



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

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Reader: Shirley Scott

November 3rd, 2024

24th Sunday after Pentecost

WE GATHER AS GOD’S PEOPLE

Prelude

Lighting the Christ Candle:

We light this candle as a sign of God's Spirit at work in the world,

may its light brighten our spirits,

may the light of God shining through us, brighten the world.

The candle is lit.

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. The land we are worshipping on today is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

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 Hymn

We Are One

VU 402

1 We are one as we come,
as we come, joyful to be here,
in the praise on our lips
there's a sense that God is near.

We are one as we sing,
as we seek, we are found;
and we come needful of God's grace
as we meet, together in this place.

2 We are one as we share,
as we share brokenness and fear,
in the touch of a hand
there's a sense that God is here.
We are one as we care,
as we heal, we are healed;
and we share warmth in God's embrace
as we pray together in this place.

3 We are one as we feast,
as we feast, peace becomes the sign;
in the bread and the wine
there's a sense of love divine.
We are one as we come,
as we feed, we are fed;
and we feel God's refreshing grace
as we meet at table in this place.

4 We are one as we hear,
as we hear, heart and hand unite;
in the word we receive
there's a sense that God is light.
We are one as we leave,
as we love, we are loved;
and we seek justice in God's ways
as we move together from this place.

Call to Worship:

We are in a time between the past and the future.

God is in the space between the past and the future.

We are in a place between what we know and what we have yet to learn.

God knows what we know and what we have yet to learn.

We are in a reformation time when the church must re-form into what God dreams.

God is wisdom and knowledge that will guide the transformation.

We open our hearts and spirits to experience the wisdom of the in-between as we worship.

Let us worship God in our in-between time.

Passing the Peace

As the church, we gather together in the spirit of Ruth and Naomi. Where you go, I will go.
Where you dwell, I will dwell. Your God will be my God, and your people will be my people.

We are bound as one body in love of God, neighbor, and self. Let us share this message of unity as we exchange signs of peace and love.

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:

**O God,
you are our God
and we come as your people on earth.
Gather us in,
that we may remember the ties
that bind us together in your love.
Write your law upon our hearts,
that others may find us to be
generous and loving friends.
Strengthen us by your Spirit,
that we may live in love—
a love that transforms our lives
even as we help to transform
the lives of others.
In the hope of your miraculous love, we pray.
Amen.**

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Scripture: Ruth 1:1-18

The Story of Ruth and Naomi

¹ In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. ² The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon^[a] and Chilion;^[b] they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³ But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, ⁵ both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

⁶ Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had considered his people and given them food. ⁷ So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸ But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have

dealt with the dead and with me. ⁹ The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.” Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰ They said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” ¹¹ But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters. Why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹² Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³ would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.” ¹⁴ Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ So she said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.” ¹⁶ But Ruth said, “Do not press me to leave you, to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!” ¹⁸ When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Mark 12:28-34 The First Commandment

²⁸ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” ²⁹ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ ³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” ³² Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; ³³ and ‘to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” ³⁴ When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

The Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Wherever You May Go

MV 216

Wherever you may, go, I will follow,
and your people shall be my people too.

Wherever you may go, I will follow,
for I would be faithful, loyal and true.

1 Say the word and I will stay,
I will never go away,
we will travel side by side
and God’s love will be our guide.

Wherever you may, go, I will follow,
and your people shall be my people too.
Wherever you may go, I will follow,
for I would be faithful, loyal and true.

2 From beginning to the end
I will always be your friend,
when you need me, I'll be there,
you can trust my faithful care.

Wherever you may, go, I will follow,
and your people shall be my people too.
Wherever you may go, I will follow,
for I would be faithful, loyal and true.

Sermon

Your People are My People

RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD

Hymn

When Hands Reach Out Beyond Divides

MV 169

1 When hands reach out beyond divides
and hope is truly found,
each chain of hate will fall away
and bells of peace shall sound,
and bells of peace, of peace shall sound,
and bells of peace shall sound,
each chain of hate will fall away
and bells of peace shall sound.

2 When fear no longer guides our steps
and days of war are done,
God's dream for all shall live anew;
our hearts will heal as one,
our hearts will heal, will heal as one,
our hearts will heal as one,
God's dream for all shall live anew;
our hearts will heal as one.

3 When race and creed blind us no more,
a neighbour's face we'll see,

and we shall dance the whole world round,
for love will set us free,
for love, yes love will set us free,
for love will set us free,
and we shall dance the whole world round,
for love will set us free.

Offering:

**God of justice and love,
transform these offerings,
that they may be gifts of justice and love
for a world in need of hope and help.
Let love flow through these offerings,
that they may become gifts of love for the world.
Amen.**

Communion

God be with you all.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts;

We lift them up to God.

Let us give thanks to God!

It is right to give God our thanks and praise!

You are true to who you are and reveal to us the glories of your presence.

You are a God of love, who speaks against oppression and injustice.

You are a God of grace, who asks us to forgive those who are blind to their privilege,
even as you invite the world to learn from you.

You are the Creator God, who weaves the beauty of diversity into something fresh and new,
the garment of understanding and wonder.

