



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Rev. Gregory Daly: Minister of Word & Sacrament

Rev. Carmen Llanos: Minister of Community Development

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Scripture: Patricia Reid and Kayin Paul

Advent Four – December 20, 2020

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Call to Worship

Do you Remember Me?

Yes, we remember You.

How do you Remember Me?

We remember You with Love.

How do you remember with Love?

We remember the love of a baby, who loves without reserve, and who we love with all our hearts.

We remember your commandment to love God with all our heart and mind and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves: with no restrictions.

We remember your love as we distance from each other: wear our masks and wash our hands.

Remember Me with Love as I remember you.

Let us worship together

Response

In The Bleak Midwinter

VU 55

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him - give my heart.

Life & Work of the Church

Welcome to online worship



Land Acknowledgement

As we prepare for worship, we take a moment to acknowledge the sacred land beside the water on which Birchcliff Bluffs United Church stands. 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 most recently, the Mississauga's of the Credit and Scugog, 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. We seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.



Advent Four Candle Lighting



As this season of sparkle and bright unfolds around us the welcome beauty of love is found, woven into the simplicity of every moment. May love flow from our hearts with abundance filling every moment with the season's gifts of hope and peace and joy. May it be shared truly and deeply that all who encounter it be charged with its message and become, themselves, the agents of love. And may our children, who love without reckoning, teach us the truth of this most precious gift—we are nothing without each other. Let us live, then, in the blessing of love. May Love light the world this Christmas.

Candle Lighting Hymn

Hope is a Star v. 4

VU 7

Words: Brain Wren

Music: Joan Collier Fogg

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Love is a flame that burns in our hearts,
Jesus has come and will never depart,
When God is a child there's joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong,
and none shall be afraid.

Opening Hymn

Gabriel's Message

1. The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame;
'All hail,' said he, 'O lowly maiden Mary,'
most highly favoured lady: Gloria!
2. 'For know a blessed mother you shall be,
all generations praise continually,
your son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,'
most highly favoured lady: Gloria!

3. Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,
'To me be as it pleases God,' she said,
'my soul shall laud and magnify God's holy name,'
most highly favoured lady: Gloria!

4. Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say:
most highly favoured lady: Gloria!

Prayer for Grace

God, the One who comes in your name comes again with grace and power, with forgiveness and strength, with truth and imagination, with gentleness and love. May the Coming One enter the hearts of those who wait with quiet expectation for all that is good and holy and just. Amen.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

And Now for Something Completely Different



The other day I saw this Holiday street lighting on social media. It is a street in the north of Spain. It shows a moon, a Christmas tree, a moon, a Christmas tree, a moon and another Christmas tree.



Someone took the first moon and tree and replaced it with 2020. Now it reads 2020 CACA. For some of you who have learned the basic Spanish words (dirty and curse ones), we see the English equivalent to 2020 POOP.



Yes, for most of us this has been a year we will always remember. As we approach the holidays, for some people it won't be different from previous years. For others it will be a very difficult one. Many people have lost loved ones and others will not be able to gather as they used to.... How we have been celebrating holidays this year and how we will be celebrating the upcoming ones has been and will be different.



Missing family, friends, enjoying a meal together... For some people there is nothing to celebrate. It is a scary time for many. Some people have lost loved ones, others will not be able to gather as they used to....

Using the advent themes we could identify hope for a vaccine widely distributed, new celebrations to come. Peace of mind knowing that we did the right thing, used our masks, kept our distance and washed our hands, joy for being able to celebrate in whatever way it is, thankful for life, as we love and protect others, loving and protecting ourselves....

Psalm 89: 1-4 New Revised Standard Version

- 1 I will sing of your steadfast love, O God forever;
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.
- 2 I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
- 3 You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to my servant David:
- 4 'I will establish your descendants forever,
and build your throne for all generations.'"

Hymn

My Soul Cries Out with a Joyful Shout

MV 120

Words: Rory Cooney

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Music: Traditional Irish melody

1. My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?

Refrain
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn!
2. Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shames,
and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn.

3. From the halls of power to the fortress tower,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears,
ev'ry tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn.
4. Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard
is the promise which holds us bound,
'til the spear and rod can be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around.

Luke 1: 26-38

New Revised Standard Version

26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Jesus' words for us to consider in our lives today.

Thanks be to God

Sermon

All You Need Is Love

Hymn

Love Came Down at Christmas

Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti

1 Love came down at Christmas,
love all lovely, Love divine;
Love was born at Christmas;
star and angels gave the sign.

2 Worship we the Godhead,
Love incarnate, Love divine;
worship we our Jesus,
but wherewith for sacred sign?

3 Love shall be our token;
love be yours and love be mine;
love to God and others,
love for plea and gift and sign.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Offering

Holy One, this Advent season we wait with love,
And we give with love.
Love for you, our God;
Love for your beautiful people.
Receive our generous offerings,
And use them for your works of love in our world. Amen.



Prayers of the People

God of Love, in this time of waiting for your Spirit,
we pray for those who find this family season difficult because they are without loved ones;
for those who will be celebrating alone because of the pandemic, for those who will not be able
to reunite in person with family or friends; for those who are left out of the celebrations because
they are without food or shelter; for those who need to be reminded of the wideness of your love
and mercy...

Spirit of Hope, in a time of busyness that threatens to overpower the sound of your voice,
and blind us to the needs of those around us, we pray for ourselves:
that we might not become so preoccupied with our own schedules,
that we forget we live within your time, that we might not be anxious about tomorrow
that we may trust you to bring about your love and peace, that we might work together
to share Good News with those around and beyond us.

Creator of Joy, we wait with excitement and impatience.

Surround us with your stillness, quiet us with your Spirit, that we might be ready to receive the light of the world. Amen.

Together, as we remember God's unconditional love for us, we share the words that Jesus taught us....



*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 for ever and ever.
Amen.*

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Angels We Have Heard on High

VU 38

Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

See him in a manger laid,
whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,
while our hearts in love we raise.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Benediction & Commissioning



May the God of the stable help us to see the wonder of Christmas:
the wonder of children who can hardly wait,
the wonder of Mary and Joseph who feel the power of God's love,
the wonder of the shepherds who hear the Good News,
the wonder of Magi who kneel and offer their gifts,
the wonder of the ages that God would come in such a simple birth. Amen.

Postlude

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Other Lectionary Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 New Revised Standard Version

Now when the king was settled in his house, and the Lord had given him rest from all his enemies around him, 2 the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." 3 Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the Lord is with you." 4 But that same night the word of the Lord came to Nathan: 5 Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? 6 I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. 7 Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders[a] of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" 8 Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the Lord of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; 9 and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. 10 And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, 11 from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the Lord declares to you that the Lord will make you a house. 16 Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

Psalms 89:19-26 New Revised Standard Version

19 Then you spoke in a vision to your faithful one, and said:
"I have set the crown[a] on one who is mighty,
I have exalted one chosen from the people.
20 I have found my servant David;
with my holy oil I have anointed him;
21 my hand shall always remain with him;
my arm also shall strengthen him.
22 The enemy shall not outwit him,
the wicked shall not humble him.
23 I will crush his foes before him
and strike down those who hate him.
24 My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him;
and in my name his horn shall be exalted.
25 I will set his hand on the sea
and his right hand on the rivers.
26 He shall cry to me, 'You are my Father,
my God, and the Rock of my salvation!'