



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Rev. Gregory Daly: Minister of Word & Sacrament

Rev. Carmen Llanos: Minister of Community Development

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Reader: Joseph Dahonick

January 10, 2021

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

A Little Child the Saviour Came

Music: Trier manuscript, 15th century

Call to Worship

God said, “Let there be light.”

And there was light.

God said, “Let there be a dome to separate the waters!”

And there was sky.

God said, “Let there be land and earth and vegetation!”

And there were all manner of trees and fruits.

Come and worship the God who speaks the words of creation.

We come to receive these creative words and to be made new!

Let us worship together.

Response

Let There Be Light

VU 679

Words: © 1970 Frances Wheeler Davis

Music: © 1976 Margaret Fleming

Let there be light,
let there be understanding,
let all the nations gather,
let them be face to face;

open our lips,
open our minds to ponder,
open the door of concord
opening into grace;

perish the sword,
perish the angry judgement,
perish the bombs and hunger,
perish the fight for gain;

let there be light;
open our hearts to wonder,
perish the way of terror,
hallow the world God made.

Life & Work of the Church

Welcome to online worship



Land Acknowledgement

As we prepare for worship, we 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 Mississauga's of the Credit and Scugog, part of the Williams Treaty. Today, the meeting place around Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this territory. We seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.



Candle Lighting

When the voice of God called out at Jesus baptism, there was embrace and transformation. The candle we light represents Christ's light shining in the world. May each of us experience that embrace and transformation in our own lives and share that light with each other.

Opening Hymn

Songs of Thankfulness and Praise

VU 101

Words: Christopher Wordsworth
Music: Jakob Hintze

Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus Christ, to you we raise,
manifested by the star
to the sages from afar;
branch of royal David's stem
in your birth at Bethlehem;
anthems be to you addressed,
God in flesh made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest, and love supreme;
and at Cana wedding guest,
in your Godhead manifest;
manifest in power divine,

changing water into wine;
anthems be to you addressed,
God in flesh made manifest.

Grant us grace to see you, God,
mirrored in your holy Word;
with your grace our lives endow,
grace to imitate you now,
that we like to you may be
at your great epiphany,
anthems be to you addressed,
God in flesh made manifest.

Opening Prayer



*Water of Life, present at the creation of the universe.
Water of Life, present at our birth.
Water of Life, present at the baptism of Jesus.
Water of Life, present at our own baptisms.
We remember that at these times,
not only was there water,
but the voice of God was experienced and felt
speaking to us.
God, Water of Life, we come this morning to be filled
with your living water and to listen for your voice.
Amen.*

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

And Now for Something Completely Different

Every time you eat a pickle think of how different it is from eating a cucumber. The infusion of vinegar and spices makes it something completely different. Think of baptism your baptism as immersing yourself in the tangy taste of God, seeping into you, changing you, transforming you.



Prayer of Illumination

*The scriptures proclaim to us the message of your light.
Loving and ever-present God, shine your light on us
so that we may discover and live a path that follows you. Amen*

Psalm 29

Ascribe to God, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to God's glory and strength.

·Ascribe to God the glory of God's name;
 worship God in holy splendor.
·The voice of God is over the waters;
 the God of glory thunders,
 over mighty waters.
·The voice of God is powerful;
 the voice of God is full of majesty.
·The voice of God breaks the cedars;
 God breaks the cedars of Lebanon.
·God makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
 and Sirion like a young wild ox.
·The voice of God flashes forth flames of fire.
·The voice of God shakes the wilderness;
 God shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
·The voice of God causes the oaks to whirl,
 and strips the forest bare;
 and in the temple all say, "Glory!"
·God sits enthroned over the flood;
 God sits enthroned as sovereign forever.
·May God give strength to the people!
 May God bless the people with peace!

Hymn:

When Jesus Comes to Be Baptised

VU 100

Words: © 1974 Stanbrook Abbey
Music: Musikalisches Handbuch

When Jesus comes to be baptized,
he leaves the hidden years behind,
the years of safety and of peace,
o bear the sins of humankind.

The Spirit of our God comes down,
anoints the Christ to suffering,
to preach the word, to free the bound,
and to the mourner, comfort bring.

O Spirit help us be like Christ:
to live in love and charity,
to walk in truth and justice now,
and grow in Christian dignity.

We praise you, God, source of all life,
we praise you, Christ, eternal Word,
we praise you, Spirit, gracious gift;
your triune presence fills our world.

Acts 19:1-7

While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul passed through the interior regions and came to Ephesus, where he found some disciples. Paul said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?” They replied, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” Then Paul said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They answered, “Into John’s baptism.” Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of Jesus. When Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied— altogether there were about twelve of them.

These are essential words for us to consider in our lives today.

Thanks be to God

Sermon

Mysteries Abound



Hymn

Called By Earth and Sky

MV 135

Words and Music: © 2005 Pat Mayberry

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious these waters, endless seas,
deep ocean’s dream,
waters of healing, rivers of rain,
the wash of love again.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious this gift, the air we breathe;
wind born and free.
Breath of the Spirit, blow through this place,
our gathering and our grace.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious these mountains, ancient sands;
vast fragile land.
Seeds of our wakening, rooted and strong,
Creation's faithful song.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky.

