Birchcliff Bluffs United Church
Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather
Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Katie Vardy
Music Director: Randy Vancourt
Reader: Mary Cannings

September 27th, 2026
18th Sunday after Pentecost

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle
In the wilderness, God brought water from the rock. In places of uncertainty, Christ still meets us with grace. We light this candle remembering that the light of Christ is among us, calling, challenging, and leading us into life. *Candle is lit.*

Lighting the Rainbow Candle
We light this rainbow candle as a sign of God's wide and wondrous welcome. Here, every identity, every body, every story is sacred. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement
As we gather for worship, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Peoples, including the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. We honour the Indigenous Peoples who have cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial.

> **As people of faith, may our acknowledgement become more than words, moving us toward truth, right relationship, reconciliation, and justice.**

Opening Hymn **Let Us with a Gladsome Mind** **VU 234**

1 Let us with a gladsome mind
praise our God, forever kind;
whose great mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

2 God, with all-commanding might,
filled the newmade world with light;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

3 God has with a gracious eye
looked upon our misery;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

4 All things living God does feed,
with full measure meets their need;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

5 Let us then with gladsome mind,
praise our God, forever kind;
whose great mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

Call to Worship
Come, people of God, with your questions and your doubts.
We come seeking the presence of God.
Come with your promises, your failures, and your hopes.
We come trusting that grace can change us.
Come, not only to speak of God's love, but to learn to live it.
With open hearts and willing spirits, let us worship God.

Passing the Peace
Jesus calls us beyond good intentions and into lives shaped by reconciliation, compassion, and peace. So, let us begin here, with one another.

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you.**
Let us share signs of Christ's peace.

Life and Work

Opening Prayer
Let us pray:
God of living water, you meet us in wilderness places and surprise us with grace.

Open our hearts this morning. Challenge what needs challenging, soften what has become hardened, and give us courage to change our minds when love requires it.
May our worship shape not only the words we speak, but the lives we live. Amen.

Hymn **Come, O Fount of Every Blessing** **VU 559**

1 Come, O Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing
call for songs of endless praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unfailing love.

2 Here I pause in my sojourning,
giving thanks for having come,
come to trust, at every turning,
God will guide me safely home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God,
came to rescue me from danger,
precious presence, precious blood.

3 O, to grace how great a debt
or daily I am drawn anew!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, I can feel it,
wander from the love I've known:
here's my heart, O, take and seal it,
seal it for your very own.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture **Exodus 17:1-6**

[1] From the wilderness of Syn, the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. [2] The people quarrelled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?" [3] But the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" [4] So Moses cried out to the Lord, "What shall I do for this people? They are almost ready to stone me." [5] The Lord said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile and go. [6] I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel.

Matthew 21:23-32

[23] When he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him as he was teaching and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" [24] Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one question; if you tell me the answer, then I will also tell you by what authority I do these things. [25] Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why, then, did you not believe him?' [26] But if we say, 'Of human origin,' we are afraid of the crowd, for all regard John as a prophet." [27] So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

[28] "What do you think? A man had two sons; he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' [29] He answered, 'I will not,' but later he changed his mind and went. [30] The father went to the second and said the same, and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. [31] Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you. [32] For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him, and even after you saw it you did not change your minds and believe him.

The Word of God for the People of God.
Thanks be to God.

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!

Sermon **Already in the Vineyard**

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn **I Surrender All**

1 All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

I surrender all, I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

2 All to Jesus I surrender,
Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that you are mine.

I surrender all, I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

3 All to Jesus I surrender,
God, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Your love and power,
Let Your blessing fall on me.

I surrender all, I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all
I surrender all, I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

Offering
Generous God, receive these gifts and receive our lives. May what we offer become more than a promise of love; may it become love made visible! Bless these gifts and all that we offer in Christ's name. Amen.
Let us sing:

Offering Hymn **What Can I Do?** **MV 191**

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

Prayers of the People
God of grace,
you have heard the cries of your people in every generation. You heard your people in the wilderness when they were thirsty and afraid. You brought water from stone and reminded them that even in barren places, they were not abandoned.

Hear us now as we bring before you the thirsts of our own world.

We pray for those who thirst for peace: for communities living beneath the shadow of war and violence, for people displaced from their homes, for those grieving lives and futures that have been taken from them. Give courage to peacemakers, wisdom to leaders, and strength to all who work for justice.

We pray for those who thirst for enough: for people struggling to afford food, housing, medicine, or other necessities; for those whose work is insecure or whose wages cannot meet the cost of living; for neighbours who are exhausted from trying to make too little stretch too far. Move us beyond words of concern and into acts of generosity, solidarity, and change.

We pray for those who thirst for belonging: for people who have been told, directly or indirectly, that they are unwelcome, unworthy, or somehow outside the reach of grace. Especially we pray for queer and trans people, for racialized communities, for newcomers and refugees, for people living with disabilities, and for all whose dignity is too often questioned or denied. Make your Church a place where welcome is not simply proclaimed, but practiced.

We pray for those who thirst for healing: for people living with illness, pain, loneliness, grief, or uncertainty; for those carrying burdens visible to others and those carrying burdens known only to themselves.

We hold before you now, in the silence of our hearts, the people and places for whom we especially pray. *(Silence)*

And, gracious God, we pray for ourselves. When we say yes to love but fail to live it, give us courage to begin again. When pride makes it difficult to admit that we were wrong, give us humility to change. When faith becomes comfortable words rather than courageous action, disturb us with your grace.

Keep shaping us into people whose lives tell the story of your love, not perfectly, but faithfully; not only with our lips, but with our choices, our relationships, and our actions.

And we now join our voices in the prayer that Jesus taught us to pray; Divine Creator, our Holy Parent, our Mother and…

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,
forever and ever. Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn **Go To the World** **VU 420**

1 Go to the world! Go into all the earth.
Go preach the cross where Christ renews life's worth,
baptising as the sign of our rebirth.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

2 Go to the world! Go into every place.
Go live the Word of God's redeeming grace.
Go seek God's presence in each time and space.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

3 Go to the world! Go struggle, bless and pray;
the nights of tears give way to joyous day.
As servant Church, you follow Christ's own way.
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

4 Go to the world! Go as the ones I send,
for I am with you 'til the age shall end,
when all the hosts of glory cry 'Amen!'
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Bread for the Journey
Where do you see God already at work in our community and how might you join in?

Commissioning
We have heard the stories of God's faithfulness.
Now we go to live the story.
We have spoken of love, justice, welcome, and peace.
Now we go to make our words visible.
And when we discover that we have been wrong?
May grace give us courage to change.
Then go, people of God, to love with more than words.
We go to follow the way of Christ.

Benediction
Go with hearts open to change, hands ready for service, and lives willing to become good news.

May the love of God sustain you, the grace of Christ accompany you, and the Holy Spirit give you courage for every step ahead. Amen!

Choral Response **I Am Walking a Path of Peace** **MV 221**

I am walking a path of peace,
I am walking a path of peace,
I am walking a path of peace,
lead me home, lead me home.

I am walking a path of hope,
I am walking a path of hope,
I am walking a path of hope,
lead me home, lead me home.

I am walking a path of joy,
I am walking a path of joy,
I am walking a path of joy,
lead me home, lead me home.

Postlude

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