



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Reader: Shirley Scott

April 6th, 2025

Fifth Sunday of Lent

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Land Acknowledgement

We begin by acknowledging 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.

As we gather here at Birchcliff Bluffs United Church, we reflect on the responsibility we share in caring for this land, learning from its history, and working toward reconciliation. May we act with respect, humility, and a commitment to justice, as we strive to build a future where all peoples—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—can live together in harmony and respect.

We offer our thanks for this land, its history, and the teachings it offers, and we commit ourselves to listening, learning, and walking in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in the pursuit of healing and justice.

Opening Hymn

Welcome to Another Day

VU 408

- 1 Welcome to another day! Night is blinded.
'Welcome,' let creation say; darkness ended.
Comes the sunshine after dew, time for labour;
time to love my God anew and my neighbour.
- 2 Welcome to the day of prayer with God's people;
welcome is the joy we share at this table.
Bread and wine from heaven fall; come, receive it
that the Christ may reign in all who believe it.
- 3 Welcome is the peace that's given, sure for ever;

welcome is the hope of heaven when life's over.
As we work and as we pray, trust God's story:
come then, as the dawning day heralds glory!

Call to Worship

The days ahead are dark and full of foreboding.

We watch as Jesus journeys to the cross.

There is no way to change what is to come.

Yet death has not the final word.

Let us bear witness to God's new life
moving within and among us.

God is doing a new thing.

Let us rejoice and give thanks!

Passing the Peace

We pass the peace (*with a bow, or a wave, or a nod to our neighbours*) to remind us of the light of Christ that is in each of us, and that we are called to reconciliation and community.

Let us greet those around you with the Peace of Christ, saying:

The peace of Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Holy and loving God,

You welcome us into this sacred space, just as Jesus was welcomed into the home of his friends. You invite us to sit at your feet, to serve with our hands, and to pour out our love without hesitation.

As we gather in your presence, may we be like Mary—bold in our love, unafraid to give fully of ourselves. May we be like Martha—faithful in our service, offering what we have for the good of others. And may we be like Lazarus—witnesses to the power of new life, testifying to your grace that knows no bounds.

Breathe your Spirit upon us now. Stir within us a generosity that flows from deep gratitude. Let our worship be a fragrance that fills this space—a sign of love poured out for you and for the world. In the name of Jesus, who teaches us to love extravagantly, we pray. Amen.

Lenten Candles: The Candle of Health

Two candles plus the Christ candle are lit

On this fifth Sunday of Lent, we light a candle to pray for wholeness and health for all living things. We rest in the glow of that candle now. (*a moment of silence*)

As we consider how precious health can be, we acknowledge our concerns about the various illnesses that can change so much in our world. We grieve sicknesses that affect the body, the mind, and the spirit of those who are afflicted by them. We grieve the present state of our natural environment and how its overall decline has changed how we live and how we might live.

As the shadows of Lent move ever closer, we extinguish our candle of health, just for today, as we commit ourselves to healing what is sick and mending what is broken, so that we can all find wholeness.

Hymn

Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights

VU 108

Throughout these Lenten days and nights,
we turn to walk the inward way,
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,
we live in hope till Easter day.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture John 12: 1-8

¹² Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him. ³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus's feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Take My Life and Let It Be (1, 2, 3, 5)

VU 506

1 Take my life, and let it be
consecrated, all for thee;
take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.

2 Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of thy love;
take my feet, and let them be
swift and purposeful for thee.

3 Take my lips, and let them be
filled with messages from thee;
take my intellect, and use
every power as thou shalt choose.

5 Take my love: and I will pour
at thy feet its treasure store;
take myself, and I will be
ever, only, all for thee.

Sermon The Prophet Mary

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

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.

Offering

Creator God,
as we bless the gifts that we receive,
we ask that you bless the work of our lives and the love of our hearts this day,
offered in so many ways.

**We share your desire to create better lives and a better community.
Let the soul of the world be restored in an ocean of your love. Amen.**

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

Listen. Pay attention. In the hustle and bustle,
in the chatter and cacophony of chaos, in the
pauses between our words, God is here among us.
Let us open our senses and hearts to God.
We open them to God, to one another, and to all of creation.
Let us take a moment and a breath to give thanks to God.
And we breathe out in gratitude, praising God.

We pause and give thanks, to you, Creator of us all.
From the very beginning, you spoke, and out of your words,
you made the world, a world filled with creatures shrieking,
roaring, gurgling, hissing, purring, clicking,
and each in our own way, joining with nature in an orchestra
of sound singing the song of life.

When we forget the song and how to harmonize
with all those who are with us, those who came before us
and who will continue the song onward,
you call to us until we respond.

