



**Birchcliff Bluffs United Church**

**Ministers:** All the People – wherever and however they gather

**Minister of Word & Sacrament:** Katie Vardy

**Music Director:** Randy Vancourt

**Reader:** Norma Grech

**February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Fifth Sunday after Epiphany**

**WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE**

**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

At the heart of our faith is a light that does not flicker out. Our Christ Candle serves as a reminder that the light of Christ shines not behind us in the past, but ahead of us, guiding our every step. *Candle is lit.*

**Lighting the Rainbow Candle**

We also light the Rainbow Candle, a symbol of God’s covenant love. Our rainbow light reminds us that our diversity is not an obstacle to God, but a reflection of God’s creativity and joy. *Candle is lit.*

**Land Acknowledgement**

As we journey through this season of Epiphany, we acknowledge the land on which we worship. This land has long been home to Indigenous peoples, including the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. It is a land where wisdom has been shared, relationships tended, and stories carried across generations. We also acknowledge that this land remains home to many diverse Indigenous nations and communities, whose presence, resilience, and leadership continue to shape this place.

**May the light of Epiphany guide us toward truth, right relationships, and shared care for this land and for one another.**

**Opening Hymn**

**Teach Me, God, To Wonder**

**VU 299**

1 Teach me, God, to wonder,  
teach me, God, to see;

let your world of beauty capture me.  
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
life be celebrated, joy you give.

2 Let me, God, be open, let me loving be;  
let your world of people speak to me.  
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
life be celebrated, joy you give.

3 Let me, God, be ready, let me be awake,  
in your world of loving my place take.  
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
life be celebrated, joy you give.

4 Teach me, God, to know you,  
hear you when you speak,  
see you in my neighbour when we meet.  
Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
life be celebrated, joy you give.

### **Call to Worship**

Blessed are those who delight in the way of Love, who seek justice not as an idea, but as a daily practice.

**We come, trusting that generosity is a holy path.**

We gather as salt in a world that often feels bland or brittle, as light in places where shadows linger.

**We come, ready to shine—not for ourselves, but for the sake of the world.**

God calls us to a faith that is visible, embodied, alive.

**Let us worship the One who invites us to live brightly, boldly, and with love.**

### **Passing the Peace**

Jesus reminds us that love is never meant to stay hidden. Before we offer prayers or promises, we offer one another peace—a sign of God’s reconciling presence among us. May the peace we share be more than words: may it be a commitment to kindness, justice, and mutual care.

The Peace of Christ be with you! **And also with you!**

### **Life and Work**

#### **Opening Prayer**

Let us pray:

**Holy and Generous God,**

**You invite us to be salt—to preserve what is good, to bring flavour to what is overlooked, to disrupt what has grown stale. You name us as light—not to blind or**

**dominate, but to illuminate paths of justice, mercy, and hope. Ground us this day in a faith that is lived, a love that is practiced, and a hope that dares to be seen. Shape us into a community whose generosity reflects your own, whose lives point beyond themselves to the deep, abiding goodness of your reign.  
Amen.**

## **Hymn**

## **Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom**

**MV 10**

1 Come and seek the ways of Wisdom,  
she who danced when earth was new.  
Follow closely what she teaches,  
for her words are right and true.  
Wisdom clears the path to justice,  
showing us what love must do.

2 Listen to the voice of Wisdom,  
crying in the marketplace.  
Hear the Word made flesh among us,  
full of glory, truth and grace.  
When the word takes root and ripens,  
peace and righteousness embrace.

3 Sister Wisdom, come, assist us;  
nurture all who seek rebirth.  
Spirit-guide and close companion,  
bring to light our sacred worth.  
Free us to become your people,  
holy friends of God and earth

## **RECEIVING GOD'S WORD**

### **Scripture Psalm 112:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> Alleluia! Happiness comes to those who revere YHWH, who revel in God's commands! <sup>2</sup> Their children hold power on earth; the descendants of the just will always be blessed. <sup>3</sup> There will be riches and wealth for their families, and God's justice can never be changed. <sup>4</sup> For the just, YHWH shines like a lamp in the dark; God is merciful, compassionate and righteous. <sup>5</sup> Good people are generous and lend money without interest; they are honest in all their dealings. <sup>6</sup> They are never shaken, because they love justice and will leave an imperishable memory behind them. <sup>7</sup> They never fear bad news, because their unwavering hearts trust in YHWH. <sup>8</sup> With peaceful hearts, they fear nothing; and in the end they will triumph over their enemies. <sup>9</sup> Quick to be generous, they give to the poor, doing justice always and forever; their horn will always be lifted in honour.

### **Matthew 5:13-20**

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth. But what if salt were to lose its flavour? How could you restore it? It would be fit for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. <sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. You don’t build a city on a hill, then try to hide it, do you? <sup>15</sup> You don’t light a lamp, then put it under a bushel basket, do you? No, you set it on a stand where it gives to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, your light must shine before others so that they may see your good acts and give praise to your Abba God in heaven.

<sup>17</sup> Don’t think I’ve come to abolish the Law and the Prophets. I have come not to abolish them, but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> The truth is, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter of the Law, not even the smallest part of a letter, will be done away with until it is all fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> That’s why whoever breaks the least significant of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called the least in the kin-dom of heaven. Whoever fulfills and teaches these commands will be called great in the kin-dom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> I tell you, unless your sense of justice surpasses that of the religious scholars and the Pharisees, you will not enter the kin-dom of heaven.”

