



Stouffville United Church  
34 Church Street N., Stouffville, Ontario L4A 1E3  
**Sunday, January 18, 2026**  
**Lead by Cheryl Stenson: The Mystery of Darkness**  
*Question: How are we like mushrooms?*  
*Answer: We're sometimes kept in the dark.*

*The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. - John 1:5*

## Music Prelude

## Welcome

## Acknowledgement of the Land

The land on which we meet today is sacred land, and has been the site of human activity for thousands of years. We are gathered on the treaty territory of the Huron Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people and their ancestors. May we honour their history, spirituality, culture and teachings and uphold our responsibilities as treaty partners, working continuously towards greater respect and understanding.

## Announcements

## Chorus

## Lighting the Christ

## Call to Worship

One: God, thank you for this sojourn,

**All: this chance to breathe in your spirit,**

One: this opportunity to gain some clarity,

**All: this precious moment of communion with you.**

One: May each one of us hear something meaningful,

**All: learn something useful,**

One: and know that you are opening our souls and senses

**All: to receive the message you have for us today. Amen**

## Hymn O Come To The Altar

### Verse 1

Are you hurting and broken within

Overwhelmed by the weight of your sin, Jesus is calling

Have you come to the end of yourself

Do you thirst for a drink from the well, Jesus is calling

Chorus

O come to the altar, the Father's arms are open wide  
Forgiveness was bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ

Verse 2

Leave behind your regrets and mistakes  
Come today, there's no reason to wait, Jesus is calling  
Bring your sorrows and trade them for joy  
From the ashes a new life is born, Jesus is calling

Chorus

O come to the altar, the Father's arms are open wide  
Forgiveness was bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ

Chorus

O come to the altar, the Father's arms are open wide  
Forgiveness was bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ

Bridge

Oh what a Savior, isn't he wonderful  
Sing hallelujah, Christ is risen  
Bow down before Him, for He is Lord of all  
Sing hallelujah, Christ is risen

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Verse 3

Bear your cross as you wait for the crown  
Tell the world of the treasure you've found

## **Prayer of Approach and Acknowledgement**

One: God, in our darkness, we cannot comprehend your light.

**All: Open us to Your glory.**

One: Just as Jesus did spiritual battle, we struggle with despair that only You can overcome.

**All: Keep us strong throughout the night.**

One: Just as Jesus slipped into human doubt, we wage war with our own ignorance.

**All: Calm the demands of our egos.**

One: Jesus came out of the desert resolute and committed to fulfilling Your will.

**All: May faith be our staple. Amen.**

## **Words of Assurance**

### **Anthem**

### **Offertory:**

#### **Offertory Doxology**

Grant us, God, the grace of giving,  
with a spirit large and free,  
that ourselves and all our living  
we may offer faithfully.

### **Offertory Prayer**

#### **Scripture:**

#### **Psalm 143**

- <sup>1</sup> Hear my prayer, O LORD;  
give ear to my supplications in your faithfulness;  
answer me in your righteousness.
- <sup>2</sup> Do not enter into judgment with your servant,  
for no one living is righteous before you.
- <sup>3</sup> For the enemy has pursued me,  
crushing my life to the ground,  
making me sit in darkness like those long dead.
- <sup>4</sup> Therefore my spirit faints within me;  
my heart within me is appalled.
- <sup>5</sup> I remember the days of old;  
I think about all your deeds;  
I meditate on the works of your hands.

<sup>6</sup> I stretch out my hands to you;  
my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. *Selah*

<sup>7</sup> Answer me quickly, O LORD;  
my spirit fails.

Do not hide your face from me,  
or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.

<sup>8</sup> Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning,  
for in you I put my trust.

Teach me the way I should go,  
for to you I lift up my soul.

<sup>9</sup> Save me, O LORD, from my enemies;  
I have fled to you for refuge.<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Teach me to do your will,  
for you are my God.

Let your good spirit lead me  
on a level path.

<sup>11</sup> For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life.  
In your righteousness bring me out of trouble.

<sup>12</sup> In your steadfast love cut off my enemies,  
and destroy all my adversaries,  
for I am your servant.

### 1 Corinthians 2: 7-13

<sup>7</sup> But we speak God's wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory <sup>8</sup> and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the human heart conceived,  
what God has prepared for those who love him"—

<sup>10</sup> God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. <sup>13</sup> And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

Reflection : The Mystery of Darkness

Hymn            MV#17 God In The Darkness

## **Prayers of the People**

One: God, desperate for light on our paths, we thank you for illuminating our way.

**All: Forgive our blindness. Heal us of doubt.**

One: Teach us how to hold pain and confusion with hope and faith.

**All: Banish our fear. Calm our panic.**

One: When mental and spiritual dis-ease is replicated physically,

**All: we turn to the power of your grace.**

One: Revive us and our world to fullness of body and spirit.

**All: In You we find safe shelter.**

One: We take a moment now for personal, silent prayers, perhaps too delicate to utter....  
God, may our prayers be answered with the gentle force of your will and the vastness of your unfathomable friendship and love. Amen.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**Our 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**

**Hymn MV#30 It's A Song Of Praise To The Maker**

## **Going Forth**

One: We encounter darkness but keep our eyes open

**All: for the faint gleam that will grow and save us.**

One: We acknowledge our ignorance and seek the grace

**All: to accept it as Your will and our path.**

One: We grow into the maturity of spirit that will grant us peace,

**All: holding fast to the light God shines for us and for all. Amen.**

## **Blessing**

**Closing Response MV145 "Draw The Circle Wide"**

## **Music Postlude**