



**Birchcliff Bluffs United Church**

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

**Minister of Word & Sacrament:**

**Music Director:** Randy Vancourt

**Reader:** Mary Cannings

**January 5, 2025**

**Epiphany / 12th Night**

**Music Sunday**

**WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE**

**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

In this season of Light, this candle reminds us of the light shining in the darkness. May we carry this light of hope, peace, and justice to the world around us everyday.

**Land Acknowledgement**

We now take a moment to acknowledge the sacred land beside the water on which Birchcliff Bluffs United Church stands. The land we are worshipping on today is the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

**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**

**When Heaven’s Bright With Mystery**

**VU 93**

1 When heaven's bright with mystery  
and science searches nature's art,  
when all creation yearns for peace  
and hope sinks deep in human hearts,  
appear to us, O Holy Light;  
lift from our eyes the shades of night.

2 When Herod barter power and lives  
and Rachel's weeping fills the night,  
when suffering's mask marks every face,  
and Love's a refugee in flight,  
reveal to us your word of grace  
and make us witness to your peace.

3 When fragile faith, like desert wind,  
blows dry and empty, hope erased,  
when withered grass and fading flower  
proclaim again our day's brief space,  
breathe on the clay of our despair  
and work a new creation there.

4 When heaven's bright with mystery  
and stars still lead an unknown way,  
when love still lights a gentle path  
where courts of power can hold no sway,  
there with the Magi, let us kneel,  
our gifts to share, God's world to heal.

### **Call to Worship**

Today we welcome the Magi into our Christmas story. A story of wonder and light, of angels, shepherds, virgin births. In the midst of darkness, they chose to follow the light. Their story gives us hope that God still sends light for us to follow. We come today knowing we too are on a journey. May we be faithful followers of the light so that we too can be bearers of hope and justice for a dark and lonely world.

**Arise! Shine! The light you have been waiting for is here.**  
**Darkness has been banished and the light of hope floods the earth.**  
**Let us make ready for the journey and prepare our hearts to receive this Light.**  
**Amen.**

### **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 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**

The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us join as one heart and mind. As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light set our hearts on fire with love, now and forever. Let your light continue to shine in our hearts and help us to make a reality a world filled with justice and peace. Just as the Three Wise Men of the East recognized the call and invitation made by the Bethlehem Star, we must also be willing to listen, follow and give our best. May that light ever shine, and may it lead us always onward.  
Amen.

## **RECEIVING GOD’S WORD**

### **Hymn**

### **We Three Kings of Orient Are**

1 We three kings of Orient are;  
bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of light,  
star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding,  
guide us to thy perfect light.

2 Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,  
gold I bring to crown him again,  
King forever, ceasing never,  
over us all to reign.

3 Frankincense to offer have I;  
incense owns a Deity nigh;  
prayer and praising, voices raising,  
worshiping God on high.

4 Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume  
breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,  
sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

5 Glorious now behold him arise;  
King and God and sacrifice:

Alleluia, Alleluia,  
sounds through the earth and skies.

O star of wonder, star of light,  
star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding,  
guide us to thy perfect light.

## Scripture

### Matthew 2:1-12    The Magi Visit the Messiah

<sup>2</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem <sup>2</sup> and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. <sup>4</sup> When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

<sup>6</sup> ““But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for out of you will come a ruler  
who will shepherd my people Israel.””

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.”

<sup>9</sup> After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. <sup>11</sup> On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

## Hymn

### Will You Come and See the Light

VU 96

1 Will you come and see the light from the stable door?  
It is shining newly bright, though it shone before.  
It will be your guiding star,  
it will show you who you are;

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

2 Will you step into the light that can free the slave?

It will stand for what is right, it will heal and save.

By the pyramids of greed

there's a longing to be freed;

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

4 Will you join the hope, alight in the young girl's eyes,  
of the mighty put to flight by a baby's cries?

When the lowest and the least

are the foremost at the feast,

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

5 Will you travel by the light of the babe new born?

In the candle lit at night there's a gleam of dawn,

and the darkness all about

is too dim to put it out:

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

## **Reflection**

### **RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

#### **Song**

#### **The King**

Joy, health, love, and peace be all here in this place

By your leave, we will sing concerning our king

Our king is well dressed, in the silks of the best

In ribbons so rare, no king can compare

We have travelled many miles, over hedges and stiles

In search of our king, unto you we bring

We have powder and shot for to conquer the lot

We have cannon and ball to conquer them all

Old Christmas is past, Twelfth Night is the last

And we bid you adieu, great joy to the new

## Offering

We take our gifts and present them with love. We rejoice in our ability to share, but long to do more. Help us to be like the Magi and carefully plan the gifts we bring. May these gifts be used so others may know the hope that is found in you. Amen.

## Hymn

### In the Bleak Mid-Winter

VU 55

1 In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

2 Heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;  
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.

4 What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him - give my heart.

## Prayers of the People

God of wanderers, you sent the Magi from afar to witness the mystery and majesty of your birth. May we go into the world with your will in our hearts and on our lips. Bless the stars that guide our way and the night sky that invites the earth into slumber. You sent the Magi to follow the star into an uncertain future. May all leaders and peoples seek the same, especially when paths are not clear, conflicts rage, tyrants oppress, and fear abounds.

Give courage and wisdom for building paths that lead to justice and freedom, and bring healing power to all who seek love, support, and restoration. Dispel fears and shadows. Restore broken relationships and mend broken hearts. Bring relief to those who are sick or struggling.

You sent the holy family to seek safety in a new land; protect all who make similar journeys. Send your guiding Spirit to asylum seekers, refugees, and all who journey toward safety.

Rejoicing in the light that has come, we join together in song, using the words you taught us to pray...

**Creator, in heaven, hallowed be your name.**

**Your dominion come, your will be done on earth, as in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread  
and forgive us our debts,**

as we forgive our debtors,  
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,  
For yours is eternity, the power, and the glory,  
For ever and ever, Amen.

## **BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH**

**Closing 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 a-sparkle and ablaze,  
warming all our days.

## **Commissioning and Benediction**

We have been called from darkness into eternal light. So go from this place, walking and shining in that blessed light. May it brighten every room you walk in, every conversation you have, and every person you encounter, now and forevermore. Amen.

1 When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky is gone,  
when the kings and the shepherds  
have found their way home,  
the work of Christmas is begun:

“I am the light of the world!  
You people come and follow me!”  
If you follow and love  
you’ll learn the mystery  
of what you were meant to do and be.

2 To find the lost and lonely one,  
to heal the broken soul with love,  
to feed the hungry children  
with warmth and good food,  
to feel the earth below, the sky above!

“I am the light of the world!  
You people come and follow me!”  
If you follow and love  
you’ll learn the mystery  
of what you were meant to do and be.

**Postlude**

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