

**Central Queens Pastoral Charge
United Church of Canada**

December 24, 2021

10:00 p.m.

Christmas Eve

Communion

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.

Gathering for Worship

Prelude

Welcome

Quiet Preparation for Worship

Hymn **"O Come, all Ye Faithful"** **VU #60**

Call to Worship

With eyes wide open
and our ears on edge,
**we look for shepherds
and listen for the songs of angels.**
In the light of winter's moon,

**we gather outside the door of a mystery,
wondering if we dare go enter.**

With folks and friends we love,
with strangers we have just met,

**we gather, becoming the holy family
for this time and in this place.**

With all creation, we gather 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.

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

Burst into the world
as a wrinkled and bloodied newborn child, and shock us with your
vulnerability
and your crying need.

Come into the world
as one of the insignificant ones
for whom the world can find no room. Confront us with the
squalor of the animal shed where Mary laboured for you,
cried out for you, shed her blood for you,
went to death's gates to push you into life.

Come into the world
as a child on the edge, granted safe space
by a man not your father.

Come to us in your defencelessness, your mother's agony for you,
your foster-father's acceptance of you.

Come to us as we wait.

Maranatha. Amen.

Written by Annie Heppenstall

Hymn

"Still, Still, Still"

VU #47

Call to 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.**

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.

The Story of Jesus Birth

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

Meditation

Prayers of the People

God of the starry heavens and the good old earth, Eternal God, God with us, you have come among us in the figure of a baby, a newborn reaching out to us, to bring a smile to our lips and hope to our hearts. Thank you for your tenderness with which you touch our lives.

Sound a bell

This Christmas, as we remember the baby lying in a manger, we pray for peace ...

Peace in all the places where there is anger or war or fear ...

Peace in all the hearts that know sorrow or stress ...

We pray for people who will not sleep safely tonight because of conflict in their lives ...

(Silence)

Cradle all those people and places in your love
so the world may sleep in heavenly peace this night.

Sound a bell

This Christmas, as we remember the mother Mary rocking her baby, we pray for all children born this Christmas season ...

Watch over mothers and fathers, grandparents and folk
hoping for the best for their newborns ...

(Silence)

Help us create communities where every child is valued
and every family has enough ...

May families rejoice because Christ the Saviour is born for us,
for each of us and for all of us.

Sound a bell

This Christmas, as we remember the father Joseph protecting his little one, we pray for all those watching over the helpless and the hopeless this season.

(Silence)

Be with all those who must work this holiday to keep the world safe and to care for those in need ... Be with those who are sick or sad or lonely so that each one will know your tender touch.

Sound a bell

God of the starry heavens and the good old earth,
Eternal God, God with us,
this Christmas, as we remember the shepherds coming in haste
and the wise men coming in wonder,
open our hearts to reach out to the Christ Child,
to receive the gift you offer us in Jesus,
even as we offer our love to you in his name.
Bless us in the year ahead
so we can share your love with all the lives that touch ours.

Sound a bell

May our hearts sing with the Christmas angels,
Glory to you, O God, and on earth, peace for all who wonder at
your love. Amen.

Communion

May it be well with you.

And also with you.

Life is a gift and we are to celebrate it.

May we rejoice in the beauty of this special time.

We celebrate tonight God-with-us
beyond our words, beyond our images,
for we know God is beyond those things.
But tonight we find joy in the image of God
coming to us in the form of the Christ child.
We sense God's presence in creation
and in the immensity of our universe,
in the incredible display of life on this planet,
and in our consciousness
of something far greater than ourselves.
As Christians we rejoice in the birth of Jesus.
In him we see the fullness of possibility
to make God visible in our lives.
Like all of us he grew in wisdom as he aged.
He questioned. He searched for meaning.
He shaped his convictions.
He experienced love and came to know
love's connectedness with God.
He stood firmly in his own Jewish tradition
and preached good news to all people dreaming
of a better humanity.
We rejoice that he taught us not to imagine
a manipulative, intervening God,

but one who is as close as breath
and as soft as a whisper,
yet as powerful in the focus of our lives,
as were the mighty warriors the Hebrew Scripture
but drawing us toward the good.

We rejoice that Jesus led people to discover
the sacred in the ordinary,
in the lowly, in everyday life,
in human yearnings to be better people,
and in being neighbour to one another.

Bread and wine,
the fruit of vine and earth.

He gave us these to keep us connected to the story:
We remember the night before he died,
according to our tradition,
when he shared a meal with his friends.

Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it.

He poured out the wine.

He gave thanks for all the blessings in his life
honouring the God so faithfully present
in his life and ours.

“Do this remembering me.”

We break this bread as Jesus did remembering
the call to love generously and faithfully,
whatever the cost.

We pour out wine remembering
our responsibility to be bearers
of forgiveness, tolerance, and understanding.

May these ordinary things be blessed.
For they represent both the ordinary and the extraordinary
as Jesus calls us to follow him.

Come, for all is ready. This table is open to all. As Jesus did not
deny anyone a place at his table, we do not deny anyone a
place at this table.

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.

Distribution

Jesus said, I am the bread of life... whoever comes to me will
never be hungry. Take and eat.

Jesus said, I am the cup of blessing... whoever comes to me will
never be thirsty. Take and drink.

Prayer after Communion

We give you thanks O, God for being with us
through friend and stranger,
in whatever has been,
in the circumstances of life now,
and in whatever the future holds for us.
And when we go out, enable us to share
generously of this wonderful gift we have received. Amen.

Hymn

“Joy to the World!”

VU #59

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.

Solo

“Silent Night, Holy Night” *by Rachelle Belair*