



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

Reader: Mary Cannings

March 2nd, 2024

Transfiguration Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Long ago, before there was a world, before there was anything, before there was day or night, there was God, our Creator and Source of Life and Goodness. Then God said, “Let there be light.”

We light this candle to remind us of that gift of light and love.

The candle is lit.

Land Acknowledgement:

We begin by acknowledging that we gather on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Chippewa, and Mississaugas of the Credit, and that this land is home to many diverse Indigenous nations.

As we gather here at Birchcliff Bluffs United Church, we reflect on the responsibility we share in caring for this land, learning from its history, and working toward reconciliation. May we act with respect, humility, and a commitment to justice, as we strive to build a future where all peoples—Indigenous and non-Indigenous—can live together in harmony and respect.

We offer our thanks for this land, its history, and the teachings it offers, and we commit ourselves to listening, learning, and walking in solidarity with Indigenous peoples in the pursuit of healing and justice.

Opening Hymn

We Have Come at Christ’s Own Bidding

VU 104

1 We have come at Christ's own bidding
to this high and holy place,
where we wait with hope and longing
for some token of God's grace.

Here we pray for new assurance
that our faith is not in vain,
searching like those first disciples
for a sign both clear and plain.

2 Light breaks in upon our darkness;
splendour bathes the flesh-joined Word;
Moses and Elijah marvel
as the heavenly voice is heard.
Eyes and hearts behold with wonder
how the Law and Prophets meet:
Christ, with garments drenched in brightness,
stands transfigured and complete.

3 Strengthened by this glimpse of glory,
fearful lest our faith decline,
we like Peter find it tempting
to remain and build a shrine.
But true worship gives us courage
to proclaim what we profess,
that our daily lives may prove us
people of the God we bless.

Call to Worship

Have you been to the mountaintop?
Have you experienced the promised land?

**Here in the valley of deep shadow,
the mountain seems impossibly high and far away,
the promise fades into the cloudy distance.**

Have you been to the mountaintop?
Have you seen the promised land?

**We want to go, we want to experience,
but who will show us the way?**

Listen to the old stories.
Listen to your own stories.
Notice the Spirit calling.
Learn to attend with your heart.

**We will go to the mountaintop.
We will seek the promised land.**

Passing the Peace

We pass the peace (*with a bow, or a wave, or a nod to our neighbours*) to remind us of the light of Christ that is in each of us, and that we are called to reconciliation and community.

Let us greet those around you with the Peace of Christ, saying:
The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Holy God, we come to this place, not because you are to be found nowhere else, but because here, we have no other task than to be in your presence. Here, we tune our senses to listen, our spirits to discover, our hearts to feel and our minds to wonder. May the glory that you are touch this hour of our time, so that it may be for us a transforming moment, bringing new light, new hope, new courage, and new commitment to follow in the way of Christ, in whose blessed name we pray. Amen.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture: Exodus 34:29-35

²⁹ Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰ When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin of his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses spoke with them. ³² Afterward all the Israelites came near, and he gave them in commandment all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. ³³ When Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face, ³⁴ but whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with him, he would take the veil off until he came out, and when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, ³⁵ the Israelites would see the face of Moses, that the skin of his face was shining, and Moses would put the veil on his face again until he went in to speak with him.

Luke 9:28-43a

²⁸ Now about eight days after these sayings Jesus took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰ Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to him. ³¹ They appeared in glory and were speaking about his exodus, which he was about to fulfill in Jerusalem. ³² Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep, but as they awoke they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. ³³ Just as they were leaving him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah," not realizing what he was saying. ³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. ³⁵ Then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!" ³⁶ When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen.

³⁷ On the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a great crowd met him. ³⁸ Just then a man from the crowd shouted, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son; he is my only child. ³⁹ Suddenly a spirit seizes him, and all at once he shrieks. It convulses him until he foams at the mouth; it mauls him and will scarcely leave him. ⁴⁰ I begged your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.” ⁴¹ Jesus answered, “You faithless and perverse generation, how much longer must I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.” ⁴² While he was being brought forward, the demon dashed him to the ground in convulsions. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healed the boy, and gave him back to his father. ⁴³ And all were astounded at the greatness of God.

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Jesus On the Mountain Peak

VU 102

1 Jesus on the mountain peak
stands alone in glory blazing;
let us, if we dare to speak,
join the saints and angels praising. Hallelujah!

2 Trembling at his feet we saw
Moses and Elijah speaking.
All the prophets and the law
shout through them their joyful greeting: Hallelujah!

3 Swift the cloud of glory came,
God proclaiming, in its thunder,
Jesus as the Son by name!
Nations, cry aloud in wonder: Hallelujah!

