Birchcliff Bluffs United Church
Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather
Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy
Music Director: Randy Vancourt
Reader: Norma Grech

November 16th, 2025
Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost
Celebrating 22 years of Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

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 Is Here (v. 1, 2, 4)** **VU 389**

1 God is here! As we your people
meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure
what it is in Christ we share.

Here, as in the world around us,
all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit
into open minds and hearts.

2 Here are symbols to remind us
of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font, and pulpit;
here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching,
here in silence, as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal,
God the Spirit comes to each.

4 God of all, of church and kingdom,
in an age of change and doubt
keep us faithful to the gospel;
help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication,
all we have to give, receive;
we, who cannot live without you,
we adore you! We believe!

Call to Worship

Rejoice and sing, for God is our salvation!
God's love is our strength and our song.
The Holy One draws near—not to the mighty or the proud,
But to the poor, the hungry, and the humble of heart.
Here in this gathered body, old songs and new voices rise together.
We give thanks for this community of faith—Birchcliff Bluffs United Church—a place of welcome, courage, and compassion.
Come, let us worship—
With joy in our hearts and hope in our hands.

Passing the Peace

In Luke's gospel, Jesus blesses those the world often overlooks—the poor, the grieving, the hungry, the merciful, and the misunderstood. He calls us not only to love those who love us, but to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, and to pray for those who harm us. It's a peace that doesn't play by the world's rules. It's a peace that heals, disrupts, and restores.

So, as we celebrate this community—a place where peace is practiced, not perfected—let us share that peace with one another.

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 have been our song through the generations—
our refuge in sorrow, our laughter in joy,
our courage in times of change.
We thank you for this church—
for the voices that have prayed here,
the hands that have served here,
the hearts that have found welcome here.
As Jesus once turned the world upside down with blessings
for the poor, the hungry, and the peacemakers,
turn us again toward your dream of justice and compassion.
We pray this in the name of Jesus,
who blesses and calls us still. Amen.

Hymn **O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing (v. 1, 2, 4, 5)** **VU 326**

1 O for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of God's grace.

2 Jesus! the name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life and health and peace.

3 He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive,
the mournful broken-hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

5 My gracious Saviour and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of your name.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Isaiah 12:1-6

[1] On that day, Israel will say: "I praise you, YHWH! Yes, you were angry with me, but your anger has abated and now you are a comfort to me. [2] You are my deliverer, O God! I trust you and am no longer afraid of you – you are my strength and my refuge. You are my deliverer." [3] With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. [4] And on that Day you will say: "Give thanks to YHWH, invoke God's holy Name! Make known among all the people what YHWH has done. Proclaim that God's Name is exalted. [5] Sing praises to YHWH, for God has triumphed. Let this be known throughout the world! [6] Cry out, shout aloud, you who dwell in Zion, for the Holy One of Israel dwells among us in majesty!"

Luke 6:20-31

[20] Looking at the disciples, Jesus said: "You who are poor are blessed, for the reign of God is yours. [21] You who hunger now are blessed, for you'll be filled. You who weep now are blessed, for you'll laugh. [22] You are blessed when people hate you, when they scorn and insult you and spurn your name as evil because of the Chosen One. [23] On the day they do so, rejoice and be glad: your reward will be great in heaven, for their ancestors treated the prophets the same way. [24] But woe to you rich, for you are now receiving your comfort in full. [25] Woe to you who are full, for you'll go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you'll weep in your grief. [26] Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in the same way. [27] To you who hear me, I say: love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you, [28] bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. [29] When they slap you on one cheek, turn and give them the other; when they take your coat, let them have your shirt as well. [30] Give to all who beg from you. When someone takes what is yours, don't demand it back. [31] Do to others what you would have them do to you."

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

Hymn **In the Quiet Curve of Evening** **VU 278**

1 In the quiet curve of evening,
in the sinking of the days,
in the silky void of darkness, you are there.
In the lapses of my breathing,
in the space between my ways,
in the crater carved by sadness, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

2 In the rests between the phrases,
in the cracks between the stars,
in the gaps between the meaning, you are there.
In the melting down of endings,

in the cooling of the sun,
in the solstice of the winter, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

3 In the mystery of my hungers,
in the silence of my rooms,
in the cloud of my unknowing, you are there.
In the empty cave of grieving,
in the desert of my dreams,
in the tunnel of my sorrow, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

Sermon **Blessed Are We**

Hymn **Blessed Assurance** **VU 337**

1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of the Spirit, washed in Christ's blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.

2 Perfect submission, perfect delight!
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending, bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.

3 Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I, in my Saviour, am happy and blessed;
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with God's goodness, lost in Christ's love.

This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;

this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Offering
Isaiah says, *"With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation."* This church—this community—is one of those wells. For decades, Birchcliff Bluffs United Church has been a place where compassion flows freely, where justice and mercy meet in shared meals, and where love is poured out for neighbours near and far. As we bring our gifts, we offer not just what we have, but who we are—a community shaped by gratitude and called to generosity.

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.

Prayers of the People
God of blessings and reversals,
you upend the world's expectations and turn our values inside out.
You bless the poor and the grieving, the gentle and the just.
You call us not to comfort alone, but to courage.

We pray for those whose spirits are weary—
those carrying grief, anxiety, or quiet pain.
We pray for those living with too little—
for neighbours seeking housing, food, safety, or belonging.
We pray for our neighbors around the world—
for Palestine, for Congo, for Sudan.
We pray for those who hold power—
that they may wield it with compassion and accountability.

Bless, too, this church—
Birchcliff Bluffs United—
for every generation who has gathered here,
and for those who will come after us.
May this community continue to be a well of living water,
a home for the outcast,
a table where love is made visible.

Renew us in your Spirit, O God,
that we might live your Beatitudes in all we do:

to comfort, to hunger for justice, to make peace,
and to love even when it is hard.

We offer these prayers, spoken and unspoken,
in the name of Christ, 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 **I See a New Heaven (v. 1, 3, 4)** **VU 713**

I see a new heaven.
I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows
and without price goes
to all people who abide in the land.

1 There, there on the banks of a river bright and free,
yielding her fruit, firm in her root,
the Tree of Life will be.

I see a new heaven.
I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows
and without price goes
to all people who abide in the land.

3 There, there where the darkness brings visions from above.
There where the night, bearing new light,
reveals the promise of love.

I see a new heaven.
I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows
and without price goes
to all people who abide in the land.

4 There, there where we work with the
love of healing hands.
Labour we must, true to our trust
to build a promised new land.

I see a new heaven.
I see a new earth
as the old one will pass away,
where the fountain of life flows
and without price goes
to all people who abide in the land.

Bread for the Journey

Where have you experienced blessing lately — not as comfort or success, but as a quiet assurance that God is with you, even in the midst of uncertainty?

Commissioning

We go now as those who have been blessed.
Blessed to comfort, to feed, to lift up.
We go as those who have been loved.
Loved enough to love others, even when it is hard.
We go as a community—rooted in gratitude, and reaching toward God's future with open hands.
For the Holy One has done great things among us, and greater things are yet to come!

Benediction

Beloved ones,
Go forth with the joy of Isaiah's song in your heart
and the courage of Christ's blessings in your bones.
May the Holy One who blessed the poor and lifted the weary
bless you and keep you.
May Christ's compassion guide your steps.
And may the Spirit's breath carry this community forward—
into another year of courage, care, and joyful witness. 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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