



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Katie Vardy

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October 4th, 2026

World Communion Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle

We light this candle as a sign of Christ among us; Christ who gathers strangers into community, who breaks bread with outsiders and friends, and who calls us to bear the fruits of God's love and justice. *Candle is lit.*

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

We light this rainbow candle as a sign of God's extravagant welcome. Across every boundary of gender, sexuality, race, culture, ability, and identity, God's table is wide, and there is room for us all. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

As we gather for worship, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Peoples, including the Anishinaabe, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat, the Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. We give thanks for the generations who have cared for these lands and waters, and we recognize that acknowledgement must lead us toward action.

May we seek relationships rooted in truth, justice, reconciliation, and respect for the land we share.

Opening Hymn

I Come With Joy

VU 477

1 I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall
in love laid down for me,
in love laid down for me.

2 I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread,
in Christ's communion bread.

3 As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends,
and strangers now are friends.

4 The Spirit of the risen Christ,
unseen, but ever near,
is in such friendship better known,
alive among us here,
alive among us here.

5 Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one,
the love that makes us one.

Call to Worship

From north and south, east and west, God gathers us.

We come as one part of a beautiful and diverse human family.

Across languages, cultures, nations, and traditions, Christ welcomes us.

There is room at God's table for us all.

Come, then, people of God: let us worship together.

Let us worship the God who makes us one.

Passing the Peace

On this World Communion Sunday, we remember that the peace of Christ is larger than this sanctuary and wider than any border. It is a peace we share with siblings in Christ around the world.

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

Let us share signs of Christ's peace.

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

God of every people and every place, you gather us into a community wider than we can imagine. Open our hearts to your presence, our ears to your Word, and our lives to your call. Teach us to tend what you have entrusted to us and to bear the fruits of compassion, justice, and peace. Amen.

Hymn

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

VU 375

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

1 You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the
valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing:
wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

3 You swept thro' the desert, you stung with the sand,
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with their idols and lies,
then you spoke thro' your prophets to open their eyes.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

4 You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,
with bold new decisions your people arise.

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Exodus 20: 1-4, 7-9, 12-20

¹ Then God spoke all these words, ² "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³ you shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ "You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above or that is on the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth. ⁷ "You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses God's name. ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labour and do all your work. ¹² "Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ¹³ "You shall not murder. ¹⁴ "You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁵ "You shall not steal. ¹⁶ "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour. ¹⁷ "You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, male or female slave, ox, donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour." ¹⁸ When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let God speak to us, lest we die." ²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid, for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of God upon you so that you do not sin."

Matthew 21:33-46

³³ "Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a winepress in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went away. ³⁴ When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. ³⁵ But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. ³⁶ Again he sent other slaves, more than the first, and they treated them in the same way. ³⁷ Then he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' ³⁸ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.' ³⁹ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. ⁴⁰ Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?" ⁴¹ They said to him, "He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time." ⁴² Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'? ⁴³ "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces its fruits. ⁴⁴ The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone on whom it falls." ⁴⁵ When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. ⁴⁶ They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

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

Hymn

O God of Every Nation

VU 677

1 O God of every nation,
of every race and land,
redeem the whole creation
with your almighty hand;
where hate and fear divide us
and bitter threats are hurled,
in love and mercy guide us
and heal our strife-torn world.

2 From search for wealth and power
and scorn of truth and right,
from trust in bombs that shower
destruction through the night,
from pride of race and station
and blindness to your way,
deliver every nation,
eternal God, we pray.

3 Give strength to those who labour
that all may find release
from fear of rattling sabre,
from dread of war's increase;
when hope and courage falter,
your still small voice be heard:
with faith that none can alter,
your servants undergird.

4 Keep bright in us the vision
of days when war shall cease,
when hatred and division,
give way to love and peace,
till dawns the morning glorious
when peace on earth shall reign
and Christ shall rule victorious
o'er all the world's domain.

