



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

April 5th, 2026

Easter Sunday

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. *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 continues to teach us about resilience, renewal, and life that persists after loss. On this Easter morning, we give thanks for Indigenous stewardship, past and present.

We recommit ourselves to the ongoing work of truth, justice, and reconciliation—trusting that resurrection calls us not only to new life, but to right relationship with one another and with the earth.

Opening Hymn

Jesus Christ is Risen Today

VU 155

1 Jesus Christ is risen today, hallelujah!
our triumphant holy day, hallelujah!
who did once, upon the cross, hallelujah!
suffer to redeem our loss. Hallelujah!

2 Hymns of praise then let us sing ,hallelujah!
unto Christ, our heavenly King, hallelujah!
who endured the cross and grave, hallelujah!
sinners to redeem and save. Hallelujah!

3 But the pains which he endured, hallelujah!
our salvation have procured; hallelujah!
now above the sky he's King, hallelujah!
where the angels ever sing. Hallelujah!

4 Sing we to our God above, hallelujah!
praise eternal as God's love; hallelujah!
praise our God, ye heavenly host, hallelujah!
praise the Son and Holy Ghost. Hallelujah!

Call to Worship

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark...

God was already at work.

In a garden marked by grief and confusion...

Hope took root.

Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Let us worship the God of life.

Let us worship with joy and wonder.

Passing the Peace

When Christ appeared to the disciples, his first words were not explanation or instruction, but peace. As you share Christ's peace today, may it be offered gently—as a sign of presence, healing, and hope.

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

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Living God,

we come to this morning carrying many things—

relief and grief, joy and exhaustion, hope that feels strong and hope that feels fragile. You meet us not after everything is resolved, but while it is still dark.

Open our eyes, like Mary's, to recognize life where we did not expect it.

Be with us now, and make us Easter people—

honest, courageous, and alive.

Amen.

1 Welcome, happy morning! age to age shall say;
 hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today:
 come then, True and Faithful, now fulfil your word;
 this is your third morning: rise, O buried Lord!

Welcome, happy morning! age to age shall say;
 hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!

2 Earth with joyful welcome clothes itself for spring;
 greets with life reviving our returning king:
 flowers in every pasture, leaves on every bough,
 speak of sorrows ended; Jesus triumphs now!

Welcome, happy morning! age to age shall say;
 hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!

3 Author and sustainer, source of life and breath;
 you for our salvation trod the path of death:
 Jesus Christ is living, God for evermore!
 Now let all creation hail him and adore.

Welcome, happy morning! age to age shall say;
 hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture John 20:1-18

¹ Early in the morning on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance, ² so she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said to them, “The Rabbi has been taken from the tomb! We don’t know where they have put Jesus!” ³ At that, Peter and the other disciple started out toward the tomb. ⁴ They were running side by side, but then the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He didn’t enter but bent down to peer in and saw the linen wrappings lying on the ground. ⁶ Then Simon Peter arrived and entered the tomb. He observed the linen wrappings on the ground, ⁷ and saw the piece of cloth that had covered Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ Then the disciple, who had arrived first at the tomb, went in. He saw and believed. ⁹ As yet, they didn’t understand the scripture that Jesus was to rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then the disciples returned to their homes.

¹¹ Meanwhile, Mary stood weeping beside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb, ¹² and she saw two angels in dazzling robes. One was seated at the head and the other at the foot of the place where Jesus’ body had lain. ¹³ They asked her, “Woman, why are you

weeping?" She answered them, "Because they have taken away my Rabbi, and I don't know where they have put the body." ¹⁴ No sooner had she said this than she turned around and caught sight of Jesus standing there, but she didn't know it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? For whom are you looking?" She supposed it was the gardener, she said to him, "Please, if you're the one who carried Jesus away, tell me where you've laid the body, and I will take it away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said, "Rabbouni!" (which means Teacher). ¹⁷ Jesus said to her, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to Abba God. Rather, go to the sisters and brothers and tell them, 'I'm ascending to my Abba and to your Abba, my God and your God!'" ¹⁸ Mary of Magdala went to the disciples. "I have seen the Teacher!" she announced. Then she reported what Jesus had said to her.

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

He Is Risen

1 He is risen, He is risen!
Tell it with a joyful voice.
Christ has burst the three days' prison;
Let the whole wide earth rejoice.
Death is conquered, we are free;
Christ has won the victory.

2 Come, you sad and fearful hearted,
With glad smile and radiant brow.
Death's dark shadows have departed,
All our woes are over now;
Through the passion that he bore,
Sin and pain have pow'r no more.

3 Come with high and holy hymning;
Chant our God's triumphant might.
Not one gloomy cloud is dimming
That bright glorious morning light
Breaking o'er the purple east,
Symbol of our Easter feast.

