



## Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

**Ministers:** All the People – wherever and however they gather

**Minister of Word & Sacrament:** Katie Vardy

**Music Director:** Randy Vancourt

**Reader:** Janet Bawcutt

**January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Second 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—a light born in love, a light that calls us forward, even when the way is unclear. Our Christ Candle serves as a reminder that the light of Christ shines 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, reminding 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 gather in this season of Epiphany—a season of light, revelation, and awakening—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

### Spirit, Open My Heart

**MV 79**

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
Spirit, open my heart.

1 God, replace my stony heart  
with a heart that's kind and tender.

    All my coldness and fear  
    to your grace I now surrender.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
    Spirit, open my heart.

2 Write your love upon my heart  
    as my law, my goal, my story.  
In each thought, word, and deed,  
    may my living bring you glory.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
    Spirit, open my heart.

3 May I weep with those who weep,  
    share the joy of sister, brother.  
    In the welcome of Christ,  
    may we welcome one another.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.  
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving,  
    Spirit, open my heart.

### Call to Worship

We waited for Love to speak, and God inclined toward us and heard our cry.

**God lifted us from the places of weariness and doubt and set our feet on steady ground.**

A new song rises on our lips—not of certainty, but of trust.

**We come not because we have all the answers, but because we are listening.**

Like those who followed Jesus long ago, we ask, “*Where are you staying?*”

**And Christ replies, “Come and see.”**

Come, then—with open hearts and willing spirits.

**Let us worship the God who calls us by name and invites us into becoming.**

### Passing the Peace

The first disciples did not come to faith alone—they came through relationship, through invitation, through love shared. The peace of Christ is not a distant idea; it is something we offer and receive, here and now.

As we pass the peace, may we offer one another the blessing of welcome, connection, and trust.

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

## Life and Work

### Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

**Holy and Listening God,**  
**You meet us where we are—**  
**in the waiting, in the wondering,**  
**in the quiet ache of longing.**  
**You place a new song within us,**  
**one we learn as we go,**  
**step by faithful step.**  
**In this time of worship,**  
**still our hurried spirits.**  
**Open our ears to your voice,**  
**our hearts to your love,**  
**and our lives to your call.**  
**Speak to us again, O God—**  
**and give us courage to follow.**  
**Amen.**

Hymn

**Oh, a Song Must Rise**

**MV 142**

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend  
    Oh a song must rise once again  
    Singing out God's praises and glory,  
        the faithful voices blend,  
    Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

1 From the mountains to the valleys,  
    from the desert to the sea,  
    a song must rise once again.  
From the voices of our leaders,  
    the voice of you and me,  
    a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend  
    Oh a song must rise once again  
    Singing out God's praises and glory,  
        the faithful voices blend,  
    Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

2 From poverty and riches,  
from the voice of young and old,  
a song must rise once again.  
From the free and the imprisoned,  
the timid and the bold,  
a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend  
Oh a song must rise once again  
Singing out God's praises and glory,  
the faithful voices blend,  
Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

3 From ev'ry house of worship,  
in ev'ry faith and tongue,  
a song must rise once again.  
From the villages and cities  
a new song must be sung,  
a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend  
Oh a song must rise once again  
Singing out God's praises and glory,  
the faithful voices blend,  
Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

## RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

### Scripture                    **Psalm 40** (Responsive)

I waited patiently for you, O God; you bent down and heard my cry.

**You lifted me out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay,  
and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.**

You put a new song in my mouth a song of praise to our God.

**Many shall see and wonder, and will put their trust in you.**

Blessed are those whose trust is in God,  
**who have not turned to the proud, nor to those who follow a lie.**

O God, my God, you have multiplied your wondrous deeds  
**and your thoughts toward us; none can compare with you!**

I would proclaim and tell of them,  
**but they are more than can be numbered.**

Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,  
**burnt offering and sacrifice for sin you have not required.**

But you have opened my ears to hear, and I said: "Here I am,  
ready to do what is written in the scroll of the book."

**I delight to do your will, O my God, your law is in my heart.**

I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation;  
I did not restrain my lips, as you well know.

**I have not kept your goodness hidden in my heart,  
but have spoken of your faithfulness and your saving help.**

I have not concealed your steadfast love, nor your truth from the great congregation.

