

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

December 24, 2023

10:30 a.m.

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Love

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 Love

Reader One: Because too many people are wandering in the wilderness, because too many people are sitting in the valley of the shadow of death, because too many of our conversations are laced with conflict and bitterness, we light candles...

Reader Two: Because people all over the world are suffering, and we're often too distracted to notice, we light candles...

Reader One: One for hope, one for peace, one for joy, and one for love...

fourth candle in your Advent wreath is lit

Reader Two: May the light from these candles overwhelm the world.

Reader One: May the light from these candles illuminate the valley of the shadow of death.

Reader Two: And may the fire from these candles burn away whatever would prevent God's love from being born among us.

Reader One: Friends, be not afraid, even now — even now — God's love is overwhelming the world, on earth as it already is in heaven!

Hymn Jesus Came Bringing Love

MV #33

Prayer

Advent God, who calls us always to be witnesses to your love for our world: may we say "Yes" to your call. Come, this holy season, into our hearts and minds, our lives and actions. Help us to learn your will for our time and to have the courage to live it. 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 love within;
 deliver us that we may rejoice.
Come, O Advent God,
 and reveal your promise in us now.

***Hymn** "Once in Royal David's City" VU #62

Prayer of Approach

**God with us—
the one who takes us from the tent to the throne—
the one who prepares places for us**

**and promises rest from our enemies—
we open our hearts and souls to the beauty of your kin-dom.
We seek to hear the precious news once again
that we might be continually renewed, transformed and awed
by your abundant love, everlasting peace, miraculous hope and
quenchless joy.
May our praise and prayers be pleasing to you.
May our lives reflect the beauty you have birthed in us.**

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 Psalm 89:1–4, 19–26

VU #804

***Hymn** “Hark the Glad Sound”

VU #29

Call to Transformation and New Life

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

**God of mystery and mercy,
you came to offer us love,
but we confess we can be stubborn and
selfish in the ways we live.
You came to reconcile all people,
but we often nurse grudges and resist repairing relationships.
Forgive who we have been,
amend who we are,
and direct who we shall be,
through Jesus the Christ who reaches out to us
from the manger and the cross. Amen.**

Assurance of God's Unending Love

“Love came down at Christmas; Love all lovely, love divine.
Love shall be our token, Love for plea and gift and sign.” Christina
Rosetti
We meet God's gift of love in Christ Jesus,
whose forgiveness restores us for whatever lies ahead.
Thanks be to God for this hope!

Presentation of Our Gifts

Invitation to Generosity

In this season that has become synonymous with gift giving, let us reflect on the gifts of love, hope, joy, and peace. Let us respond to

the generosity of the Giver of all things beautiful. Let us give generously to share God's beauty in our community.

Offertory

***Presentation of Offering** "As with Gladness Men of Old" VU #81 v.3

***Offertory Prayer**

Generous God, we give thanks for all the beautiful resources you have given to us. Let these gifts bring glory and honour to you and beauty and peace to your creation. Amen.

Listening for the Word

Sacred Readings

Luke 1:26–38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy

Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.’ Then Mary said, ‘Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.’ Then the angel departed from her.

Anthem

Sermon

Reflective Music

Responding to the Word

Hymn “All Who Hunger”

VU #460

Holy Communion

And so it begins, our God, our annual trek to the manger. We call to mind all that lies waiting for us to attend to.

We may find ourselves overwhelmed.

We may find ourselves profoundly grateful.

But we know, like Mary and Joseph, that we can only come one step at a time, in whatever condition we find ourselves.

We come in the midst of all our living, seeking holy moments of communion with you.

(pause)

All Sing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

VU #1 v. 1

You, O God are the great Christmas Architect. You, who hurled the stars into space, created the swirls of our fingerprints so that no

two are alike. You make life to stir within us and call us to yourself for new life, over and over again. It is you for whom we hunger, you who quench our thirst.

(pause)

All Sing “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” VU #1 v. 1

Grateful for those moments of quiet and calm, grateful for this food prepared for us, remembering your love offered in the kindness of strangers, the devotion of friends and family, the comfort of the gentle places of the heart, for you, we wait. As so it begins again your love made known in bread and wine, in flesh and blood, in death sighs and birth cries – in all, you are with us, and we bring the offering of our hearts.

(pause)

All Sing: “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” VU #1 v. 1

(Bread and cup are presented)

When we **break open** our lives and share them with others on the journey, we understand that bread, broken and shared, brings us Christ’s life.

When we **pour out** our lives and share them with others on the journey, we understand that the wine of our living, poured out and shared, brings us Christ’s life.

Bread and cup remind us that Christ is with us on the journey as we begin again.

(Communion is served)

The Bread of our Living – Christ, for whom we wait.
The Cup of our Sharing – Christ, our Love.

Come for all is ready.

After Communion Prayer

Holy one, we have been nourished again at the table of your hospitality. None of us have been turned away - may we turn away none of our sisters, brothers - folk. We have experienced your justice, your mercy and your peace. May we seek justice for the oppressed, mercy for the enslaved, peace for the quarrelling and troubled. We return soon too familiar places of living, may we be ready always to meet you, our host, our guest. Let your love be in us for the honouring of your creation and the building of your community. By your Spirit's power may we walk as witnesses to the grace we have known in Jesus. Amen.

***Hymn** "She Walked in the Summer"

VU #12

***Blessing**

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.

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

*Please rise as you are able.