



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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May 11th, 2025

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Christian Family Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Christ & Rainbow Candle

You assure us, Jesus, that wherever two or three are gathered in your name, you are there.

We light this candle to remind ourselves and to celebrate your constant presence.

May we always seek your guiding light in our lives. Amen.

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

Draw The Circle Wide

MV 145

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

1 God the still-point of the circle,
'round whom all creation turns;
nothing lost, but held forever,
in God's gracious arms.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

2 Let our hearts touch far horizons,
so encompass great and small;
let our loving know no borders,
faithful to God's call.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

3 Let the dreams we dream be larger,
than we've ever dreamed before;
let the dream of Christ be in us,
open every door.

Draw the circle wide. Draw it wider still.
Let this be our song, no one stands alone,
standing side by side, draw the circle wide.

Call to Worship

Come as people open to the Spirit's movement among and within us.

We come in anticipation and with openness to God's word.

Come as people wishing to work for a new creation.

We come to listen and to worship as we embrace the good news.

Gather us in, O Spirit, as people seeking your enthusiasm and your joy.

**Gather us in, strange and family, foe and friends, in and out, establishing our
common identity in the risen Christ. Amen.**

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

Creator God, parent of us all, we are your precious children who live within family units of all kinds and sizes. We gather here with you and within this church family ready to worship you and to be embraced in your love. Amen.

Hymn

Who Is My Mother

MV 178

1 Who is my mother, who is my brother?
All those who gather round Jesus Christ:
Spirit blown people born from the Gospel
sit at the table, round Jesus Christ.

2 Differently abled, differently labeled,
widen the circle round Jesus Christ:
crutches and stigmas, culture's enigmas,
all come together round Jesus Christ.

3 Love will relate us colour or status
can't segregate us round Jesus Christ:
family failings, human derailings
all are accepted round Jesus Christ.

4 Bound by one vision, met for one mission
we claim each other, round Jesus Christ:
here is my mother, here is my brother,
kindred in Spirit, through Jesus Christ.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Psalm 23 (responsive)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil, for you are with me;

your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

John 10: 22-30

²² At that time the Festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, ²³ and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon. ²⁴ So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." ²⁵ Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me, ²⁶ but you do not believe because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷ My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, in regard to what he has given me, is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ The Father and I are one."

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Come, Let Us Sing of a Wonderful Love

VU 574

1 Come, let us sing of a wonderful love,
tender and true, tender and true,
out of the heart of our saviour above,
streaming to me and to you:
wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of our dear God above.

2 Jesus the Saviour this gospel to tell
joyfully came, joyfully came,
came with the helpless and hopeless to dwell,
sharing their sorrow and shame,
seeking the lost, seeking the lost,
saving, redeeming at measureless cost.

3 Jesus is seeking the wanderers yet;
why do they roam? why do they roam?
Love only waits to forgive and forget;
home, weary wanderers, home!
Wonderful love, wonderful love
dwells in the heart of our dear God above.

4 Come to my heart, O thou wonderful love!
Come and abide, come and abide,
lifting my life till it rises above
envy and falsehood and pride:

seeking to be, seeking to be
lowly and humble, a learner of thee.

Sermon

Tell Us Plainly

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

Are You a Shepherd

MV 126

- 1 Are you a shepherd, good shepherd who leads us
safely through danger, while calming our fears?
Are you a parent who shelters and feeds us,
shares in our laughter and wipes away tears?

Yes, you are shepherd, parent and teacher,
but you are greater than all that we know.
Holy and living, loving and giving,
God, you are with us wherever we go.

- 2 Are you a mother, good mother who bears us,
comforts, protects us and helps us to rest?
Are you a teacher who daily prepares us,
challenging students to offer their best?

Yes, you are shepherd, parent and teacher,
but you are greater than all that we know.
Holy and living, loving and giving,
God, you are with us wherever we go.

