



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Minister of Word & Sacrament: Rev. Dr. Ellen Redcliffe

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Music Director: Randy Vancourt

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December 18th, 2022

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Love Sunday

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Call to Worship candles of hope, peace and joy are lit.

Today is the Advent of love. As we light this candle, we remember all who are feeling lonely and distressed at this time of year.

We live in a world that fears the stranger and the strange.

We light this candle as our commitment to love that is expressed in inclusivity.

We are the community that welcomes unconditionally and generously, so we light this candle for Jesus, the Lover of all.

4th candle lit here

All sing:

Hope Is a Star (v. 4)

VU 7

Love is a flame that burns in our heart,
Jesus has come and will never depart.
When God is a child there’s joy in our song
The last shall be first and the weak shall be strong
And none shall be afraid.

Land Acknowledgement

We now take a moment to acknowledge the sacred land beside the water on which Birchcliff Bluffs United Church stands. It has been a site of human activity for many thousands of years. This land is the territory of the Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently the Mississaugas of the Credit and Scugog, all part of the Williams Treaty. We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this territory and we seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.

Opening Prayer

Merciful God, we have gathered in hope, sought peace, and laughed with joy, and now we come to share the great love you have for us.

Be with us in our worship and in our witness this week and every week. Help us to bring your love into the world, especially in broken or forgotten places and to your people who feel unlovable. It is for this that you came to us in Bethlehem and for this that you continue to come again this year. Amen.

Hymn

All Earth Is Waiting

VU 5

1 All earth is waiting to see the Promised One,
and open furrows await the seed of God.
All the world, bound and struggling, seeks true liberty;
it cries out for justice and searches for the truth.

2 Thus says the prophet to those of Israel,
'A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel.'
One whose name is 'God with us', our Saviour shall be,
through whom hope will blossom
once more within our hearts.

3 Mountains and valleys will have to be made plain,
open new highways, new highways for our God,
who is now coming closer, so come all and see,
and open the doorways as wide as wide can be.

4 In lowly stable the Promised One appeared.
Yet, feel that presence throughout the earth today,
for Christ lives in all Christians and is with us now;
again, on arriving, Christ brings us liberty.

Life and Work of the Church

Scripture Luke 1:47-55

Mary said: with all my heart I praise the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;

he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
53 He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
54 He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

Gospel Matthew 1:18–25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about^[a]: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet^[b] did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus,^[c] because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”^[d] (which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

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

Hymn

The Angel Gabriel

1 The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
with wings as drifted snow, with eyes as flame;
"All hail," said he, "O lowly maiden Mary,
"most highly favored lady." Gloria!

2 "How blest among all women you shall be,
Whom every age will praise continually.
Your Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,
most highly favored lady." Gloria!

3 Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head;
"To me be as it pleases God," she said.
"My soul shall laud and magnify God's holy name."
Most highly favored lady, Gloria!

4 Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ, was born
In Bethlehem, all on a Christmas morn,
and Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
"Most highly favored lady." Gloria!

Sermon The Spirit of the Creche

Hymn Jesous Ahatonhia

Have courage all you human beings, Jesus, he has come
The spirits in the sky have words to share with everyone
They say in an exalted voice, that Mary's given birth, Rejoice!
Jesous Ahatonhia, Jesus is born
Jesous Ahatonhia

Three men of great authority left for the sacred place
Tichion, the star, appeared to lead them on their path with grace
And stopped not far from where he lay
"The place is found, now come this way,"
Jesous Ahatonhia, Jesus is born
Jesous Ahatonhia

With sunflower oil they rubbed his scalp, anointing Jesus' head
It is the spirit's will that you shall love us, elders said
And Jesus, how we wish to be adopted to your family
Jesous Ahatonhia, Jesus is born
Jesous Ahatonhia

Offering

Dear God, our true salvation, we wait humbly and faithfully for the rebirth of the Christ light within us.

In the shadows of a weary world, we come together, trusting that this Light will indeed shine once again upon us. Through Jesus the way has been made plain for us. In thanksgiving, we praise your holy name as we wait. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of unexpected time and place, we are humbles as we remember that, by promising to be with them, you gave two young people the courage to be part of the miraculous event that was the birth of your son. Loving God, your promise filled us with hope.

You worked through Jesus to bring your good news to all people everywhere through countless generations. Loving God, your promise filled us with peace.
You helped each of us through tough times and promise to always be with us. Loving God, your promise filled us with joy.

So today, in the knowledge of what you have already done in the world and in our lives, we are strengthened by your promises and filled with love...

We now take a moment to remember those we keep in our prayers.

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom 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.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,
For ever and ever, Amen.**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Angels We Have Heard on High

VU 38

1 Angels we have heard on high
sweetly singing o'er the plains,
and the mountains in reply,
echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

2 Shepherds, why this jubilee?
Why your joyous strains prolong?
What the gladsome tidings be
which inspire your heavenly song?
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

3 Come to Bethlehem and see
Christ whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee
Christ, the Lord, the newborn King.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

4 See him in a manger laid,
whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid,

while our hearts in love we raise.
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!

Benediction & Commissioning

We go from this place into a world longing to hear of the hope, peace, joy and love God has promised to all who open themselves to God's presence. Go knowing we are the hands and feet God needs to get this message out and into the world. May God's blessing pour forth to all you meet. May Christ's love surround all whom you encounter. May the Holy Spirit guide us in all ways. **Amen.**

Postlude

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Birchcliff Bluffs United Church Additional Lectionary

Isaiah 7:10-16

New Revised Standard Version

Isaiah Gives Ahaz the Sign of Immanuel

¹⁰ Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, saying, ¹¹ “Ask a sign of the LORD your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah^[a] said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary mortals that you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son and shall name him Immanuel.^[b] ¹⁵ He shall eat curds and honey by the time he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good. ¹⁶ For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

Psalm 80:1-7

New Revised Standard Version

Prayer for Israel's Restoration

To the leader: on Lilies, a Covenant. Of Asaph. A Psalm.

¹ Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
² before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!

³ Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

⁴ O LORD God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

⁵ You have fed them with the bread of tears
and given them tears to drink in full measure.

⁶ You make us the scorn^[a] of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.

⁷ Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Psalm 80:17-19 **New Revised Standard Version**

¹⁷ But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.

¹⁸ Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.

¹⁹ Restore us, O LORD God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Romans 1:1-7 **New Revised Standard Version**

Salutation

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, ³ the gospel concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit^[a] of holiness by resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the gentiles for the sake of his name, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,

⁷ To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.