



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe

Minister of Community Development: Rev. Carmen Llanos

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

August 28th, 2022

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

What Shall I Do My God To Love

Music by John B. Dykes

Call to Worship

Which of you walks in darkness and sees no light?

... lean on God. Isaiah 50:4-10

Land Acknowledgement

We take a moment to acknowledge the sacred land beside the water on which we gather. It has been a site of human activity for many thousands of years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit and Scugog. The lands where Birchcliff Bluffs United Church sits are part of the Williams Treaty. Today, the meeting place around Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this territory and we seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.



Candle Lighting

Opening Prayer

O God, we grow through difficult times because of this power of your love at work in our lives made visible in Jesus. We lean upon you and we thank you for walking with us.

Reading

Leaning on God

Some people lean against fence posts
When their bodies ache from toil.
Some people lean on oak trees,
Seeking cool shade on hot, humid days.
Some people lean on crutches
When their limbs won't work for them;
And some people lean on each other
When their hearts can't stand alone.

How long it takes to lean upon you,
God of shelter and of strength;
How long it takes to recognize the truth
Of where my inner power has its source.

All my independence, with its arrogance,
Stands up and stretches within me,
Trying to convince my trembling soul
That I can conquer troubles on my own.

But the day of truth always comes
When I finally yield to you, God,
Knowing you are a stronghold,
A refuge when times are tough.

Thank you for offering me strength,
For being the oak tree of comfort;
Thank you for being the sturdy support
When the limbs of my life are weak.

Praise to you, Eternal Lean-to,
For always being there for me.
Continue to transform me
With the power of your love. - *Joyce Rupp*

Opening Hymn

Oh, A Song Must Rise

MV 142

Words and music: Paul B. Svenson
© 1995 Dad's Songbook Music

*Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend
Oh a song must rise once again
Singing out God's praises and glory,
the faithful voices blend,
Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.*

From the mountains to the valleys,
from the desert to the sea,
a song must rise once again.
From the voices of our leaders,
the voice of you and me,
a song must rise for the spirit to descend. *R*

From poverty and riches,
from the voice of young and old,
a song must rise once again.
From the free and the imprisoned,
the timid and the bold,
a song must rise for the spirit to descend. *R*

From ev'ry house of worship,
in ev'ry faith and tongue,
a song must rise once again.
From the villages and cities
a new song must be sung,
a song must rise for the spirit to descend. *R*

Scripture Reading Isaiah 50:4-9 NRSV

4 The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens - wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward.

6 I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

7 The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

8 he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me.

9 It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Hymn

Though I May Speak

VU 372

Words: Hal Hopson / Music: Traditional English Melody
© 1972 Hope Publishing Company

Though I may speak with bravest fire,
And have the gift to all inspire,
And have not love, my words are vain,

As sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

Though I may give all I possess,
And striving so my love profess,
But not be given by love within,
The profit soon turns strangely thin.

Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
Our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
By this we worship, and are freed.

Sermon Leaning on God

Visiting my sister on her farm, I came upon an old lean-to. A few pieces of wood had been nailed together and set up in a remote pasture. As I looked at the lean-to, I imagined cattle, horses, and sheep seeking shelter, finding comfort from the harsh storms that can come so quickly.

I could also see how we humans need our lean-tos, in the storms of life which come upon us when our bodies are too weary to work, our spirits too hurt to struggle, and our hearts are too pained to care.

The journey of the human spirit has tiring searches, long stretches of grief and letting go, dark-hearted things that steal the energy from our spirits. At these times we need lean-tos. Our lean-tos can be anyone or anything that brings us a sense of hope, a pause from the pain, a bit of strength to sustain us, a little vision for guidance, a touch of happiness.

We have a wonderful lean-to in God whose heart always welcomes us and provides refuge for us. We often have people who stand by us and offer warmth, support, and refuge. Little comforts and glimmers of hope we do not notice when we are strong. They become very significant for us when we are weak: a smile, a song, a sunrise, a bird singing, a phone call or a letter. In all these we rest our woes and our weariness and draw strength for our recovery.

We all need to be lean-tos for others. That's the blessing of human love and compassion. These are not permanent havens; they are temporary but essential when the storms rage around us or inside us. We need to trust others for comfort, support, and vision when our spirit feels weak, but in the end we have to do our part, accept responsibility, make our own choices and decisions. No one can do our growing for us.

I am deeply grateful for the lean-tos I have in my life. Those who helped me through extremely hurtful times ... their understanding and support gave me the strength I needed to grow and move on.

Jesus too knew what it was to need others. After dealing with the sick, the ugly odors of leprosy, the painful cries, all sounds of those who were ill. In early morning he got up and went to find a

place of quiet where he could pray. He leans-on the one who can restore his inner strength. He leaned on his friends in his grief when his cousin John the Baptist died. He leaned on Lazarus, Mary and Martha when in Bethany; he leaned on Mary who never tired of listening to him.

While hanging on the cross, Jesus leans on John. Seeing his mother in such pain he gives her into John's care. Jesus needed his lean-tos just as we do. Sometimes leaning on others is not an easy thing to do. But we recognize their strength in the face of our need.

