



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

November 22, 2020 – Reign of Christ / Trans Day of Remembrance



WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Call to Worship (*Catherine Tovell, Komoka, Ontario*)

Come to this sacred place where neighbours and friends gather.

We come to worship God in community.

Come to this sacred place where strangers are embraced.

We come to worship God in community.

Come to this sacred place where those who are stigmatized, bullied, minimized, ignored or simply forgotten are now called friends.

We come to worship God in community. (Catherine Tovell, Komoka, Ontario)

Response

Now There Is No Male or Female

Words: © 1985 Lynette P. Miller

VU 627

Music: Public Domain

Now there is no male or female,
now there is no free or slave,
now there is no Jew or Gentile
in the earth Christ died to save.

Christ has set us free for freedom:
we no more sing slavery's creed;
old submissions cannot claim us,
Christ has set us free indeed.

Death has no dominion o'er him,
so for us it holds no power;

life's own waters now have marked us
born to God this very hour.
From this moment and forever
dead to sin, alive in Christ,
born of water and the Spirit,
now in Christ we find our life.

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



Jesus announced the coming of God's reign—a commonwealth not of domination but of peace, justice, and reconciliation (A Song of Faith). While we acknowledge that violence happens for many unjust reasons, today we honour the lives of those who were victims of violence because of their gender identity and gender expression. This is an important opportunity for us to intentionally bear witness to the hardships of the trans community and we publicly mourn and honor the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten, giving their silenced lives new voice. It is an opportunity to meet hatred and indifference with love and respect. As we light this candle, we ask for guidance as we continue to follow Jesus' steps towards making this world a better place for all.

Opening Hymn

Spirit, Open My Heart

Words: Ruth Duck © 1997 The Pilgrim Press

Music: Traditional melody

MV 79

Refrain:

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

1. God, replace my stony heart
with a heart that's kind and tender.
All my coldness and fear
to your grace I now surrender.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

2. Write your love upon my heart
as my law, my goal, my story.
In each thought, word, and deed,
may my living bring you glory.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

3. May I weep with those who weep,
share the joy of sister, brother.
In the welcome of Christ,
may we welcome one another.

Spirit, open my heart to the joy and pain of living.
As you love may I love, in receiving and in giving, Spirit, open my heart.

Opening Prayer (*Joanna Fontaine-Crawford*)

Our God, whom we call by many names, but who calls each of us “Beloved,” we come in gratitude for the richness, the diversity, the great abundance of unique souls in this world. Thank you for the very complexity that distinguishes each one of us. May all people find those who will love and accept them and value their distinctive beauty and spirits. May we each feel the presence of your transcending mystery, may we know that we are part of a process of life that is rooted in divine, emanating love, and may we feel the comfort of knowing that every one of us is cherished by God. Amen.

WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD

Transgender Day of Remembrance



Every year on or around November 20th trans people worldwide gather for the International Trans Day of Remembrance (TDOR) to remember those lost to violence in the past year. It began in 1999 by transgender advocate Gwendolyn Ann Smith to commemorate the life of an African-American trans woman named Rita Hester who was brutally murdered in Boston in 1998. Her death came just weeks after the murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming had

roused a huge discussion on hate crimes against gay people, yet Rita's murder garnered no such response. Her murder and the lack of media attention to her death drove a candlelight vigil to begin in San Francisco the next year. The vigil commemorated all the transgender people lost to

violence since Rita Hester's death, and began an important tradition that has become the annual Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Ezekiel 34: 11-16,20-24 New Revised Standard Version

¹¹For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹²As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

Hymn

O Christ, the Word Incarnate

VU 499

Words: William Walsham How
Music: Felix Mendelssohn

1 O Christ, the Word incarnate,
 O wisdom from on high,
 O truth unchanged, unchanging,
 O light of our dark sky:
we praise you for the radiance
 that from the hallowed page,
a lantern to our footsteps,
 shines on from age to age.

2 Your people hold this treasure
 from you, its source divine,
a light that to all ages
 throughout the earth will shine;
it is the chart and compass
 that all life's voyage through,
mid mists and rocks and tempest,
 still guides, O Christ, to you.

