



Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

Rev. Gregory Daly: Minister of Word & Sacrament

Rev. Carmen Llanos: Minister of Community Development

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

January 3, 2021

WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

We Three Kings

John Henry Hopkins Jr.

Call to Worship

We proclaim the birth of our saviour, sent to nurture and protect us: Jesus, Emmanuel, the promise that God is with us.

In hope, we follow.

We celebrate the wonder of Jesus, sent to heal and transform us: the Messiah.

In awe, we follow.

We worship the light of the world, sent to guide us forward: Jesus, born of God, our eternal grace.

In faith, we follow.

May God lead us in the New Year to follow Jesus Way in worship together.

Response

Arise, Your Light Is Come

VU 79

Words: Ruth Duck © 1992 G.I.A. Publications, Inc.

Music: William H. Walter

- 1 Arise, your light is come!
The Spirit's call obey;
show forth the glory of your God,
which shines on you today.
- 2 Arise, your light is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
proclaim the captive's liberty,
good tidings to the poor.
- 4 Arise, your light is come!
The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing;
God's power will make us strong.

Life & Work of the Church

Welcome to online worship



Land Acknowledgement

As we prepare for worship, we 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 Mississauga's of the Credit and Scugog, part of the Williams Treaty. Today, the meeting place around Toronto is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We are grateful for the opportunity to live and work on this territory. We seek to be mindful of broken covenants and the need to strive to make right with all our relations.



Candle Lighting

In the midst of shadows, or dazzled by the glare of lights we search for the Radiant One who gives life, hope, and joy. As we light this candle we encounter the light of Emmanuel, God with us, and warm to this light.

Opening Hymn

All Poor Ones and Humble

VU 68

Words: Katharine Emily Roberts & Dr. W. T. Pennar Davies

© 1928 Oxford University Press

Music: Welsh carol

- 1 All poor ones and humble and all those who stumble,
come hastening, and feel not afraid;
for Jesus, our treasure, with love past all measure,
in lowly poor manger was laid.
Though wise men who found him
laid rich gifts around him,
yet oxen they gave him their hay,
and Jesus in beauty accepted their duty;
contented in manger he lay.

Then haste we to show him the praises we owe him;
our service he ne'er can despise;
whose love still is able to show us that stable,
where softly in manger he lies.
- 2 The Christ Child will lead us, the Good Shepherd feed us
and with us abide till his day.
Then hatred he'll banish; then sorrow will vanish,
and death and despair flee away.
And he shall reign ever, and nothing shall sever
from us the great love of our King;
his peace and his pity shall bless his fair city;
his praises we ever shall sing.

Then haste we to show him the praises we owe him;
our service he ne'er can despise;
whose love still is able to show us that stable,
where softly in manger he lies.

Opening Prayer

*In the year gone by, in the year to come, and right at this moment, you are with us God.
Thank you for leading and loving, teaching and caring, for changing love at work in all of us.
In your love, you hold all of creation.
In your hope, you give new life.
In your peace, you begin again.
So, what had gone and what is yet to be, we declare, Alleluia, thank you, Holy God. Amen*

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD

Hymn

When Heaven's Bright With Mystery

VU 93

Words: Rob Johns © 1987 Carol Johns
Music: Sussex Carol

1 When heaven's bright with mystery
and science searches nature's art,
when all creation yearns for peace
and hope sinks deep in human hearts,
appear to us, O Holy Light;
lift from our eyes the shades of night.

And Now for Something Completely Different (Part 1)

Hymn

When Heaven's Bright With Mystery

VU 93

2 When Herod barter's power and lives
and Rachel's weeping fills the night,
when suffering's mask marks every face,
and Love's a refugee in flight,
reveal to us your word of grace
and make us witness to your peace.

And Now for Something Completely Different (Part 2)

Hymn

When Heaven's Bright With Mystery

VU 93

3 When fragile faith, like desert wind,
blows dry and empty, hope erased,
when withered grass and fading flower
proclaim again our day's brief space,
breathe on the clay of our despair
and work a new creation there.

And Now for Something Completely Different (Part 3)

Hymn

When Heaven's Bright With Mystery

VU 93

4 When heaven's bright with mystery
and stars still lead an unknown way,
when love still lights a gentle path
where courts of power can hold no sway,
there with the Magi, let us kneel,
our gifts to share, God's world to heal.

Prayer of Illumination

*The scriptures proclaim to us the message of your light.
Loving and ever present God, shine your light on us
so that we may discover and live a path that follows you.
Amen*

Jeremiah 31: 7-14

The Voice

Sing a song of joy for Jacob; shout for this greatest of nations.

Shout it out with praise *in your hearts*:

“O Eternal, save Your people—
rescue the remnant of Israel.”

⁸ Watch now, as I bring them from the land to the north,
as I gather *My people* from the ends of the earth.

Look who is among those returning home: the disabled and the infirm,
expectant mothers and even those giving birth—

All of these together in the multitude on its way home.

⁹ *Listen*, as they come home weeping *and repenting*,
praying *for direction, pleading for mercy* as I bring them back.

In that day I will lead them beside *quiet* streams of water
and *take them* upon a straight path where they will not stumble.

Why? Because I am Israel's parent, and they are as my firstborn.

¹⁰ Listen to the word of the Eternal, you nations *of the earth*;
take *this story* to distant shores and make it known:

The One who scattered Israel will now gather the *people*
and watch over the flock as a shepherd.

¹¹ For the Eternal has rescued the people
and redeemed them from those who are too strong for them.

