

Central Queens Pastoral Charge

United Church of Canada

December 24, 2020

10:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve

Communion Service

Central Queens Mission Statement

Central Queens United Church is a loving and living community called to support the life stages of all people; celebrating joy and sharing in pain.

Through faith and fellowship we are united by God's love to live and serve as Disciples of Christ.

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Quiet Preparation for Worship

Gathering

***Introit**

***Call to Worship** *Come and See*

Light to splinter darkness.

Hope to lift the soul.

Peace to ring the changes.

Grace resounds for all.

Night, the time for birthing.
Stars to guide us on.
Angels voices singing,
joining with our song.

Come and see the newborn.
Come with newfound joy.
Come, from heavens rejoicing ...
Mary's infant boy! ¹

**Like a newborn baby... vulnerable, naked, dependent ...
we come to worship God!**

Advent Candle Lighting

Voice 1: Love-shine, your moment has come. In the darkness of the womb you waited. Bathed in the balm of the star, you rest. Into a world sorely in need of your light, you are born.

Voice 2: When you knock on our door looking for room, may we welcome you. Like the Herald of your birth, call us to share your good news first with those who are poor, excluded and afraid.

**The light shines in the darkness and the darkness
cannot put it out.**

Light the Christ candle and all four advent candles.

Voice 1: The love of heaven has come to earth.

¹ Stephen J Maunder, from *Candles & Conifers*, published by Wild Goose Published by the Iona Community, UK.

Voice 2: The call of Christ begins in a baby's cry. Listen and respond.

We light the Christ candle. May it light the way.

***Prayer of Approach**

**God of our darkest nights and brightest days,
fill us with your hope as we celebrate with joyful hearts
the birth of Christ.**

**May familiar words speak to us with a new voice,
and may the song of Bethlehem reach into our hearts.
This we ask in the name of Jesus who is the Christ,
light of the world. Amen.**²

***Hymn of Praise**

"O Come, all Ye Faithful"

VU #60

Call to Confession

Prayer of Confession

**God of grace and truth,
you give the gift of yourself,
but we are often caught up in giving and receiving our own gifts.
You offer us new life in the baby born in Bethlehem,
but we cloak that birth in sentiment and ignore the cost of new
life. You shine in the world, but we dwell on the darkness around
us. You came to us in flesh and blood,
but we often fail to see you in the human lives beside us.
Forgive what we have been, shape who we are, and direct who we
shall be, through Christ our Saviour. Amen.**

² Stephen J Maunder, from Candles & Conifers, published by Wild Goose Published by the Iona Community, UK.

Assurance of God's Love

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light! Walk in the assurance of God's unconditional love. Be people of light and forgive one another.

Hymn

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

VU #44

The Word

Luke 2:1-20

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the

Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favours!”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.” So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

Anthem

Sermon

Hymn

“Will You Come and See the Light”

VU #96

Service of the Table³

Passing of the Peace

³ Communion Service created by the Rev. Andrew O'Neil, St. Paul's United Church, Riverview, NB.

Invitation to Give

Mary said, "... the Mighty One has done great things for me." God's done great things for us, too. Let us return a small portion of the love God lavished on us to "lift the lowly" and "fill the hungry with good things."

Offertory

"In Gratitude and Humble Trust"

VU #544

Presentation of Gifts (Money, bread and wine)

Offertory Prayer

Generous God, you have done great things for us. We offer these gifts in response to the great love you have shown us. We pray that they will be useful, not only to our congregation, but to the world where many babies are being born into poverty, injustice and hopelessness. This we do in the name of Christ the Jesus. Amen.

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

God be with you.
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 thanks and praise.

God of all times and places, we gather at your table of grace to recall your vision of hope for all people and for your world.

Through Abraham and Sarah, you revealed your promise in the surprise of a child. Through your prophets, you called your people to make way for peace and justice. In Jesus, you revealed your way of forgiveness and love. Through the ever-circling year, your Word discloses to us—again and anew—your promise for the restoration of all creation.

As we gather to share this sign of hope and fulfillment, we remember Jesus, the child born into obscurity, amid fear and uncertainty. We remember the fragility of that revelation, as well as the hope he stirred and imagination he inspired, and we sing...

(VU 55, v.1) **In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow; snow on snow.
In the bleak midwinter, long ago.**

We remember Jesus, the One who blazed a new and risky path of extravagant generosity and of passionate concern: temple-shaker, world-maker, rule-breaker, risk-taker; the author and finisher of our faith.

We remember Jesus' self-giving love and the offer of himself for others, even those who gave him over to death, and we sing...

(VU 55, v.2) **Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign;
in the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ.**

On that night, in the midst of great confusion and fear, Jesus broke bread with friends, saying, "This is my body, which I give for you and for all. When you do this, remember me."

With a blessing, he took the cup and offered it to them saying: "This cup is God's covenant which is given for all. When you drink this, remember me."

(VU 55, v.3) **Enough for him, whom cherubim worship night and day, a breast full of milk, and a manger full of hay. Enough for him, whom angels fall down before, the ox and ass and camel which adore.**

Come to us, life-giving Spirit of God. Bless us, these gifts, and what we do here, so that we might sing your song of love for your people and for your world.

Prayers of the People

God of All, we pray for your people.
For those who are afraid and oppressed, may you give courage.
For those suffering conflict and fear, may you bring peace.
For those who long for food and water, may they be filled.
For those who long for justice, may it be fulfilled.
We pray also for ourselves and our community.
That those in hospital and in care feel your strength.
That those who are alone and anxious feel you near.
That those who are ill in body and in spirit be comforted.
That our friends and family be blessed by healing and love.

Hear our prayers, O God,
and in your mercy, answer.

We pray these things, trusting in God's faithfulness revealed:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

(VU 55, v.4) **What can I give him, poor as I am?**

If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb,

if I were a wise man I would do my part;

yet what I can I give him—give my heart.

The Lord's Prayer

**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.

Communion

The bread that we break
is our sharing in the life of Christ.
The Cup for which we give thanks
is our sharing in the life of Christ.

Come, for all is ready, these are the gifts of God for the people of God. Jesus turned no one away, nor do we... all are welcome at this table.

Prayer after Communion

God of shepherds and Kings, you gather us by the light of the star of promise. You lead us not only to hope for the future, but to trust in your presence and renewal of life in every time and place. Guide us this night, by the light of that same star. Lead us to the manglers of this world, where uncertainty is met with the renewal of life and the transformation of this world is most deeply felt in love, one with another. Be with us on this most wondrous of nights, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Going Forth

Candles are lit

Hymn

"Silent Night, Holy Night"

VU #67

Blessing

May the grace of God,
star-forming Creator,
and the love of Christ,
be born among us,
in the communion of the Holy Spirit,

opening hearts and lives to hope and joy,
be with us this night,
this Christmastide,
and forevermore. Amen ⁴

Postlude

Choral Amen

⁴ Stephen J Mauser, from *Candles & Conifers*, published by Wild Goose Published by the Iona Community, UK.