



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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May 4th, 2025

Third Sunday of Easter

Blessing of the Animals

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

God of the Sparrow

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

All Creatures of Our God (v. 1, 2, 4, 5)

VU 217

1 All creatures of our God and King,

lift up your voice and with us sing:

hallelujah, hallelujah!

Bright burning sun with golden beam,

soft shining moon with silver gleam,
sing praises, sing praises,
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

2 O rushing winds and breezes soft,
O clouds that ride the winds aloft,
sing praises, hallelujah!
O rising morn, in praise rejoice;
O lights of evening, find a voice:
sing praises, sing praises,
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

4 And everyone of tender heart,
forgiving others, take your part:
sing praises, hallelujah!
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God and yield up all your care:
sing praises, hallelujah!
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

5 Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship God in humbleness:
sing praises, hallelujah!
Praise God eternal, praise the Son,
and praise the Spirit, three in one:
sing praises, hallelujah!
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Call to Worship

Come, all creatures great and small,
voices gentle, wings that soar, paws that dance upon the earth.

**We gather with gratitude, recognizing the sacred bond
we share with every living being.**

Come, beloved companions, whose eyes speak a language
of loyalty, comfort, and boundless joy.

**We celebrate the presence of those who teach us daily
about love unconditional, patience unending, and grace abundant.**

Come, those who care for animals, who protect and cherish life,
who advocate for justice and compassion for all creatures.

**We commit ourselves to nurturing and respecting the diversity of creation,
knowing each animal is beloved and blessed.**

Together, in reverence and delight, let us join our voices with all creation,
affirming our shared purpose to sustain and honor life in all its forms.

**Let us worship, let us bless, let us rejoice,
for all creatures reflect the heart of God's love.**

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,
whose love moves through fur and feathers, paws and wings,
bless us as we gather to honor the animals
who share our lives and teach us compassion.
Open our hearts to their wisdom,
guide us to care for all your creation,
and fill us with joy and reverence this day.
In the name of Love, we pray.
Amen.**

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture Genesis 1:20-24

²⁰ And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." ²³ And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind and the cattle of every kind and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Job 12:7-10

⁷ "But ask the animals, and they will teach you, the birds of the air, and they will tell you; ⁸ ask the plants of the earth, and they will teach you, and the fish of the sea will declare to you. ⁹ Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? ¹⁰ In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of every human being.

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

Hymn

All Things Bright and Beautiful

VU 291

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
in love, God made them all.

1 Each little flower that opens,
each little bird that sings,
God made their glowing colours,
God made their tiny wings.

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.

2 The purple headed mountains,
the river running by,
the sunset and the morning
that brightens up the sky;

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.

3 The cold wind in the winter,
the pleasant summer sun,
the ripe fruits in the garden:
God made them every one.

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.

5 God gave us eyes to see them,
and lips that we might tell

how great is God our maker,
who has made all things well.

All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,
all things wise and wonderful,
the Lord God made them all.

Story Adam's Animals from *Does God Have a Big Toe?* by Marc Gellman

Prayers from the Ark & The Creatures' Choir by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold

The Prayer of the Monkey
The Prayer of the Dog
The Prayer of the Tortoise
The Prayer of the Butterfly
The Prayer of the Elephant
The Prayer of the Little Ducks
The Prayer of the Cat
The Prayer of the Mouse

Act of Blessing (animals are brought forward to be blessed)

Bless O God, this your creature, and all who are involved in its care and protection.

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Song **A Place in the Choir**

All God's creatures got a place in the choir
Some sing low and some sing higher
Some sing out loud on the telephone wire
Some just clap their hands or paws,
or anything they've got now

All God's creatures got a place in the choir
Some sing low and some sing higher
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or anything they've got now

Listen to the top where the little bird sings
And the melodies and the high notes ringing
And the hoot owl cries over everything
And the blackbird disagrees

Singing in the nighttime, singing in the day
When little duck quacks and he's on his way
And the otter hasn't got much to say
And the porcupine talks to himself

All God's creatures got a place in the choir
Some sing low and some sing higher
Some sing out loud on the telephone wire
Some just clap their hands or paws,
or anything they've got now

Dogs and the cats, they take up the middle
While the honeybee hums and the cricket fiddles
The donkey brays and the pony neighs
The old grey badger sighs

Listen to the bass, it's the one on the bottom
Where the bullfrog croaks and the hippopotamus
Moans and groans with a big t'do
And the old cow just goes moo

All God's creatures got a place in the choir
Some sing low and some sing higher
Some sing out loud on the telephone wire
Some just clap their hands or paws,
or anything they've got now

It's a simple song, a little song everywhere
By the ox and the fox and the grizzly bear
The dopey alligator and the hawk above
The sly old weasel and the turtle dove

All God's creatures got a place in the choir
Some sing low and some sing higher
Some sing out loud on the telephone wire
Some just clap their hands or paws,
or anything they've got now

All God's creatures got a place in the choir
Some sing low and some sing higher
Some sing out loud on the telephone wire
Some just clap their hands or paws,

or anything they've got now
All God's creatures got a place in the choir

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.

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

Loving Creator,

we lift our prayers to you today,
celebrating the animals who share our homes and our hearts,
who teach us about joy, loyalty, and unconditional love.

We pray for those who care for creatures,
the veterinarians, rescue workers, shelter volunteers, and advocates,
grant them strength, compassion, and support in their work.

We hold in our hearts animals suffering neglect or harm,
calling upon your spirit of justice and mercy
to inspire compassion and action in our communities.

We remember beloved pets who have passed from our lives,
thankful for their companionship,
holding gently the memories of joy they brought.

Help us, O God, to honor all life,
to nurture creation, and live with kindness and respect.
May the love we share with the animals around us
guide us into greater empathy and care for the whole world.

In your gracious name, we pray all this, using the ancient words you taught us, saying:

**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.**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Let All Things Now Living

VU 242

1 Let all things now living a song of thanksgiving
to God our Creator triumphantly raise;
who fashioned and made us, protected and stayed us,
by guiding us on to the end of our days.
God's banners are o'er us, pure light goes before us,
a pillar of fire shining forth in the night;
till shadows have vanished and darkness is banished,
as forward we travel from light into Light.

2 By law God enforces, the stars in their courses
and sun in its orbit obediently shine;
the hills and the mountains, the rivers and fountains,
the depths of the ocean proclaim God divine.
We, too, should be voicing our love and rejoicing;
with glad adoration a song let us raise:
till all things now living unite in thanksgiving,
to God in the highest, hosanna and praise

Bread for the Journey

How has your relationship with animals taught you about love, compassion, and the sacredness of life?

Commissioning and Benediction

Go forth to care for all creation, with gentle hands and compassionate hearts.

We promise to nurture, protect, and honor every creature entrusted to us.

Be advocates of kindness, justice, and love for animals great and small.

We commit ourselves to respect all life and live in harmony with the earth.

May our lives reflect the grace and love of the Creator. Amen.

May God, who created the animals of this earth, continue to protect and sustain us all, now and forever. Go in peace. 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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