



**Birchcliff Bluffs United Church**

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

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

**Music Director:** Randy Vancourt

**Reader:** Mary Cannings

**March 22, 2026**

**Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**CELTIC MUSIC SERVICE**

**WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE**

**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

As we light this candle, may the blessing of light be on you,

Light without and light within.

Let the blessed sunlight shine upon you and warm your heart

Till it glows like a great fire,

And strangers may warm themselves, as well as friends.

**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 traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit River.

**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**

**Be Thou My Vision (v. 1, 2, 4, 5)**

**VU 642**

1 Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart;  
naught be all else to me save that thou art,  
thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping thy presence my light.

2 Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife;  
I ever with thee, and thou in my life;  
thou loving parent, thy child may I be,  
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

4 Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,  
thou mine inheritance, now and always;  
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

5 Great God of heaven, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

### **Call to Worship**

Let us kindle our fires this morning in the presence of the holy angels of heaven.  
Kindle in my heart a flame of love to my neighbour,  
to my foe, to my friend, to my kindred all,  
to the brave, to the knave, and to all.

### **Passing the Peace**

We now take this opportunity to greet those around us, with a wave, a handshake, a nod. As you share the peace today, may it be offered gently, as a sign of presence and care.

Peace be with you all. **And also with you.**

### **Life and Work**

#### **Opening Prayer**

We come to this sanctuary, this house, this home,  
And are received with lavish welcome.  
The Restorer of our fortunes,  
The Promise of new life –  
Fill this room with your Spirit:  
The sound of wind, the warmth of flame, the scent of perfume  
And fill our hearts with compassion,  
Not just in this time and place,  
But in all times and in all places,  
So that we may celebrate the great things,  
And embody the love that is shared with all. Amen.

### **Prayer of Confession**

God who knows our sorrow,  
we confess that we often resist grief.  
We rush past pain, seeking easy answers and quick comfort.  
We confess the ways we avoid one another's tears,  
the ways we struggle to sit with loss—our own and others'.  
Forgive us when we turn away.  
Teach us how to mourn with love  
and to trust you with our broken hearts.  
Amen.

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news: Jesus wept.  
God does not stand far from our grief.  
In Christ, love enters even the grave.  
We are forgiven.  
We are held.  
We are not alone.  
Thanks be to God. Amen.

### **Hymn**

#### **Before the Earth Had Yet Begun** (tune: The Wexford Carol)

**VU 301**

1 Before the earth had yet begun  
its journey round the burning sun,  
before a seed of life had stirred,  
there sounded God's creating Word.

In that bright dawning of the world,  
'ere ocean surged or wind unfurled,  
the vaults of heaven with praises rang,  
the morning stars together sang.

2 Thus when creation's God did take  
the clay of earth our form to make,  
God willed that to our race belong  
the gifts of music, word, and song.

For mind can never comprehend,  
our noblest words can but pretend  
to grasp God's glory; praise alone  
is our companion by that throne.

## RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture     **John 11:1-45**

### **The Death of Lazarus**

11 Now a certain man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village where Mary and her sister Martha lived. <sup>2</sup> (Now it was Mary who anointed the Lord with perfumed oil and wiped his feet dry with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) <sup>3</sup> So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, look, the one you love is sick." <sup>4</sup> When Jesus heard this, he said, "This sickness will not lead to death, but to God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." <sup>5</sup> (Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.)

<sup>6</sup> So when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he remained in the place where he was for two more days. <sup>7</sup> Then after this, he said to his disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." <sup>8</sup> The disciples replied, "Rabbi, the Jewish leaders were just now trying to stone you to death! Are you going there again?" <sup>9</sup> Jesus replied, "Are there not twelve hours in a day? If anyone walks around in the daytime, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world. <sup>10</sup> But if anyone walks around at night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

<sup>11</sup> After he said this, he added, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep. But I am going there to awaken him." <sup>12</sup> Then the disciples replied, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will recover." <sup>13</sup> (Now Jesus had been talking about his death, but they thought he had been talking about real sleep.)

<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and I am glad for your sake that I was not there, so that you may believe. <sup>16</sup> But let us go to him." <sup>16</sup> So Thomas said to his fellow disciples, "Let us go too, so that we may die with him."

<sup>17</sup> When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days already. <sup>18</sup> (Now Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, <sup>19</sup> so many of the Jewish people of the region had come to Martha and Mary to console them over the loss of their brother.) <sup>20</sup> So when Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary was sitting in the house. <sup>21</sup> Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup> But even now I know that whatever you ask from God, God will grant you."

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, "Your brother will come back to life again." <sup>24</sup> Martha said, "I know that he will come back to life again in the resurrection at the last day." <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even if he dies, <sup>26</sup> and the one who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" <sup>27</sup> She replied, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who comes into the world."

<sup>28</sup> And when she had said this, Martha went and called her sister Mary, saying privately, "The Teacher is here and is asking for you." <sup>29</sup> So when Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him. <sup>31</sup> Then the people who were with Mary in the house consoling her saw her get up quickly and go out. They followed her, because they thought she was going to the tomb to weep there.