¹² The redeemed will return home and shout for joy from the top of *Mount Zion*;
they will shine with the sheer goodness of the Eternal—

The *harvests of grain, wine, and oil*; the healthy flocks and herds.

Their lives will be like a lush, well-watered garden.

From that day on, they will never know sorrow.

¹³ **The eternal one speaks:**

Young ones will dance for joy;

others will join them, old ones too.

For I will turn their mourning into joy.
I will comfort *My people* and replace their sorrow with gladness.
¹⁴ From the overflow of *sacrifices*,
I will satisfy My priests;
All My people will feast on My goodness.
This is what the Eternal declares!

John 1: 10-18 New Living Translation

Before time itself was measured, the Voice was speaking.

The Voice was and is God.

²This *celestial* Word remained ever present with the Creator;

³ This speech shaped the entire cosmos.

Immersed in the practice of creating,

all things that exist were birthed in Him.

⁴This breath filled all things

with a living, breathing light—

⁵ A light that thrives in the depths of darkness,

blazes through murky bottoms.

It cannot and will not be quenched.

⁶ A man named John, who was sent by God, *was the first to clearly articulate the source of this Light.* ⁷This *baptizer* put in plain words the *elusive mystery of the Divine Light* so all might believe through him. *Some wondered whether he might be the Light,* ⁸but John was not the Light. He merely pointed to the Light. ⁹The true Light, who shines upon *the heart of everyone*, was coming into the cosmos.

¹⁰ The Voice entered our world, a world that the Voice made; and yet was not recognized by the world. ¹¹ Even though the Voice came to and for the people, they refused to *listen and receive* the Voice. ¹² But for all who did receive and trust, they were *reborn as children of God*; ¹³ this birthright was bestowed not by human power or initiative but by God's will.

¹⁴ The Voice took on flesh *and became human* and chose to live alongside us. We have seen the Voice, enveloped in undeniable splendor—the one *true* begotten of God—*evidenced in* the perfect balance of grace and truth. ¹⁵ John *the Baptist* testified about the Voice and shouted, “This is the one I've been telling you is coming. This person is much greater than I am because they existed *long* before me.” ¹⁶ Through this person we all receive *gifts of grace* beyond our imagination. ¹⁷ You see, Moses gave *us* rules to live by, but Jesus the Anointed offered *us* gifts of grace and truth. ¹⁸ God, unseen until now, is revealed in the Voice, God's only child, *straight from* the parent's heart.

These are essential words for us to consider in our lives today.

Thanks be to God

Sermon

What in the World?

Hymn

I Am The Light Of The World

VU 87

Words & Music by Jim Strathdee

© 1969 Desert Flower Music

“I am the light of the world!

You people come and follow me!”

If you follow and love
you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

- 1 When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and the shepherds
have found their way home,
the work of Christmas is begun:

“I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!”
If you follow and love
you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

- 2 To find the lost and lonely one,
to heal the broken soul with love,
to feed the hungry children
with warmth and good food,
to feel the earth below, the sky above!

“I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!”
If you follow and love
you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

- 3 To free the prisoner from all chains,
to make the powerful care,
to rebuild the nations
with strength of goodwill,
to see God's children everywhere!

“I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!”
If you follow and love
you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

- 4 To bring hope to every task you do,
to dance at a baby's new birth,
to make music in an old person's heart,
and sing to the colours of the earth!

“I am the light of the world!
You people come and follow me!”
If you follow and love
you'll learn the mystery
of what you were meant to do and be.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD



Offering

In our offering we share love with the world. Transform us in our giving, to be your agents of love. Amen

Prayers of the People

God we are called to be people of light.

In our connections with family and friends both near and far, your love Oh God is here.

In our remembering of those who must venture into the world to work and care for us and our needs, your love Oh God is here.

We sometimes find ourselves seeking favour with the wealthy and the powerful. As we are in touch with those who are sick, sorrowing, and troubled in our own community and in the world, your love, Oh God is here.

So often our faith does not translate into action. As we reach out to meet needs for food, shelter, and companionship and to work for justice and empowerment of the oppressed, your love, Oh God is here.

We give thanks for your love, love that we know in Jesus who inspired us to find new ways to be with and for each other.

We share the words that Jesus taught us to pray together.....



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, the power, and the glory for ever and ever.

Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

As With Gladness Those Of Old

VU 81

Words: William Chatterton Dix

Music: Conrad Kocher

- 1 As with gladness those of old
did the guiding star behold,
as with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright,
so, most gracious God, may we
evermore your splendour see.
- 2 As with joyful steps they sped,
to that lowly manger bed,
there to bend the knee before
Christ, whom heaven and earth adore;
so may we with eager pace
ever seek your throne of grace.

4 Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way;
and, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds your glory hide.

5 In the heavenly country bright
none shall need created light;
you its light, its joy, its crown,
you its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
hallelujah to our King.

Benediction & Commissioning



As you go from this place,
Receive God's grace and be open to new vision.
May the love of God, the power of the Spirit, and the
presence of Jesus be with you all.

Postlude

Angels From The Realms of Glory

Music: Henry Smart

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Other Resources for Today

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Other Lectionary Readings

Ephesians 1:3-14 New Revised Standard Version

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 just as he chose us in Christ[a] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. 5 He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight 9 he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance,[b] having been destined according to the purpose

of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, 12 so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; 14 this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Psalm 72: 1 to 7, 10 to 14

- 1 Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's son.
- 2 May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
- 3 May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- 4 May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.
- 5 May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- 6 May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- 10 May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.
- 11 May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.
- 12 For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
- 13 He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- 14 From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.