When we turn away from you and the rest of creation,
you patiently wait for us to run out of steam,
to stop and listen in the silence for your whisper of hope.
And in the whisper, we remember:

We remember the cry of a baby born in a stable.
We remember the gasps of the shepherds
and the song of the angels reminding them
and us that you, Immanuel, are with us.
Your gurgles and babbles as a wee baby
invite us back into relationship with one another and creation.

And as we remember this baby growing,
we are reminded how the love song of his living deepened
with the sounds of love and compassion.
We remember the cries of despair and the sobbing
that echoed in the emptiness as Jesus met folks in pain with cries of his own.
We remember the sighs of relief and the shouts of amazement
as Jesus travelled along the world,
his footsteps walking with the beat of creation
as he revealed your love, Holy Creator.

Yet the message of love was silenced
through the pounding of nails to a cross,
reverberating the sounds of betrayal with its staccato beat.
And when all was silent, with grace,
you lifted Jesus from the cross and restored him to life,
so that our hearts may sing and
our lives may resonate with your love forevermore.
Therefore, we pause and listen, breathing deeply
and remembering that we belong.
We belong in this sacred story.
We belong in the love song of creation.
We belong just as we are-holy and beloved, beautiful and broken.

Therefore we join our voices with your people on earth and all the company of the heavens,
singing praise to you,

Holy, Holy, Holy One
God of justice and love
Heaven and earth are full of your wonder
Hosanna among us

We gather at this table to remember that
on the night before he died, Jesus ate with his friends.
He took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it,
he broke it and gave it to them, saying,
"Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.
Each time you do this, remember me."

That same night, Jesus also took a cup,
and after giving thanks, passed it to his friends,
saying, "Drink. This cup, poured out for you, is the promise of God.
Whenever you drink it, remember me."

We remember Jesus' death and celebrate his resurrection.
We await with hope his coming again to bring
the song of peace and justice to the earth.

In remembrance of all you have done to save us,
we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Christ was birthed among us.

Christ was killed among us.

Christ rises again among us.

Send, O God, your Holy Spirit upon us
and what we do here, that we and these gifts,
touched by your Spirit, may be signs of life
and a love song to one another and to the world.

And so this is our prayer. So be it! Amen.

Amen.

Come, for the feast is now ready.

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

Wonderful God,
may your vibrations of life transform and enliven us,
that we may proclaim lives of thanksgiving.
May we listen for your ever-present love among us,
a love that invites us into a yearning that will never be satisfied
until everyone knows that they are a part of your glorious creation,
a melody of grace that reflects your beloved word.
In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Trusting that God receives all our prayers and responds to each of them in love,
let us pray together saying: Loving God, **hear our prayer.**

And now, as a community of faith,
we pray all this, using the ancient words you taught us, saying:

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

Let Us with a Gladsome Mind

VU 234

1 Let us with a gladsome mind
praise our God, forever kind;
whose great mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

2 God, with all-commanding might,
filled the newmade world with light;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

3 God has with a gracious eye
looked upon our misery;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

4 All things living God does feed,
with full measure meets their need;
for God's mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

5 Let us then with gladsome mind,
praise our God, forever kind;
whose great mercies still endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

Bread for the Journey

How do Mary's actions challenge our understanding of love, generosity, and faith? In what ways might we be called to show extravagant love in our own lives?

Commissioning and Benediction

Like Mary, who poured out her love at the feet of Jesus, we are called to give extravagantly.

We go to share love without counting the cost.

Like Martha, who served with devotion, we are called to work for justice and care for our neighbors.

We go to serve with open hands and open hearts.

Like Lazarus, who bore witness to life restored, we are called to proclaim hope in the face of despair.

We go to embody grace, walking in the way of Jesus.

God calls us into a world that does not always understand generosity, justice, or hope. Yet, we go, knowing that love is never wasted.

We go in love, trusting that God's abundance is enough for all.

Go now, beloved of God, to love boldly. May you walk in the way of Jesus, finding beauty in justice, hope in community, and joy in serving one another. And may the Spirit sustain you in all things, filling your heart with abundance, so that your very life becomes a fragrant offering of love.

Go in peace. Amen.

Choral Response

May Sunshine Light Your Way

May sunshine light your way
as you move on toward tomorrow
May laughter fill your days

with joy instead of sorrow,
May you have the strength to soar
as on eagles' wing,
And may your heart be filled
with joyous songs to sing.

May you have the strength to soar
as on eagles' wing,
And may your heart be filled
with joyous songs to sing.
Go in peace, go in love,
Go in song.

Postlude

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