Precious the fire that lights our way,
bright dawning day.
Fire of passion, sorrows undone,
our faith and justice one.

Called by earth and sky,
promise of hope held high.
This is our sacred living trust,
treasure of life sanctified,
called by earth and sky,
called by earth and sky.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Offering

Our gifts,
when gathered together,
can be an impressive thing.



Prayers of the People



*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, the power, and the glory for ever and ever.
Amen.*

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Shine, Jesus, Shine

Words & Music by Graham Kendrick
© 1987 Make Way Music

God, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with your radiant glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
God, and let there be light

God, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with your radiant glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
God, and let there be light

As we gaze on your holy brightness
So our faces display your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me, shine on me

Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with your radiant glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word
God, and let there be light

Benediction & Commissioning

May the still small voice of God,
the descending dove of the Spirit,
and the mystery of Jesus be with you all,
today and always, Amen



Postlude

Shall We Gather at the River

Music: Robert Lowry

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Other Resources for Today

Opening Prayer Image: *Water of Life*
 Sculpture by Stephen Broadbent, Chester Cathedral England, 2013

My Personal Statement of Faith – written December 2015:

Preamble:

Faith provides meaning and purpose for life.

Faith statements provide context and a framework for understanding what faith means for groups and individuals.

Faith statements remind us that we can never have complete knowledge and understandings are always partial.

Statement:

God of Holy Mystery

*who creates, tends, suffers with, and animates the universe,
we seek relationship with you.*

*You are beyond comprehension and yet,
we know you intimately in and through your loving action
which mends, guides and makes all things possible.*

We know you by many names: Creator; Lover; Holy One.

*There are other names for you as well:
spoken and unspoken, understood and not yet revealed.*

All that is vibrates with your energy, which is Wholly Love.

You are the source of all.

With openness and gratitude we give thanks.

*In its complexity, connectedness, and beauty,
we discover that the foundations of life are irrefutably affirmative.*

*In creation we recognize we are not above all but part of all;
we accept that our way of being and acting is harmful.*

*While the image of God is present in our quest for relationship with self, other and God;
this image is broken by sin.*

*In structures and systems which reinforce and perpetuate injustice;
in selfishness, cowardice and apathy that break relationship;*

sin touches us all and undermines the goodness of creation.

In this alienation,

driven by our desire to force the world to operate on our own terms,

*God, in grace, and in solidarity with us offers relationship
and provides new ways for us to be in community with each other.*

As we own our actions with authenticity and humility,

God reconciles, transforms and heals.

In accepting and living out reconciliation

the Spirit moves us to new ways of being in this world.

From the beginning,

the Spirit animates, guides, and challenges us to see the holy in all things.

When we recognize and accept the work of the Spirit,

*our deepest needs both spoken and unspoken, are better understood.
The still small voice that prods us to action is the Spirit at work in our lives.
The Spirit embraces these expressions
and in this we, and our world, are transformed.
The indwelling of the Spirit gives rise to praise, gratitude, vulnerability, and comfort.
In these experiences our lives are forever changed.
Scripture accompanies us on our journey as it is passed from generation to generation;
working together with all creation to reveal the Divine.
Scripture guides and inspires;
providing fresh revelation responsive to our time and place.
It calls us to consider ways to live for other,
to set aside desire for power through glory,
and to look instead to the transformational power of suffering for other revealed in Christ.
We are called to action through this revelatory power,
and we are called to account when we abuse it for selfish purposes.
Scripture in its fulsomeness testifies to diverse and contrasting viewpoints,
each held in tension.
It reveals ways to know God, meet Christ, and engage Spirit.
Scripture challenges us to work in faithfulness, with an open mind;
responsive to God's redemptive call.
In meeting Christ we find a way to know God and find redemption.
Jesus as the Christ is a faith foundation.
Jesus and God meet on the bridge between humanity and divinity.
Jesus' actions are strange to us,
however we know through journey that Christ orients us towards truths.
In Christ's continued living we are drawn to faith and drawn to serve other.
In Christ we find intimate relationship.
The Church embodies Christ's presence in the world.
The Church works to bring about God's reign in this place.
The Church lives by grace not entitlement.
The Church's mission is to practise radical hospitality in the world.
I am called to live my Christianity through action which implements the words I speak.
I am called to witness Good News to others that they too have this call.
I am called to stand with those who have been oppressed by the words and actions of others.
I am called to embody God's love in this world.
The sacraments represent a way to remember God's action in the world.
In baptism we are reminded of God's offer of intimate relationship.
Baptism points to our participation in new life which God offers.
In communion we are reminded of God's action in Christ to be for us.
Communion points to our participation in feeding, forgiving and loving the world.
The sacraments point us to the presence of God in our midst.
We hope for new life in the here and now, and the not yet;
Understood as God present in our midst and through all time.
We experience new life in the present as we live in relationship with God.
We are embraced as we live in right relationship with all that is.
God is that all: forever Holy Mystery, Wholly Love.*

Other Lectionary Readings

Genesis 1: 1-5

In the beginning when God created^a the heavens and the earth, ^bthe earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God^c swept over the face of the waters. ^dThen God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. ^eAnd God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. ^fGod called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

Mark 1: 4-11

^aJohn the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ^bAnd people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ^cNow John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ^dHe proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. ^eI have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

^fIn those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ^gAnd just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. ^hAnd a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”