4 This is God's beloved one!
Law and prophets sing before him,
first and last and only One.
All creation shall adore him! Hallelujah!

Sermon

Glimpses of Glory

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Hymn

Though I May Speak

VU 372

1 Though I may speak with bravest fire,
and have the gift to all inspire,
and have not love, my words are vain,
as sounding brass, and hopeless gain.

2 Though I may give all I possess,
and striving so my love profess,
but not be given by love within,
the profit soon turns strangely thin.

3 Come, Spirit, come, our hearts control,
our spirits long to be made whole.
Let inward love guide every deed;
by this we worship, and are freed.

Offering

Creator God,
as we bless the gifts that we receive,
we ask that you bless the work of our lives and the love of our hearts this day,
offered in so many ways.

We share your desire to create better lives and a better community.

Let the soul of the world be restored in an ocean of your love. Amen.

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

The Holy One be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

Let us give thanks to God, in whose image we are made.

To the Creator of all, we give thanks and praise.

Divine Protector, Defender of Life, your love for this world is everlasting. As oceans burn and species go extinct, our children are made vulnerable at school and our neighbors are denied at our borders, there is so much reason to despair. But you, O God, refuse to abandon us to destruction. Christ takes on flesh. In the midst of struggle, you are glimpses of hope, encounters of freedom, tastes of what satisfies when so much leaves empty. In these incarnate moments, we sense the closeness of your Kindom.

Holy, Holy, Holy One

God of justice and love

Heaven and earth are full of your wonder

Hosanna, among us.

You, O God, reorder the world into right-relationship.

You lift high those made low.

You humble the arrogant.

You hear the earth groaning under capitalism and consumption

and your fire burns in the hearts of your prophets.

With this hope and assurance, we turn to the witness of Jesus whose teachings reveal the way to liberation. We seek his wisdom. We practice his courage. We remember his radical commitment to love.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus shared a meal with his companions. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples and said: "This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After the meal, he took the cup, blessed it, and shared it saying: "This cup that is poured out is the new covenant."

In remembrance of the love that saves us, we proclaim the mystery of our faith:

Christ was birthed among us.

Christ was executed among us.

Christ rises again among us.

May the Spirit come and settle upon these gifts. Making this bread and this cup be for us a Holy Encounter. Reminding us that Christ is with us. That Resurrection is a promise granted to us. That the Kindom is always closer than we can imagine.

May we be nourished, that we might nourish others.

At this time, we also remember all those with whom you would have us share your feast.

We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain...

all who are ill or alone...

all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger...

all whom the world counts as last and least...

We pray for your church and its varied ministries...

for the nations as they strive for peace and justice...

for the earth, and the fragile web of life we share...

for our families and friends.

Bring them into the place of eternal joy and peace.

In collective longing for a taste of your Kindom on earth,

we join together in echoing the prayer of Jesus:

Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name

Thy Kindom 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.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

**For thine is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever.
Amen.**

Through Christ, in Christ, and with Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and forever.

And so this is our prayer. So be it! Amen.
Amen.

Come, for the feast is now ready.

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

**Beloved One, if we grow weary in love,
may this meal live on as a reminder of what sustains us.
In seeking the flourishing you intend for us,
our neighbors, and this planet, keep our hearts tender, our spirits alive,
and our senses attuned to the beauty that surrounds.
With gratitude for your abiding presence, we pray. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

God of radiant light,
On this Transfiguration Sunday, we open our hearts to your transforming presence.
As Christ shone on the mountaintop,
may your love shine through us in our daily lives.

We pray for the Church,
that we may be a voice of compassion, justice, and inclusion.
Transfigure our communities to reflect your grace and welcome for all people.

We lift up the brokenness of our world
—where there is violence, bring peace;
where there is despair, bring hope; where there is injustice, bring courage to act.

Be near to those who are sick, grieving, or struggling.
Let your healing and comfort surround them,
and empower us to be agents of your kindness and care.

God of new life, transform us, that we may listen to Christ
and follow in the way of love.
In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Take Up The Song

MV 213

1 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.

2 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.

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

4 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.

Bread for the Journey:

How does seeing Christ's glory encourage you to trust God in everyday life?

Commissioning and Benediction:

May God now send us back down the mountain of our worship.

We have been changed.

We can't be silent anymore

We have seen the Light of the World.

Go and share the radiance of love!

May God's face shine upon you from every other face,
every bare tree branch and tiny, first daffodil sprout.

And may it make you bold. Amen.

Choral Response

Let There Be Peace on Earth

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be
With God our Creator
Family all are we
Let us walk with each other
In perfect harmony.
Let peace begin with me
Let this be the moment now.
With every step I take
Let this be my solemn vow
To take each moment
and live each moment
in peace eternally
Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me.

Postlude

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