- 3 Great, gentle shepherd, forever beside us,
lead all you children in paths that are right.
Great, loving parent, wise teacher, you guide us.
We want to love you and bring you delight.

Yes, you are shepherd, parent and teacher,
but you are greater than all that we know.
Holy and living, loving and giving,
God, you are with us wherever we go.

Offering

Holy and wondrous God, we honor you with gifts of time, resources, and abilities. Use all that
we offer to bring hope and strength to our needy world.

**May gifts both large and small become new life within this community and around
the worlds. Amen.**

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

Holy One,
In a world full of noise,
we long to hear your voice—clear, steady, and true.
You have told us plainly, in the life and love of Jesus,
what it means to belong, to be held, to be known.

Shepherd of our souls, speak to us again.

We pray for all who feel lost in the clamor of conflict and misinformation—
for those who hunger for clarity and truth,
but are weary of the confusion that surrounds us.
Guide our leaders, our institutions, and each of us
to act with integrity, humility, and justice.

Shepherd of our souls, lead us in truth.

We pray for the brokenhearted and the fearful,
for those displaced by war, economic injustice, or political violence.
Especially today, we lift up communities impacted by ongoing violence—
in our cities, in Ukraine, in Gaza, in Sudan, and in all places where peace is fragile.
May your voice call forth compassion from the nations.

Shepherd of our souls, bring your peace.

We pray for all who do not feel safe to be who they are—
for queer and trans people whose very identities are under attack,
for those whose faith has been twisted into shame,
for those told they do not belong.

O Christ, who knows us by name, remind us:
there is no snatching from your hand.

Shepherd of our souls, hold us close.

We pray for the Church, here and everywhere.
May we be a flock shaped not by fear,
but by love so bold it becomes sanctuary.
Help us not to demand certainty from you,
but to lean into relationship—
to listen, to follow, to trust.

Shepherd of our souls, teach us to follow.

Hear the prayers of our hearts, O God, spoken and unspoken, those too deep for words and those still forming in silence...

(Moment of silence)

In your mercy, gather them all. In your grace, answer them in love.

And now, as a community of faith, we pray all this, using the ancient words you taught us, saying:

Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver, Source of all that is and that shall be.

Father and Mother of us all, Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!

The way of your justice be followed by people of the world!

Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!

Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.

In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.

In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.

From trials too great to endure, spare us.

From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Deep In Our Hearts

MV 154

- 1 Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.
- 2 Deep in our hearts there is a common purpose;
deep in our hearts there is a common goal;
deep in our hearts there is a sacred message,
justice and peace in harmony.
- 3 Deep in our hearts there is a common longing;
deep in our hearts there is a common theme;
deep in our hearts there is a common current,
flowing to freedom like a stream.
- 4 Deep in our hearts there is a common vision;
deep in our hearts there is a common song;
deep in our hearts there is a common story,
telling Creation that we are one.

Bread for the Journey

In moments of uncertainty or longing, how do we recognize and respond to the voice of the Good Shepherd in our lives?

Commissioning and Benediction

Christ, the Good Shepherd, calls each of us by name.

We have heard his voice and we follow with trust.

We are held in the hand of God—no one can snatch us away.

In God's love, we find our safety, our courage, and our home.

Go now into the world as those who are known and loved.

We go with faith, to listen, to love, and to lead with compassion.

Let your life echo the Shepherd's voice—

A voice of justice, of tenderness, of hope.

Go in peace, beloved of God,
for the Shepherd knows your name and calls you still.
Walk in trust, speak with love,
and rest in the grace that holds you fast.
May God's blessing go with you, now and always. Amen.

Choral Response

May Sunshine Light Your Way

May sunshine light your way
as you move on toward tomorrow
May laughter fill your days
with joy instead of sorrow,
May you have the strength to soar
as on eagles' wing,
And may your heart be filled
with joyous songs to sing.

May you have the strength to soar
as on eagles' wing,
And may your heart be filled
with joyous songs to sing.
Go in peace, go in love,
Go in song.

Postlude

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