



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle

At the heart of our faith is a light that does not flicker out. Our Christ Candle serves as a reminder that the light of Christ shines not behind us in the past, but ahead of us, guiding our every step. *Candle is lit.*

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

We also light the Rainbow Candle, a symbol of God's covenant love. Our rainbow light reminds us that our diversity is not an obstacle to God, but a reflection of God's creativity and joy. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

As we journey through this season of Epiphany, we acknowledge the land on which we worship. This land has long been home to Indigenous peoples, including the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. It is a land where wisdom has been shared, relationships tended, and stories carried across generations. We also acknowledge that this land remains home to many diverse Indigenous nations and communities, whose presence, resilience, and leadership continue to shape this place.

May the light of Epiphany guide us toward truth, right relationships, and shared care for this land and for one another.

Opening Hymn

Gather Us In

1 Here in this place new light is streaming
Now is the darkness vanished away

See in this space, our fears and our dreamings
Brought here to you in the light of this day

Gather us in, the lost and forsaken
Gather us in, the blind and the lame
Call to us now and we shall awaken
We shall arise at the sound of our name

2 We are the young, our lives are a mystery
We are the old who yearn for your face
We have been sung throughout all of history
Called to be light to the whole human race

Gather us in, the rich and the haughty
Gather us in, the proud and the strong
Give us a heart so meek and so lowly
Give us the courage to enter the song

3 Here we will take the wine and the water
Here we will take the bread of new birth
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters
Call us anew to be salt for the earth

Give us to drink the wine of compassion
Give us to eat the bread that is you
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining
Not in some heaven light years away
But here in this place the new light is shining
Now is the kingdom, now is the day

Gather us in and hold us forever
Gather us in and make us your own
Gather us in, all peoples together
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone
Fire of love in our flesh and our bone

Call to Worship

Who may dwell in the shelter of God's love?

Those who walk with integrity and speak truth with tenderness.
Jesus gathers the crowds and proclaims a blessing.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are the grieving. Blessed are the gentle.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice.

Blessed are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers.
Come, then—not because we are perfect,
But because we are longing.
Let us worship the God who blesses the unlikely and calls us closer.
Let us worship with open hearts and willing lives.

Passing the Peace

Jesus blesses those the world overlooks and calls them beloved. May that blessing move among us now. As you are comfortable, share a sign of Christ's peace with one another—a word, a wave, a smile—remembering that peace is not only felt, but practiced.

The Peace of Christ be with you! **And also with you!**

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Holy and Living God,
you meet us not on pedestals, but on hillsides—
in ordinary places, among ordinary people,
speaking words that turn the world upside down.
Quiet the noise within us. Open us to your truth.
Teach us how to walk with integrity, to love mercy,
and to live as citizens of your kin-dom.
We pray in hope, and in trust. Amen.

Hymn

Arise, Your Light is Come

VU 79

- 1 Arise, your light is come!
The Spirit's call obey;
show forth the glory of your God,
which shines on you today.
- 2 Arise, your light is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
proclaim the captive's liberty,
good tidings to the poor.
- 3 Arise, your light is come!
All you in sorrow born,
bind up the broken-hearted ones
and comfort those who mourn.

4 Arise, your light is come!
The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing;
God's power will make us strong.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Psalm 15

¹ Who has the right to enter your tent, YHWH, or to live on your holy mountain? ² Those who conduct themselves with integrity and work for justice, who speak the truth from their heart ³ and do not use their tongue for slander, who do not wrong their neighbors and cast no discredit on their friends, ⁴ who look with contempt on the corrupt but honor those who revere YHWH, who always keep their promises even when it hurts, ⁵ who don't demand interest on loans and cannot be bribed to exploit the innocent. If people do these things, nothing can ever shake them.

Matthew 5:1-12

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountainside, and after he sat down and the disciples had gathered around, ² Jesus began to teach them: ³ “Blessed are those who are poor in spirit: the kingdom of heaven is theirs. ⁴ Blessed are those who are mourning, for they will be comforted. ⁵ Blessed are those who are gentle, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will have their fill. ⁷ Blessed are those who show mercy to others, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice, the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

¹¹ Blessed are you when others insult you and persecute you, and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. ¹² Be glad and rejoice, for your reward in heaven is great; they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.”

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

VU 684

1 Make me a channel of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
where there is injury, your healing power,
and where there's doubt, true faith in you:

2 Make me a channel of your peace:
where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
where there is darkness, only light;
and where there's sadness, ever joy.

O Spirit, grant that I may never seek
so much to be consoled as to console,
 to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love with all my soul.

3 Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
 in giving to all that we receive,
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Sermon **Blessed, Still**

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

Make Me a Blessing

1 Out in the highways and byways of life,
 Many are weary and sad;
Carry the sunshine where darkness is rife,
 Making the sorrowing glad.

Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing.
 Out of my life may Jesus shine;
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray.
 Make me a blessing to someone today.

2 Tell the sweet story of Christ and his love,
 Tell of his pow'r to forgive;
Others will trust him if only you prove
 True, ev'ry moment you live.

Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing.
 Out of my life may Jesus shine;
Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray.
 Make me a blessing to someone today.

3 Give as 'twas given to you in your need,
 Love as the Saviour loved you;
Be to the helpless a helper indeed,
 Unto your mission be true.

Make me a blessing, Make me a blessing.
 Out of my life may Jesus shine;

Make me a blessing, O Savior, I pray.
Make me a blessing to someone today.

Offering

Jesus reminds us that blessing is not measured by abundance, but by how we live, how we love, and how we share. Our offering is one way we practice that blessing—supporting ministry, nurturing community, and participating in God’s work of justice and compassion. If you wish to give, you are invited to do so in gratitude, trusting that what we offer—whether much or little—is gathered and used for love.