3 O make your church, dear Saviour,
 a lamp of purest gold,
to bear before the nations
 your true light as of old;
O teach your wandering pilgrims
 by this their path to trace,

till, cloud and darkness ended,
they see you face to face.

Matthew 25: 31-46 New Revised Standard Version

³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, ⁴¹you did it to me.’ ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ ⁴⁵Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

These are Jesus' words for us to consider today.

Thanks be to God

Sermon

I was hungry and you gave me no food



Hymn

Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness

VU 375

Words & Music: © 1978 James K. Manley

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

- 1 You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing:
wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.
Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.
- 3 You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still;
and down in the city you called once again,
when you blew through your people on the rush of the wind.
Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.
- 4 You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,
with bold new decisions your people arise.
Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness,
Wind, Wind on the sea.

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD



Offering

Loving God, may our gifts of time and labour embody our desire to share and contribute to your coming reign among us.
Amen.

Prayers of the People

(Rabbi Reuben Zellman)

God full of mercy, bless the souls of all who are in our hearts as we celebrate Transgender Day of Remembrance. We call to mind today young and old, of every race, faith, and gender experience, who have died by violence. We remember those who have died because they would not hide, or did not pass, or did pass, or stood too proud. Today we name them: the reluctant activist; the fiery hurler of heels; the warrior for quiet truth; the one whom no one really knew.

As many as we can name, there are thousands more whom we cannot, and for whom no Kaddish may have been said. We mourn their senseless deaths, and give thanks for their lives, for their teaching, and for the brief glow of each holy flame. We pray for the strength to carry on their legacy of vision, bravery, and love.

And as we remember them, we remember with them the thousands more who have taken their own lives. We pray for resolve to root out the injustice, ignorance, and cruelty that grow despair. And we pray, God, that all those who perpetrate hate and violence will speedily come to understand that Your creation has many faces, many genders, many holy expressions.

Blessed are they, who have allowed their divine image to shine in the world. Blessed is God, in Whom no light is extinguished.

And so, friends, I invite you to pray with me, in the manner that Christ taught us...

The Lord's Prayer For Transgender Awareness

(Rev. Kim Sorrells)



Our Mother and Father, our beloved parent, in whom we move and breathe and have our being,

The hallowing of your name shines forth in the diversity of your children.

May your peace and love, justice and equality, inclusion and belonging reign here on earth as in heaven.

Grant that our transgender loved ones might have their daily needs met—that they might find gainful employment without discrimination; that they might have access to medical care without fear; that they might have their rights and lives protected, and that they might find a loving community to belong to and call their own.

Forgive us for the ways that we have fallen short and failed your transgender children. Forgive us of the times we turned away, or did not care; for the times we laughed or judged their unique expression of your image; for the times we have misspoken, asked too much, or failed to hear

As we forgive those who might have failed us.

Lead us away from the temptation to be complacent in the face of injustice. But instead give us courage to stand up and stand with your beloved children. For your love and justice is to be made manifest now and forever. Amen.

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

Closing Hymn

There's a Spirit in the Air

VU 582

Words: Brian Wren / Music: John Wilson
© 1979 Hope Publishing Company

- 1 There's a spirit in the air,
telling Christians everywhere:
'Praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world.'
- 2 Lose your shyness, find your tongue,
tell the world what God has done:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today!
- 4 Still the Spirit gives us light,
seeing wrong and setting right:
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today!
- 5 When a stranger's not alone,
where the homeless find a home,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world

Benediction & Commissioning



We are called to make sure that in this world, all are treated equally, all have the right to live a safe life, and every person is counted as a whole and complete person created in the image of God. Let us stand together and act together so that no one may remain broken.

Postlude

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Other Lectionary Readings

Psalm 100 NRSV

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth.
² Worship the LORD with gladness;
 come into his presence with singing.
³Know that the LORD is God.
 It is he that made us, and we are his;
 we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
 and his courts with praise.
 Give thanks to him, bless his name.
⁵For the LORD is good;
 his steadfast love endures forever,
 and his faithfulness to all generations.

Ephesians 1: 15-23 New Revised Standard Version

¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.