4 Christ is risen, Christ is risen!
And has opened heaven's gate.
We are free from evil's prison,
Risen to a holier state;
And a brighter Easter beam
On our longing eyes shall stream.

Sermon **Blessed Are Those Who Hope Still**

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

The Day of Resurrection

VU 164

1 The day of resurrection!
Earth, tell it out abroad;
the passover of gladness,
 the passover of God.
From death to life eternal,
from earth unto the sky,
our Christ hath brought us over,
 with hymns of victory.

2 Our hearts be pure from evil,
 that we may see aright
 the Lord in rays eternal
 of resurrection light;
and listening to his accents,
may hear, so calm and plain,
his own "All hail!" and, hearing,
 may raise the victor strain.

3 Now let the heavens be joyful!
 Let earth the song begin!
Let the round world keep triumph,
 and all that is therein!
Let all things seen and unseen
 their notes in gladness blend,
for Christ the Lord hath risen,
 our joy that hath no end.

Offering

Resurrection is not only something we believe—it is something we practice. As we offer our gifts today, we do so in gratitude for life renewed and in hope for the world God is still restoring. May our giving reflect the life we have been raised into.

As we bless the offerings, let us sing:

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

May God be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the God who welcome 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 New Covenant,
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.
Amen.**

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

Holy God,
we come to you this morning as Mary came to the tomb—
not always certain, not always joyful, but showing up anyway.

We come while it is still dark in parts of our lives,
still tender in places we carry grief,
still uncertain in a world that does not always make sense.
Meet us here, O God of resurrection.
Speak our names again. Call us gently back into life.

We pray for those who are grieving this day—
those for whom loss feels close,
those who carry absence like a quiet weight.
For those who have buried loved ones,
for those who are facing endings they did not choose,
for those who feel alone even in a crowded room.
Hold them in your compassion.
Sit with them in the garden of their sorrow.
And when the time is right, whisper their name with love.

We pray for those who are struggling to hope.
For those who are weary of injustice that seems unending.
For those whose bodies, identities, or lives are treated as less than sacred.
For queer and trans youth seeking safety. For elders who feel forgotten.
For all who are pushed to the margins of our communities.

God of life,
where the world has closed doors, help us open them.
Where systems harm, help us resist and rebuild.
Where people are told they do not belong,
make us communities that say—clearly and boldly—
you are welcome, you are loved, you are needed.

We pray for this fragile and beautiful world.
For places marked by violence and war.
For communities facing hunger, displacement, and fear.
For creation itself, groaning under the weight of human harm.

God of resurrection,
bring life where there is devastation.
Bring courage where there is despair.
Bring possibility where the future feels closed.
And where we can be part of that renewal—give us the courage to act.

We pray for this community gathered here.
For the joys we carry and the burdens we do not always name aloud.
For the relationships that sustain us. For the quiet ways we care for one another.
Make us a people who hope still—not with naïve certainty,
but with stubborn, defiant love.

God of the empty tomb,
you do not rush us past our grief,
but you do not leave us there either.
You call us forward.
Help us to notice where life is already breaking through.
Help us to trust that you are not finished with us yet.
Help us to live as people of hope—in word, in action, in love.

We offer all of these prayers—spoken and unspoken—
in the name of the risen Christ,
who meets us in the garden, calls us by name,
and sends us into the world.
And together, we pray the words he 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

Christ Is Alive

VU 158

1 Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring.
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

2 Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

3 In every insult, rift, and war,
where colour, scorn, or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

5 Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love and praise.

Bread for the Journey

Where might you be invited to stay present—rather than certain—this Easter season?

Commissioning

Go in the light of resurrection.

We go as people of hope.

Go, carrying life into the world.

We go with courage and love.

Go, trusting Christ walks ahead of you.

We go in joy. Alleluia.

Benediction

May the God who met Mary in the garden meet you in unexpected places.

May Christ, risen and still bearing scars, walk beside you into new life.

And may the Spirit send you out—hopeful, honest, and alive.

Christ is risen. Alleluia! Amen.

Choral Response

This is the Day That God Has Made

VU175

This is the day that God has made!
Rejoice! Rejoice, and be exceeding glad!
This is the day that God has made!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Hallelujah!

Christ has conquered death at last,
left the tomb that held him fast!
Gone the sorrow, gone the night,
dawns the morning clear and bright!

This is the day that God has made!
Rejoice! Rejoice, and be exceeding glad!
This is the day that God has made!
Rejoice! Rejoice! Hallelujah!

Postlude

* Permission to podcast/stream and reproduce the music and lyrics obtained from
ONE LICENSE with license A-737645.
All rights reserved.