



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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March 19, 2023

Lent 4

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle

Though we yearn for a great vision, many visions are limited.

As prophet Joel said, when the leaders lack vision, it is the people who suffer.

We experience the suffering of God's people on our streets, in shantytowns, in refugee camps, and in every neighbourhood.

Call to Worship

We do not know just how limited we are spiritually.

Content to live with illusions and self-delusions, people do not seem to want to know wisdom and truth.

So we call upon your Spirit, O God, to help us to see our way.

Response

Open My Eyes, That I May See

VU 371

1 Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.

Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

3 Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere;
open my heart and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.

Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Opening Prayer

O God, we long for enlightened leaders to emerge who have the audacity to hope and declare the truth we long to receive.

How long must we wait? How long must we suffer? Or are we the ones who are to embrace the visions and possibilities? Then open our spirits for us to embrace your truth. Open our minds to receive your wisdom. Open our hearts to love widely, generously, and deeply. May our faith shine through us we pray. 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 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 Hymn

A Light Is Gleaming

VU 82

A light is gleaming,
spreading its arms throughout the night,
living in the light.
Come share its gladness,
God's radiant love is burning bright,
living in the light.

1 When light comes pouring into the darkest place,
it hurts our eyes to see the glow.
Sometimes a word of hope reminds us of our fears,
our memories and tears.

A light is gleaming,
spreading its arms throughout the night,
living in the light.
Come share its gladness,
God's radiant love is burning bright,
living in the light.

3 And Jesus showed us a brighter path to walk.
He showed us things we hadn't seen.

Now we, like Jesus, can help creation shine,
and this will be a sign:

A light is gleaming,
spreading its arms throughout the night,
living in the light.
Come share its gladness,
God's radiant love is burning bright,
living in the light.

4 So let us live in the brightness God has giv'n,
and let us rise to see the dawn.
We trust that God is here asparkle and ablaze,
warming all our days.

A light is gleaming,
spreading its arms throughout the night,
living in the light.
Come share its gladness,
God's radiant love is burning bright,
living in the light.

Life and Work of the Church

Scripture Psalm 23 The Divine Shepherd

¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
³ he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
⁴ Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil,
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.
⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.

Gospel John 9:1-41 A Man Born Blind Receives Sight

9 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth.

2 His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

3 Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him.

4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.

5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

6 When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes,

7 saying to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

8 The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”

9 Some were saying, “It is he.” Others were saying, “No, but it is someone like him.” He kept saying, “I am he.”

10 But they kept asking him, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

11 He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.”

12 They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. **14** Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. **15** Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.” **16** Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath.” Others said, “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?” And they were divided. **17** So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.” He said, “He is a prophet.”

18 The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight **19** and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” **20** His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, **21** but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” **22** His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus^[e] to be the Messiah^[d] would be put out of the synagogue. **23** Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴ So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵ He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶ They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷ He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?”

²⁸ Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰ The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. ³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. ³² Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. ³³ If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴ They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

³⁵ Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶ He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” ³⁷ Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” ³⁸ He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him. ³⁹ Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind.” ⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, “Surely we are not blind, are we?” ⁴¹ Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

The Word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God!

Hymn

I Have Called You By Your Name

MV 161

1 I have called you by your name, you are mine;
I have gifted you and ask you now to shine.
I will not abandon you;
all my promises are true.
You are gifted, called, and chosen;
you are mine.

2 I will help you learn my name as you go;
read it written in my people, help them grow.
Pour the water in my name,
speak the word your soul can claim,
offer Jesus’ body given long ago.

3 I know you will need my touch as you go;
feel it pulsing in creation’s ebb and flow.
Like the woman reaching out,
choosing faith in spite of doubt,

hold the hem of Jesus' robe,
then let it go.

4 I have given you a name, it is mine;
I have given you my Spirit as a sign.
With my wonder in your soul,
make my wounded children whole;
go and tell my precious people
they are mine.

Sermon

A Life Changing Question

Hymn

Amazing Grace

VU 266

- 1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.
- 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.
- 3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace that brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
- 5 When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we'd first begun.

Offering

As our loving shepherd, Jesus reaches out to help us through all the troubles of life, in loving ways.

Let us reach out to each other and to others in our community and in the world beyond as we present our offering in his name. Amen.

Prayers of the People

With grumbles and yawns, and sleepy heads, you, our shepherd, call us from our beds.

In ones and twos, threes and fours, our shepherd calls us through the door of our church. Friends and family, old and new, our shepherd calls us to our pew. In summer, autumn, winter, spring, our shepherd calls us here to sing. And so we have come ...

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

**Our Father, 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

This Day God Gives Me

VU 410

- 1 This day God gives me strength of high heaven,
sun and moon shining, flame in my hearth,
flashing of lightning, wind in its swiftness,
deeps of the ocean, firmness of earth.
- 2 This day God sends me strength to sustain me,
might to uphold me, wisdom as guide.
Your eyes are watchful, your ears are listening,
your lips are speaking, Friend at my side.
- 3 God's way is my way, God's shield is round me,
God's host defends me, saving from ill.
Angels of heaven, drive from me always
all that would harm me, stand by me still.
- 4 Rising, I thank you, mighty and strong One,
God of creation, giver of rest,
firmly confessing Threeness of Persons,
Oneness of Godhead, Trinity blest.

Benediction & Commissioning

We go out from here secure in God's promises.

**We take with us the knowledge of God's presence offering to all the hospitality and
welcome of Christ.**

Go in peace and love.

Amen.

Postlude

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Birchcliff Bluffs United Church Additional Lectionary

1 Samuel 16:1-13 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

David Anointed as King

16 The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” ² Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’” ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do, and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” ⁴ Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, “Do you come peaceably?” ⁵ He said, “Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely his anointed is now before the LORD.” ⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.” ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here.” ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The LORD said, “Rise and anoint him, for this is the one.” ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

Ephesians 5:8-14 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

⁸ for once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, ⁹ for the fruit of the light^a is found in all that is good and right and true. ¹⁰ Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. ¹² For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, ¹³ but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, ¹⁴ for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake!
Rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”