



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

March 29th , 2026

Palm Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle

As we open our hearts for worship, we light the Christ candle—a reminder of God’s presence among us, steady and faithful, even when the path ahead is unclear. *Candle is lit.*

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

We also light the Rainbow Candle, giving thanks for the full spectrum of God’s beloved community. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

We gather on land that has long been home to Indigenous peoples, including the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. This land has witnessed both resistance and resilience, celebration and suffering. As we enter Holy Week, we acknowledge the ways power has been misused and voices silenced.

We commit ourselves to the path of humility and justice—following the Christ who enters not with domination, but with love that risks rejection.

Opening Hymn

Open My Eyes, That I May See

VU 371

1 Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

2 Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth thou sendest clear;
and while the wavenotes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!

3 Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere;
open my heart and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Call to Worship

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest heaven.

Blessed is the one who comes in humility and hope.

Hosanna, save us.

Blessed is the one who walks toward suffering with love.

Hosanna, God of mercy.

This is the beginning of a holy journey.

Let us worship the God who draws near.

Passing the Peace

The peace of Christ is not dependent on crowds or approval. It is the deep assurance that we are held by love, even when the path is uncertain. As you share Christ's peace today, may it be a sign of welcome, courage, and care.

The peace of Christ be with you all. **And also with you.**

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Holy God,

today we wave branches and sing songs of praise, even as we sense the road ahead grows darker. Open our hearts to see you clearly. Give us courage to follow you not only in moments of celebration, but all the way to the cross.

Be with us in this time of worship.

Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Let us pray:

God of mercy, we confess that we often praise you when the path feels easy, but hesitate when faith requires courage. We confess the ways we follow from a distance, the ways we benefit from systems that exclude and harm. Forgive us when we choose comfort over compassion. Teach us to follow Jesus with humility, honesty, and love. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news:

God's love does not depend on our consistency.

Christ enters the city knowing rejection lies ahead—and still he comes.

In Christ, we are forgiven.

In Christ, we are invited again to follow.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn

He Came Riding on a Donkey

VU124

1 He came riding on a donkey,
he came riding into town;
slow and easy kind of lowly
he came riding with the dawn.
His disciples walked beside him,
staying close, a little shy;
not too sure where he would guide them,
on to live or on to die.
But all the morning sang his praises;
waking birds and dancing wind;
here he is, the Son of David;
riding on to take his throne.

2 Then the children gathered, singing
shouts of laughter, bursting cheer;
in the streets their song was ringing,
'Hosannas' filled the morning air.
Timid adults strained to see him,
caught the Spirit, joined the song;
spread their cloaks along before him,
branches flashing in the sun.
So all the city sang his praises;
waking streets and dancing crowd;
here he is, the Son of David;
our Messiah, Son of God.

3 In our fasting, and our feasting,
called to follow in his way;
called to walk his road to Easter,
called to live his cross today.
Hosanna to the Son of David,
hosanna in the heavens above;
blessed is he who comes to save us,
blessed is he who brings his love.
Let us join to sing his praises;
open hearts and souls to God;
he is with us, Son of David;
God's Messiah, Christ the Lord.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Lenten Ritual

We follow a love that moves forward without guarantees.

Bless the Lent we actually have. (*Moment of silent reflection*)

Hymn

Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights (verse 6)

VU 108

Rejoice, O sons and daughters!
Sing and shout hosannas! Raise the strain!
For Christ, whose death Good Friday brings,
on Easter day will rise again!

Shower Curtain Productions: The Road to Jerusalem
written by Beth Moore

Hosanna, Loud Hosanna

VU123

1 Hosanna, loud hosanna
the happy children sang;
through pillared court and temple
the joyful anthem rang;
to Jesus, who had blessed them
close folded to his breast,
the children sang their praises,
the simplest and the best.

2 From Olivet they followed
'mid an exultant crowd,
the victory palm branch waving,
and singing clear and loud;
the Lord of earth and heaven
rode on in lowly state,
content that little children
should on his bidding wait.

3 'Hosanna in the highest!'
That ancient song we sing,
for Christ is our Redeemer;
earth, let your anthems ring.
O may we ever praise him
with heart and life and voice,
and in his humble presence
eternally rejoice!

