



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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December 7th, 2025

2nd Sunday of Advent – Peace

White Gift Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

As we light the Rainbow Candle, we remember that God’s love is wide and welcoming. May this small flame shine with courage and compassion, a reminder that all belong, all are cherished, and all are held in the heart of God. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

As we enter this season of Advent—a time of waiting, listening, and preparing—we acknowledge that we do so on the sacred lands of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. This land has been a place of story and spirit long before our candles were lit or our hymns were sung. Creator has been present here through the teachings, ceremonies, and care of Indigenous peoples whose stewardship continues to this day.

As we journey through Advent, may we commit ourselves to the ongoing work of reconciliation—honouring the land, respecting its First Peoples, and walking a path of right relations.

Opening Hymn

Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

VU 684

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:

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.

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.

Lighting our Advent Candles

Last week, we lit a candle for hope—a small light that reminded us of dawn. Today we light the candle of peace, trusting that even in the wilderness, God’s Spirit breathes harmony into our chaos.

We light a candle for peace, not the easy kind that asks nothing of us, but the fierce peace that rebuilds what hatred has broken, that speaks truth in love, and turns us toward one another again.

The prophet cries out, “Prepare the way of our God!” Peace is that preparation—a path cleared by compassion, a road made level by repentance.

God of peace, quiet our hearts when the world is loud, soften our anger when injustice burns hot, and steady our hands for the holy work of mending.

May this flame remind us: peace is not a far-off dream, but a light kindled here, within us, between us, among us.

Come, Christ of Peace, dwell within our hearts, and teach us your way. Amen.

(The first & second candle on the Advent wreath are lit.)

Sung Response:

A Candle Is Burning

VU 6

A candle is burning, a candle of peace,
a candle to signal that conflict must cease:
for Jesus is coming to show us the way;
a message of peace humbly laid in the hay.

Passing the Peace

John the Baptist called people to repentance—to turn around, to see one another differently, to live as though God’s reign of peace had already begun. When we share the peace of Christ, we practice that turning. We lay down grudges, cross divides, and make room for grace. So, let us greet one another as those who are becoming new—the peace of Christ be with you all. **And also with you.**

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

**Holy and wild God,
you speak through prophets and poets, through silence and song.
You call us into the wilderness—not to punish us, but to free us.
In this Advent time of waiting and turning, strip away what keeps us from you.
Loosen our grip on fear and pride; soften our hearts to your peace.
As we prepare the way for Christ among us,
may your Spirit make us brave enough to repent, humble enough to listen,
and hopeful enough to begin again.
Through Jesus, our peace and our promise. Amen.**

RECEIVING GOD’S WORD

Scripture Matthew 3:1-12

¹ At this time John the Baptizer appeared in the desert of Judea, proclaiming, ² “Change your hearts and minds, for the reign of heaven is about to break in upon you!” ³ It was John that the prophet Isaiah described when he said, “A herald’s voice cries in the desert; ‘Prepare the way of our God, make straight the paths of God!’” ⁴ John was clothed in a garment of camel’s hair and wore a leather belt around his waist. Grasshoppers and wild honey were his food. ⁵ At the time, Jerusalem, all Judea and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him. ⁶ John baptized them in the Jordan River as they confessed their sins. ⁷ When he saw that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees were coming to be baptized, John said to them, “You pack of snakes! Who told you to flee from the coming wrath?” ⁸ Give some evidence that you mean to reform! ⁹ And don’t pride yourselves on the claim, ‘Sarah and Abraham are our parents.’ I tell you, God can raise children for Sarah and Abraham from these very stones! ¹⁰ Even now the ax is laid to the root of the tree. Every tree that is not fruitful will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹ I will baptize you in water if you have a change of heart, but the One who will follow me is more powerful than I. I’m not fit even to untie the sandals of the Coming One! That One will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire, ¹² whose winnowing-fan will clear the threshing floor. The grain will be gathered into the barn, but the chaff will be burned in unquenchable fire.”

