



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Reader:

August 24th, 2025

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ & Rainbow Candle

We light these candles as a symbol of our intention to be open to God’s presence and action during this time of worship. As we welcome this flickering flame, we wait to be transformed by the divine Spirit! *The candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

We begin by acknowledging that we gather on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Chippewa, and Mississaugas of the Credit, and that this land is home to many diverse Indigenous nations.

As we gather here at Birchcliff Bluffs United Church, we reflect on the responsibility we share in caring for this land, learning from its history, and working toward reconciliation. May we act with respect, humility, and a commitment to justice, as we strive to build a future where all peoples—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—can live together in harmony and respect.

We offer our thanks for this land, its history, and the teachings it offers, and we commit ourselves to listening, learning, and walking in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in the pursuit of healing and justice.

Opening Hymn

I Am a Child of God

MV 157

1 I am a child of God,
I am a glimpse of God’s new creation.
I am a child of God,
I am a child of God.

2 I am an endless prayer,
I am a yearning for contemplation,
I am an endless prayer,
I am an endless prayer.

4 I am a cry for peace,
I am commitment and dedication,
I am a cry for peace,
I am a cry for peace.

5 I am a song of joy,
I am the moment of jubilation,
I am a song of joy,
I am a song of joy.

Call to Worship

Come to praise our God!

We come to praise our Redeemer, Creator.

Come with gratitude!

In peaceful generosity, we come to worship.

What a joy it is to be united in praise!

Passing the Peace

Even though we are separated by screens and space, the peace of Christ knows no boundaries. It reaches across city blocks and rural roads, through cables and airwaves, into every heart tuned in today. So, take a moment to wave, to type in the chat, to smile at the screen—however you can—let us pass the peace to one another.

May the peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Opening Prayer

In Christ's name, we come, O God, ready to be attentive to your voice. Help us to find that still place inside our celebration, to feel the quiet rhythm of your love, echoing the rhythms of our souls. Remind us that we are a part of your love. Remind us that all are a part of your love. Amen.

Hymn

God Take My Hand

VU 638

- 1 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.
- 2 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.

3 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.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Luke 14:1, 7-14

¹ On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the Sabbath, they were watching him closely.

⁷ When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host, ⁹ and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹ For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

¹² He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers and sisters or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

For The Faithful

VU 707

1 For the faithful who have answered
when they heard your call to serve,
for the many ways you led them
testing will and stretching nerve,
for their work and for their witness
as they strove against the odds,
for their courage and obedience
we give thanks and praise, O God.

2 Many eyes have glimpsed the promise,
many hearts have yearned to see.
Many ears have heard you calling
us to greater liberty.

Some have fallen in the struggle,
others still are fighting on.
You are not ashamed to own us.
We give thanks and praise, O God.

3 For this cloud of faithful witness,
for the common life we share,
for the work of peace and justice,
for the gospel that we bear,
for the vision that our homeland
is your love - deep, high, and broad -
for the different roads we travel
we give thanks and praise, O God.

Sermon

Places of Honour

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

Like a Healing Stream

MV 144

- 1 Like a healing stream in a barren desert,
Spirit water bringing life to dusty earth,
God is trickling through our lives
as in a dream unfolding,
promising revival and rebirth
like a healing stream
- 2 Like a gentle rain on a thirsty garden,
Spirit water come to nourish tiny seed,
God is bubbling through the soil
to coax a new creation
yearning for an end to want and need
like a gentle rain.
- 3 Like a river strong with a restless current,
Spirit water rushing on to distant shore,
God is carving out a channel
in a new direction,
calling for an end to hate and war
like a river strong.
- 4 Like a mighty sea reaching far horizons,
Spirit water with a love both deep and wide,

God is working in our hearts
to shape a new tomorrow:
God will always challenge and provide!
Like a mighty sea, like a river strong,
like a gentle rain, like a healing stream.

Offering

Holy and wondrous God, we honor you with gifts of time, resources, and abilities. Use all that we offer to bring hope and strength to our needy world.

May gifts both large and small become new life within this community and around the worlds. Amen.

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

Gracious God,
You who call us to tables of grace and not of grandeur,
who invite the poor, the outcast, the forgotten ones—
teach us again how to pray, not only with words, but with welcome.

We pray today for those who sit at the margins of society:
the unhoused, the hungry, the overlooked,
those for whom no invitation has yet arrived.
May your justice make room for them, and may your church do the same.

We pray for all who carry hidden burdens:
the grief no one sees, the pain that isolates, the wounds we dare not name aloud.
Bring healing, O God, and remind us that in your eyes, no one is invisible.

We lift to you those in power and leadership,
that they may use their influence not to climb higher,
but to stoop lower—serving the common good with humility and compassion.

We pray for our community:
may we not only welcome the stranger but be changed by their presence.
Open our doors, our hearts, and our minds to the possibility of holy interruption.

And we pray for ourselves,
that we might not seek seats of honour, but places of service;

that we might not ask, "What's in it for me?"
but rather, "Who is still waiting to be invited?"
We ask all this in the name of Jesus,
using the ancient words taught to us:

**Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name
Thy Kindom 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.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the Kindom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Will Your Anchor Hold

VU 675

1 Will your anchor hold in the storms of life?
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife,
when the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
will your anchor drift or firm remain?

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

2 It will surely hold in the straits of fear,
when the breakers tell that the reef is near;
though the tempest rave and the wild winds blow,
not an angry wave shall our bark o'erflow.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

3 It will surely hold in the floods of death,
when the waters cold chill our latest breath;
on the rising tide it can never fail
while our hopes abide within the veil.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,

grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

4 When our eyes behold, through the gathering night,
the city of gold, our harbour bright,
we shall anchor fast by the heavenly shore,
with the storms all past for evermore.

We have an anchor that keeps the soul
steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
fastened to the rock which cannot move,
grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love!

Commissioning

Go now into the world,
not seeking the best seat at the table,
but seeking the one who has yet to be seated.
Go with humility, ready to listen.
Go with courage, ready to invite.
Go with love, ready to be changed.

Benediction

May the God who humbles the proud and lifts up the lowly,
go with you as you widen your welcome.
May Christ, who ate with sinners and strangers,
teach you to make room at every table.
And may the Spirit stir in you a holy boldness—
to serve, to love, and to include—
today, and all your days.
Amen.

Choral Benediction

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!

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