



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

Reader: Janet Bawcutt

May 2, 2021 – Easter 5



WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Jesus Calls Us

Traditional Gaelic melody

Call to Worship

We gather in the presence of the One who breathes life into all of Creation.

We sing God's praises, breathing in God's glory.

All are welcome in the presence of the Most High.

We come, seeking the goodness in the hands of God.

We gather as God's beloved people, leaving no one outside.

Together we reflect the fullness of God's love;

together we bring God's love into the world.

Let us worship the Living God whose breath gives us life.

Response

Come and Find the Quiet Centre

Words: Shirley Erena Murray

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Music: Attributed to Benjamin Franklin White

VU 374

*Come and find the quiet centre
in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter,
find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter,
clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter,
be at peace, and simply be.*

*Silence is a friend who claims us,
cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us,
knows our being, face to face,
making space within our thinking,
lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking,
finding scope for faith begun.*

*In the Spirit let us travel,
open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel,
celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming,
there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming
there is always room to spare!*

Life & Work of the Church



Welcome to online worship

Whoever you are, however you identify, wherever you come from, you are welcome here.

Land Acknowledgement

As we prepare for worship, we take a moment to acknowledge the sacred land 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 the Mississauga's of the Credit and Scugog. What we now know as Scarborough is part of the Williams Treaty lands. 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. It is now our time to share in the care and maintenance of the land. Part of that discussion is the work of reconciliation and we seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.



Candle Lighting

Opening Hymn

God, Take My Hand

VU 638

Words: Julie van Hausmann
Music: Friedrich Silcher

*God, take my hand and lead me upon life's way;
direct, protect and feed me from day to day.
Without your grace and favour I go astray;
so take my hand, O Saviour, and lead the way.*

*God, when the tempest rages, I need not fear;
for you, the Rock of Ages, are always near.
Close by your side abiding, I fear no foe,
for when your hand is guiding, in peace I go.*

*God, when the shadows lengthen and night has come,
I know that you will strengthen my steps toward home,
and nothing can impede me, O blessed Friend!
So, take my hand and lead me unto the end.*

Prayer for Grace

God of love, today as we celebrate Mental Health Sunday, stir in us deep compassion for people living with mental health disorders and their families.

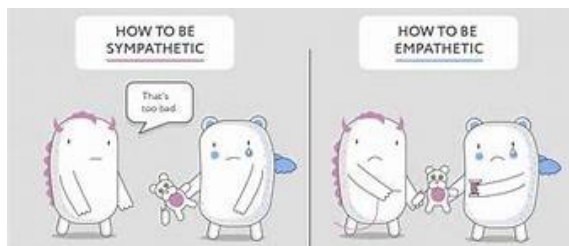
Raise our awareness of how we can create a supportive and safe spiritual community for people who feel isolated, shunned and ashamed.

Inspire us to reach out in love as a sign of your radical hospitality and grace.

Encourage us to receive the gifts that are given by all, including those who are living with mental health challenges. Amen

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

And Now For Something Completely Different



Empathy vs. Sympathy

Hymn

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

VU 559

Words: Robert Robinson
Music: John Wyeth

*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.*

*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.*

*O, to grace how great a debtor
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*

Prayer of Illumination

*Sheltering One, keeper of hearts; as we receive your word today,
bring us into open spaces where peace and reconciliation will thrive.
With joy and blessings, Amen.*

Acts 8:26-40

New Revised Standard Version

²⁶ Then an angel of God said to Philip, "Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over to this chariot and join it." ³⁰ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

³¹ He replied, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³² Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

*"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth. ³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."*

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of God snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

1 John 4:7-21

New Revised Standard Version

⁷ Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸ Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God but that God loved us and sent the Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹ Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹² No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and God’s love is perfected in us.

¹³ By this we know that we abide in God and God in us, because God has given us the Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and do testify that God has sent the Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶ So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷ Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸ There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹ We love because God first loved us. ²⁰ Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their siblings, are liars; for those who do not love a sibling whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹ The commandment we have from God is this: those who love God must love their siblings also.