Hymn

Now The Green Blade Rises

VU186

- 1 Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
wheat that in dark earth many days has lain;
love lives again, that with the dead has been:
love is come again, like wheat arising green.
- 2 In the grave they laid him, love by hatred slain,
thinking that he would never wake again,
laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen;
love is come again, like wheat arising green.
- 3 Forth he came at Easter, like the risen grain,
he that for three days in the grave had lain;
raised from the dead, my living Lord is seen;
love is come again, like wheat arising green.
- 4 When our hearts are wintry, grieving, or in pain,
your touch can call us back to life again,
fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been;
love is come again, like wheat arising green.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Offering

Jesus enters Jerusalem not to take power, but to give himself in love. As we offer our gifts today, we do so in response to that love—seeking to live generously, courageously, and faithfully.

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

Holy One,
we begin this journey with branches in our hands and hope in our hearts,
walking the road toward Jerusalem—
a road lined with longing, with courage, with cries for justice.

We remember the crowds who welcomed Jesus with shouts of *Hosanna*—
save us, we pray—a cry that still echoes in our world today.

And so we walk this road with you, O Christ,
and we carry with us the prayers of the world:

For all who cry out for liberation—
for those living under systems of oppression,
for those whose dignity is denied by racism, transphobia,
colonialism, and economic injustice—
we lift our voices with theirs:
Hosanna. Save us.

For those forced to travel difficult roads—
refugees and migrants seeking safety,
families displaced by war or climate disaster,
those who journey not by choice but by necessity—
walk beside them, O God,
and make a way where there is no way.

For those whose bodies bear the weight of injustice—
those who are hungry, unhoused, or without access to care,
those who are overworked and underpaid,
those who feel unseen or forgotten—
may your justice rise up like a path made straight.

For those who resist—
organizers, advocates, truth-tellers, and quiet disruptors—
for all who dare to imagine a different world
and put their bodies on the line to make it so—
give them courage for the road ahead.

For your Church, called to follow not just in praise but in practice—
when it is easier to wave palms than to walk the hard road of justice,
when we are tempted by comfort over compassion,
call us back to the way of Jesus.

And for ourselves—
as we enter this Holy Week journey,
as we move from celebration to confrontation, from procession to cross—
give us the courage to keep walking.
To keep noticing.
To keep choosing love.

God of the road,
you meet us not only in triumph but in struggle,
not only in shouts of joy but in cries for justice.

So hold all these prayers—spoken and unspoken—
as we walk with you toward Jerusalem,
trusting that even this road,
winding and heavy as it may be,
leads toward resurrection.

Let us pray the words Jesus taught to us:

**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, and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Filled With Excitement

Filled with excitement all the happy throng
Spread cloaks and branches on the city streets
There in the distance they begin to see
Riding on a donkey comes the Son of God

From every corner a thousand voices sing
Praises to Him who comes in the Name of God
With one great shout of acclamation, loud
triumphant song breaks forth:

Hosanna, hosanna to the King
Hosanna, hosanna to the King
Hosanna, hosanna to the King
Hosanna, hosanna to the King

As in that entrance to Jerusalem
We sing hosannas to the Christ, our king
To our redeemer who still calls today
Asking us to follow him with love and faith.

From every corner a thousand voices sing
Praises to Him who comes in the Name of God
With one great shout of acclamation, loud
triumphant song breaks forth:

Hosanna, hosanna to the King
Hosanna, hosanna to the King
Hosanna, hosanna to the King
Hosanna, hosanna to the King
(repeat)

Bread for the Journey

As you walk the road toward Jerusalem this week, where do you hear the cry of *Hosanna*—“save us”—in your own life or in the world, and how might you be invited to respond?

Commissioning

Go, following Jesus on the road ahead.

We go with courage and hope.

Go, choosing love even when it is costly.

We go trusting God's faithfulness.

Go, to walk with those the world rejects.

We go in humility and love.

Benediction

May the God who meets us on the road walk beside you in every uncertain step.

May Christ, who enters in humility and love, give you courage to follow all the way.

And may the Spirit hold you in the days of praise, protest, and pain ahead.

Amen.

Choral Response

And On This Path

MV 8

And on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide (x3)
Open wide! Open wide! Open wide!
The gates are open wide!

So enter in, the gates of holiness are open wide (x3)
Open wide! Open wide! Open wide!
The gates are open wide!

Postlude

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