



**Birchcliff Bluffs United Church**

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

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

**Music Director:** Randy Vancourt

**Reader:** Janet Bawcutt

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

**Third Sunday in Lent**

**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 knows stories of movement, survival, and care—especially for water, which sustains all life. As we journey through Lent, we acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization and environmental injustice.

**We commit ourselves to listening, learning, and walking more gently—seeking right relationship with one another, with the land, and with the God who hears our thirst.**

**Opening Hymn**

**O God, How We Have Wandered**

**VU 112**

1 O God, how we have wandered  
and hidden from your face;  
in foolishness have squandered  
your legacy of grace.  
But how, in exile dwelling,  
we turn with fear and shame,  
as distant but compelling,  
you call us each by name.

2 And now at length discerning  
the evil that we do,  
by faith we are returning  
with hope and trust in you.  
In haste you come to meet us,  
and home rejoicing bring,  
in gladness there to greet us  
with calf and robe and ring.

3 O God of all the living,  
both banished and restored,  
compassionate, forgiving,  
our peace and hope assured.  
Grant now that our transgressing,  
our faithlessness may cease.  
Stretch out your hand in blessing,  
in pardon, and in peace.

### **Call to Worship**

Come, all who are weary from the journey.

**We come carrying our thirst.**

Come, all who have asked hard questions in dry places.

**We come longing for living water.**

Come, all who have known both faith and frustration.

**We come trusting God meets us here.**

This is the place of encounter and grace.

**Let us worship the God who gives life.**

### **Passing the Peace**

Christ meets us not only in moments of strength, but in our need and vulnerability. The peace he offers is not shallow reassurance, but the promise that we are seen and known. As you share Christ's peace today, may it be a sign of care, connection, and grace.

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

### **Life and Work**

#### **Opening Prayer**

Let us pray:

**Faithful God,**

**you hear the cries of your people in the wilderness,  
and you meet us at wells we did not plan to visit.**

**You know our thirst—for justice, for healing, for truth, for rest.**

**Make space for our questions and our complaints.  
Teach us to recognize your presence even when we are tired, frustrated, or unsure.  
Be with us now, and give us the water that sustains life.  
Amen.**

### **Prayer of Confession**

Let us pray:

**God of mercy,  
we confess that we are often impatient in the wilderness.  
We confess the ways we hoard what gives life, the ways we judge others' stories,  
the ways we avoid honest conversation about our own deep needs.  
Forgive us when fear hardens our hearts.  
Open us again to your living water—flowing freely, making us whole.  
Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news:  
God does not abandon us in the wilderness.  
God does not turn away from our questions or complaints.  
In Christ, grace meets us exactly where we are.  
We are forgiven. We are renewed.  
We are invited again into life.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

### **Hymn**

#### **I Heard the Voice of Jesus**

**VU 626**

- 1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
    'Come unto me and rest;  
lay down, O weary one, lay down  
    your head upon my breast.'  
    I came to Jesus as I was,  
    weary and worn and sad;  
I found in him a resting place,  
    and he has made me glad.
  
- 2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
    'Behold, I freely give  
    the living water; thirsty one,  
stoop down, and drink, and live.'  
    I came to Jesus, and I drank  
    of that life-giving stream;  
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,  
    and now I live in him.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
'I am this dark world's light;  
look unto me, your morn shall rise,  
and all your day be bright.'  
I looked to Jesus, and I found  
in him my star, my sun;  
and in that light of life I'll walk  
till travelling days are done.

### RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

#### Scripture      **John 4:5-42**

<sup>5</sup> So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. <sup>6</sup> Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. <sup>7</sup> A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." <sup>8</sup> (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) <sup>9</sup> The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." <sup>11</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? <sup>12</sup> Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" <sup>13</sup> Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, <sup>14</sup> but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." <sup>15</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." <sup>17</sup> The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband,' <sup>18</sup> for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" <sup>19</sup> The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. <sup>20</sup> Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. <sup>22</sup> You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. <sup>23</sup> But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. <sup>24</sup> God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." <sup>25</sup> The woman said to him, "I know that the Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." <sup>26</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

<sup>27</sup> Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" <sup>28</sup> Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, <sup>29</sup> "Come and see a man who told me

everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"<sup>30</sup> They left the city and were on their way to him.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."<sup>32</sup> But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."<sup>33</sup> So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"<sup>34</sup> Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work."<sup>35</sup> Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.<sup>36</sup> The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.<sup>37</sup> For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'<sup>38</sup> I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."<sup>39</sup> Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done."<sup>40</sup> So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.<sup>41</sup> And many more believed because of his word.<sup>42</sup> They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world."

The Word of God for the People of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Lenten Ritual**

Some needs cannot be ignored. Some thirsts tell the truth.

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

**Hymn**

**Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights** (v. 2)

**VU 108**

The pilgrim Christ, the Lamb of God,  
who found in weakness greater power,  
embraces us, though lost and flawed,  
and leads us to his Rising Hour.