Sermon

The Vineyard Is Not Ours

- 1 We gather as Christ's body and lift our hearts anew.
The Spirit is among us, at work in all we do.
And God, the One we worship, shows tender loving care:
inviting life-abundant with siblings everywhere.
No sorrow can confine us, no power can destroy
our hopeful trust to guide us, our songs of faith and joy.
- 2 In times when we are sep'rate and distance feels a strain
We turn toward Creator who reassures again:
Though sadness may befall us, what trial can assail?
Can sickness separate us? Can fear or death derail?
No! Nothing can divide us, not height or depth or space,
from God our watchful parent, who folds us in embrace.
- 3 Though even when we're silenced, our hearts uplift in praise
For love that's ever-seeking; for love that ever-stays.
We bring this promise with us: God's presence is at hand
when loneliness is crushing, when we don't understand.
Our trust makes ways of knowing; in weakness we are strong;
our faith becomes our courage, God's love becomes our song.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**Offering**

Generous God, everything we have is first a gift from you. Receive these gifts and the lives they represent. Use them to feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, seek justice, and cultivate your love in this community and beyond. Amen.

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.

COMMUNION

Friends, this is not our table. It is not the table of this congregation, or of this denomination, or of any one nation, culture, or tradition. This is Christ's table.

And on this World Communion Sunday, we remember just how wide that table is. Around the world today, people gather around tables very different from this one. The bread may look different. The words may sound different. The songs may be unfamiliar to us. And yet Christ is there.

At this table, borders do not determine belonging. Wealth does not purchase a better seat. Status does not move anyone closer to God.

Here, grace is given freely. So come if you are certain and come if you are questioning. Come if your faith feels strong and come if you are barely holding onto it.

Come because Christ invites you. There is room.

God is with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right to give you thanks, O God. You spoke creation into being and called it good. You entrusted the earth to humanity, not as something to conquer or possess, but as a garden to tend, a vineyard to nurture, a home to share.

Again and again, when humanity forgot your ways, you called us back. Through prophets and poets, through commandments and stories, through ordinary people who dared to imagine another way, you reminded us that you desire justice, mercy, and love.

And when we still struggled to understand, you came among us in Jesus. Jesus crossed boundaries. Jesus touched those others avoided. Jesus ate with people whose presence caused scandal. Jesus proclaimed good news to the poor and challenged those who confused power with righteousness.

And so, with Christians gathering around tables throughout the world, with our ancestors in faith, with those who will come after us, and with all creation, we join the song of praise:

Holy, holy, holy God,

God of power and possibility,

heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

**Blessed is the One who comes in the name of God.
Hosanna in the highest.**

On the night before his death, Jesus gathered with his friends around a table. He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and shared it among them, saying: Take and eat. This is my body, given for you. Whenever you eat together, remember me.

After supper, Jesus took the cup. Again he gave thanks and shared it, saying: This cup is the new covenant, a sign of God's love poured out for you and for many. Whenever you drink together, remember me.

And so we remember. We remember the life Jesus lived. We remember the love he embodied. We remember the justice he proclaimed. We remember the death he endured. And we proclaim that violence and death did not have the final word.

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Let us pray:

Holy Spirit, come upon these ordinary gifts of bread and cup. Make them signs of extraordinary grace for us. And come upon us. Make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one with your people throughout the world. As this bread is broken, break open the walls that divide us. As this cup is shared, pour into us courage for the work of justice. And when we leave this table, send us out to tend your vineyard faithfully; feeding the hungry, welcoming the excluded, challenging injustice, seeking peace, and bearing the fruit of your kingdom. Amen.

The bread we break is a sharing in the life of Christ. **Though we are many, we are one body.** (*The bread is broken.*)

The cup we share is a sharing in the love of Christ. **One cup, one grace, one beloved community.** (*The cup is poured out.*)

These are the gifts of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God.**

SHARING THE MEAL

(Please come forward through the middle aisle to receive the elements. Please eat the elements as you receive them, discarding the cup into the bin next to the folks serving Communion.)

