



**Birchcliff Bluffs United Church**

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

**Minister of Word & Sacrament:** Katie Vardy

**Music Director:** Randy Vancourt

**Reader:** Tricia Reid

**March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026**

**Second Sunday in Lent**

**WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE**

**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

As we enter the season of Lent, we light the Christ candle—a reminder of God’s presence among us, steady and faithful, even when the path ahead is unclear. *Candle is lit.*

**Lighting the Rainbow Candle**

We also light the Rainbow Candle, giving thanks for the full spectrum of God’s beloved community. Our rainbow light reminds us that our diversity is not an obstacle to God, but a reflection of God’s creativity and joy. *Candle is lit.*

**Land Acknowledgement**

We gather on land that has long been home to Indigenous peoples, including the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. This land knows stories of movement, survival, and care—especially for water, which sustains all life. As we journey through Lent, we acknowledge the ongoing impacts of colonization and environmental injustice.

**We commit ourselves to listening, learning, and walking more gently—seeking right relationship with one another, with the land, and with the God who hears our thirst.**

**Opening Hymn**

**Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah**

**VU 651**

1 Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,  
pilgrim through this barren land.  
I am weak, but thou art mighty,  
hold me with thy powerful hand.  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,

feed me till I want no more,  
 feed me till I want no more.

2 Open now the crystal fountain,  
 whence the healing stream doth flow;  
 let the fire and cloudy pillar  
 lead me all my journey through.  
 Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,  
 be thou still my strength and shield,  
 be thou still my strength and shield.

3 When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
 bid my anxious fears subside;  
 death of death, and hell's destruction,  
 land me safe on Canaan's side:  
 songs of praises, songs of praises  
 I will ever give to thee,  
 I will ever give to thee.

### **Call to Worship**

Come, all who are searching—

**We come with questions, not answers.**

Come, all who feel called forward, even when the destination is unclear.

**We come trusting the God who says, “Go,” before showing us where.**

Come, all who are learning to be born again and again.

**We come, ready to be changed.**

This is the season of becoming.

**Let us worship the God who calls us into new life.**

### **Passing the Peace**

The peace of Christ is not a polished greeting or a shallow assurance. It is the deep, steady promise that we do not walk this journey alone. As you share Christ’s peace today, may it be a sign of the belonging God offers us all.

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

### **Life and Work**

#### **Opening Prayer**

Let us pray:

**Holy and Living God,**

**You call us out of what is familiar and into lives we did not yet imagine.**

**You speak to us in the night, in our wondering,**

**in the quiet questions we are almost afraid to ask.**

**In this time of worship, slow us down enough to listen.  
Loosen our grip on certainty.  
Make room in us for curiosity, trust, and transformation.  
Meet us here, just as we are—and lead us, gently, into new life.  
Amen.**

### **Prayer of Confession**

Let us pray:

**God of new beginnings,  
we confess that we prefer what is familiar to what is faithful.  
We cling to certainty when you invite us into trust.  
Forgive us when fear speaks louder than hope.  
Turn us again toward your life-giving Spirit,  
who moves where it will, calling us into freedom, courage, and love.  
Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news:

God does not wait for us to have it all figured out.

God meets us in the questions, in the becoming,  
in the long, slow work of new life.

In Christ, we are forgiven.

In the Spirit, we are renewed.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

### **Hymn**

### **Just As I Am**

**VU 508**

1 Just as I am, without one plea,  
but that thy blood was shed for me,  
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

2 Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind;  
sight, riches, healing of the mind,  
yea, all I need, in thee to find,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

3 Just as I am, though tossed about  
with many a conflict, many a doubt,  
fightings and fears within, without,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

4 Just as I am, thy love unknown  
has broken every barrier down;  
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,  
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

### RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

#### Scripture      **John 3:1-17**

<sup>1</sup> Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person." <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. <sup>6</sup> What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." <sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?

<sup>11</sup> "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. <sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

The Word of God for the People of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### Lenten Ritual

We do not have all the answers. We are allowed to ask real questions.

**Bless the Lent we actually have.** (*Moment of silent reflection*)

#### Hymn

#### Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights (v 1)

VU 108

Throughout these Lenten days and nights  
we turn to walk the inward way,  
where, meeting Christ, our guide and light,  
we live in hope 'till Easter Day.

**Sermon**      **Blessed Are The Curious**

**RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

**Hymn**                                      **Teach Me, God, To Wonder**                                      **VU 299**

1 Teach me, God, to wonder, teach me, God, to see;  
     let your world of beauty capture me.  
 Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
     life be celebrated, joy you give.

2 Let me, God, be open, let me loving be;  
     let your world of people speak to me.  
 Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
     life be celebrated, joy you give.

3 Let me, God, be ready, let me be awake,  
     in your world of loving my place take.  
 Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
     life be celebrated, joy you give.

4 Teach me, God, to know you, hear you when you speak,  
     see you in my neighbour when we meet.  
 Praise to you be given, love for you be lived,  
     life be celebrated, joy you give.

**Offering**

Our giving is not about earning God's love or proving our faithfulness. It is a response to grace already given, a way of participating in the life God is growing among us. As we offer our gifts today, we do so trusting that God can take what we have and use it for new life, in ways we cannot yet see.

As we bless the offerings, let us sing:

**Offering Hymn**                                      **Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow**                                      **VU 541**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
 praise God, all creatures high and low;  
 give thanks to God in love made known:  
     Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

### **Prayers of the People**

God of mystery and mercy,  
we bring before you the prayers of our hearts.

For those standing at a crossroads,  
unsure of what comes next,  
grant courage for the journey.

For those living with illness, grief, or loss,  
for those whose lives have been interrupted or reshaped,  
hold them gently in your care.

For those who feel alone in their questions,  
who wonder if faith still has room for them,  
remind them they are not abandoned.

For your church, called again and again into renewal,  
give us humility to listen and imagination to follow where your Spirit leads.

For our world, aching for justice and peace,  
teach us how to live with compassion, courage,  
and deep love for one another.

All these prayers we offer, trusting in your presence and your promise,  
as we pray together the words Jesus taught us:

**Our Father and Mother, 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, and the power, and the glory,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

### **BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH**

**Closing Hymn**

**One More Step Along The World**

**VU 639**

1 One more step along the world I go,  
one more step along the world I go,  
from the old things to the new,  
keep me travelling along with you:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me travelling along with you.

2 Round the corner of the world I turn,  
more and more about the world I learn;  
all the new things that I see  
you'll be looking at along with me:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me travelling along with you.

3 As I travel through the bad and good,  
keep me travelling the way I should;  
where I see no way to go  
you'll be telling me the way, I know:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me travelling along with you.

4 Give me courage when the world is rough,  
keep me loving though the world is tough,  
leap and sing in all I do,  
keep me travelling along with you:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me travelling along with you.

5 You are older than the world can be,  
you are younger than the life in me,  
ever old and ever new,  
keep me travelling along with you:

And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me travelling along with you.

And it's from the old I travel to the new;  
keep me travelling along with you.

### **Bread for the Journey**

Where might God be inviting you to stay curious—rather than certain—right now?

**Commissioning**

Go, not knowing every step ahead.

**We go trusting the God who calls us forward.**

Go, carrying questions and hope together.

**We go open to being changed.**

Go, to live the new life already stirring among you.

**We go in faith, courage, and love.**

**Benediction**

May the God who called Abram into the unknown walk beside you on every uncertain road.  
 May Christ, born again and again among us, give you courage to trust the Spirit's movement.  
 And may you know, even in the questions, that you are held, you are loved, and you are never alone. 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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