



Image: Untitled, Samir Salameh (2000)



**January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2026 - 10:30 am**

*Joint Holy Land Service of Bathurst, Bloor Street, and Trinity-St. Paul's United Churches*

**Prelude: Meditation** by Felix Mendelssohn

**Acknowledgement of Traditional Territory**

Ken McEvoy

**Lighting of the Christ and Communities Candles**

Rev. Douglas DuCharme

We light the Christ Candle  
to remind us that God's light of love and justice still shines. (*Candle is lit*)

We light the Communities Candle  
to honour the people, places, and prayers  
that shape us into a living sanctuary of peace, justice, and joy. (*Candle is lit*)

**Words of Welcome and Opening Prayer**

Rev. Hewitt T. Holmes

**Life and Works of our Congregations**

**Silent Reflection**

**Opening Hymn: VU 883 *Comfort, Comfort now my People***

1      **Comfort, comfort now my people;**  
          speak of peace; so says our God.  
          Comfort those who sit in darkness,  
          mourning under sorrow's load.

      Cry out to Jerusalem  
          of the peace that waits for them;  
          tell them that their sins I cover  
          and their warfare now is over.

2      **For the herald's voice is crying**  
          in the the desert far and near,

calling all to true repentance,  
since God's judgement now is here.  
      Oh, that warning cry obey!  
          Now prepare for God a way!

Let the valleys rise in meeting  
and the hills bow down in greeting.

3      **Then make straight what long was crooked;**  
          make the rougher places plain.  
          Let your hearts be true and humble,  
          as befits a holy reign.

**For the glory of our God  
now on earth is shed abroad,**

**and all flesh shall see the token  
that God's word is never broken.**

## Introduction to the Service

Barbara Lloyd, Chair of the Middle East Working Group

## Passing of the Peace

Rev. Jean Ward

**Anthem:** *Abana alathi fi ssama* (Abana in Heaven) (أبانا الذي في السماء ليتقدس اسمك) by Lilly Constantine ليلي قسطنطين

## Introduction to Scripture:

Nora McKay

The readings invite us to imagine both a transformed world and a faithful way of living within it. In Micah, we hear a vision of God's future where violence gives way to peace, and communities learn the ways of life rather than the ways of war. In Psalm 139, we are drawn inward, to the God who knows us intimately, who forms us with care, and who searches our hearts for paths that lead toward life. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus stands in the tension of politics and faith, refusing easy answers and calling his listeners to discern what truly belongs to God. As we listen, we are invited to hold together hope for the world, honesty about ourselves, and courage in how we live our faith. Let us attend to what the Spirit is saying to us.

**Scripture:** Micah 4:3b – 5  
Psalm 139:13-15, 23-24  
Matthew 22:15-23

Nora McKay

We are grateful for these words of wisdom.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Introduction of Guest Speaker

Ken McEvoy

**Reflection:** *Canada: Acting for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel?*

Hon. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith

## Invitation to Offering and Thanksgiving

Rev. Douglas duCharme

*Loose offering will be donated to the International Development and Relief Foundation Canada (IDRF) Palestine Urgent Appeal. For more information and to donate, visit <https://idrf.ca/appeal/palestine/> or scan the QR code below.*



**Offertory Hymn:** MV 111 *A Voice was Heard in Ramah*

1      **A voice was heard in Ramah  
that could not be consoled,  
as Rachel wept for children  
she could no longer hold.  
For Herod ruled the nation,  
yet feared the Infant King.  
How great the devastation  
that fear and anger bring!**

3      **Whenever one is weeping,  
the whole world suffers too.  
Yet, Jesus, as we serve them,  
we're also serving you.  
So may we not ignore them,  
nor turn our eyes away,  
but help us labour for them  
to bring a better day.**

2      **O God, we hear the crying  
for little ones of yours;  
for many still are dying  
in conflicts and in wars  
in every troubled nation,  
on every violent street,  
how great the lamentation  
when fear and anger meet!**

4      **O Prince of Peace, you lead us  
in ways of truth and grace.  
May we be brave to practice  
your peace in every place  
to love each fear-filled nation,  
to serve each troubled street,  
how great the celebration  
when peace and justice meet!**

## Offering Prayer

Rev. Douglas duCharme

## Silent Reflection

### Prayers of the People

Loving God, hear our prayer.

