



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Reader:

May 3rd, 2026

5th Sunday of Easter

Mental Health Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle

Today, we light the Christ candle—a reminder of the sacred presence that moves among us, within us, and beyond us. A light that calls us toward love, justice, and compassion.

Candle is lit.

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

We also light the rainbow candle—a sign of promise, of diversity, of sacred belonging. A light that proclaims: all are welcome here, just as they are. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

As we gather in this season of new life and rising hope, we acknowledge that we are on sacred land. We give thanks for the stewardship of this place by the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit—whose care for this land stretches back through generations and continues to this day. We recognize that the work of truth, justice, and right relationship remains before us.

May this acknowledgement be more than words—may it call us into deeper listening, faithful action, and a commitment to reconciliation.

Opening Hymn

Deep In Our Hearts

MV 154

1 Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

2 Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.

3 Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
deep in our hearts there is a common current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.

4 Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Call to Worship

We gather in the presence of the One who abandons no one.

Come Holy Spirit, our advocate and comforter.

All are welcome in this sacred place, made holy through your presence with us.

Open our hearts and minds this day, guide us into a loving relationship with all your children.

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

Spark us with a word of life and radical belonging— a message that we share with others as we seek to live out Christ's love.

We call on the name of God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us.

Amen.

Passing the Peace

In a world that can feel hurried, heavy, and at times isolating, this moment invites us to practice something simple and sacred: connection. Christ calls us to love one another—not in theory, but in presence, in kindness, in care. The peace we share is not about having everything together. It is about showing up for one another, just as we are—with open hearts and gentle spirits.

So whether you're feeling strong today, or fragile, or somewhere in between, you are part of this community of care.

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

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

**Holy One,
 In a world that can feel overwhelming,
 you speak a simple and radical word: love one another.
 Not a shallow love that ignores pain, but a love that sits beside it.
 A love that listens. A love that refuses to let anyone struggle alone.
 As we worship, quiet what distracts us, hold what feels fragile within us,
 and open us to your presence—a presence that does not demand perfection,
 but meets us in truth and tenderness.
 We pray all this in the spirit of Christ, who calls us to love, and shows us how.
 Amen.**

Hymn

Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom

MV 10

1 Come and seek the ways of Wisdom,
 she who danced when earth was new.
 Follow closely what she teaches,
 for her words are right and true.
 Wisdom clears the path to justice,
 Showing us what love must do.

2 Listen to the voice of Wisdom,
 crying in the market-place.
 Hear the Word made flesh among us,
 full of glory, truth, and grace.
 When the word takes root and ripens,
 peace and righteousness embrace.

3 Sister Wisdom, come, assist us;
 nurture all who seek rebirth.
 Spirit guide and close companion,
 bring to light our sacred worth.
 Free us to become your people,
 holy friends of God and earth.

RECEIVING GOD’S WORD

Scripture Lamentations 5:19-21

¹⁹ But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations. ²⁰ Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken us these many days? ²¹ Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old.

John 13:31-35

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and as I said to the Jews so now, I say to you, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come.’ ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

The Gift of Love

VU 372

1 Though I may speak with bravest fire,
and have the gift to all inspire,
and have not love, my words are vain,
as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

2 Though I may give all I possess,
and striving so my love profess,
but not be given by love within,
the profit soon turns strangely thin.

3 Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
by this we worship, and are freed.

Sermon

A Love That Stays

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Hymn

Help Us Accept Each Other

1 Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, God, among us
and bring us to believe:
we are ourselves accepted
and meant to love and live.

2 Teach us, O God, your lessons,
as in our daily life
we struggle to be human
and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people,
for all - not just for some,
to love them as we find them
or as they may become.

3 Let your acceptance change us
so that we may be moved
in living situations
to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance
until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness
and laughter's healing art.

4 Now for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for justice and for bread,
we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
And free us, make us one!

Offering

In a world where so many carry unseen burdens, our giving becomes more than a routine—it becomes an act of care. Jesus calls us to love one another, and this is one of the ways we live that calling: by supporting the ministries that nurture belonging, extend care, and remind people they matter. Whatever you offer, may it be received as a sign of hope—a small but meaningful part of the healing our world longs for.

As we bless the offerings, 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.

COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Friends, this is not a table for the perfect, but a table for the present. It is a table for those who are weary, for those who are carrying more than they can name, for those who are searching, doubting, healing, or holding on.

Jesus does not ask us to have it all together. Instead, he offers a simple command: love one another. And here, at this table, that love takes shape—in bread that is shared, in a cup that is poured, in a community that gathers just as it is. This is Christ's table. And all are welcome.

May God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the God who welcomes all.

Let us give thanks to God, who gathers us in love.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right and good and joyful
to give thanks to you, Holy One —
you are our dwelling place in every generation.
Even when the world feels uncertain,
even when our spirits are heavy, you remain.

And so we give you thanks—
for your steady presence, for your enduring love,
for the ways you meet us exactly where we are.

