



**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 15<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**PIE Day**

**WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE**

**Prelude**

**Welcome**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

As we open our hearts for worship, 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 carries stories of community and care, even amid disruption and loss. In this season, we acknowledge both the resilience of Indigenous peoples and the loneliness created by broken relationships and unjust systems.

**We commit ourselves to the work of reconciliation, trusting the God who walks with us through every valley and calls us toward belonging and connection.**

**Opening 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.

### **Call to Worship**

Come, all who feel unseen or overlooked.

**We come seeking light.**

Come, all who walk through shadowed places.

**We come trusting God walks with us.**

Come, all who long to belong.

**We come held by love.**

This is the place of refuge and grace.

**Let us worship the God who stays.**

### **Passing the Peace**

Christ's peace is not dependent on our circumstances. It is the promise that we are never abandoned. As you share the peace today, may it be a sign of presence, care, and belonging.

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

### **Life and Work**

### **Opening Prayer**

Let us pray:

**God who shepherds your people,  
 you know the paths we walk and the valleys we fear.  
 You see us when others pass by.  
 You stay when others turn away.  
 In this time of worship, quiet our anxious hearts.  
 Help us trust your presence, even when we feel alone or unsure.  
 Lead us beside still waters. Restore our souls.  
 Amen.**

### **Prayer of Confession**

Let us pray:

**God of compassion,  
 we confess that loneliness often shapes our lives.  
 We turn inward when we feel unseen.  
 We withdraw when connection feels risky.  
 We confess the ways we fail to notice others,  
 the ways fear keeps us distant,  
 the ways we settle for isolation instead of community.  
 Forgive us, O God.  
 Amen.**

### **Assurance of Pardon**

Hear the good news:

God sees what the world overlooks.  
 God stays when others leave.  
 In Christ, light breaks through the darkness.  
 We are forgiven. We are restored. We are never alone.  
 Thanks be to God. Amen.

### **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!

### RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

#### Scripture      **John 9:1-38**

<sup>1</sup> As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup> When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, <sup>7</sup> saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam." Then he went and washed and came back able to see. <sup>8</sup> The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." <sup>10</sup> But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" <sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." <sup>12</sup> They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

<sup>13</sup> They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup> Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup> Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. <sup>17</sup> So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." <sup>18</sup> The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup> and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, <sup>21</sup> but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

<sup>24</sup> So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.” <sup>25</sup> He answered, “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” <sup>26</sup> They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” <sup>27</sup> He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” <sup>28</sup> Then they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup> We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” <sup>30</sup> The man answered, “Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup> We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup> Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” <sup>34</sup> They answered him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?” And they drove him out.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” <sup>36</sup> He answered, “And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.” <sup>37</sup> Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.” <sup>38</sup> He said, “Lord, I believe.” And he worshiped him.

The Word of God for the People of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Lenten Ritual**

Even here – especially here – we belong.

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

**Hymn**

**Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights** (v. 4)

**VU 108**

And though the road is hard and steep,  
the Spirit ever calls us on  
through Calvary's dying, dark and deep,  
until we see the coming Dawn.

**Sermon**

**Blessed Are Those Who Feel Alone**

### **RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

**Hymn**

**Amazing Grace**

**VU 266**

1 Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
was blind, but now I see.

2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;  
how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed.

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
'tis grace that brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promised good to me,  
this word my hope secures;  
God will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.

5 When we've been there ten thousand years,  
bright shining as the sun,  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
than when we'd first begun.

### Offering

God prepares a table for us, even in the presence of fear and uncertainty. As we offer our gifts today, we do so in gratitude for the care we have received and in hope for the community we are still becoming.

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 light and mercy,  
you are the one who sees clearly when the world cannot.  
You see the ones sitting at the roadside, the ones pushed to the edges,  
the ones whose stories are questioned or dismissed.  
You see those who feel alone.

Today we bring before you the longings of this world.

We pray for those who live with loneliness—  
those who feel unseen in their workplaces,  
in their schools, in their neighbourhoods,  
and even within their own families.  
Draw near to them, O God.  
Send companions on the road.  
Open our eyes so we might recognize where we are called  
to sit beside someone who feels forgotten.

We pray for those who know the pain of exclusion.  
For LGBTQIA+ and Two-Spirit people  
who have been questioned, rejected, or harmed in the name of faith.  
For those who still wonder whether there is a place for them in the church.  
May your Spirit continue to move among us,  
softening hearts, widening tables,  
and guiding us to be public, intentional, and explicit in love.

We pray for those who live with disabilities and chronic illness,  
for those navigating systems that are difficult to access,  
and for those whose gifts are overlooked by a world that values productivity over dignity.  
Help us to build communities where every body, every mind,  
and every story is honoured as part of your beloved creation.

We pray for those whose lives are overshadowed by injustice—  
for people experiencing poverty, for those seeking safe housing,  
for refugees and newcomers searching for stability,  
for communities that continue to face discrimination and violence.  
Give courage to those who work for justice,  
and strengthen us to be part of the healing you are bringing into the world.

We pray for your church, O God.  
Open our eyes again and again.  
When we are tempted to judge, teach us compassion.  
When we cling too tightly to certainty, teach us humility.  
When we struggle to see your presence, remind us that Christ is already at work among those on  
the margins.

We give thanks for moments of healing—  
for friendships that ease loneliness, for communities that choose inclusion,  
for acts of courage that help the world see more clearly.  
And we pray for the quiet hopes we carry in our own hearts today—  
for the people we love, for the places where we long for healing,  
for the courage we need to follow where your Spirit leads.

We offer these prayers in the spirit of Jesus,  
who finds the ones cast aside and calls them beloved.

Let us pray, using the words Jesus taught us:

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

### BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

**We'll Understand It Better By and By**

1 We are often tossed and driv'n on the restless sea of time;  
Somber skies and howling tempests oft succeed a bright sunshine;  
In that land of perfect day, when the mists have rolled away,  
We will understand it better by and by.

By and by, when the morning comes,  
All the saints of God are gathered home,  
We will tell the story how we've overcome,  
And we'll understand it better by and by.

2 We are often destitute of the things that life demands;  
Want of food and want of shelter, thirsty hills and barren lands;  
We are trusting in the Lord, and according to his Word,  
We will understand it better by and by.

By and by, when the morning comes,  
All the saints of God are gathered home,  
We will tell the story how we've overcome,  
And we'll understand it better by and by.

3 Temptations, hidden snares often take us unaware,  
And our hearts are made to bleed for any thoughtless word or deed,  
And we wonder why the test when we try to do our best,  
But we'll understand it better by and by.

By and by, when the morning comes,  
All the saints of God are gathered home,

We will tell the story how we've overcome,  
And we'll understand it better by and by.

By and by, when the morning comes,  
All the saints of God are gathered home,  
We will tell the story how we've overcome,  
And we'll understand it better by and by  
And we'll understand it better by and by.

### **Bread for the Journey**

Where might God be inviting you this week to help someone feel less alone?

### **Commissioning**

Go, knowing you are seen and known.

**We go held by love.**

Go, walking in the light of Christ.

**We go trusting God's presence.**

Go, to be signs of belonging in the world.

**We go in faith and hope.**

### **Benediction**

May the God who walks with you through every valley be your comfort and guide.

May Christ, the light of the world, shine gently upon your path.

And may you know, wherever you go, that you belong.

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 hope  
and go into the world,  
Take up the song of hope  
in ev'ry moment.

In ev'ry moment of the journey,  
we're laying down our lives,  
lay them down, in hope,  
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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