The Word of God for the People of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn**

**You Are Salt for the Earth**

**Marty Haugen**

1 You are salt for the earth, O people:  
Salt for the City of God!  
Share the flavour of life, O people:  
Life in the City of God!

Bring forth the City of mercy,  
Bring forth the City of peace;  
Bring forth the City of justice,  
Bring forth the City of God!

2 You are a light on the hill, O people:  
Light for the City of God!  
Shine so holy and bright, O people:  
Shine for the City of God!

Bring forth the City of mercy,  
Bring forth the City of peace;  
Bring forth the City of justice,  
Bring forth the City of God!

3 You are a seed of the Word, O people:  
Bring forth the City of God!  
Seeds of mercy and seeds of justice,  
Grow in the City of God!

Bring forth the City of mercy,  
Bring forth the City of peace;  
Bring forth the City of justice,  
Bring forth the City of God!

4 We are a blest and a pilgrim people:  
Bound for the City of God!  
Love our journey and love our homeland:  
Love is the City of God!

Bring forth the City of mercy,  
Bring forth the City of peace;  
Bring forth the City of justice,  
Bring forth the City of God!

Bring forth the City of mercy,  
Bring forth the City of peace;  
Bring forth the City of justice,  
Bring forth the City of God!

**Sermon      Still Salty, Still Shining**

### **RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

**Hymn**

**There's a Spirit in the Air**  
**(v. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7)**

**VU 582**

1 There's a spirit in the air,  
telling Christians everywhere:  
'Praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working in our world.'

2 Lose your shyness, find your tongue,  
tell the world what God has done:  
God in Christ has come to stay.  
Live tomorrow's life today!

4 Still the Spirit gives us light,  
seeing wrong and setting right:  
God in Christ has come to stay.  
Live tomorrow's life today!

5 When a stranger's not alone,  
where the homeless find a home,  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working, in our world

6 May the Spirit fill our praise,  
guide our thoughts and change our ways.  
God in Christ has come to stay,  
live tomorrow's life today.

7 There's a Spirit in the air,  
calling people everywhere:  
praise the love that Christ revealed,  
living, working, in our world.

### **Offering**

In Psalm 112, we hear of lives marked by generosity—by open hands and open hearts, by a trust that what is shared multiplies. Our giving today is one way we live as salt and light: not for recognition, but for the healing of the world God so loves. We give, trusting that every act of generosity—seen or unseen—participates in God's ongoing work of justice and love. Let us offer what we can, with grateful hearts.

As we bless the offerings, let us sing:

### **Offering Hymn**

### **Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow**

**VU 541**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
praise God, all creatures high and low;  
give thanks to God in love made known:  
Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

### **Prayers of the People**

God of steady light and faithful presence, we come to you carrying the world in our prayers—its beauty and its brokenness, its promise and its pain.

We pray for all who seek to live with integrity in difficult times: for those working for justice when progress feels slow, for those choosing generosity in a culture of scarcity, for those shining light where it would be easier to turn away.

We hold before you those who feel overwhelmed or worn down—  
by grief, by illness, by uncertainty, by fear.  
May they know the quiet strength of your nearness  
and the support of communities that refuse to let them stand alone.

We pray for places where light feels scarce:  
where violence, hatred, or indifference prevail.  
Kindle in us the courage to be present there—  
not as saviours, but as companions,  
not with easy answers, but with faithful love.

We remember that the light we carry is not our own.  
It is borrowed grace,  
entrusted to us for the sake of the world.

Gather now all our spoken and unspoken prayers  
into the words Jesus taught us, saying:

**Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kin-dom come, your 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 yours is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

### **BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH**

**Closing Hymn**

**Go Forth for God**

**VU 418**

1 Go forth for God, go to the world in peace;  
be of good courage, armed with heavenly grace,  
in God's good Spirit daily to increase,  
till in the kingdom we see face to face.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in peace.

2 Go forth for God, go to the world in love;  
strengthen the faint, give courage to the weak;  
help the afflicted; richly from above  
God's love supplies the grace and power we seek.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in love.

3 Go forth for God, go to the world in strength;  
hold fast the good, be urgent for the right;  
render to no one evil; Christ at length  
shall overcome all darkness with his light.

Go forth for God, go to the world in strength.

4 Go forth for God, go to the world in joy,  
to serve God's people every day and hour,  
and serving Christ, our every gift employ,  
rejoicing in the Holy Spirit's power.  
Go forth for God, go to the world in joy.

### **Bread for the Journey**

Where might you be invited this week to be salt or light—not by doing more, but by showing up with care for the sake of others?

### **Commissioning**

You are the salt of the earth. **May we live with courage, generosity, and care.** You are the light of the world. **May our lives reflect justice, mercy, and love.** Go into the world God loves—not hiding your faith, but living it fully. **We go, trusting that even small acts can shine brightly.**

### **Benediction**

Go now, rooted in a faith that is lived, not hidden.  
May your generosity be steady, your courage quiet but enduring,  
your light, unmistakable in a world longing for hope.  
And may the God who calls you blessed  
walk with you, shine through you, and hold you always in love.  
Amen.

### **Choral Response**

### **Go Now In Peace**

Go now in peace, never be afraid  
God will go with you each hour of every day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true,  
Know God will guide you in all you do.  
Go now in love and show you believe  
Reach out to others so all the world can see.  
God will be there, watching from above  
Go now in peace, in faith and in love.  
Amen, amen, amen!

### **Postlude**

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