



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe

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Reader: Beth Moore

April 23, 2023

Earth Day Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

We light this Christ candle in recognition of this world.

In every moment Christ’s light shines over this land.

Call to Worship

You come with questions and doubts;

We are welcome here.

You come with concerns and anxieties;

We are welcome here.

You come believing God’s peace will be your peace;

We are welcome here. Let us worship our God!

Introit

Each Blade of Grass

MV 37

1 Each blade of grass, ev’ry wing that soars,
the waves that sweep across a distant shore,
make full the circle of God.

Each laughing child, ev’ry gentle eye,
a forest lit beneath a moon-bright sky,
make full the circle of God.

2 Each silent paw, ev’ry rounded stone,
the buzz that echoes from a honey’d comb,
make full the circle of God.

Each fire-brimmed star, ev’ry out-stretched hand,
the wind that leaps and sails across the land,
make full the circle of God.

3 Each icy peak, ev'ry patterned shell,
the joyous chorus that the dawn foretells,
make full the circle of God.
Each cosmic hue, ev'ry creature's way,
all form the beauty of this vast array,
making full the circle of God.

Opening Prayer

May all our prayers today be an honest reflection of who we are ...

**May we keep at the centre of our prayer the One who taught us to pray as one
people in unity. Amen.**

Land Acknowledgement

We now 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 Mississaugas of the Credit and Scugog, all part of the Williams Treaty. We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this territory and we seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.

Opening Hymn

Called By Earth and Sky

MV 135

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

1 Precious these waters, endless seas,
deep ocean's dream,
waters of healing, rivers of rain,
the wash of love again.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

2 Precious this gift, the air we breathe;
wind born and free.
Breath of the Spirit, blow through this place,
our gathering and our grace.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.

This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

3 Precious these mountains, ancient sands;
vast fragile land.
Seeds of our wakening, rooted and strong,
Creation's faithful song.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

4 Precious the fire that lights our way,
bright dawning day.
Fire of passion, sorrows undone,
our faith and justice one.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky,
called by earth and sky.

Life and Work of the Church

Scripture Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19

I love the LORD because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.

**² Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.**

³ The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.

**⁴ Then I called on the name of the LORD,
"O LORD, I pray, save my life!"**

¹² What shall I return to the LORD
for all his bounty to me?

**¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the LORD;**

¹⁴ I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people.

**15 Precious in the sight of the LORD
is the death of his faithful ones.**

16 O LORD, I am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your serving girl.
You have loosed my bonds.

**17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice
and call on the name of the LORD.**

18 I will pay my vows to the LORD
in the presence of all his people,

**19 in the courts of the house of the LORD,
in your midst, O Jerusalem.**

Praise the LORD!

Gospel Luke 24:13-31

The Walk to Emmaus

¹³ Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, ¹⁶ but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” ¹⁹ He asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. ²² Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body there they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see him.” ²⁵ Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” ²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

²⁸ As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. ²⁹ But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.

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

Hymn He Lives

Rejoice, for the Saviour has risen,
And gone is the darkness of night;
The stone has been rolled from the prison;
He lives in His glory and might.

He lives! O be glad on the earth!
He lives! Jesus lives!
Up from the grave He rose to save!
He lives, the Conqueror lives!

Rejoice in the glad Gospel story;
Rejoice in the promise it gives
That we shall behold Him in glory;
Rejoice, for we know Jesus lives.

He lives! O be glad on the earth!
He lives! Jesus lives!
Up from the grave He rose to save!
He lives, the Conqueror lives!

Rejoice for the joy it is bringing,
The hope of a glad, brighter day;
O list, while the angels are singing;
Go, bear ye the message away.

He lives! O be glad on the earth!
He lives! Jesus lives!
Up from the grave He rose to save!
He lives, the Conqueror lives!
Up from the grave He rose to save!
He lives, the Conqueror lives!

Sermon **Easter Heartburn!**

Hymn

We Meet You, O Christ

VU 183

1 We meet you, O Christ, in many a guise;
your image we see in simple and wise.
You live in a palace, exist in a shack.
We see you, the gardener, a tree on your back.

2 In millions alive, away and abroad;
involved in our life you live down the road.
Imprisoned in systems you long to be free.
We see you, O Jesus, still bearing your tree.

4 You choose to be made at one with the earth;
the dark of the grave prepares for your birth.
Your death is your rising, creative your word:
the tree springs to life and our hope is restored.

Offering

A life of faith is a life of stewardship, which means it's a life of caring.

We are called by faith to care for others and live in respect with creation. Our offering is a way to bring our faith to life. Please be generous.

Prayers of the People

O God, our Guide and Companion, you walk with us through our days to a time of reflection and rest.

Calm our souls and refresh us with your peace. In Christ, draw us closer to one another in the bonds of his love. Continue to light our path that we might learn to walk in faith, in peace and in love ...

We now take a moment to remember those we keep in our prayers.

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

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

I Sing the Mighty Power

VU 231

1 I sing the mighty power of God
that made the mountains rise,
that spread the flowing seas abroad,
and built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained
the sun to rule the day;
the moon shines full at God's command
and all the stars obey.

2 I sing the goodness of the One
who filled the earth with food;
who formed the creatures with a word,
and then pronounced them good.

O God, your wonders are displayed
where'er I turn my eye;
if I survey the ground I tread,
or gaze upon the sky!

3 There's not a plant or flower below
but makes your glories known;
and clouds arise, and tempests blow,
by order from your throne;
while all that borrows life from you
is ever in your care,
and everywhere that I may be,
you, God, are present there.

Benediction & Commissioning

The God of rainbow light is at work in us and in others.

May we experience signs of God's love even when we journey through the shadows.
Go with God into the world, let the voice of Jesus speak as you journey, and let the Holy Spirit
be your guide. **Amen.**

Postlude

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Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Additional Lectionary

Acts 2:14 **New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition**

Peter Addresses the Crowd

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Fellow Jews^[a] and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say.

Acts 2:36-41 **New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition**

³⁶ “Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah,^[a] this Jesus whom you crucified.”

The First Converts

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, “Brothers,^[b] what should we do?” ³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.” ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other

arguments and exhorted them, saying, “Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.”⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

1 Peter 1:17-23 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

¹⁷ If you invoke as Father the one who judges impartially according to each person’s work, live in fear during the time of your exile. ¹⁸ You know that you were ransomed from the futile conduct inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. ²⁰ He was destined before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. ²¹ Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your trust and hope are in God.

²² Now that you have purified your souls^[a] by your obedience to the truth^[b] so that you have genuine mutual affection, love one another deeply from the heart.^[c] ²³ You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.^[d]