



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Reader: Janet Bawcutt, Tricia Reid

December 3, 2023

Advent One / Communion

Hope Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

In a world filled with tragedy and chaos, we arrive weary, wary and wrung out.

We come to find shelter from our fears, to discover hope as we practice our faith in worship.

We’re tired of this marathon of difficulty, longing for relief through a return to what we once thought normal.

We come because the vulnerable Christ child enlightens us with possibility.

On this first Sunday of Advent, we light this first candle symbolizing hope - the assurance that the risen Christ transforms all things in love.

The first candle is lit.

All sing:

Hope Is a Star (v. 1)

VU 7

Hope is a star that shines in the night,
Leading us on till the morning is bright.
When God is a child there’s joy in our song.
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong.
And none shall be afraid.

Flickering and fragile, this tiny flame opens us to wonder, to the heart of God, which transforms us as we join together in prayer.

We come to be sustained in life, O God, even as we wrestle. Inspire us to perceive the way of Jesus as the path of wholeness. Unite us to become a community of faith woven as one by the Spirit. Teach us how to live by loving-kindness, becoming catalysts for hope in the hearts of those we encounter. Amen.

Land Acknowledgement

We now take a moment to acknowledge the sacred land beside the water on which Birchcliff Bluffs United Church stands. It has been a site of human activity for many thousands of years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississauga's of the Credit and Scugog, all part of the Williams Treaty. We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this territory and we seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.

Opening Hymn

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

VU 1

1 O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lowly exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

3 O come, O come, great God of might,
who to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times once gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

4 O come, O Rod of Jesse's stem,
from every foe deliver them
that trust your mighty power to save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

5 O come, O Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

7 O come, Desire of nations, bind
all peoples in one heart and mind;
O bid our sad divisions cease,

and be for us the Prince of Peace.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.

Call to Worship

People came to the banks of the Jordan to see John the Baptist.

We are called to leave the Christmas preparations behind and turn towards the spiritual challenge of Advent.

John told the people, “you have traditions to leave behind and sharing to begin because GOD’s chosen ONE is coming to you.”

We are challenged to change our actions and attitudes in the light of the coming Jesus Christ.

John refused to compromise with the leaders of his time; he would not accept the easy way.

We are called to engage with the issues of our day and make our stance for justice and truth.

Are we willing to go to the banks of the Jordan River to encounter John the prophet?

It will take courage to venture out, but the joy of Advent will be our reward.

Then come, let us worship GOD!

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

We gather this morning, GOD, waiting, anticipating.

But we are even sure what we are waiting for anymore. Yet we are here, ready to receive, to search, to ponder and simply to be still in anticipation of something that will happen, that is happening among us now. Make us aware of the holy mystery that surrounds us always and keep us moving forward toward a deeper relationship with you. Amen.

RECEIVING GOD’S WORD

Scripture Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

- ¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
- ² **before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up
your might and come to save us!**
- ³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.
- ⁴ **O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people’s prayers?**
- ⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

**6 You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.**

7 Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

**17 But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.**

18 Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.

**19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.**

The Word of God for the People of God.
Thanks be to God.

Mark 13:24-37 The Coming of the Son of Man

24 “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light,

25 and the stars will be falling from heaven,
and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

26 “Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory. **27** Then he will send out the angels and gather the^[a] elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. **29** So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he^[b] is near, at the very gates. **30** Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Beware, keep alert,^[c] for you do not know when the time will come. **34** It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. **35** Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight or at cockcrow or at dawn, **36** or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. **37** And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Hymn

Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending

VU 25

1 Lo, he comes with clouds descending,
see the Lamb for sinners slain!
Thousand, thousand saints attending
join to sing the glad refrain:

hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!
God appears on earth to reign.

2 Every eye shall then behold you,
robed in awesome majesty;
all who jeered, and mocked, and sold you,
pierced, and nailed you to the tree,
deeply grieving, deeply grieving, deeply grieving,
shall the true Messiah see.