**Do not withhold from me your tender care, O God;  
may your love and truth ever preserve me.**

### **John 1:29-42**

<sup>29</sup> The next day, catching sight of Jesus approaching, John exclaimed, "Look, there's God's sacrificial lamb, who takes away the world's sin!" <sup>30</sup> This is the one I was talking about when I said, 'The one who comes after me ranks ahead of me, for this One existed before I did.' <sup>31</sup> I didn't recognize him, but it was so that he would be revealed to Israel that I came baptizing with water." <sup>32</sup> John also gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and she came to rest on him. <sup>33</sup> I didn't recognize him, but the One who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'When you see the Spirit descend and rest on someone, that is the One who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup> Now I have seen for myself and have testified that this is the Only Begotten of God." <sup>35</sup> The next day, John was by the Jordan again with two of his disciples. <sup>36</sup> Seeing Jesus walk by, John said, "Look! There's the Lamb of God!" <sup>37</sup> The two disciples heard what John said and followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup> When Jesus turned around and noticed them following, he asked them, "What are you looking for?" They replied, "Rabbi," (which means 'Teacher'), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup> "Come and see," Jesus answered. So, they went to see where he was staying, and they spent the rest of the day with him. It was about four in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup> One of the two who had followed Jesus after hearing John was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find Simon Peter and say, "We've found the Messiah!" (which means 'the Anointed One'). <sup>42</sup> Andrew brought Simon to Jesus, who looked hard at him and said, "You are Simon, child of John; I will call you 'Cephas' (which means 'Rock').

The Word of God for the People of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **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.

**Sermon      What Are You Looking For?**

**RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

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.

### Offering

In the psalm, we hear that God does not delight in empty ritual, but in lives shaped by love and faithfulness. Our offering is not about obligation—it is a response to the God who hears our cries and invites us into God's work in the world. As we give today, may our gifts—of money, time,

compassion, and presence—be signs of our willingness to say yes when Christ says, “*Come and see.*”

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.

**Prayers of the People**

God of patient love,  
you hear the cries we speak aloud  
and the ones we carry silently.

We pray for your world—  
for places where people wait in fear or uncertainty,  
for communities longing for justice,  
for lands and waters strained by neglect and greed.  
Set our feet on paths of care and responsibility,  
that creation may flourish.

We pray for your church—  
that we may be known not by how certain we are,  
but by how faithfully we listen;  
not by how loudly we speak,  
but by how deeply we love.  
Make us a community that invites others to come and see.

We pray for those who are weary or hurting—  
for those facing illness, grief, loneliness, or anxiety;  
for those searching for belonging or purpose;  
for those whose names we speak now,  
and those held quietly in our hearts.  
Lift them from despair and place them on steady ground.

We pray for ourselves—  
when we are unsure of the next step,  
when your call feels unclear or costly,  
when faith feels more like waiting than knowing.  
Give us courage to trust that you are already at work within us.

All these prayers we offer in the spirit of Jesus,  
who taught us to pray together, saying:

**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**

**You Shall Go Out with Joy**

**VU p.884**

You shall go out with joy  
and be led forth with peace;  
the mountains and the hills  
will break forth before you,  
There'll be shouts of joy,  
and all the trees of the field  
will clap, clap, clap their hands.

And all the trees of the field will clap their hands,  
the trees of the field will clap their hands,  
the trees of the fields will clap their hands  
while you go out with joy.

You shall go out with joy  
and be led forth with peace;  
the mountains and the hills  
will break forth before you,  
There'll be shouts of joy,  
and all the trees of the field  
will clap, clap, clap their hands.

And all the trees of the field will clap their hands,  
the trees of the field will clap their hands,  
the trees of the fields will clap their hands  
while you go out with joy.  
*(repeat chorus)*

## **Bread for the Journey**

When Jesus asks, “*What are you looking for?*” what rises in your heart—and what names, hopes, or longings are shaping the way you answer?

## **Commissioning**

God has heard our cry and placed a new song within us.

**We will carry that song into the world.**

Christ calls us not only to believe, but to follow.

**We will walk the path of love and justice.**

The Spirit sends us out, still learning, still becoming.

**We go, trusting that God walks with us.**

## **Benediction**

May the God who listens hear your deepest hopes.

May the Christ who calls speak your name with love.

May the Spirit who sends give you courage for the journey ahead.

Go in hope. Go in courage. Go in peace.

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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