The word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God

Sermon

A Tale of Two Stories



Hymn

Abide With Me

(alternate text)

Words: Elaine Bidgood Sweet

Music: William Henry Monk

*Abide with me, O Christ, the one true vine.
Root me in love and train me to be kind.
Guide all my actions, thoughts so I can be
fruitful for you, O Christ, abide with me.*

*I can do nothing, God, apart from you.
Yours is the glory, strength and wisdom, too.
May I obey and faithful always be.
O Christ, who changes not, abide with me.*

*Stay with me, God, through all this life does bring.
Your nearness is a joy for all to sing.
Grant me a heart that serves you all my days.
Almighty God, I will abide always.*

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Offering



Prayers of the People



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.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Take My Life and Let it Be

Words: Frances Ridley Havergal

Music: Public Domain

VU 506

*Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, all for thee;
take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of your love;*

*take my feet, and let them be
swift and purposeful for thee.*

*Take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee;
take my intellect, and use
every power as you shall choose.*

*Take my love: and I will pour
at your feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.*

Benediction & Commissioning



Postlude

May The Grace of Christ

Music: William Boyce

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Other Resources for Today

Mental Health Commission of Canada: A federal organization developing a national mental health strategy, offering support, and programs: <http://mentalhealthcommission.ca/>

eMental Health: mental health services in your community: <http://www.ementalhealth.ca/>

Crisis Services Canada Suicide prevention and support: <http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/>

Canadian Mental Health Association: Local offices offer services and support: <http://cmha.ca>

Black Youth Helpline <https://blackyouth.ca>

Mental Health First Aid <https://www.mhfa.ca/>

Psychological First Aid <https://www.redcross.ca/training>

Pointers For Successful Conversations About Mental Health

Conversations about mental health, both public and private, sometimes can be complicated and difficult, especially in a religious context. Below are some Do's and Don'ts that may help.

DO:

- Be careful to respect your congregants' confidentiality. Many people with mental illness have endured stigma for many years. They may not want others to know they have mental health challenges, substance use disorder, neurodevelopmental difference, or other brain disorder, so always check with the person before talking about their condition publicly.
- Watch your language. Avoid stigmatizing words like "crazy," "nuts" and "psycho."
- Listen without being judgmental or offering advice.
- Talk to others of God's unconditional love for them and your care and concern for them.
- Pray for balance in their lives and tolerance in yours.
- Gently educate those who spread misinformation about mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and brain differences, or perpetuate negative stereotypes.
- Treat persons affected by mental health challenges and their families with compassion, not condescension. Most don't want pity, just understanding and the ability to bring their whole selves and their stories to the congregation.
- Educate yourself about mental health challenges, understanding that some individuals may need more than spiritual counseling. Refer them to appropriate mental health professionals while continuing to support them as a spiritual friend.

DON'T:

- Don't tell a person with a mental health challenge or substance use disorder to just pray harder. That would not be appropriate advice for someone with cancer or a heart condition, and it is not appropriate for someone with mental illness. Mental illnesses are biological conditions that may have environmental triggers, and frequently respond well to therapies and/or medications, just like other disorders.
- Don't use shame or guilt as a motivator. For many who suffer from mental health challenges and substance use disorders, shame and inappropriate guilt may exacerbate their problems.
- Don't look down on persons with mental illness or substance use disorders for using medications to control their symptoms. Someone with depression using antidepressants is no different from someone with diabetes using insulin.
- Don't forget to find simple ways to support family members and friends of people living with a mental illness. A card, a meal, and your supportive listening can be healing.
- Don't shy away from talking with a person who has let it be known they are living with a mental health challenge, substance use disorder, or brain difference.

Some of the above content was adapted from an article by Jan Lutz, "The 'Do's and 'Don'ts of Ministry," published by NAMI Faith-Net.

5 Simple Things You Can Do

to make the world a better place for people with mental health challenges and their families

1. **Be a friend.** Provide companionship and compassion on the road toward recovery. Offer a ride to church or to a local support group. Listen without judgement. Pray for those you know with mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and for their family members.
2. **Share your story.** Has mental illness impacted you or your family in some way? Your story may empower others to seek treatment or have hope.
3. **Watch your language.** Pay attention to the words you use and avoid stigmatizing labels. Do not refer to people as "crazy," "psycho," "lunatic" or "mental."
4. **Be a "StigmaBuster."** Challenge negative attitudes toward mental illness among your friends and acquaintances and in the media.
5. **Learn the facts.** Educate yourself about the various mental health challenges, substance use disorders, neurodevelopmental differences, and other brain disorders. Check out the resources at the UCC Mental Health Network (www.mhn-ucc.org), take a Mental Health First Aid class and host one at your congregation for the larger community. Offer a class or going a support group with the National Alliance on Mental Illness (www.nami.org) and check out the facts at the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov), the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (www.samhsa.gov), the Alzheimer's Association (www.alz.org). Visit the Mental Health Commission of Canada for education, supports and programs related to mental wellness <http://mentalhealthcommission.ca/>

Lectionary Readings

Psalm 22:25-31

New Revised Standard Version

- ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
- ²⁶ The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!
- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
- ²⁸ For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.
- ²⁹ To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.
- ³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,
- ³¹ and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

John 15:1-8

New Revised Standard Version

¹⁵ "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ² He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³ You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷ If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.