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

There’s a Voice in the Wilderness

VU 18

1 There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
a call from the ways untrod:
prepare in the desert a highway,
a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted,
the lofty hills brought low;

make straight all the crooked places
where God, our God, may go!

2 O Zion, that bringest good tidings,
get thee up to the heights and sing!
Proclaim to a desolate people
the coming of their King.
Like the flowers of the field they perish,
like grass our works decay;
the power and pomp of nations
shall pass, like a dream, away.

3 But the word of our God endureth,
whose arm is ever strong;
God stands in the midst of nations,
and soon will right the wrong.
God shall feed the flock like a shepherd,
the lambs so gently hold;
to pastures of peace will lead them,
and bring them safe to fold.

4 There's a voice in the wilderness crying,
a call from the ways untrod:
prepare in the desert a highway,
a highway for our God!
The valleys shall be exalted,
the lofty hills brought low;
make straight all the crooked places
where God, our God, may go!

Reflection – Becoming the Table: An Advent Journey of Gathering

Sung Refrain

There is Room for All

MV 62

There is room for all in the shadow of God's wing;
there is room for all sheltered in God's love.
And I rejoice and sing, "My refuge and my rock, in whom I trust."
There is room for all, there is room for all!

Poem – 100 Tables by Beth Moore

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Offering

Today, along with our offering, we bring our White Gifts—simple offerings, infused with love—to be shared with our neighbours through the Bluffs Food Bank. Each can, each box, each mitten carries a prayer: that no one be hungry, that all be warm, that dignity and compassion take root in our community. As we bring these gifts, and the gifts of our hearts and hands, we remember: generosity is how we *prepare the way*. Let us offer what we have, that hope may take flesh once more among us.

As we bless these 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 hope and harmony,
we lift to you the voices of the wilderness—
those crying for justice, for mercy, for peace.

We pray for all who hunger,
for those who cannot afford enough,
for the families who depend on food banks and warm hearts.
Bless the hands that give, and the hands that receive.

We pray for leaders—of nations, communities, and churches—
that they may govern with wisdom, humility, and compassion.
May they prepare the way for your peace through courage and truth.

We pray for those who suffer:
for the sick and the grieving,
for those caught in the wilderness of loneliness or despair.
May your Spirit comfort and renew them.

We pray for your Church in all its forms—
that we might be a people of preparation,
proclaiming hope not with words alone,
but with actions that heal and restore.

And for ourselves, O God—
as we wait, as we hope—

teach us to live awake,
to follow the wild prophets among us,
and to welcome Christ when he comes,
in the stranger, the neighbour, the hungry, and the poor.

Through the One who is our peace,
Jesus, our Christ, who taught us to pray, 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

Herald! Sound the Note of Gladness

VU 28

1 Herald! Sound the note of gladness!
Tell the news that Christ is here;
make a pathway through the desert
for the one who brings God near.
Sound the trumpet!
Tell the message!
Christ the Saving One has come!

2 Herald! Sound the note of judgement,
warning us of right and wrong,
turning us from sin and sadness,
till once more we sing the song.
Sound the trumpet!
Tell the message!
Christ the Saving One has come!

3 Herald! Sound the note of pardon!
Those repenting are forgiv'n;

God receives these wayward children,
and to all new life is giv'n.
Sound the trumpet!
Tell the message!
Christ the Saving One has come!

4 Herald! Sound the note of triumph!
Christ has come to share our life,
bringing God's own love and power,
granting victory in our strife.
Sound the trumpet!
Tell the message!
Christ the Saving One has come!

Bread for the Journey

As we gather on this White Gift Sunday, what does “making room at the table” mean for you this Advent season?

Commissioning and Benediction

The wilderness is wide, but God's promise is wider still.

We go forth to prepare the way.

With voices of hope and hands of compassion—

We make straight the paths of love and justice.

Christ is coming, and peace is already near.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Go now, awakened and renewed.

Let hope steady your steps,

let peace guide your hands,

let love prepare the way before you.

And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. 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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