



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

December 21st, 2024

Blue Christmas

Gathering Music

Welcome

Call to Worship

Lord, it is night. The night is for stillness.

Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.

What has been done has been done; what has not been done has not been done; let it be.

The night is dark.

Let our fears of the darkness, both in the world and in ourselves, rest in you.

The night is quiet.

Let the quietness of your peace enfold us, all who are dear to us, and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.

Help us to know your presence in our midst.

**Help us to know that we are not alone, and in knowing this,
may we find the strength to look expectantly to
a new day, new joys, new possibilities.**

In the name of Emmanuel, God with us, we pray.

Amen.

Hymn

Don't Be Afraid (x3)

MV90

Don't be afraid. My love is stronger,
my love is stronger than your fear.
Don't be afraid. My love is stronger
and I have promised, promised to be always near.

Opening Prayer

O God, we gather this night to remember.

**We gather to name those who have been life itself to us;
those who have touched our lives,
glad memories and happy stories,
and love that we hold dear.**

**We gather in the name of Jesus:
vulnerable as an infant,
joyful and happy as a youth,
wise and caring as an adult.**

**We gather in the presence of God,
who brings life and light to all,
as all life is precious in God's sight.**

**With God, no one is ever alone or forgotten.
So, we come and gather in the Spirit of hope and peace.
We worship in the name of joy and love. Amen.**

Hymn It Came Upon the Midnight Clear (verses 1, 2, 4) VU44

1 It came upon the midnight clear,
that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
to touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on the earth, goodwill to all,
from heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay,
to hear the angels sing.

2 Still through the cloven skies they come
with peaceful wings unfurled,
and still their heavenly music floats
o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains,
they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
the blessed angels sing.

4 For lo! the days are hastening on,
by prophet seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
shall come the time foretold
when peace shall over all the earth
its ancient splendors fling,
and the whole world send back the song
which now the angels sing.

LIGHTING OF CANDLES AND REFLECTION

Naming our Loss

Hymn

Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying (x4)

VU400

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Ceremony of Commemoration

We light a candle in memory of those who gave us birth,
who nurtured us, offered love, and cherished us. (*Candle is lit*)

**We remember parents,
guardians and grandparents,
and all our family through the ages.**

We light a candle in memory of those
who have been joined to us in the great circle of family. (*Candle is lit*)

**We remember siblings,
aunts, uncles, and cousins,
those near to us and far away.**

We light a candle in memory of those who have left us
before we expected, those we hold dear,
and with whom we still walk in our dreams. (*Candle is lit*)

**We remember children and grandchildren,
those who leaped within the womb
and who danced upon the earth.**

We light a candle in memory of those whom we came to know through the eyes of love.
We hold sacred the faces and memories of years past,
of those who brightened our days and lit up our lives. (*Candle is lit*)

**We remember spouses,
dearest loves and closest friends,
who changed our lives forever.**

We light a candle in memory of those who shared in our lives
in many ways, who worked with us
and made our lives more enjoyable. (*Candle is lit*)

We remember friends and neighbours.

We light a candle for those we do not know, O God,
who, like us, have suffered loss, who live with grief,
who long for peace and justice,

who long for friendship and healing. (*Candle is lit*)

We remember your people, of every time and place.

Finally, we leave one candle unlit,
mindful of the great truth of this life,
that in the fullness of time we, too,
will join our loved ones in a realm without sorrow and pain,
in the company of Unending Love.

**For these and all your children, we give thanks
for life, hope and courage. Amen.**

Hymn

Long Before the Night (verses 1, 2 & 5)

VU 282

1 Long before the night was born from darkness
Long before the dawn rolled unsteady from fire
Long before she wrapped her scarlet arm around the hills
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

2 Long before the grass spotted green the bare hillside
Long before a wing unfolded to wind
Long before She wrapped her long blue arm around the sea
there was a love, this ancient love was born.

5 Wakeful are our nights and slumbers our morning
Stubborn is the grass sowing green wounded hills
As we wrap our healing arms to hold what her arms held
this ancient love, this aching love rolls on.

Sightings – Nativity Narratives by Kathy Galloway

Lighting of Memorial Candles

You are invited to light a candle on the table to allow the silence of your heart be the light
that you need or feel free to name the person(s) or situation as the Spirit leads you.

In your pain, we are with you.

In your pain, God is with you.

Song

Bringing in the Light by Gathering Sparks

We are bringing in the light
We are singing through the longest night
Keep the fire burning, have faith we are returning
Returning to the light

The crescent moon curls just above the pines

And the northern star is anchoring the sky
Clouds are slowly lifting, snow is faintly drifting
And the fields are dressed in icy shades of white

(Chorus) We are bringing in the light
We are singing through the longest night
Keep the fire burning, have faith we are returning
Returning to the light - the glorious light, the glorious light
We are bringing in the light

Light a fire and let the smoke rise through the trees
Light a candle in an ancient prayer for peace
We will sing in celebration, this hymn of invitation
To awaken from our silent winter sleep

(Chorus)

When it seems we've been forsaken by the sun
And our journey through the dark goes on and on
Stand still for a moment, the spell of night is broken
And the darkest hour surrenders to the dawn

We are bringing in the light
We are singing through the longest night
Keep the fire burning, have faith we are returning
Returning to the light - the glorious light, the glorious light
We are bringing in the light *(repeat chorus)*

Prayer

Out of the depths we cry to you, O God:
we come in pain
we come in sorrow
we come in brokenness
we come in sadness
we come in the loneliness.

You hear our cries, O God,
you know our pain;
hold us in your tender love.

**God of hope,
give us this night a glimpse of trust and assurance,
a sense of purpose and possibility.
Come into our hearts and our minds,
bringing comfort, health, and peace.**

**Re-create in us a sense of thanksgiving,
in the joy of your love. Amen.**

Closing Hymn

Silent Night

VU67

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!"

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from Thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!

Blessing and Sending Forth

We return to the world from which we came:
a world of pain, a world of promise;
the world which God so loved
that the Bethlehem baby was born.

**May we listen to the voice of the angel who says, "Fear not."
May we be filled with the Good News of God,
through the child of Mary and Joseph,
God's gift of new life for all. Amen.**

Postlude Bringing in the Light by Gathering Sparks

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