<sup>32</sup> Now when Mary came to the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” <sup>33</sup> When Jesus saw her weeping, and the people who had come with her weeping, he was intensely moved in spirit and greatly distressed. <sup>34</sup> He asked, “Where have you laid him?” They replied, “Lord, come and see.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus wept. <sup>36</sup> Thus the people who had come to mourn said, “Look how much he loved him!” <sup>37</sup> But some of them said, “This is the man who caused the blind man to see! Couldn’t he have done something to keep Lazarus from dying?”

<sup>38</sup> Jesus, intensely moved again, came to the tomb. (Now it was a cave, and a stone was placed across it.) <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, “Take away the stone.” Martha, the sister of the deceased, replied, “Lord, by this time the body will have a bad smell, because he has been buried four days.” <sup>40</sup> Jesus responded, “Didn’t I tell you that if you believe, you would see the glory of God?” <sup>41</sup> So they took away the stone. Jesus looked upward and said, “Father, I thank you that you have listened to me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always listen to me, but I said this for the sake of the crowd standing around here, that they may believe that you sent me.” <sup>43</sup> When he had said this, he shouted in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” <sup>44</sup> The one who had died came out, his feet and hands tied up with strips of cloth, and a cloth wrapped around his face. Jesus said to them, “Unwrap him and let him go.”

<sup>45</sup> Then many of the people, who had come with Mary and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in him.

The Word of God for the People of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Lenten Ritual**

Some losses do not shrink with time.

We carry them together.

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

**Hymn**

**Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights (verse 5)**

**VU 108**

So let us choose the path of One  
who wore, for us the crown of thorn,  
and slept in death that we might wake  
to life on Resurrection Morn!

### **A CELEBRATION OF CELTIC MUSIC**

**Reflection**

**RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD**

## Hymn

### Wind In The Willows

1 As I went a walking one morning in spring  
I met with some travelers in an old country lane  
One was an old man, the second a maid  
The third was a young boy who smiled as he said

With the wind in the willows and the birds in the sky  
There's a bright sun to warm us wherever we lie  
We have bread and fishes and a jug of red wine  
to share on our journey with all of mankind

2 I sat down beside them, the flowers all around  
and we ate on a mantel spread out on the ground  
They told me of prophets and princes and kings  
and they spoke of the one God who knows everything

With the wind in the willows and the birds in the sky  
There's a bright sun to warm us wherever we lie  
We have bread and fishes and a jug of red wine  
to share on our journey with all of mankind

3 I asked them to tell me their names and their race  
So I might remember their kindness and grace  
My name is Joseph, this is Mary my wife  
and this is our young son who is our delight

With the wind in the willows and the birds in the sky  
There's a bright sun to warm us wherever we lie  
We have bread and fishes and a jug of red wine  
to share on our journey with all of mankind

4 So sadly I left them in that old country lane  
I know that I never shall see them again  
One was an old man, the second a maid  
The third was a young boy who smiled as he said

With the wind in the willows and the birds in the sky  
There's a bright sun to warm us wherever we lie  
We have bread and fishes and a jug of red wine  
to share on our journey with all of mankind

## Offering

Even in grief, we are invited to participate in life and love. As we offer our gifts today, we do so trusting that they can bring hope from places that feel beyond repair.

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

O God, You are above me, You are around me

You are in air, You are in earth.

You are beside me, You are within.

O God of heaven, you have made your home on earth in the broken body of Creation.

Kindle within us a love for all things that we may be instruments of your peace.

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

*Moment of silence*

And now, in the words Jesus taught us, we sing...

**Creator, in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**Your dominion come, your will be done on earth, as in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,**

**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, For you reign eternally,  
in power, and in glory, For ever and ever, Amen.**

## BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

### Closing Hymn

### Morning Has Broken

VU 409

1 Morning has broken like the first morning,  
blackbird has spoken like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing! Praise for the morning!  
Praise for them, springing fresh from the Word!

2 Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,  
like the first dewfall on the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,  
sprung in completeness where God's feet pass.

3 Ours is the sunlight! Ours is the morning  
born of the one light Eden saw play!  
Praise with elation, praise every morning,  
God's recreation of the new day!

### **Bread for the Journey**

When has music helped you feel closer to God—or more connected to others—and what might it be inviting you to notice in this season of your life?

### **Commissioning and Benediction**

May the road rise to meet you

*Go n-éiri an bóthar leat*

May the wind be always at your back

*Go raibh an ghaoth go brách ag do chúl*

May the sun shine warm upon your face

*Go lonraí an ghrian go te ar d'aghaidh*

The rains fall soft upon your fields

*Go dtite an bháisteach go mín ar do pháirceanna*

And until we meet again

*Agus go mbuailimid le chéile arís*

May God hold you in the hollow of His hand.

*Go gcoinní Dia i mbos A láimhe thú*

Amen.

### **Choral Response**

### **Christ Be With Me**

**VU 318**

Christ be with me, Christ within me,  
Christ behind me, Christ before me,  
Christ beside me, Christ to win me,  
Christ to comfort and restore me.

Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger,  
Christ in hearts of all that love me,  
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

### **Postlude**

\* Permission to podcast/stream and reproduce the music and lyrics obtained from ONE LICENSE with license A-737645. All rights reserved.