I encourage each of you to identify your lean-tos, your shelters and places of comfort and give thanks to God for their presence in your life.

Let those who have ears understand and respond. Amen.

Hymn

Like a Healing Stream

MV 144

Words and Music: Bruce Harding
© 2003 by Bruce Harding

Like a healing stream in a barren desert,
Spirit water bringing life to dusty earth,
God is trickling through our lives
as in a dream unfolding,
promising revival and rebirth
like a healing stream.

Like a gentle rain on a thirsty garden,
Spirit water come to nourish tiny seed,
God is bubbling through the soil
to coax a new creation
yearning for an end to want and need
like a gentle rain.

Like a river strong with a restless current,
Spirit water rushing on to distant shore,
God is carving out a channel
in a new direction,
calling for an end to hate and war
like a river strong.

Like a mighty sea reaching far horizons,
Spirit water with a love both deep and wide,
God is working in our hearts
to shape a new tomorrow:
God will always challenge and provide!
Like a mighty sea, like a river strong,
like a gentle rain, like a healing stream.

Offering

To you who have given us so much – we say thank you to all who offer a portion of what they have that others might have as well. Our offerings have been received with thanks.

Prayers of the People & Lord's Prayer

God who dwells within, God who is with us in good times and in bad, we turn our hearts again to you and we proclaim: nothing can come between us and your love for us, even if we are troubled or worried or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked.

We can grow through difficult times because of this power of your love at work in our lives. For we are certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nor any power, no height nor depth, not any created thing, can come between us and your love which has been made visible in Jesus. We lean upon you and we offer you our thanks. Amen

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Go Make a Difference

MV 209

Words and Music: © 1997 Steve Angrisano and Tom Tomaszek

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world
Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

We are the salt of the earth,
called to let the people see
the love of God for you and me.
We are the light of the world,
not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world
Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

We are the hands of Christ
reaching out to those in need,
the face of God for all to see.
We are the spirit of hope;
we are the voice of peace
Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

So let your love shine on,
let it shine for all to see.
Go make a difference in the world.
And the spirit of Christ
will be with us as we go.
Go make a difference in the world.

Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world
Go make a difference. We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world.

Benediction & Commissioning

God keeps us on the path that leads home and gives us the courage
To do what is best for healing the heart of the world.

We go, knowing we are not alone, God goes with us! Amen.

Postlude

O Perfect Love

Music by Joseph Barnby

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Birchcliff Bluffs United Church Additional Lectionary

Jeremiah 2:4-13

New Revised Standard Version

⁴ Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. ⁵ Thus says the LORD:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me
and went after worthless things and became worthless themselves?

⁶ They did not say, "Where is the LORD,

who brought us up from the land of Egypt,
who led us in the wilderness,
in a land of deserts and pits,
in a land of drought and deep darkness,
in a land that no one passes through,
where no one lives?”

⁷ I brought you into a plentiful land
to eat its fruits and its good things.

But when you entered you defiled my land
and made my heritage an abomination.

⁸ The priests did not say, “Where is the LORD?”

Those who handle the law did not know me;
the rulers^[a] transgressed against me;
the prophets prophesied by Baal
and went after things that do not profit.

⁹ Therefore once more I accuse you,
says the LORD,

and I accuse your children’s children.

¹⁰ Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look;
send to Kedar and examine with care;
see if there has ever been such a thing.

¹¹ Has a nation changed its gods,
even though they are no gods?

But my people have changed their glory
for something that does not profit.

¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this;
be shocked; be utterly desolate,
says the LORD,

¹³ for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns
that can hold no water

Psalm 81:1

New Revised Standard Version

God’s Appeal to Stubborn Israel

¹ Sing aloud to God our strength;
shout for joy to the God of Jacob.

Psalm 81:10-16**New Revised Standard Version**

- ¹⁰ I am the LORD your God,
who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.
Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.
- ¹¹ “But my people did not listen to my voice;
Israel would not submit to me.
- ¹² So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts,
to follow their own counsels.
- ¹³ O that my people would listen to me,
that Israel would walk in my ways!
- ¹⁴ Then I would quickly subdue their enemies
and turn my hand against their foes.
- ¹⁵ Those who hate the LORD would cringe before him,
and their doom would last forever.
- ¹⁶ I would feed you^[a] with the finest of the wheat,
and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.”

Hebrews 13:1-8**New Revised Standard Version****Service Well-Pleasing to God**

¹ Let mutual affection continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them, those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.^[a] ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterers. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have, for he himself has said, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” ⁶ So we can say with confidence,

“The Lord is my helper;
I will not be afraid.
What can anyone do to me?”

⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:15-16**New Revised Standard Version**

¹⁵ Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Luke 14:1

New Revised Standard Version

Jesus Heals the Man with Edema

14 On one occasion when Jesus^[a] was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely.

Luke 14:7-14

New Revised Standard Version

Humility and Hospitality

⁷ When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host, ⁹ and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹ For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹² He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”