**Sermon**

**Blessed Are Those Who Thirst**

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

**Hymn**

**Come to the Well**

Come to the well full of water.  
Come to the well deep as the sea.  
Come to the one who will give you  
water to drink, living and free.

1. Jesus is walking to Galilee.  
What will he notice? Who will he see?  
Talking to strangers, asking to drink,  
breaking conventions—what will they think?

Come to the well full of water.  
Come to the well deep as the sea.  
Come to the one who will give you  
water to drink, living and free.

2. Seeking companions, making a friend—  
what will it lead to, where will it end?  
Woman entrusted, woman you choose  
to be the bearer of the good news.

Come to the well full of water.  
Come to the well deep as the sea.  
Come to the one who will give you  
water to drink, living and free.

3. When we are weary, when we are weak,  
Jesus will be the strength that we seek.  
In all our searching, in all our care,  
Jesus is with us, Jesus is there.

Come to the well full of water.  
Come to the well deep as the sea.  
Come to the one who will give you  
water to drink, living and free.

### **Offering**

God's gifts are not meant to be hoarded, but shared—like water in a dry land. As we offer our gifts today, we do so trusting that God can use them to bring refreshment, justice, and hope. May our giving reflect a faith that flows outward in love.

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 living water,  
we come before you today as thirsty people.

Thirsty for a world that is more gentle than the one we inhabit.  
Thirsty for justice that runs deeper than words.  
Thirsty for communities where every person knows they belong.

You meet us at the well of our lives—  
not when we have everything figured out,  
but when we are weary, searching, and longing for more.  
Receive our prayers now, O God,  
as we hold before you the thirst of the world.

We pray for those whose thirst is literal.  
For communities where clean water is scarce.  
For places where drought, climate change, and conflict  
make daily life a struggle for survival.  
Stir in us the courage to protect the waters of this earth—  
rivers, lakes, oceans, and aquifers—  
so that your gift of water may remain a blessing for generations to come.

We pray for those who thirst for justice.  
For people whose dignity is denied because of who they are—  
their race, their gender, their identity, their immigration status, their poverty.  
For those who know what it is to be pushed to the margins  
and made to feel invisible.  
May your Spirit trouble every system that denies the sacred worth  
of your beloved children.

We pray for those who thirst for safety and home.  
For refugees and displaced people.  
For families searching for housing they can afford.  
For neighbours navigating systems that feel overwhelming and cold.  
May we become communities that open doors, share resources,  
and refuse the lie that scarcity must rule our lives.

We pray for those who thirst for healing.  
For those living with illness, grief, and exhaustion.  
For those whose spirits feel dry and brittle  
from the weight of worry or loneliness.  
Pour your living water into every place of pain,  
and surround them with compassion that restores hope.

We pray for the church.  
That we would not guard the well of grace, but widen it.

That we would not hoard living water, but share it freely.  
Make us a people who listen deeply, welcome boldly,  
and walk humbly alongside our neighbours.

God of the well,  
you met the Samaritan woman in the heat of the day  
and transformed her thirst into testimony and courage.

Meet us there too—  
in the ordinary places of our lives, in our questions and our longings.  
And as we drink from the living water of your grace,  
send us back into the world  
as people who help others find the well.

We offer all these prayers, spoken and unspoken,  
trusting that your love is deeper than our thirst  
and wider than the world's pain.

Let us pray:

**Our Father and Mother, 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**

**All the Way My Saviour Leads Me**

**VU 635**

1 All the way my Saviour leads me;  
what have I to ask beside?  
Can I doubt his tender mercy  
who through life has been my guide?  
Heavenly peace, divinest comfort,  
here by faith in him to dwell,  
for I know, whate'er befall me,  
Jesus doeth all things well.

2 All the way my Saviour leads me,  
cheers each winding path I tread,  
gives me grace for every trial,  
feeds me with the living bread.  
Though my weary steps may falter,  
and my soul athirst may be,  
gushing from the rock before me,  
lo, a spring of joy I see!

3 All the way my Saviour leads me;  
O the fullness of his love!  
Perfect rest to me is promised  
in the blessed house above.  
When my spirit, clothed, immortal,  
wings its flight to realms of day,  
this my song through endless ages,  
'Jesus led me all the way!'

### **Bread for the Journey**

Where do you notice thirst—in your own life or in the world around you—and how might God be inviting you to come to the well?

### **Commissioning**

Go, trusting God meets you in dry places.

**We go, open to living water.**

Go, telling the truth about what you need.

**We go, trusting God hears us.**

Go, to share life and hope with others.

**We go in faith and love.**

### **Benediction**

May the God who brings water from the rock sustain you in every wilderness.

May Christ, who meets us at the well, teach you to speak truth with courage and grace.

And may the Spirit flow through you—renewing, restoring, and giving life.

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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