

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

December 17, 2023

10:30 a.m.

Second Sunday in Advent

Joy

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 communion, we are united by God's love to live and serve as Disciples of Christ.

Gathering for Worship

Prelude

Welcome

Welcome in the name of the Christ.

**Welcome to this place of worship, situated on the
unceded traditional lands of the Mi'kmaq people.**

Welcome to this place of retreat and refuge, worship and wonder.

It is good to be here.

It is indeed good to be together.

Announcements

Birthdays & Special Occasions

Lighting the Candle of Joy

Reader One: When I look around, I see shadows of sadness,
families who have lost loved ones, people in prison,
people who are isolated and feel on their own...

Reader Two: When I look around, I see shadows of grief, people
dreading the holidays because of painful memories,
or because they don't want to spend another
Christmas alone...

Reader One: In the face of sadness, we light a candle of joy...

Reader Two: In the face of grief, in the face of loss, we light a
candle of joy...

Light the third candle in your Advent wreath

Reader One: May the light from this candle overwhelm the world.

Reader Two: May the light from this candle say to all that God's
joy is coming, on earth as it already is in heaven.

Reader One: Friends, be not afraid, God's joy is at hand!

Hymn "Jesus Came Bringing Us Joy" MV #33

Prayer **Advent God: still we need you to come -- to release us
from the bonds of anxiety and fear, to comfort those
who mourn, to release so many in our world from the
prisons of poverty, prejudice and war. We await the coming
of your Messiah. Come, Lord Jesus, come. Amen.**

Bible Presentation

***Introit** “Hark the Glad Sound” VU #29 v.1

***Call to Worship**

Keep shadows without and light within;
 let your face shine that we may be saved.

Keep fear without and justice within;
 comfort, comfort your people.

Keep chaos without and life within;
 may those who sow in tears reap with shouts of gladness.

Keep despair without and joy within;
 deliver us that we may rejoice.

Come, O Advent God,
 and reveal your promise in us now.

***Hymn** “People, Look East” VU #9

Prayer of Approach

God of Mary, Mother of Jesus – and all of the lowly who seek to be lifted –

God of Isaiah, who felt the Spirit upon him calling him to bring Good News—

Let your Spirit fall upon us in this hour.

Out of the ruins, remind us of your everlasting covenant.

Anoint us as we seek to share and experience your Good News.

Bind our broken hearts.

Awaken us to the liberation within and among us.

Embolden us to proclaim your favour

as we seek you more deeply.

With Jesus, we share in the ancient prayer...

Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, which 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.**

Responsive Reading Luke 1:47–55 Song of Mary VU #898–899

***Hymn** “Hope is a Star” VU #7 vv. 1, 2, 3

Time for All Ages

***Hymn** “Hope is a Star” VU #7 v.4

Call to Transformation and New Life

We gather together in this season of Advent
anticipating peace, attempting to cultivate love amidst
commotion, grief, despair and uncertainty.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

**Womb of Creation, we often get caught up in what we do not have –
the material things we lack, the access and privilege we may lack, the answers that seem to escape us in crucial moments. Forgive us for the times we forgot to remember you. Hold us accountable for the moments we failed to see you in the blessings of ages past. Help us reconnect with our joy and our gratitude. Remind us to name our joys, our miracles, our deliverances, our redemptions one by one by one, for you are there in them all. Amen.**

Assurance of God's Unending Love

God hears what is named aloud, what is named within and what is yet to be named. Go forth knowing that the Spirit of the Lord is upon you, and this joy you have – the world didn't give it and the world can't take it away. Amen.

Presentation of Our Gifts

Offertory Invitation

We come in the name of the One who filled the hungry, who lifted up the lowly, and brought the powerful ones down from their thrones. We aim to share our gifts and resources so that we may continue the mission of God and become the Good News we wish to see.

Offertory

***Presentation of Offering** “As With Gladness Men of Old” VU #81 v.3

***Offertory Prayer**

We dedicate these gifts that have been shared for the strengthening of the beloved community. Let these gifts usher joy into this world and signal to the people that God is still setting captives free. Amen.

Listening for the Word

Sacred Readings

Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the broken-hearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favour,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;
to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.
Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.

John 1:6–8, 19–28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ‘Who are you?’ He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, ‘I am not the Messiah.’ And they asked him, ‘What then? Are you Elijah?’ He said, ‘I am not.’ ‘Are you the prophet?’ He answered, ‘No.’ Then they said to him, ‘Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?’ He said,

‘I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,
“Make straight the way of the Lord”’,

as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, ‘Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?’ John answered them, ‘I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.’ This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Anthem

Sermon

Reflective Music

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Sung Response is the from O Come, O Come Emmanuel

VU #1

Come, Christ Jesus, be our guest,
and enter our lives today with your blessing.
We are lonely for you and the joy you bring.

Draw near to us in friendship and faithfulness
so that in this season which combines celebration in the face of
uncertainty, we may know your presence...
and sing with all your people:

rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Come, Christ Jesus, be our guide,
and show us the way to wisdom and gratitude.
We are thankful for the kindness we know in friends and good
neighbours,
in warm houses and warm smiles,
which hold off the darkness and fears for the future.
Encourage us to reach out to those who need your embrace and
ours...
so that together we may sing of your presence:

rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Come, Christ Jesus, be our hope
and touch us with your healing and grace.
We remember before you all those we know and those known to
you alone
who are living with loss or illness this season,
those who face depression or discouragement,
and all who will find it hard to be merry this year.

Silence

Shine the light of your comfort into their lives...
as we sing of the hope that dawns in your love:
rejoice, rejoice, Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Come, Christ Jesus, be our Sovereign,
and claim your rightful place in our hearts.
Our world is struggling to find the justice and mercy you call for.
Draw near to our leaders and all citizens working for peace and justice,
and those striving to mediate or contain conflicts.
Encourage honourable action and co-operation on all sides.
Give hope to people under oppression
and to those living with fear or hunger day by day.
Hasten the day when the world's peoples will live as neighbours
reconciled in your truth and freedom.
For the coming of this day we pray. Amen.

Responding to the Word

***Hymn** "There Was a Child in Galilee" MV #134

***Blessing**

May the God of peace bless you;
May your spirit and soul and body be kept sound.
May you go forth knowing you are held by
The One who calls you faithful.
Amen.

***Choral Benediction** "Glory to God In the Highest" MV #124

***Please rise as you are able.**