



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

August 16th, 2026

12th Sunday after Pentecost

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle

Today, we light the Christ candle—a flame of love that no darkness can overcome, a light that reminds us that hope still lives, even when the world feels heavy. *Candle is lit.*

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

We also light the rainbow candle—a sign of promise, of diversity, of sacred belonging. A reminder that every identity, every story, every body is held in the wide embrace of God’s love. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

As we gather today, we acknowledge that the land on which many of us worship is the traditional territory of many Indigenous peoples, including the Wendat, the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Today, it remains home to many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

May acknowledging this truth move us beyond words toward relationships rooted in justice, respect, and reconciliation.

Opening Hymn

Step By Step

1. It’s so sweet to walk with Jesus,
Step by step and day by day;
Stepping in the very footprints,
Walking with You all the way.

Step by step, step by step,

I would walk with Jesus,
All the day, all the way,
Keeping step with Jesus.

2. Step by step, I'll walk with Jesus
Just a moment at a time,
Heights I have not wings to soar to,
Step by step, my feet can climb.

Step by step, step by step,
I would walk with Jesus,
All the day, all the way,
Keeping step with Jesus.

3. Here awhile we walk with Jesus
But the time will not be long
'Til the night shall change to morning
And the sorrow into song.

Step by step, step by step,
I would walk with Jesus,
All the day, all the way,
Keeping step with Jesus.

4. Jesus keep me closer - closer,
Step by step and day by day;
Stepping in Your very footprints
Walking with You all the way.

Step by step, step by step,
I would walk with Jesus,
All the day, all the way,
Keeping step with Jesus.

Call to Worship

Come, all who have known calm waters and stormy seas.

We come seeking the One who walks beside us through them all.

Come, all who have felt brave one day and uncertain the next.

We come just as we are, trusting that Christ welcomes us.

Come, all who long for steady ground beneath your feet.

Christ calls us not to certainty, but to relationship.

Come.

The One who calms our fears and strengthens our hearts is here.

Let us worship God.

Passing the Peace

The disciples discovered that even in the middle of the storm, they were not alone. Before the wind settled and before all their questions were answered, Jesus came to them. The peace of Christ is like that. It is the quiet assurance that God is present with us, even when the waters feel uncertain.

If you're worshipping with others today, I invite you to share a sign of Christ's peace with one another. If you're worshipping on your own, receive these words as a reminder that Christ is with you, surrounding you with love and holding you through whatever this season of life may bring.

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

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Holy God,

As we worship today, quiet the fears that distract us and soften the worries we carry. Open our hearts to your presence.

Help us to trust that even when we cannot see the way ahead, your love is already reaching toward us. Strengthen our faith, deepen our compassion, and send us into the world as people who offer hope to others navigating difficult waters.

We pray in the spirit of Christ.

Amen.

Hymn

Will You Come and Follow Me

VU 567

1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

5 Christ, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In you and you in me.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Matthew 14:22-33

²² Immediately, he made the disciples get into a boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. ²³ And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, ²⁴ but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵ And early in the morning, he came walking toward them on the sea. ²⁶ But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. ²⁷ But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

²⁸ Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." ²⁹ He said, "Come." So, Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" ³¹ Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" ³² When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. ³³ And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Throw Out The Lifeline

Throw out the lifeline across the dark wave;
There is a brother or sister to save;
Somebody's family! O who then will dare
To throw out the lifeline, the peril to share?

Throw out the lifeline! Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is drifting away;
Throw out the lifeline! Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is sinking today.

Throw out the life line with hand quick and strong:
Why do you tarry, why linger so long?
Someone is sinking; oh, hasten today
And out with the lifeboat! away, then away!

Throw out the lifeline! Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is drifting away;
Throw out the lifeline! Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is sinking today.

Throw out the lifeline! Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is drifting away;
Throw out the lifeline! Throw out the lifeline!
Someone is sinking today.

Sermon Meeting Christ in the Storm

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

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!

Offering

Every day, God places opportunities before us to become signs of hope in our communities.
When we share our time, our gifts, our compassion, and our financial resources, we help create
places where people can find welcome, support, healing, and belonging.

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.

Prayers of the People

Faithful God,

There are times when life feels steady and familiar, and there are times when the wind picks up
without warning. Some of us come to worship today feeling confident and hopeful.

Others arrive carrying worry, grief, exhaustion, or uncertainty.

Wherever we find ourselves, remind us that your presence is not limited to calm waters.

You meet us in every season of life.

We pray for all who are navigating storms.

For those living with illness or chronic pain.

For those grieving the loss of someone they love.
For those facing financial uncertainty, unemployment, or housing insecurity.
For those whose relationships are strained or whose futures feel unclear.
For those whose anxiety or depression makes each day feel like an uphill climb.
May they know that they are not alone.

God of compassion,
We pray for a world that often feels turbulent.
We pray for places torn apart by war and violence.
For communities recovering from natural disasters.
For people displaced from their homes.
For leaders entrusted with difficult decisions.
Grant wisdom where there is conflict, courage where there is fear, and compassion where there is division.

We pray for your Church.
For congregations discerning new possibilities.
For ministers, volunteers, and leaders who continue to serve with generosity.
For those worshipping in sanctuaries, outdoors, online, or quietly on their own.
Remind us that wherever people gather in love and seek your presence, you are already there.

We give thanks for all who have reached out a hand when someone else was struggling.
For neighbours who checked in. Friends who listened.
Volunteers who served. Healthcare workers, caregivers, teachers, first responders, and all whose quiet acts of compassion often go unnoticed.
May their kindness remind us of your own.

We take a moment now to lift before you the people and situations that weigh upon our hearts.
Silence

Loving Christ,
When fear threatens to overwhelm us, help us hear your gentle words once more: "Take heart. It is I. Do not be afraid."
May those words guide us through the week ahead.
And we join our voices in the prayer that Jesus taught to us; Divine Creator, our Holy Parent, our Mother and...

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kin-dom 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 kin-dom, the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard, and took their flight,
hear us, we humbly pray, and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray, let there be light.

Jesus, who came to bring
on your redeeming wing, healing and sight,
health to the troubled mind, sight to the Spirit-blind,
O now to humankind let there be light.

Spirit of truth and love,
lifegiving, holy dove, speed forth your flight;
move on the water's face, bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place let there be light.

Blessed and holy three,
glorious trinity, wisdom, love, might,
boundless as ocean's tide rolling in fullest pride,
through the world far and wide, let there be light.

Bread for the Journey

Where in your life do you need to hear Christ's words today: "Take heart. I am here. Do not be afraid"?

Benediction

As you go into the week ahead, remember this:

You do not walk alone. When life is calm, give thanks. When life is uncertain, take courage.

When the winds rise, remember that Christ still comes toward us with words of hope:

"Take heart. Do not be afraid."

May the love of God, the peace of Christ,
and the courage of the Holy Spirit
go with you today and always. 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!

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