Prayer After Communion

Let us pray:

God of the wide table, you have fed us with bread and cup, with grace and belonging. Do not let us leave this table unchanged. Send us into the world to make room where others have been excluded, to share where others have gone without, to challenge systems that deny dignity, and to tend your vineyard with courage and love. Amen.

Hymn

Grateful

MV 182

Grateful for the life you give us,
thankful for your Holy Son,
joyful in your Spirit flowing over all,
O God of Love.
Grateful for the Bread of Heaven,
thankful for your Holy Word,
joyful in your mercy flowing,
we will praise you.

Prayers of the People

God of all creation, on this World Communion Sunday, we remember that we are part of something much larger than ourselves.

Today, tables are being set around the world. Bread is being broken in countless ways. Cups are being filled. Prayers are rising in hundreds of languages. People are gathering in cathedrals and tiny churches, in homes and community halls, in places of freedom and places of danger.

And somehow, by your grace, we belong to one another.

So we pray today for your church throughout the world. Where the church has become too comfortable with power, disturb us. Where we have protected institutions instead of people, change us. Where we have excluded those you welcome, forgive us. Where communities of faith are courageously seeking justice, give them strength.

We pray for this beautiful and wounded world. For places torn apart by war and violence, for people displaced from their homes, for refugees seeking safety, for communities living under occupation and oppression, and for all who long for peace.

We pray for those who hunger in a world of abundance, for those struggling with the cost of food and housing, for those whose labour is exploited, and for everyone wondering whether there will be enough.

Remind us that the earth and its abundance do not belong only to those powerful enough to claim them. Teach us to share.

We pray for the earth itself, for lands and waters damaged by our consumption, for communities experiencing the realities of climate change, and for generations who will inherit what we leave behind.

Teach us to be faithful tenants of your vineyard: not possessing, but tending; not exploiting, but nurturing; not hoarding, but sharing.

And we pray for those within our own community who need your presence today: those who are grieving, those who are lonely, those who are ill or exhausted, those carrying worries we may never see.

In the silence of our hearts, we name the people and places for whom we pray...*Silence.*

God of grace, gather all these prayers, spoken and unspoken, into your love. And now, as one small part of your worldwide family, we join our voices in the prayer Jesus taught his disciples; Divine Creator, our Holy Parent, our Mother and...

**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, forever and ever. Amen.**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Oh a Song Must Rise

MV 142

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend
Oh a song must rise once again
Singing out God's praises and glory,
the faithful voices blend,
Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

1 From the mountains to the valleys,
from the desert to the sea,
a song must rise once again.
From the voices of our leaders,
the voice of you and me,
a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend
Oh a song must rise once again
Singing out God's praises and glory,
the faithful voices blend,
Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

2 From poverty and riches,
from the voice of young and old,
a song must rise once again.
From the free and the imprisoned,
the timid and the bold,
a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend
Oh a song must rise once again
Singing out God's praises and glory,
the faithful voices blend,
Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

3 From ev'ry house of worship,
in ev'ry faith and tongue,
a song must rise once again.
From the villages and cities
a new song must be sung,
a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend
Oh a song must rise once again
Singing out God's praises and glory,
the faithful voices blend,
Oh a song must rise for the spirit to descend.

Bread for the Journey

What might change if we approached the earth, our communities, and one another not as things to possess, but as gifts entrusted to our care?

Commissioning

We have gathered at Christ's table.

Now we go to make room at the tables of the world.

We have received God's abundant grace.

Now we go to share that abundance.

We have heard again the call to bear good fruit.

We go to seek justice, love boldly, and walk in the way of Christ.

Go, people of God, and tend the vineyard entrusted to us.

We go in hope, courage, and love.

Benediction

May the God who created us, the Christ who gathers us around one table, and the Spirit who sends us into the world bless you and keep you.

Go in peace, bear good fruit, and make the circle of God's love ever wider. 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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