When we wandered, you whispered our names.
When we hid, you sought us out.
When we forgot what love looks like
you came among us in Jesus —
the one who ate with outcasts,
who touched the untouchable, who saw the invisible,
and who told us again and again: “You are my beloved.”
He sat at tables with friends and strangers,
with those who were joyful and those who were struggling,
and he made space for all of them.

And so, with all who have found their home in you —
with saints and ancestors, with children and dreamers,

with all creation singing one song of love —
we lift our voices together:

**Holy, holy, holy One,
God of mercy and grace,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes in your name.
Hosanna in the highest.**

On the night before everything changed,
he gathered with his friends—
friends who did not fully understand,
friends who would falter and fail—
and still, he loved them.

He took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying:
“Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Whenever you do this, remember me.”

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and shared it, saying:
“This cup is a new covenant in love.
Whenever you drink it, remember me.”

And so we remember—
not just a moment in the past,
but a love that continues to meet us here and now.

Remembering your boundless love for us in Jesus Christ,
we offer you our praise, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

Let us pray:
Pour out your Spirit, O God,
on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup.
Make them for us more than symbols—
make them signs of your love that nourishes,
your grace that restores, your presence that abides.
In our eating and drinking, may we be restored.
In our remembering, may we be renewed.
In our sharing, may we become love made visible.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour are yours, almighty God,
now and forever. Amen.

Come, beloved of God, the table is prepared.
Bread is broken in love, the cup is poured in grace.
Whether your faith is strong or fragile, whether you come with certainty or questions,
whether you come from near or far—here you are welcomed.
Here you belong. Taste and see that God is good.

SHARING THE MEAL

(Please come forward through the middle aisle to receive the elements. Once you receive the elements, do not eat them yet! Please return to your seat through the outer aisles of the sanctuary. Once everyone has been served, we will share the feast together. During the singing of our closing hymn, we will collect the cups.)

The bread is broken,
a reminder that love meets us in our brokenness.
(eat the bread)

The cup is shared,
a reminder that we are held in a covenant of grace.
(drink the juice)

The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray:

Loving Spirit,
we give you thanks for this meal—
for bread that steadies us, for cup that comforts us,
for the reminder that we are not alone.
Help us to be gentle with ourselves,
compassionate toward others,
and brave enough to love in a world that needs it so deeply.
In every moment, remind us: you remain.
And your love does not let us go. Amen.

Bread for the journey, food for the way.
Cup of God's blessing, tomorrow, today.

Prayers of the People

God of compassion,
We come before you carrying many things.
Some of us arrive this morning feeling joyful and grounded.
Some of us arrive weary. And still, you meet us here.
You meet us in our laughter and in our tears.
In our certainty and in our questions. In our hope and in our exhaustion.
And for that, we give you thanks.

O God, we pray for all those living with mental illness.
For those navigating anxiety, depression, addiction, trauma, eating disorders, burnout, grief, and loneliness.
For those waiting for diagnoses.
For those trying to access care in overwhelmed systems.
For those who feel ashamed to ask for help.
For those who are exhausted from pretending they are okay.

Remind them, O God, that they are not alone.
Remind them that their lives are precious.
Remind them that they are deeply loved.

We pray for families, friends, caregivers, counsellors, social workers, doctors, nurses, and crisis workers—all those who walk alongside others in times of deep struggle.
Grant them strength when they are weary.
Grant them patience when answers feel far away.
Grant them tenderness for themselves as they care for others.

God, we pray for your Church.
Teach us to become communities of radical compassion.
Communities where lament is welcomed.
Where vulnerability is met with care.
Where asking for help is seen as a sign of courage.
Where no one feels alone in their pain.

We pray for our wider world.
For communities impacted by violence and war.
For those facing poverty and displacement. For those grieving loved ones.
For all whose mental well-being is impacted by injustice, instability, and fear.
May your peace take root where despair has grown.

And now, in the quiet of our hearts, we lift before you the people and situations that weigh heavily on us this day. *Silence*

God, hold what we cannot hold alone.
And remind us that even in our hardest moments, we are never abandoned.
Your love remains. Your mercy remains. Your hope remains.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus,
who taught us to pray together, saying:

**Our Creator, 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,
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 Christ'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 in your life—or in your community—might love be inviting you to listen more deeply and make space for what is real?

Commissioning

Go from this place as people who are loved—not because you have it all together, but because God meets you as you are.

We go held in love, just as we are.

Go into a world that is hurting and carry the gentle command of Christ: love one another.

We will practice love in word and in action.

When you encounter weariness—your own or another’s—offer compassion instead of judgment.

We will choose kindness, again and again.

When the path feels uncertain, remember the One who remains.

We go with courage, trusting we are not alone.

Go now in peace, to be a community of care, healing, and hope.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Benediction

Go now into the tenderness of this world,
carrying with you the steady love of God—
a love that does not waver when life feels uncertain,
a love that meets you in every high and every low.

May you be gentle with your own heart, especially on the days when it feels heavy or fragile.

May you trust that you are not alone in what you carry.

And may the love of Christ guide you to be a source of care and connection for others,
today and every day. 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

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