



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Katie Vardy

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Reader: Mary Cannings

December 24th, 2025

Christmas Eve Service – 7:30pm

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Welcome

Lighting the Rainbow Candle

As we light the Rainbow Candle, we remember that God's love is wide and welcoming. May this small flame shine with courage and compassion, a reminder that all belong, all are cherished, and all are held in the heart of God. *Candle is lit.*

Land Acknowledgement

On this holy night, when we remember Love choosing to dwell among us, we pause to honour the land on which we gather. We acknowledge that we worship on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Wendat, Chippewa, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. This land has been home, hearth, and homeland to Indigenous peoples since long before the story of Christmas was first told. As we celebrate the birth of Christ—God-with-us—we recognize the ongoing realities of colonization and commit ourselves to relationships rooted in truth, respect, and justice.

May the light we welcome tonight guide us toward right relations, shared healing, and a future where all peoples may live in dignity and peace on this land.

Opening Hymn

What Child Is This

VU 74

1 What child is this, who laid to rest,
on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

2 Why lies he in such mean estate
where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading.

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, one and all, to own him.
The King of Kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.

This, this is Christ the King,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud,
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

Lighting our Advent Candles

All Advent long, we have been waiting—for light to grow, for promises to ripen, for Love to take on flesh and live among us.

Tonight, we rejoice: the waiting is over. Christ is born, and the world is bathed in holy light.

We have lit candles for Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. Each flame is a reminder of what God is doing in the shadows. Tonight, we light the Christ Candle—for the Light has come, and the darkness cannot overcome it. (*Light the Christ Candle and all candles of the Advent wreath*)

God of wonder and delight, open our eyes to your glory in this night. Open our hearts to your presence in every child, every neighbour, every act of grace. Let your light shine through us—bright and unafraid—until the world is made new.

The Light of the world has come. Come, let us walk in its glow.

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace among us all. Amen.

Sung Response

A Candle Is Burning (v. 5)

VU 6

We honour Messiah with Christ-candle's flame,
our Christmas Eve candles glad tidings proclaim.

O come, all you faithful, rejoice in this night,
as God comes among us, the Christian's true light.

Passing the Peace

On this holy night, angels sang “Peace on earth.” Not a peace born of silence or surrender, but a peace forged in love—a peace strong enough to hold us all. When we share the peace of Christ, we join that ancient song. We practice the promise of God-with-us, and remind each other that no one stands alone.

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

Life and Work

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

Holy Mystery, tonight we gather at the edge of heaven and earth, where angels whisper “Do not be afraid,” and shepherds tremble beneath a sky of glory. We come, weary and hopeful, to hear again the story that changes everything—of love made small enough to hold, of peace born among the poor, of joy that cannot be contained. May the light of Christ kindle wonder within us once more, and may our worship this night be a lullaby of gratitude and awe. Amen.

Lighting the Memory Tree (*Moment of silence*)

In lighting this tree, we honour the lives, love, and light of those we remember and celebrate.

Their light shines on.

Hymn

O Little Town of Bethlehem

VU 64

1 O little town of Bethlehem,
 how still we see thee lie!
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
 the silent stars go by;
 yet in thy dark streets shineth
 the everlasting light;
 the hopes and fears of all the years
 are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary;
 and gathered all above,
 while mortals sleep, the angels keep
 their watch of wondering love.
 O morning stars, together
 proclaim the holy birth,

and praises sing to God the King,
and peace to all on earth.

3 How silently, how silently
the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
the blessed gift of heaven.
No ear may hear his coming;
but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still
the dear Christ enters in.

4 O holy child of Bethlehem,
descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in;
be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels
the great glad tidings tell;
O come to us, abide with us,
our Lord Emmanuel.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Luke 2:1-14

¹ In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. ² This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³ All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴ Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵ He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no place in the guest room.

⁸ Now in that same region, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of God stood before them, and the glory of God shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in David’s city, a saviour – the Messiah – has been born to you. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”

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

Hymn

It Came Upon The Midnight Clear

VU44

1 It came upon the midnight clear,
 that glorious song of old,
from angels bending near the earth
 to touch their harps of gold,
'Peace on the earth, good will to all,
 from heaven's all-gracious King!'
The world in solemn stillness lay
 to hear the angels sing.

2 Still through the cloven skies they come
 with peaceful wings unfurled;
and still their heavenly music floats
 o'er all the weary world;
above its sad and lowly plains
 they bend on hovering wing,
and ever o'er its Babel sounds
 the blessed angels sing.

3 Yet with the woes of sin and strife
 the world has suffered long;
beneath the angel strain have rolled
 two thousand years of wrong;
and warring humankind hears not
 the love song which they bring.
O hush the noise, and cease your strife,
 to hear the angels sing.

4 For, lo! the days are hastening on,
 by prophets seen of old,
when with the ever-circling years
 shall come the time foretold,
when peace shall over all the earth
 its ancient splendours fling,
and the whole world send back the song
 which now the angels sing.

Sermon Do You Have Room?

Hymn

O Come all Ye Faithful (v. 1, 3, 4, 5)

VU 60

1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
 O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem:
 come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
 O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

3 Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,
 sing, all ye citizens of heaven above;
 glory to God in the highest:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
 O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

4 See how the shepherds summoned to his cradle,
 leaving their flocks, draw nigh with lowly fear;
 we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
 O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

5 Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;
 Jesus, to thee be glory given;
 word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
 O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Offering

On this night, God's generosity takes shape in a child—tiny, vulnerable, radiant with promise. In that spirit, we bring what we have and who we are. Our gifts—our prayers, our resources, our compassion—become swaddling cloths for the world, wrapping others in warmth, in hope, in dignity. Let us give as those who have received the greatest gift of all—Love made flesh among us.