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.

COMMUNION

This is not a table for the perfect, but a table for the hungry.
Not a reward for the righteous, but nourishment for those still learning how to love.
Jesus welcomed the poor, the grieving, the overlooked—and he welcomes us still.
All who seek grace are welcome here.

God is with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God, our Creator.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Faithful God,
you create a world rooted in abundance,
yet you bless those who know hunger—
for you promise that nothing empty will remain so forever.

You call us into covenant, teach us how to walk with integrity,
and send prophets and teachers to remind us that justice and mercy are holy work.

In Jesus, you climbed the hillside and spoke blessing into a weary world—
naming hope where others saw only lack.

And so, with the faithful of every time and place, we praise you, saying:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of love and justice,
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 he faced betrayal and loss,
Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his friends, saying:
“Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

After supper, he took the cup, and after giving thanks, he shared it, saying:
“This cup is the new covenant, sealed in my love. Whenever you drink it, remember me.”

Let us pray:
Send your Spirit, O God, to rest upon these gifts of bread and cup
and upon us, your gathered people.

As the bread is broken and the cup is shared, make us participants in Christ’s work—
feeding those who hunger, healing what is wounded, and blessing those the world has
overlooked.

Nourish us with the bread of justice-seeking, and the cup of gratitude and joy, that we may learn
again what it means to walk with integrity, to love mercy, and to live into your promised realm
of shalom—salaam—peace.

As we share new life at this table, we remember those still waiting—some nearby, some far
away—for daily bread, for safety, for dignity, for belonging.

We hold before you those living with mental, spiritual, or physical health challenges;
those caught in cycles of fear, violence, or displacement; those struggling to name who they are,
or to trust how deeply they are loved.

Blessed are they, O God. Draw near, and let your peace take root.

Receive now the prayers of our hearts, spoken and unspoken. (*A time of silence is kept.*)

Ancient of Days,
shape us by your Word—steady us when we are overwhelmed,
soften us when we are afraid, and send us out as peacemakers
in these days of wonder, lament, and possibility.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours,
God most holy, now and forever.

Amen.

Come, beloved of God. The table is ready.
Bread is broken in love. The cup is poured in grace.

Whether your faith feels strong or fragile, whether you arrive with confidence or questions,
whether you come from near or far—here you are welcome. 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 body of Christ,
the bread of life.
(eat the bread)

The New Covenant,
the cup of blessing.
(drink the juice)

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray:

Gracious God,
we thank you for this gift of bread and cup,
for grace received and blessing shared.
Strengthen us now to walk with integrity,
to love mercy, and to hunger for justice.
Send us out as peacemakers,
living the blessing we have received,
through Christ our hope. Amen.

Grateful for the life you give us,
thankful for your Holy Son,
joyful in your Spirit flowing over all,
O God of Love.

Grateful for the Bread of Heaven,
thankful for your Holy Word,
joyful in your mercy flowing,
we will praise you.

Prayers of the People

Loving God,
you bless those the world names last,
and you draw near to those who feel forgotten.
We bring before you the prayers of our hearts.

We pray for all who are grieving—
those mourning loved ones, lost dreams,
broken relationships, or a world that feels increasingly fragile.
Hold them gently, O God.

We pray for those who hunger and thirst for justice—
for those living with poverty,
for those displaced by war or climate crisis,
for those whose bodies, identities, or loves are treated as threats.
Strengthen all who resist despair with courage and hope.

We pray for peacemakers—
in families, in communities, in nations—
especially where anger has hardened into violence
and fear has drowned out compassion.
Teach us what peace truly costs, and why it is always worth the price.

We pray for this community—
that we may be people of integrity,
who speak truth without cruelty,
and act with humility and joy.

And we pray for ourselves,
that we may trust your blessing
even when the path is steep,
and the way unclear.

Gather all these prayers—
spoken and unspoken—
as we join our voices together, singing:

VU 960

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

Take Up The Song

MV 213

Take up the song of peace
and go into the world,
Take up the song of peace
in ev'ry moment.
In ev'ry moment of the journey,
we're laying down our lives,
 lay them down, in peace,
lay them down, and take up the song.

Take up the song of hope
and go into the world,
Take up the song of hope
in ev'ry moment.
In ev'ry moment of the journey,
we're laying down our lives,
 lay them down, in hope,
lay them down, and take up the song.

Take up the song of faith
and go into the world,
Take up the song of faith
in ev'ry moment.
In ev'ry moment of the journey,

we're laying down our lives,
 lay them down, in faith,
lay them down, and take up the song.

Take up the song of love
 and go into the world,
Take up the song of love
 in ev'ry moment.
In ev'ry moment of the journey,
 we're laying down our lives,
 lay them down, in love,
lay them down, and take up the song.

Bread for the Journey

Where do you hear yourself named in the Beatitudes—and how might God be blessing you, even in the midst of uncertainty?

Commissioning

You have heard the blessing.

We have received it with open hearts.

You have been fed at the table of grace.

We go now to live what we have tasted.

Go to walk with integrity.

Go to love mercy.

Go to hunger and thirst for justice.

Go to be a blessing in a weary world.

Benediction

May the God who blesses the poor in spirit strengthen your courage.
May the Christ who names the grieving as beloved hold you in hope.
May the Spirit who calls peacemakers into being guide your steps.
Go in blessing. Go in peace. Go, and live the Beatitudes. Amen.

Choral Response

Let There Be Peace on Earth

Let there be peace on earth
 And let it begin with me
Let there be peace on earth
 The peace that was meant to be
 With God our Creator
 Family all are we
Let us walk with each other
 In perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me

Let this be the moment now.
With every step I take
Let this be my solemn vow
To take each moment
and live each moment
in peace eternally
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

Postlude

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