



Birchliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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April 12th, 2026

2nd Sunday of Easter

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle

Today, we light the Christ candle—a flame of love that no darkness can overcome, a light that reminds us that hope still lives, even when the world feels heavy. *Candle is lit.*

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

We also light the rainbow candle—a sign of promise, of diversity, of sacred belonging. A reminder that every identity, every story, every body is held in the wide embrace of God’s love. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

As we gather in this season of new life and rising hope, we acknowledge that we are on sacred land. We give thanks for the stewardship of this place by the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit—whose care for this land stretches back through generations and continues to this day. We recognize that the work of truth, justice, and right relationship remains before us.

May this acknowledgement be more than words—may it call us into deeper listening, faithful action, and a commitment to reconciliation that lives in how we love, serve, and walk together.

Opening Hymn

Sing Your Joy

VU 253

1 Sing your joy, proclaim God's glory!
Rise and sing, the morning has come!
Bless our God and praise all creation;

song of the earth, and light from heaven:
God is alive! Hallelujah!

2 All the earth is filled with rejoicing,
light and life, the wonder of God!
Christ has triumphed! Risen forever!
Joy of our hearts, and hope of our dreaming:
God is alive! Hallelujah!

3 May we learn to become your kingdom,
may we be your kindness and truth!
Love is our calling, gift of your presence;
children of God, and spirit of Jesus:
God is alive! Hallelujah!

4 Light our way, O God of the living,
may we learn to see with new eyes!
Jesus the Lord, our power and promise;
light for the blind, and food for the hungry:
God is alive! Hallelujah!

Call to Worship

When fear closes every door, when we gather unsure and unsettled—

Christ comes and stands among us.

When our voices tremble, when hope feels fragile or far away—

Christ speaks: “Peace be with you.”

When we long for proof, when doubt lingers in the quiet corners of our hearts—

Christ meets us with compassion, not judgment.

When we are sent out, still uncertain but deeply loved—

Christ breathes courage into us.

So come—believing or unsure, hopeful or hesitant—

We come to worship the One who meets us here.

Passing the Peace

In the gospel, Jesus comes to the disciples behind locked doors and says, “*Peace be with you.*” It is not a shallow peace, but a deep and steady presence—one that meets us in our fear, our doubt, and our longing. Today, we share that same peace with one another—a peace that says: *you are not alone, you are welcome here, you belong.* So, whether with a handshake, a wave, or a kind word, let us share signs of Christ’s peace with one another.

The peace of Christ be with you. **And also with you!**

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Holy One,
you come to us even when the doors are closed—
even when fear lingers and doubt has not yet found its voice.
You stand among us and speak peace,
steady, gentle, and real.
So meet us here, O Christ.
Breathe your Spirit into this gathering—
that we might be renewed,
that we might be courageous,
that we might become bearers of your peace in the world.
Open our hearts to your presence,
our minds to your wisdom,
and our lives to your transforming love.
We pray all this in the spirit of the risen Christ.
Amen.

Hymn

Come, You Faithful, Raise the Strain

VU 165

1 Come, you faithful, raise the strain
of triumphant gladness:
God has brought forth Israel
into joy from sadness,
loosed from Pharaoh's bitter yoke
Jacob's sons and daughters,
led them with unmoistened foot
through the Red Sea waters.

2 'Tis the spring of souls today,
Christ has burst his prison,
and from three days' sleep in death
as a sun has risen;
all the winter of our sins,
long and dark, is flying
from his light, to whom we give
laud and praise undying.

3 Now the queen of seasons, bright
with the day of splendour,
with the royal feast of feasts,
comes its joy to render;
comes to gladden faithful hearts,

who with true affection
welcome in unwearied strains
Jesus' resurrection!

4 Neither could the gates of death,
nor the tomb's dark portal,
nor the watchers, nor the seal,
hold him as a mortal:
for today amid his own
he now stands, bestowing
God's true peace which evermore
passes human knowing.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture **John 20:19-31**

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors were locked where the disciples were, for fear of the Temple authorities, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.²¹ Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Abba God has sent me, so I send you."²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit."²³ If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven; if you retain anyone's sins, they are retained."

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came.²⁵ So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶ A week later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe."²⁸ Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!"²⁹ Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples that are not written in this book.³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God.**

1 You tell me that the Lord is risen,
that you have seen his face.
Then tell me why you crouch in fear
and hide within this place.
You say that he spoke words of peace
and stood just as before.
But 'til I touch his very flesh
I will not trust your joy.

2 You claim a resurrection here,
that God has broken death.
No easy words like these will soothe
the pain that tears my breath.
How well do I recall his face,
compassion, strength in fear.
How deep my grief that he should die.
Spare me your words of cheer!

