**

Christ has been revealed among us.  
He who is God is here seated.  
The voice of peace has sounded.  
The command for the Holy greeting has been given.  
The church has become one soul.  
The kiss has been given as a full bond.  
The adversity has been removed,  
and love has been spread among us all.  
Now, raising your voice,  
give praise in unison,  
to the united Godhead  
to whom the Seraphim give praise.

*(From The Sacred Music and the Divine Liturgy of the Armenian Apostolic Church, sent by a member of the Armenian Apostolic Church, Iran)*

### **Prayer of Lament (by a Syrian-Canadian)**

Our Father in Heaven, holy is your name—  
may it be made holy again.  
We cry out to you, standing in your presence,  
and remembering your promises—  
with your own words, Lord God, we declare it:  
Syria is your people, Iraq your handiwork.  
Yet our hearts have fainted.  
We are oppressed.  
We need to see your love and forgiveness.  
  
How we need your comfort now—  
we need to know your love more than ever.  
How long, O Lord?  
How long will you leave your people  
in this state of weakness, this hole of wickedness?  
How long will you leave the work of your hands,  
and let the depravities of the evil one flourish?  
How long must we be cut off from our loved ones?  
How long will we be strangers among the living?  
Have mercy on us, O God, have mercy.  
Have mercy on your children's children,  
have mercy on those who declare your holy name.  
  
Forgive us every sin, silence our sighing,  
and bring the joy of your salvation to our mouths again.  
Forgive our complicity with any oppression,

and our years of spiritual famine and faithless fear.  
Forgive us, forgive our fathers and mothers,  
forgive our friends and leaders, forgive our enemies.  
Pour out your Spirit now, O Lord—as it is in heaven,  
let your kingdom come.

Give us faith in place of faltering, fuel our hopes,  
and let the earth see your glory made new.  
Do what we cannot ask for or imagine,  
and bring a real and lasting healing to our land.  
Open the eyes of the blind, now,  
and strike shame and repentance in the hearts of the guilty.  
Heal the spirit of your churches,  
and let your faithful ones be remembered aright.  
Cause the name of Christ to be known,  
and let his light bring morning to our night.

Be the same to us, O God, as you were  
to the Israelites in the Exodus, and in the wilderness of Sinai.  
So that gardens of peace would grow in these wastelands of war,  
and that your name be lifted high.  
In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,  
we pray this— One God forever and ever praised. Amen

*(by Naji Umran, a Syrian-Canadian and ordained pastor in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, living in Egypt)*

### **Closing Hymn: May the God of Hope Go with Us (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.*

## **Benediction and Sending Forth**

People of God,  
There are so many challenges in this world.  
You are God's light  
Shine it wherever you go,  
Brighten the lives of those around you  
And send God's love to the places where peace and justice is needed. God is with you.  
Amen.

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.*

**Coffee Host: Brian Kinsley**  
**Ushers/Counters: Margaret Isaac/ Sandra Black**

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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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