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.

COMMUNION

On this night of wonder and light, we come to a table that stretches wider than we can see. Here, Christ is host and guest, Word and flesh, Light and love intertwined. This table is not ours to guard—it belongs to the One whose birth we celebrate: Jesus, the child of peace, the friend of sinners, the feast for the hungry in body and in spirit.

So come, all who are weary and wandering, all who sing with joy or sit in silence, all who seek the holy amid the ordinary. Here, the light of Christ meets you. Here, the bread of life is for you. Here, the love of God is born again.

The Holy One be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the God who comes.

Let us give thanks to God, who is love made flesh.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Holy God,

from the beginning, you have spoken light into the darkness,
hope into despair, and life into the dust of the earth.

You formed us in love and called us to live in peace with one another and with creation.

When we turned away, still you did not leave us—

your love came calling through prophets and dreamers,
through Mary's courage and Joseph's trust,
through a child born under starlight and straw.

On this holy night, we join our voices with angels and shepherds, with ancestors and all creation, in hopeful praise:

Holy, holy, holy God,
Light of heaven and earth,
Glory and love fill all that is!
Blessed is the One who comes in your name,
Hosanna in the highest!

Holy are you, O God, and holy is your Son, Jesus Christ—
born to bring peace to our world and warmth to our hearts.

He came as a child of promise, grew into a teacher of truth, a healer of the broken, a friend of the forgotten.

On the night before he gave himself to the powers of fear and hate,
he gathered his friends at a table much like this one.

He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and shared it, saying:
“Take, eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Then he took the cup and gave thanks again, saying:
“This cup is the new covenant of love, poured out for you and for all people.
Whenever you drink it, remember me.”

And so, we remember—the mystery and the miracle:

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

Holy One,
as Christ gave himself for the life of the world,
so we offer ourselves to you—our hands and hearts,
our stories and struggles, our hope for what might yet be.

**Let this bread and cup be our “yes” to your love—
born in us, lived through us, shared freely with the world.**

Let us pray:
Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts, O God—
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ,
and that we, gathered in your light,
may become your living body in the world:
love embodied, justice enacted,
peace proclaimed through every act of compassion.

As these humble elements become holy, make our lives holy too. Amen.

As we share this meal, we remember those who cannot be here—
those kept away by distance, illness, grief, or work;
those who celebrate in other sanctuaries,
and those who have gone before us into the fullness of your light.
May our communion with them be made real in this shared bread and cup,
in the love that binds us together across every border and every generation.

Make us one body, O Christ, your hands and heart for the healing of the world.

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:

Holy and Gracious God,
we give you thanks for this feast of wonder and grace—
for love that became bread for the journey,
and light that no darkness can extinguish.
As we leave this table, may we carry the radiance of your presence
into every place that longs for warmth,
every heart that hungers for hope.
Amen.

Hymn

Grateful

MV 182

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

God of silent nights and shining stars,
we give you thanks for drawing near to us.

We pray for this weary world:
for lands torn by war,
for families displaced by violence,

for those who hunger for food and for peace.
May the promise of Bethlehem—peace on earth, goodwill among all—
find life in us.

We pray for those who keep vigil tonight—
hospital staff, first responders, caregivers,
those who work while others rest.
Let your light guide and strengthen them.

We pray for all who grieve this night—
for empty chairs at the table,
for love that feels too far away.
Wrap them in your comfort,
and remind them that Emmanuel means you are not alone.

We pray for the Church, scattered and gathered—
for all who dare to believe that love can heal what is broken.
Make us bearers of your light in dark places,
messengers of good news in every generation.

And we pray for ourselves—
that the wonder of this night may soften what is hard within us,
that joy may rise again in our hearts,
and that we may leave this place radiant with your love.

Through Jesus Christ, born among us and for us,
the Light no darkness can overcome, 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**Joy To The World****VU 59**

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come:
let earth receive her King!

Let every heart prepare him room,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2 Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:
let all their songs employ,

while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3 No more let sins and sorrows grow,
nor thorns infest the ground:

he comes to make his blessings flow
far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,
far as, far as the curse is found.

4 He rules the earth with truth and grace,

and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness

and wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,
and wonders, wonders of his love.

Commissioning and Sending Forth

The angels' song still echoes: Glory to God, peace on earth!

We will go to sing that song with our lives.

The shepherds' wonder still calls us to go and see.

We will go to find Christ in the world around us.

The light of this night still shines in every heart open to love.

We will go, carrying the light of Christ wherever we are sent.

Go in joy, go in peace, go in love.

For Christ is born! Alleluia! Amen.

Hymn**Silent Night**
(sung by candlelight)**VU 67**

Silent night! Holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
'round yon virgin mother and child!
Holy infant, so tender and mild,

sleep in heavenly peace,
sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night! Holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar,
heav'nly hosts sing, "Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!"

Silent night! Holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
radiant beams from Thy holy face
with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!
Jesus, Lord, at Thy birth!

Blessing

Go now, beloved of God,
carrying this light into the night—
to your homes, your neighbours, your world.
For unto us a Child is born,
unto us Love is given.
Thanks be to God,
and may peace dwell deeply with you.

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