

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

December 24, 2023

5:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve

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

O Come, All Ye Faithful

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,

O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem.

Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels;

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,

O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Announcements

Lighting Advent Candles

Reader 1 The season of advent has come to an end.

Reader 2 In these four weeks we have remembered God's preparation for the coming of Christ:

Reader 3 Our longing for God, our need to repent and receive new life, God's promise of a special person, and the willingness of John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zachariah, Joseph and especially Mary, to say yes to God's plan.

Reader 1 So tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

Reader 2 The candle we light is for Christ, our Saviour.

Reader 3 The One who is Light of the World.

Reader 1 God's word Incarnate.

Reader 2 The Prince of Peace.

Reader 3 *Lighting of the Christ Candle*

Hymn "Joy to the World"

VU #59

Prayer

**God of grace,
we rejoice that you chose to dwell among us.
Fill us with your spirit,
that we may hear again
the announcement of Jesus coming,
and proclaim the good news
of your promise fulfilled. Amen.**

Musical Selection "Away In a Manger" by the Sunday School

The Christmas Story

Scene 1- Luke 2:1-5 (*Mary and Joseph on the way to Bethlehem*)

Notes: Mary and Joseph wander about the sanctuary where they eventually come to the door -- inn keeper.

Mary's tummy was getting very big. She could feel her baby move inside her. It wouldn't be long before her baby would be born.

Then one day Joseph came in from his shop where he made furniture for people. "Bad news, Mary!" he said. "The soldiers came and told me all of us have to go to the place where we were born. They want to count how many people live in Israel."

"But you were born in Bethlehem," said Mary. "That's a long way from Nazareth." "I know. And it's going to be even harder for you, because our baby is almost ready to be born."

So Mary and Joseph packed clothes and some food. And some clothes for the baby that Mary could feel moving in her womb.

It was a very long walk. Sometimes Mary rode on the donkey, but most time she walked.

Hymn O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie;
above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light;
the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Scene 2- Luke 2:6-7 (Mary and Joseph and Baby Jesus in the stable)

Notes: Joseph knocks at the door. Inn keep looks out and shakes his head. Then comes out the door and points to the stable. He goes back in and shuts the door.

When they got to Bethlehem, there was no room! The whole town was crowded with other people who had come to be counted. Joseph knocked on many doors, but nobody had any room for them.

"The best I could find was in the place where they keep the animals," said Joseph. "It isn't very clean. And it's really smelly. But at least the cold wind won't blow on us." Mary began to cry. She felt so very, very tired, and she knew the baby was ready to be born.

Joseph helped Mary lie down, gently, on the straw beside the animals. It hurt when the baby was being born. Mary cried. She wanted her mother to be with her. Sometimes she even screamed too, it hurt so much. That night, in the animal barn, Jesus was born. Mary wrapped Jesus in strips of cloth and laid him in a cattle trough --- a manger.

Hymn "What Child is This"

VU #74

Scene 3 - Luke 2: 8-14 (*Angels and shepherds*)

Notes: Before the reading begins the shepherds talk loudly -- a commotion. One comes in.

A few hours later, they heard a commotion outside. A man walked in the door. He looked around as if he was very mixed up.

When he saw Joseph and Mary and Jesus, he walked over to them. His eyes opened really wide. "Is this God's chosen one?" He asked.

Mary and Joseph looked at each other. Then at the man. "Yes," said Joseph. "But how did you know?"

"We were up in the fields, looking after sheep. It was the middle of the night." The shepherd stopped. His mouth opened a few times, but no words came out. He was trying to talk about something that was so wonderful, he couldn't find the right words to tell about it.

"There were bright things, all over the sky!" He said after a while. "And there was music, all around us! Some of the shepherds said it was Angels singing!" The shepherd looked at little Jesus. "Can I bring my friends in to see?"

(Notes: Other shepherds come in) The shepherd went to the door and called to his friends. They all came in through the door and worshipped the baby Jesus.

Hymn The First Noel

The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay.
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,
born is the King of Israel.

Scene 4 - Matthew 2:1-11 *(Magi on their way to Bethlehem)*

Notes: Magi wander about the sanctuary where they eventually come to the stable.

After Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph stayed in Jerusalem for quite a while. They were waiting for Mary to feel stronger and for Jesus to get a little bigger before they went back to their home in Nazareth. Being born is very hard work for both the mother and the baby.

Now, in a country far away, a bright star shone in the sky. Some Magi saw the star. Magi are sometimes called "Wise ones" or "kings."

"That bright star means something important is happening," said one of the Magi. "It's happening in a faraway land. We should go and see."

"Yes," said one of the other Magi. "When a bright star appears in the sky, it means that a king is born."

So they loaded food and clothes onto their camels. Then they started off. As they walked along, the star seemed to move ahead of them. "I think the star is leading us somewhere," said one of the Magi.

So they followed the star. It led them to Bethlehem. They found Mary Joseph and baby Jesus there. They gave Jesus special gifts that they had brought with them -- shining gold, sweet-smelling incense and a perfume called myrrh. They worshipped Jesus -- Emmanuel -- God with us.

Hymn We Three Kings

We three kings of Orient are bearing gifts we traverse afar
field and fountain, moor and mountain following yonder star.
Oh, star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright
westward leading, still proceeding guide us to thy Perfect Light.

Musical Selection

Sr Choir

Offertory

Presentation of Offering

"In the Bleak Midwinter"

VU #55 v. 4

Offertory Prayer

Love shone from the stable at Bethlehem;
love will come clear from these offerings:
a love that reaches out to link hands with the
suffering,
**a love that encourages the dispirited,
a love that will accept the vulnerable,
a lot of worked out in faith community,
a love that crosses oceans and ethnic groups,
a Jesus-type love.**
**In the name of Jesus these offerings will
be blessed. Amen.**

Solo for peace by Mae Dykerman

Sharing the Light (Lit from the Christ Candle, shared with the community.)

Hymn "Silent Night, Holy Night" VU #67

Blessing

Go Tell it on the Mountain

**Go, tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere.
Go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born. Amen.**