

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

December 25, 2022

10:30 a.m.

Christmas Day

Central Queens Mission Statement

Central Queens United Church is a loving and living community called to support the life stages of all people; celebrating the joy and sharing in pain. Through faith and communion, we are united by God's love to live and serve as Disciples of Christ.

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Carol "Once in David's Royal City"

VU #62

John's Prologue

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

Thanks be to God!

The lighting of the Christ Candle

One candle to remind us of the prophets,

Candle Lit

the second for John the Baptist,

Candle Lit

the third for Mary,

Candle Lit

and the fourth for us.

Candle Lit

Now, the central candle for Jesus, born today.

Jesus is the light of the world.

Candle Lit

Mary gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in strips of cloth,
and laid him in a manger – there was no room for them to stay in
the inn. (*Luke 2:7*)

***Carol** “O Come, All Ye Faithful”

VU #60

John the Baptist

I am ‘the voice of one shouting in the desert:

Get the road ready for the Lord;

make a straight path for him to travel!

Every valley must be filled up,

every hill and mountain leveled off.

The winding roads must be made straight,

and the rough paths made smooth.

All mankind will see Gods salvation!"

"I baptize you with water, but someone is coming who is much greater than I am. I am not good enough even to untie his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

Thanks be to God!

Poem "In December Darkness"

written by Ann Weems

The whole world waits in December darkness
for glimpse of the light of God.
Even those who snarl " humbug!"
and chase away the carolers
have been seen looking toward the skies.
The one who declared he never would forgive
has forgiven,
and those who left home
have returned,
and even wars are halted,
if briefly,
as the whole world looks starward.
In the December darkness
we peer from our windows
watching for an Angel with rainbow wings
to announce the hope of the world.

Carol "Joy to the World!"

VU #59

Jesus is born

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.

Thanks be to God!

Poem “Mary, Nazareth Girl” written by Ann Weems

Mary,
Nazareth girl:
what did you know of otherworldly beings
with messages from God?
What did you know of men
when you found yourself with child?
What did you know of babies,
you, barely out of childhood yourself?
God-chosen girl:

what did you know of God
that brought you to this stable
blessed among women?
Could it be that you had been ready
waiting
listening
for the footsteps
of an angel?
Could it be there are messages for us
if we have the faith to listen?

Choir ??????????????

The Shepherds

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 who 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.

Thanks be to God!

Poem written by Ann Weems

Is it also sewn up -- my life?
Is it at this point so predictable,
 so orderly,
 so neat,
 so arranged,
 so right,
that I don't have time or space
 for listening for the rustle of angels' wings
 or running to stables to see a baby?
Could this be what he meant when he said
 listen, those who have ears to hear...
 look, those who have eyes to see?
Oh God, give me the humbleness of those shepherds
 who saw in the cold December darkness
 the coming of light
 the Advent of Love!

Carol “The First Nowell”

VU #91

The Magi

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed

his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea: for so it has been written by the prophet: Then Herod secretly called for the Magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then, he sent them to Bethlehem saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out and there ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Thanks be to God!

Poem “The Gifts of the Magi”

written by Ann Weems

Oh Lord, I'd like to go to the stable this night!

I'd run

even through the dark

to lay my gifts at your feet!

Lord, why couldn't I have been there?

I needn't have been a king,

perhaps just a shepherd child

or someone sent from the inn

to check on the progress of the birth...

Or are you waiting this night in other stables

for me
to bring my gift?
Are you waiting for me to run
even through the dark and cold of the night?

Carol "All Poor Ones and Humble"

VU #68

Offertory Invitation

Offertory

***Presentation of Offering** "In the Bleak Midwinter" VU #55 v. 4

***Offertory Prayer**

Christmas Prayer

And then...

The Magi returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

An angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, "Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him. So get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to leave." So, Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod died.

Thanks be to God!

Poem “It is Not Over” written by Ann Weems

It is not over,
 this birthing.
There are always newer skies
 into which
 God can throw stars.
When we begin to think
 that we can predict the advent of God,
 that we can box the Christ
 in a stable in Bethlehem,
 that's just the time
 that God will be born
 in a place we can't imagine and won't believe.
Those who wait for God
 watch with their hearts and not their eyes,
 listening
 always listening
 for Angel words.

Carol “Go, Tell it on the Mountain” VU #43

Benediction

“The Work of Christmas” by Howard Thurman
When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flock,

the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among others,
to make music in the heart.

Go in hope, peace, joy, and love...to spread the beauty of Christmas.