3 Now redemption, long expected
see in solemn pomp appear;
all the saints, by us rejected,
thrill the trumpet sound to hear:
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!
See the day of God appear!

4 Yea! Amen! Let all adore you,
high on your eternal throne;
crowns and empires fall before you,
claim the kingdom for your own:
O come quickly! O come quickly!
O come quickly!
Everlasting Christ, come down.

Sermon **Just an old Woman** (Tricia)

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn **O Come Divine Messiah**

1 O come, Divine Messiah;
The world in silence waits the day
When hope shall sing its triumph
And sadness flee away.

Dear Savior, haste! Come, come to earth.
Dispel the night and show your face,
and bid us hail the dawn of grace.
O come, divine Messiah;
the world in silence waits the day
when hope shall sing its triumph
and sadness flee away.

2 O come, Desired of nations
Whom priest and prophet long foretold,
Will break the captive's fetters,
Redeem the long-lost fold.

Dear Savior, haste! Come, come to earth.
Dispel the night and show your face,
and bid us hail the dawn of grace.
O come, divine Messiah;
the world in silence waits the day
when hope shall sing its triumph
and sadness flee away.

3 O come in peace and meekness
For lowly will your cradle be;
Though clothed in human weakness
We shall your Godhead see.

Dear Savior, haste! Come, come to earth.
Dispel the night and show your face,
and bid us hail the dawn of grace.
O come, divine Messiah;
the world in silence waits the day
when hope shall sing its triumph
and sadness flee away.

Offering

Loving GOD, with hope and love, we bring our gifts to you. May our act of giving symbolize hope to the world.

As we worship you through the Advent journey, may these offerings be blessed to bring hope for our work here in the Birchcliff Bluffs community and your work in the world. Amen.

Communion

God is with us!

We are not alone!

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Even when we turn away from you, you are with us;

your presence never fails us,
your gifts of hope and new life transform us.

**We praise you for Jesus Christ,
eternal as your love, our bond to one another.
We rejoice with all your people of every time and place,
and with angels and archangels,
to proclaim the glory of your name:**

On the night before Jesus died,
he took a loaf of bread,
gave thanks, broke it, and said,
“Take and eat; whenever you do this, remember me.”
After supper, Jesus took the cup, and poured, saying,
“This is the new covenant, remember me.”

we do remember.

We remember his life of love, his friendship, his teaching, his dying, and his rising to life again.
In sharing this meal, we live out the mystery of our faith:

Bless this bread and this cup,
the wheat and the grape,
the farmer and the harvest,
the seed and the sower.

So that in the sharing of these simple elements in community,
we may taste and see your goodness,
so that we might catch a glimpse of what it is to be in communion with you and with one
another.

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

The body of Christ,
the bread of life.
The lifeblood of Christ,
the cup of blessing.
The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

Prayer after Communion

Thank you, O Christ, for this feast of life.

We are fed by your love;

we are strengthened by your life.

We are sent forth into this world to live into the visions God has laid on our hearts.

We are now commissioned to:

feed as we have been fed,

forgive as we have been forgiven,

love as we have been loved, we ask in Jesus' name...

Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy Kingdom 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 kingdom and the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever, Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

All Earth Is Waiting

VU 5

1 All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
and open furrows await the seed of God.
All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;
it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

2 Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,
'A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel.'
One whose name is 'God with us', our Saviour shall be,
through whom hope will blossom
once more within our hearts.

3 Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain,
open new highways, new highways for our God,
who is now coming closer, so come all and see,
and open the doorways as wide as wide can be.

4 In lowly stable the Promised One appeared.
Yet, feel that presence throughout the earth today,
for Christ lives in all Christians and is with us now;
again, on arriving, Christ brings us liberty.

Commissioning and Benediction

Go out this day blessed by the love of our joyful GOD who delights in you and your Advent journey.

We take the joy God has in us as it radiates in our soul, warming us to all whom we meet. We share our joy in this season as a holy gift to God. 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!

Postlude

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