



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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September 14th, 2025

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ & Rainbow Candle

As we move into our worship, 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

As we take a moment and feel the ground beneath our feet, we give thanks for the caretakers of this land and for the opportunity to pray here together. We acknowledge 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. We give thanks for this living land that holds us this day; may we live into our own calling to respect and care for all life that makes home here together.

Opening Hymn

Praise with Joy the World’s Creator

VU 312

1 Praise with joy the world's Creator,
God of justice, love, and peace,
source and end of human knowledge,
God whose grace shall never cease.
Celebrate the Maker's glory,
power to rescue and release.

2 Praise to Christ who feeds the hungry,
frees the captive, finds the lost,
heals the sick, upsets religion,

fearless both of fate and cost.
Celebrate Christ's constant presence:
friend and stranger, guest and host.

3 Praise the Spirit sent among us,
liberating truth from pride,
forging bonds where race or gender,
age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure:
foolishness none dare deride.

4 Praise the Maker, Christ, and Spirit,
one God in community,
calling Christians to embody
oneness and diversity.
This the world shall see reflected:
God is One and One in Three.

Call to Worship

Come, all who are weary of trying to earn love.

We come to rest in the One who already loves us.

Come, all who have wandered, who feel unseen or unsure.

We come to be found in sacred belonging.

Come, seekers and skeptics, caretakers and questioners.

We come, knowing that God is searching not to shame us, but to celebrate us.

Let us gather in joy, as a people beloved and whole.

Let us worship God with open hearts and expectant hope!

Passing the Peace

In a world where people are divided into lost and found, Jesus reminds us that everyone belongs. So let us share signs of peace and belonging with one another—not because we've earned it, but because love is always searching for us.

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

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

God of open doors and joyful searches,

we come to you not as perfect people,

but as ones longing to be seen and gathered in.

You know the corners of our hearts where we hide,

the stories that make us feel unworthy,
 the ways we feel forgotten or left behind.
 And still—you search.
 Still—you call us beloved.
 Still—you celebrate our presence.
 As we worship today,
 help us to receive that joy.
 Help us to remember that we matter—not because of what we’ve done,
 but because of who we are: yours.
 In the name of the One who seeks and finds,
 Amen.

Hymn **There’s a Wideness In God’s Mercy (v. 1, 2, 4, 5)** **VU 271**

- 1 There's a wideness in God's mercy
 like the wideness of the sea;
 there's a kindness in God's justice
 which is more than liberty.

- 2 There is no place where earth's sorrows
 are more felt than up in heaven;
 there is no place where earth's failings
 have such gracious judgement given.

- 4 Troubled souls, why will you scatter
 like a crowd of frightened sheep?
 Foolish hearts, why will you wander
 from a love so true and deep?

- 5 For the love of God is broader
 than the measures of the mind,
 and the heart of the Eternal
 is most wonderfully kind

RECEIVING GOD’S WORD

Scripture Psalm 98

¹ O sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things. His right hand and his holy arm have gotten him victory. ² The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations. ³ He has remembered his steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God. ⁴ Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. ⁵ Sing praises to

the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. ⁶ With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

Luke 15:1-10

¹ Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” ³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵ And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶ And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep.’ ⁷ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

⁸ “Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ ¹⁰ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Softly and Tenderly

1 Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
calling for you and for me;
see, on the portals he's waiting and watching,
watching for you and for me.

Come home, come home;
you who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!

2 Why should we tarry when Jesus is pleading,
pleading for you and for me?
Why should we linger and heed not his mercies,
mercies for you and for me?

Come home, come home;
you who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!

3 O for the wonderful love he has promised,
promised for you and for me!
Though we have sinned, he has mercy and pardon,
pardon for you and for me.