**And in your love, answer.**

Betsy Anderson

**Sung Response: Ya Rabba Ssalami (God of Peace) (English, Arabic)**

**God of peace and justice, God of justice,  
Rain down upon us your peace.  
Ya Rabba ssalami, Ya Rabba ssalami,  
Amter alayna ssalam.**

**Encircling Prayers... We hold in our prayers:**

#### **From Bloor Street United Church**

In our ongoing prayer cycle: Rhondda Smiley, Kay Smythe, Andy Spears, Cyrus Spears, Bev Stager, Beth Symes  
For healing and transformation: Hazel Gardner, Karl Shuler

#### **From Bathurst Street United Church**

Ronny Yaron, undergoing chemo-therapy  
Joanne Clarke, recovering from back surgery in Bridgepoint rehab

#### **From Trinity-St. Paul's United Church**

Betty Butterworth  
Greg and Vera Callaghan

#### **United Church of Canada - Regional Councils:**

Antler River Watershed  
Bermuda Nova Scotia  
Canadian Shield

#### **Ecumenical Prayer**

The churches in Cyprus, Greece, Türkiye:

*Our spirit seeks you in the early dawn, O God,  
for your commandments are light.  
Teach us your righteousness  
and make us worthy to follow your commandments  
with all our strength.  
Take away from our hearts every darkness.  
Grant to us the Sun of righteousness  
and protect our lives from any bad influence  
with the seal of your most Holy Spirit.  
Direct our steps to the way of peace  
and grant to us that this present morning may be peaceful  
so that we may send up the morning hymns  
to you the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer,  
the only God,  
who is more than without beginning  
and creator of all. Amen.*

**Closing Hymn: TLUS 162 *Creation, like a prism* (v1-3,5)**

**1      Creation, like a prism, shine,  
its source, Eternal Light.  
Each colour, every shimm'ring ray  
reflects a glory bright.**

**2      Each age and gender, race and creed,  
each nation large or small,  
reveals the radiant Holy One,  
the God who made us all.**

**3      How can we offer fitting thanks  
for life received, unearned?  
By shining forth and passing on  
the love that we have learned.**

**5      We, children all of Abraham,  
are Muslim, Christian, Jew.  
Shalom, salaam, with you be peace,  
and also, friend, with you.**

**Benediction and Commissioning**

Rev. Hewitt T. Holmes

**Postlude:** *Make me a Channel of Your Peace* by Sebastian Temple, arr by Lloyd Larson

**Refreshments and a Question and Answer period with our speaker will follow the service.** Zatoun olive oil and other Palestinian products will be available from Robert Massoud in the Narthex.

**We give special thanks** to our guest speaker, the Hon. Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, Liberal MP for Beaches - East York. Nathaniel is a Canadian lawyer and politician who has been a member of Parliament since 2015. As a progressive, he has advocated for bottom-up democracy and positive politics. He believes in getting things done across all parties.

**Thanks** also to our clergy leaders: Rev. Douglas duCharme, Rev. Jean Ward, and Rev Hewitt Holmes; to our choir, music director, tech team, administrator, and to our faithful friend, Robert Massoud. This joint service, break and Q and A have been organized and led by members of the Middle East Working Group of our three congregations. Many thanks for their long and persistent leadership, friendship and solidarity.

**The loose offering today will be donated to the International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF) Canada, 'Palestine Urgent Appeal'.** IDRF coordinates and works with trusted local partners in Gaza. IDRF is also a member of UN OCHA Humanitarian Clusters, ensuring that food deliveries are coordinated, projects adhere to best practices, and all work upholds humanitarian standards.

For more information and to donate, visit <https://idrf.ca/appeal/palestine/>



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