3 'Now peace be with you. Come, my friend,
my wounded body see.
Let the rich courage of your doubt
bring you to fresh belief.
Fear not to wonder at the Word,
to search the depths of grace.
Reach out and touch, here is my hand.
Receive the gift of faith.'

4 'How blest are they, how fortunate
who know without the sight.
But Thomas, you are favoured too,
for searching yields its light.'
So may each pilgrim in the Way,
each road to Christ be blest,
'til lips declare, 'Beloved God!',
Christ's body one at last

Hymn

Because He Lives

God sent his son, they called him Jesus
He came to love, heal and forgive
He bled and died to buy my pardon
An empty grave is there to prove my saviour lives.

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow
Because he lives, all fear is gone
Because I know he holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because he lives.

And then one day, I'll cross the river
And fight life's final war with pain
And then as death gives way to victory
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know he reigns.

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow
Because he lives, all fear is gone
Because I know he holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because he lives.

Because I know he holds the future
And life is worth the living, just because he lives.

Offering

In the gospel story, Jesus comes to the disciples not when they are strong and certain, but when they are unsure, afraid, and still becoming. And still—he sends them. Still—he trusts them to carry love into the world. In the same way, we are invited to offer what we can—not because we have everything figured out, but because we are part of this ongoing work of hope and healing. Through our gifts, this community becomes a place of welcome, a place where peace is practiced, and where love takes on tangible form. Let us give as we are able, with grateful hearts.

As we bless the offerings, let us sing:

Offering Hymn

What Can I Do?

MV 191

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share.

Prayers of the People

God of the wounded and the risen,
we come before you as we are—
not with perfect faith, but with honest hearts.

We bring you our questions,
the ones we speak out loud
and the ones we keep tucked away.

We bring you our doubts,
not as failures, but as signs of our longing—
our longing for something real,
something trustworthy,
something that can hold us.

You know the places where our lives feel fragile.
You know the moments that have shaken us.
You know the grief we carry,
the fears we name, and the ones we cannot yet speak.

And so we pray:
For those who are living in the aftermath of loss,
whose worlds have been turned upside down—
may they be met with gentleness,
and may they know they are not alone.

For those who have been hurt—
by systems, by communities, even by the church—
may they encounter spaces of safety,
healing, and deep belonging.

For those who are questioning,
who are searching,
who are unsure what they believe—
may they know that their questions are welcome,
and that you are not afraid of their honesty.

For those who long for justice
in a world still marked by wounds—
for communities pushed to the margins,
for those whose dignity is denied—
may courage rise, may truth be spoken,
and may your justice take root among us.

For this community,
that we might be a place where faith is not forced,

where doubt is not shamed, where curiosity is cherished,
and where all are invited to come as they are.

God of resurrection,
you do not turn away from our wounds.
You meet us in them. You breathe peace into our fear.
You invite us closer—closer to you,
closer to one another, closer to the possibility of new life.

So hold us in our questioning.
Strengthen us in our seeking.
And shape us into people who trust that even here—
even now—you are at work.

We offer all of this,
in the spirit of the risen Christ,
who meets us in our humanity and calls us into life.
And together, we pray the words he taught us:

**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

Sing a Happy Hallelujah

VU 224

1 Sing a happy hallelujah,
sing it out with heart and style,
we're the echo of God's laughter,
we're the image of God's smile.

Hallelujah, all creation,
hallelujah everyone!
Hallelujah, all creation,
hallelujah everyone!

2 We're the proof of God's good humour,
we're the twinkle in God's eye,
made to shine, reflect the glory,
given light and space to fly.

Hallelujah, all creation,
hallelujah everyone!
Hallelujah, all creation,
hallelujah everyone!

4 Every day sing hallelujah!
We are loved, though so absurd,
human, foolish, chosen people,
God still takes us at our word!

Hallelujah, all creation,
hallelujah everyone!
Hallelujah, all creation,
hallelujah everyone

Bread for the Journey

Where in your life are you longing for “something real”—and what questions might be guiding you there?

Commissioning

Go now into the world—not as those who have all the answers,
but as those who have encountered peace.

Go as people who know fear and doubt,
and have been met there by Christ’s presence.

Go, carrying the breath of the Spirit,
to bring life, hope, and healing.

Go to be signs of welcome, bearers of justice, and makers of peace—
for we are sent, just as Christ sends us.

And as you go, remember:

Christ is with us—in every question, in every step, in every act of love.
Amen.

Benediction

Go as people of peace, bearers of compassion,
and witnesses to a love that does not let go.
And may the blessing of God—
Creator, Christ, and Spirit—
rest upon you and remain with you,
now and always. Amen.

Choral Response**Go Now In Peace**

Go now in peace, never be afraid
God will go with you each hour of every day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true,
Know God will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love and show you believe
Reach out to others so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above
Go now in peace, in faith and in love.
Amen, amen, amen!

Postlude

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