You call us to follow you out of the familiar and comfortable, and to live by faith:

Calling upon your holy name,

and trusting in the power of your grace.

You invite us to be like Jonah and preach your word in Nineveh,

bringing salvation to our historical oppressors.

You move our hearts to say with Ruth;

“Wherever you live, that is where I will now live.

You will be family. Your God will be mine.

I will even die for you, buried next to you.”

Because you show your mercy to every nation and people upon the earth;

because you speak every language and delight in every culture;

we join in your praise with all the earth.

Because you have embraced people from every continent,
have walked with all of our ancestors,
continuing to hear your praise even in forgotten languages
that are sung continually around your throne;
we join in their endless praise, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed are they who come in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

You are holy and Jesus is Immanuel, God with us.
Leaving all that was familiar in heaven,
Jesus was born into the people and culture of Israel,
was taught the language and the traditions of his family,
worshiped in the Temple in Jerusalem.
Jesus came first to the lost sheep of Israel, people of his race, people of his culture.
Jesus also shared your grace with Roman oppressors, who lynched his people.
Jesus entered into deep theological discussions with a Samaritan woman,
breaking cultural taboos and stereotypes.
Jesus responded to the needs of a Syro-Phoenician woman,
going against the deeply ingrained prejudices that his society had taught him.
Jesus realized that you, O God, love the world so much
that you wanted everyone to believe,
even if it meant personal sacrifice.

When culture dictated that the least important was to wash feet,
Jesus broke with social convention,
left the seat of honor,
took off his robe,
and with a towel and basin in his hands,
knelt and washed the feet of the one who would betray him;
washed the feet of the one who would deny him not once but three times;
and the feet of those who would desert him to save their own lives.
Jesus invites us to do the same.

As an expression of culture,
Jesus took the bread and remembered the historical struggles of his people,
and shared it with everyone, saying:
“Take, eat, this is my body given for you.”

As an expression of culture,
Jesus took the cup and remembered the historical struggles of his people,
and shared it with everyone, saying:

“Drink with me all of you, for this is my blood poured out as a witness to the Divine Covenant of forgiveness with you and the whole world.”

Out of specific culture Jesus works cross-culturally to bring salvation to the whole world.

Jesus came not just to save his own people but all peoples.

Jesus came not just to save his own economic class but those of every class.

Jesus came not just to save those of his own gender identity, but those of every gender identity.

We have testified that this mystery of salvation found in Jesus Christ is for all, when we say:

Christ has died,

Christ is risen,

Christ will come again.

Cross-cultural Dancer, Wind of Change

use these simple gifts of bread and wine
to become for us the body and blood of Christ,
source of your transforming power.

Cross-cultural Dancer, Wind of Change

use the simple gift of our lives, our culture, our faithfulness, and our dreams
to become for the world, the church: the authentic body and devoted bride of Christ,
source of your transforming power.

Cross-cultural Dancer, Wind of Change

be with all those called to cross the social boundaries of race and culture
to boldly go where only your grace could send them.

Give them the courage to accept your challenge to pick up their cross and follow you.

Use their faithfulness to set the captives free,

to restore sight to the blind,

to liberate the oppressed,

and to share the good news of the availability of your grace to all.

Be blessed by the presence of Christ.

Be blessed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Be blessed by the creativity of The Divine Inspiration,

who will continually receive all our glory, thanks and praise.

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 Kindom, 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 lifeblood of Christ,
the cup of blessing.
(drink the juice)

The gifts of God for the people of God.
Thanks be to God!

Prayer after Communion

We give thanks, Creator God,
that you have nourished us at your table
by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ.
Strengthen our faith,
increase our love for one another,

**and send us forth into the world
united in courage and peace,
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;
through Jesus Christ.**

Amen.

Prayers of the People

Creator, in your mercy: **hear our prayer**

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

Help Us Accept Each Other

Help us accept each other
as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother,
each person to embrace.
Be present, God, among us
and bring us to believe:
we are ourselves accepted
and meant to love and live.

Teach us, O God, your lessons,
as in our daily life
we struggle to be human
and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people,
for all - not just for some,
to love them as we find them
or as they may become.

Let your acceptance change us
so that we may be moved
in living situations
to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance
until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness
and laughter's healing art.

So for today's encounters
with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance,
for justice and for bread,

we need new eyes for seeing,
new hands for holding on:
renew us with your Spirit;
God, free us, make us one!

Bread for the Journey:

What can we learn from the story of Ruth and Naomi?

Commissioning and Benediction:

God invites us into God's future,
where the one who makes all things new
has made their home among us.

**We are called and chosen,
together embraced by the God in whom tears, mourning,
crying, pain and even death will be no more.**

Remember God's future, for this is our story.

**Jesus says, "See, I am coming soon!"
and we respond, "Come, Christ Jesus!"**

The pathway is open before you this day.
It is a path of peace and hope,
brought to others by God's mighty love and wondrous blessings.
Go in peace, bringing hope to all that you meet.
Go, blessed ones, to serve God all your days.
Amen.

Choral Benediction

May The God of Hope Go With Us

VU 424

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.
May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Praying, let us work for peace,
singing, share our joy with all,
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

Postlude

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