



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Reader: Janet Bawcutt

November 2nd, 2025

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ & Rainbow Candle

As we light the Christ Candle, we remember the light that no darkness can overcome—the light of love that meets us as we are and calls us into community with one another. We light the Rainbow Candle to celebrate the many colors of God’s people—the full spectrum of love, identity, and belonging—each one a reflection of divine light! *The candles are lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

Many thousands of years before we gathered here, Indigenous peoples lived, worked, cared for, and worshipped on this land. Their deep connection to the land, waters, skies, and all living beings has shaped this place. Over time, settlers—ourselves and those before us—arrived and too often disrupted these sacred relationships, causing harm to the land and to the peoples who have always belonged to it. We acknowledge that we are on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Chippewa, and Mississaugas of the Credit, and that this land remains the ancestral home of many diverse Indigenous nations.

As we light our candles, we give thanks for the caretakers of this land—past, present, and emerging—and we pray for courage and humility on our shared journey toward truth, justice, and reconciliation.

Opening Hymn

God of Grace and God of Glory

VU 686

1 God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your power;
now fulfil your church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flower.

Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the facing of this hour.

2 Lo, the hosts of evil round us
scorn your Christ, assail your ways;
fears and doubts too long have bound us;
free our hearts to work and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
for the living of these days.

3 Cure your children's warring madness,
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton selfish gladness,
rich in goods and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal.

4 Set our feet on lofty places,
gird our lives that they may be
armoured with all Christlike graces,
pledged to set all captives free.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
that we fail not them nor thee.

Call to Worship

Come, seekers and skeptics, climbers and dreamers—

We come, curious and hopeful, longing to see what love looks like.

Christ calls us by name, sees us where we are, and invites us to come down.

We come to be known, to be changed, to be made whole.

Come—let us worship the One who looks up, who sees us, who calls us home.

We come, hearts open, ready to be seen.

Passing the Peace

Before we share words of peace, remember: Jesus didn't begin with correction—he began with connection. He looked up, spoke a name, and changed a life. So, as we pass the peace, may it be more than words—may it be our way of looking up, seeing one another, and reminding each other that we belong.

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

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

God of the tree and the table,

**You see us when we're reaching and when we're hiding,
when we are proud and when we are afraid.**

**You meet us in the branches of our striving,
and call us back to the ground of our belonging.**

**As we worship, help us to look up with wonder,
to look around with compassion,
and to look within with honesty.**

**May your Spirit move through this place
as surely as it moved through the streets of Jericho,
calling us by name into love that transforms.**

Amen.

Hymn

Come, O Fount of Every Blessing

VU 559

1 Come, O Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing your grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing
call for songs of endless praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unfailing love.

2 Here I pause in my sojourning,
giving thanks for having come,
come to trust, at every turning,
God will guide me safely home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God,
came to rescue me from danger,
precious presence, precious blood.

3 O, to grace how great a debt
or daily I am drawn anew!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to you.
Prone to wander, I can feel it,
wander from the love I've known:
here's my heart, O, take and seal it,
seal it for your very own.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Luke 19:1-10

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd, he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to Jesus, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Will You Come and Follow Me (v. 1, 2, 4, 5)

VU 567

1 Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown,
will you let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?

4 Will you love the 'you' you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

5 Christ, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

Sermon Come Down, I Want to See You

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn Open My Eyes That I May See VU 371

1 Open my eyes, that I may see
glimpses of truth thou hast for me;
place in my hands the wonderful key
that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!

2 Open my ears, that I may hear
voices of truth thou sendest clear;
and while the wavenotes fall on my ear,
everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!

3 Open my mouth, and let me bear
gladly the warm truth everywhere;
open my heart and let me prepare
love with thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!

Offering

When Jesus looked up into that sycamore tree, he didn't see a tax collector or a sinner or a success story. He saw a person — someone longing to be seen, to belong, to start again. And when Zacchaeus came down, his first instinct wasn't guilt — it was generosity. He didn't give because he was told to. He gave because something in him had shifted. He had been seen, and that seeing made him free. That's what happens when grace reaches us: our hearts open, our hands open, and the world begins to change.

As we bless the offerings given to the church, 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.

COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

Friends, this is the table of love —
the table where Jesus sat with friends and strangers,
the table where stories were told and hearts were opened,
the table where everyone —
every last one —
was seen, known, and loved.

This table is not ours.
It belongs to Christ,
whose love is wide enough to welcome us all.
So whether you come with a heart full of faith
or one full of questions,
whether you have been here often
or have just found your way home —
there is a place for you here.

If you are joining us online,
we invite you to gather something to eat and drink —
bread or cracker, water or juice —
and trust that the Spirit makes us one
across every distance.
Come, for all is ready.
Come and be fed by grace.

The Great Thanksgiving

May God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the God who welcomes us home.

