

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

March 25, 2025

10:30 a.m.

Lent IV

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 fellowship, 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

***Introit** “Spirit Open My Heart”

MV #79 (Refrain x2)

Bible Presentation (Bible is brought forward during the singing of the Introit)

The Candle of Joy

On the 4th Sunday of advent, we lit a candle to welcome the love that can bring us together and make us whole. We rest in the glow of that candle now.

Silence

As we hold this dream of love tightly to us,
we acknowledge how hard it is to recognize
this love as being lived out fully
and unconditionally as it should.

We grieve the places where indifference
and hatred are so overwhelming
that love doesn't get a chance
to be experienced by those who need to know
it is for them, too.

Our hearts break at how love
is withheld and denied
from those who need it most.

As the shadows of Lent surround us,
we extinguish our candle of love,
just for today,
as we seek to break down
all barriers that exist
between us and love

Candle is extinguished.

Hymn "Throughout these Lenten Days and Nights"

VU #108 v.1

Call to Worship

We gather as a community,
for the Lord has rolled away the burdens of our past.

**We come to celebrate our journey of freedom,
from the wilderness to the promise fulfilled.**

In this sacred space, we remember the faithfulness of our Creator,
as we are nourished by the gifts of life.

We gather in gratitude.

Let us lift our hearts in praise,
for the Divine leads us into a land of promise.

**With joy, we worship and give thanks,
for love and goodness endure forever!**

Come, let us worship together,
in the spirit of unity and grace!

***Hymn** Come In, Come In, and Sit Down

VU #395

Prayer of Approach

**Holy One,
we gather in your sacred presence,
surrounded by the warmth of this community.**

**We seek your light to guide us,
a spark of hope to uplift our spirits.
Open our hearts to recognize your whispers
in the rustle of leaves and the laughter of friends.**

**May your healing touch restore us,
and may we be transformed by your love,
flowing like a river, nourishing all who seek.**

**In this sacred space,
draw us closer to one another
and to you, our source of hope.**

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,
forever and ever.
Amen.

Responsive Reading Psalm 32

VU #759

***Hymn** "Teach Me, God to Wonder"

VU #299 vv. 1, 2

All God's Children

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

**Loving God,
we gather in humility,
recognizing your generous gifts,
yet we confess that we often stray,
like the wayward child seeking more.**

**Forgive us for taking your blessings for granted,
for demanding more while squandering what we have.
Help us to remember the joy of your embrace,
and to return to you when we lose our way.**

**When we fail to cherish the love and grace
you offer, draw us back into your arms,
that we may celebrate the abundance of your mercy
and steward your gifts with gratitude.**

Amen.

Words of Grace

Holy God,
no matter how far we wander,
you stand ready to embrace us,
to enfold us in your love and grace.

Like the father in the parable,
your heart is open, waiting,
welcoming us home with joy.

In the name of Jesus,
we affirm your forgiveness,
a gift that restores and renews.

May we, too, extend this grace,
celebrating every return,
as we journey together in your light.

Amen.

***Sung Response: “Halle, Halle, Halle”**

VU #958

Presentation of Our Gifts

Invitation to Generosity

Giving God,
as we gather in this sacred space,
we remember the gifts we have received—
the beauty of creation and the warmth of community.

With grateful hearts, we come before you,
seeking to offer our lives and share your grace.
May our offerings reflect our love for you,
nurturing hope and kindness in this church and beyond.

Let us be stewards of your mercy,
building a brighter path together.

We now present our gifts to you, O God.

***Presentation of Offering**

*** Offertory “In Gratitude and Humble Trust”**

VU #544

***Offertory Prayer**

**Gracious Spirit,
we offer these gifts with open hearts,
tokens of our gratitude for the blessings we share.
May they be transformed into vessels of compassion,
serving the needs of our community and beyond.**

**Help us recognize the abundance in our lives,
and inspire us to share generously,
reflecting love and kindness in all we do.
May our offerings bring hope and connection
to all who seek it.**

Amen.

Listening for the Word

Prayer for Understanding

Soften our hearts, O God,
as we listen to the sacred words of scripture.
May our hearts become fertile soil,
ready to receive your living Word.

Nurture us with your wisdom,
that we may grow in love and understanding,
and bear fruit in our lives and community.

Amen.

Sacred Scripture

Joshua 5:9–12

9 The Lord said to Joshua, “Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt.” And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

10 While the Israelites were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho.

11 On the day after the Passover, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain.

12 The manna ceased on the day after they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna, but they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Luke 15:1–3, 11b–32

1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him.

2 And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

3 So he told them this parable:

11b “A man had two sons.

12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.

16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger!

18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands."

20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

21 Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

25 Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on.

27 He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.'

28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him.

29 But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends.

30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!'

31 Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours.

32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

Anthem

Sermon

Reflective Music

Responding to the Word

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Gracious God,

you've brought us together as a diverse community,
to embody the spirit of love and connection.

Help us stand united in faith and understanding,
as we share meals and spread kindness,
so that all may feel your love,

turn their hearts toward compassion,
and walk in the light of truth.

Faithful God,
wrap us in your hope.

Creator God,
you made this beautiful world and called it good.
We lift up the earth, tender and worn,
hurt by our choices and our endless wanting.
Fill us with a deep respect for all you've created.
Guide us to make better choices,
so we can care for your gifts and protect them for those who
come after us.
Help us cherish the balance of life,
nurturing all the precious threads that connect us.

Faithful God,
wrap us in your hope.

Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace,
you show us God's loving grace.
Speak to the hearts of your people,
in these times when folks are quick to judge,
and neighbours and nations clash in anger.
Teach us to seek peace together,
calling those in power to work for the common good.
Turn us away from fear and fighting,
so we can be known as peacemakers,
reflecting your love in all we do.

Faithful God,
wrap us in your hope.

O Christ, healer of hearts,
you want each of us to be whole and well.
We pray for those who've lost their jobs,
that they may find true abundance again.
Bring rest to those who are weary,
comfort to those who are hurting,
and hope to those feeling lonely.
In this quiet moment, we lift up the names of those we care for:

Silence

Faithful God,
wrap us in your hope.

Spirit of power and promise,
fill us with hope today,
so we can live faithfully,
encouraging one another with the love we see in Jesus Christ.
Amen.

***Hymn** "Though Ancient Walls"

VU #691

***Benediction**

Go in peace, like the soft whisper of the wind through ancient
trees;
be of good courage, like the mountains standing firm against the
storms.

Cling to what is good,
and let your heart be a wellspring of kindness,
flowing like a hidden brook in the glen.
Strengthen the fainthearted,
support the weary,
and offer your hand to those in need.
Honour each soul as a sacred flame,
love and serve the Divine in every face you meet.
May the blessing of the Almighty—
Creator, Christ, and Spirit—
fall upon you like a gentle rain,
and remain with you through all your days.
Amen.

***Choral Benediction** “May the God of Hope Go with Us” VU #424

Postlude

*Please stand as you are able.