Come home, come home;
you who are weary come home;
earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
calling, O sinner, come home!
(repeat)

Sermon

The Joy of Being Found

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

Jesus, Hold My Hand

1 As I travel through this pilgrim land
There is a friend who walks with me
Leads me safely through the sinking sand
It is the Christ of Calvary
This would be my prayer, dear God, each day
You help me do the best I can
For I need Your light to guide me day and night
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

Jesus, hold my hand
For I need You every hour
Through this pilgrim land
Protect me by Your power
Hear my feeble plea
O Lord, look down on me
When I kneel in prayer
I hope to meet You there
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

2 Let me travel in the light divine
That I may see the blessed way
Keep me that I may be wholly Thine
And sing "Redemption's Song" some day
I will be a pilgrim brave and true
And ever firmly take a stand

As I onward go and daily meet the foe
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

Jesus, hold my hand
'Cause I need Thee every hour
Through this pilgrim land
Protect me by Thy power
Hear my feeble plea
And O Lord, look down on me
When I kneel in prayer
I hope to meet You there
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

3 When I wander through the valley dim
Toward the setting of the sun,
Lead me safely to a land of rest
If I a crown of life have won;
I have put my faith in You, dear God,
That I may reach the golden strand,
There's no other friend on whom I can depend,
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

Jesus, hold my hand
'Cause I need Thee every hour
Through this pilgrim land
Protect me by Thy power
Hear my feeble plea
And O Lord, look down on me
When I kneel in prayer
I hope to meet You there
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

When I kneel in prayer
I hope to meet You there
Blessed Jesus, hold my hand.

Offering

In a world that tells us to hold tight, God calls us to live generously— sharing in joy, in hope, in community. In the parables we heard today, the shepherd and the woman didn't just recover what was lost—they celebrated. They invited their neighbours in. So today, we give not out of obligation, but as an act of joy. We give to make room at the table, to light the lamps, to keep searching for those who haven't yet heard, "You belong."

As we bless the offerings given to the church, let us sing:

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

God of sheep and silver,
God of those who wander and those who wait,
we come to you with the prayers of our hearts—spoken and unspoken.

We pray for those who feel lost today:
For the one who doesn't know where home is anymore.
For the one who wonders if they matter.
For the one who left the church and isn't sure they'll ever come back.
For the one whose grief has no name, but lingers like fog.

God, may your love find them,
not to correct or coerce,
but to carry them into community.

We pray for those who search:
For the caregiver trying to reach a loved one with dementia.
For the parent hoping their child finds healing.
For those who search rubble for signs of life,
or policy for signs of justice.

Give them courage, God.
Give them persistence.
Give them joy when the lost are found.

We pray for our queer and trans kin who have been made to feel unworthy—
especially by those who claimed to speak in your name.
Help us be the kind of church that searches with love
and celebrates without hesitation.

We pray for the earth, our shared home,
and for all your creatures—human and more-than-human—
who live and move and breathe under your watchful eye.

And we pray for ourselves—
that we might be seekers of joy,
celebrants of return,
and companions on the journey.

All this we pray in the name of Jesus,
the One who finds us again and again.
Together, we pray, using the ancient words you taught to us,
(using whichever version feels most comfortable for you):
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

I Have Decided to Follow Jesus

- 1 I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
no turning back, no turning back.
- 2 The world behind me, the cross before me;
the world behind me, the cross before me,
the world behind me, the cross before me;
no turning back, no turning back.
- 3 Though none go with me, I still will follow;
though none go with me, I still will follow;
though none go with me, I still will follow;
no turning back, no turning back.
- 4 Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
Will you decide now to follow Jesus?
No turning back, no turning back.
- 5 I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
no turning back, no turning back.
No turning back, no turning back.

Bread for the Journey

When in your life have you felt lost—and what helped you feel found again?

Commissioning and Benediction

We have been seen. We have been sought out. We have been found in love.

**Now we go to be seekers of others—to notice who is missing,
to light the lamp, to make room at the table.**

The celebration has begun—and it is not complete without every beloved soul.

**We go in joy, to be a community of welcome,
a people of belonging, and a church of unrelenting love.**

Go now—

not in fear of being lost,

but in confidence that you are always being found.

May the God who searches with joy,

the Christ who welcomes with open arms,

and the Spirit who lights every corner of the soul,

go with you—now 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!

Postlude

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