Let us give thanks to God, who gathers us in love.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right and good and joyful
to give thanks to you, Holy One —
Maker of heaven and earth,
of rivers that know our names
and stars that remember where we've been.

From the beginning of time,
you have called your people into belonging —
a belonging deeper than tribe or creed or custom,
a belonging born of love itself.

When we wandered, you whispered our names.
When we hid, you sought us out.
When we forgot who we were,
you came among us in Jesus —
the one who ate with outcasts,
who touched the untouchable,
who saw the invisible,
and who told us again and again:
“You are my beloved.”

And so, with all who have found their home in you —
with saints and ancestors,
with children and dreamers,
with all creation singing one song of love —
we lift our voices together:

**Holy, holy, holy One,
God of mercy and grace,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes in your name.
Hosanna in the highest.**

On the night before he gave himself up for love,
Jesus gathered with his friends.
They shared stories, laughter, and tears.
He took bread — common, blessed bread —
and gave thanks to you, O God.
Then he broke it, saying:
“This is my body, broken for you.
Whenever you eat this bread,
remember me.”

Then he took the cup —
the cup of blessing and promise —
and gave thanks once more, saying:
“This cup is the new covenant in my love.
Whenever you drink it,
remember me.”

And so we remember:
that we are seen,
that we are known,
that we are loved —
and that love is stronger than death.

Remembering your boundless love for us in Jesus Christ,
we offer you our praise, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Let us pray:
Pour out your Spirit, O God,
on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and cup.
Make them be for us the body and love of Christ,
so that we — who belong to you and to one another —
may become your body of compassion in the world.
In our eating and drinking,
may we be restored.
In our remembering,
may we be renewed.
In our sharing,
may we become love made visible.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour are yours, almighty God,
now and forever. Amen.

Come, beloved of God, the table is prepared.
Bread is broken in love, the cup is poured in grace.
Whether your faith is strong or fragile, whether you come with certainty or questions,
whether you come from near or far—here you are welcomed.
Here you belong. Taste and see that God is good.

SHARING THE MEAL

(Please come forward through the middle aisle to receive the elements. Once you receive the elements, do not eat them yet! Please return to your seat through the outer aisles of the sanctuary. Once everyone has been served, we will share the feast together. During the singing of our closing hymn, we will collect the cups.)

The body of Christ,
the bread of life.
(eat the bread)

The blood of Christ,
the cup of blessing.
(drink the juice)

The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray:
Loving Spirit,
we give thanks that you have gathered us at this table of belonging —
fed us with grace,
met us in mystery,
and reminded us that we are never alone.
As we go from this table,
may we carry your love into the world:
seeing others as you see them,
knowing others as you know them,
and loving as we have been loved.

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 the hidden and the seen,
We bring to you the prayers of our hearts:
for those who are climbing, reaching, struggling to be noticed;
for those who have been looked past or pushed aside;
for those who feel lost, lonely, or unseen.

We pray for leaders and systems that climb higher and higher
on ladders of greed and fear—
remind us instead to come down,
to find our power in compassion,
our purpose in connection.

We remember those whose daily climb feels too steep—
the unhoused, the hungry, the grieving,
the overworked, the overlooked,
the weary of war and injustice.

And we pray for ourselves, God:
help us to see with your eyes,
to pause in the crowd,
to look up and call others by name.
For that is where salvation begins.

We pray all this in the name of the One who still seeks and saves the lost—
the One who taught us to pray, saying:

**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

What a Friend We Have in Jesus

VU 664

1 What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

2 Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

3 Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Christ the Saviour is our refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do our friends despise, forsake us?
Are we tempted to despair?
Jesus' strength will shield our weakness,
and we'll find new courage there.

Bread for the Journey:

Where might God be inviting you to “come down” — to stop climbing, hiding, or performing — so that you can be more fully known and loved?

Commissioning

Christ has called you by name.

We have been seen, known, and loved.

Go now, and look up. Notice those in the branches.

We will see as Christ sees, with eyes of compassion.

Go, and bring the good news of grace to every table.

For today—and every day—we are known, seen, and loved.

Benediction

Beloved of God,

May you go from this place ready to see and be seen—ready to call others by name, ready to set another table of welcome.

And may the God who looks up, the Christ who calls down, and the Spirit who moves among the branches go with you and before you, this day and always.

Amen.

Choral Response

Take Up The Song

MV 213

Take up the song of peace
and go into the world,
Take up the song of peace
in ev'ry moment.
In ev'ry moment of the journey,
we're laying down our lives,
lay them down, in peace,
lay them down, and take up the song.

Take up the song of love
and go into the world,
Take up the song of love
in ev'ry moment.
In ev'ry moment of the journey,
we're laying down our lives,
lay them down, in love,
lay them down, and take up the song.

Postlude

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