



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

Service Lead: Mary Cannings

Readers: Betty McCulloch & Julian “King Julez” Munro

May 7, 2023

Fifth Sunday of Easter

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

As we light the Christ Candle

May we continue to spread the light through our actions in our lives

Call to Worship

We are called to be the church.

We come to learn from the lessons Jesus taught.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.

We come in amazement of the wondrous things God is doing in the world.

All who believed were together and had all things in common.

We come with our own unique stories and histories, drawn together in God’s love.

Introit

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!

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!

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 Mississaugas 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 Prayer

Awesome and wonderful God, we bring our praises before you this day. Receive our adoration, let our words be full of truth, and take away any reticence or fear we have about expressing our love for you and your church. Let our worship be an offering to you this day. Amen.

Opening Hymn

Draw The Circle Wide

MV 145

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

God the still-point of the circle,
'round whom all creation turns;
nothing lost, but held forever,
in God's gracious arms.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Let our hearts touch far horizons,
so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders,
faithful to God's call.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Let the dreams we dream be larger,
than we've ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us,
open every door.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Life and Work of the Church

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Psalm 139: 1-6, 12-18

O God, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar.

You discern my path and the places I rest; you are familiar with all my ways.

Before a word is on my tongue, you know it, O God, completely. You guard me from behind and before and lay your hand upon me.

It is beyond my knowledge; it is a mystery; I cannot fathom it.

It is you who formed my inward parts; you fashioned me in my mother's womb.

I praise you, for I am fearfully, wonderfully made. Wondrous are your works; that I know very well.

My frame was not hidden from you when I was being fashioned in secret, intricately woven in the mystery of clay.

Your eyes saw my substance taking shape; in your book my every day was recorded; all my day were fashioned, even before they came to be.

Beatitudes for a Queerer Church

Blessed are the outcasts; the ostracised, the outsiders.
Blessed are the scared; the scarred, the silent.
Blessed are the broken; for they are not broken.
Blessed are the hated; for they are not worthy of hate.
Blessed are those who try; those who transform, who transition.
Blessed are the closeted; God sees you shine anyway.

Blessed are the queers;
Who love creation enough to live the truth of it,
Despite a world that tells them they cannot.

And blessed are those
Who believe themselves unworthy of blessing;
What inconceivable wonders you hold.

Hymn

On Eagle's Wings

VU p. 808

You who dwell in the shelter of our God,
who abide in this shadow for life,
say to my God: "My refuge,
my Rock in whom I trust."

"And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand."

The snare of the fowler will never capture you,
and famine will bring you no fear:
under God's wings your refuge,
God's faithfulness your shield.

"And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand."

You need not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day;
though thousands fall about you,
near you it shall not come.

"And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand."

For to God's angels is given a command
to guard you in all of your ways;
upon their hands they will bear you up,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

“And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand.
And hold you, hold you in the palm of my hand.”

Sermon Living Into Affirming

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

Be Still My Soul

VU 652

Be still, my soul, for God is on your side;
bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.
Trust in your God, your saviour and your guide,
who through all changes faithful will remain.
Be still, my soul, your best, your heavenly friend
through stormy ways leads to a peaceful end.

Be still, my soul, your God will undertake
to guide the future surely as the past.
Your hope, your confidence let nothing shake;
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.
Be still, my soul, life's tempests still obey
the voice that once the waves' wild fury stayed.

Be still, my soul, the hour is hastening on
when we shall be forever in God's peace;
when disappointment, grief and fear are gone,
love's joys restored, our strivings all shall cease.
Be still, my soul, when change and tears are past,
all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.

Offering

The offerings that we receive help us to fulfill our efforts to act justly, love kindness and mercy and walk humbly with our God.

Prayers of the People

**Creator, we come to you with both the joys and the sorrows of our hearts.
We are grateful for the gift of life and the joy that it can bring.
For families and friends who love us.
For allies who stick up for us,
even when we cannot risk sticking up for ourselves.**

For the great diversity you have created in our world.

**We pray for those who suffer from discrimination
because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.
Who worry about their employment or who cannot find a job.
For those who must hide who they are to find housing.
For those who are not safe on our streets.
For those who do not feel safe in their place of worship.**

**Help us to end homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia,
and all forms of discrimination and hate.
Show us the way to make this world a better place for all.**

We now take a moment to remember those we keep in our prayers.

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever. Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

River

MV 3

- 1 River, rushing down to the ocean blue,
River from a mountain high.
River, as you do what rivers do,
River, draw the Spirit nigh.
- 2 Spirit, coming down to the river-side,
Spirit, spark of wondrous thought.
Spirit, I am free for you to guide,
Spirit, pray that I be taught!

3 Water, let me drink of your healing pow'r,
Water, strength and life you give.
Water, as I travel with each hour,
Water, help my body live.

4 River, flowing down where you ran before,
River, source of clearer view.
River, as I walk your rocky shore,
River, see my journey through.
See my journey through
See my journey through.

Benediction & Commissioning

**In the names of the Creator, who created us all.
In the name of Jesus, who accepted us all.
In the name of the Spirit, who guides us all.
Go in peace, love and hope into the days and weeks ahead.
Amen**

Postlude

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Birchcliff Bluffs United Church Fifth Sunday of Easter Sunday, May 7, 2023 Additional Lectionary

Acts 7:55-60 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

⁵⁵ But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ “Look,” he said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” ⁵⁷ But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸ Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him, and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he died.^[a]

Psalm 31:1-5

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Prayer and Praise for Deliverance from Enemies

To the leader. A Psalm of David.

- ¹ In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.
- ² Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
- Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.
- ³ You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me;
- ⁴ take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.
- ⁵ Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

Psalm 31:15-16

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

- ¹⁵ My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
- ¹⁶ Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

1 Peter 2:2-10

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

- ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.^[a]
- ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵ like living stones let yourselves be built^[b] into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in scripture:
- “See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious,
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.”
- ⁷ This honor, then, is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe,^[c]
- “The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner,”
- ⁸ and
- “A stone that makes them stumble
and a rock that makes them fall.”
- They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people,^[d] in order that you may proclaim the excellence of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

¹⁰ Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

John 14:1-14

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

Jesus the Way to the Father

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe^[a] in God; believe also in me. ² In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?^[b] ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to the place where I am going."^[c] ⁵ Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" ⁶ Jesus said to him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷ If you know me, you will know^[d] my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

⁸ Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." ⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, but if you do not, then believe^[e] because of the works themselves. ¹² Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me^[f] for anything, I will do it.