

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

December 24, 2024

5:30 p.m.

Christmas Eve - Communion

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.

Prelude Christmas Music

Greeting

Merry Christmas eve to you all! Tonight, we gather to celebrate the greatest gift ever given -- that is the birth of Jesus, God's child. This service is a time when we can prepare our hearts to celebrate God's love for us.

Introit "Shepherd, Shake off Your Drowsy Sleep" AGCS #44 v.1

***Shepherd, shake off your drowsy sleep,
Rise and leave your silly sheep;
Angels from heav'n around there singing,
Tidings of great joy are bringing.
Shepherds! the chorus come and swell!
Sing Noel, O sing Noel!***

Call to worship

" The people walking in darkness have seen a great light!"

"A great light!" -- " a great light!" --- " a great light!"

" for to us, a child is born, to us, a son is given!"

" His name is Jesus!"

Hymn "O Come, All Ye Faithful"

VU #60

Lighting the Advent Candles

One: We have been getting ready and now Jesus is here.

Jesus brought hope to the world and to our lives.

We light the candle of hope. *(Candle is lit)*

Two: Jesus taught his followers and us to be peace-makers. This

is the candle of peace. *(Candle is lit)*

One: Jesus wants us to be happy and filled with joy. This is the

candle of Joy. *(Candle is lit)*

Two: Jesus brought love to his world and ours. This is the candle

of love. This is the Christ candle for Jesus' birthday.

(Candle is lit)

One: Tonight we light the last candle, the Christ Candle --

Emanuel, which means, God-is-with-us!

One: Jesus came to the world as a tiny baby but he was a great gift from God. He showed us how to bring hope, peace, joy, and love to others and to the earth. The flames of the Advent candles remind us of all these things.

Hymn “A Candle is Burning” VU #6

Prayer

**Dear God,
we pause to breathe deeply, still our hearts,
and open our minds.
Come and be with us this evening.
Just as the star guided the magi,
lead us to your presence—
in our moments of worry and fear,
and in our times of joy and celebration.
In all things, we seek you and long to know you are near.
Amen.**

Interactive Nativity Reading: Luke 2:1–20

Instructions for Participation

Characters/Parts: We will need:

Narrator, Mary, Joseph, Angel, Shepherds, and Congregation.

The Congregation will be encourage everyone to join in with sound effects and actions. **Put the congregational parts on the screen!**

Narrator:

"Tonight, we tell the story of Jesus' birth from the Gospel of Luke. But this is not just a story to hear—it's one to experience together! Everyone has a role to play. Listen carefully for your part!"

Scene 1: The Journey to Bethlehem**Narrator**

"In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem."

Mary and Joseph (walks to Manger, settles in)

Hymn "Away in a Manger"

VU #69

Narrator (wait until Mary and Joseph arrive at the manger)

"While they were there, the time came for Mary to give birth. She wrapped the baby in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the inn."

Congregation: (make animal sounds—moo, baa, neigh—to set the scene in the stable)

(This should be "flashed on the screen for the congregation)

Scene 2: The Angels and the Shepherds**Narrator**

"Nearby, shepherds were in the fields, keeping watch over their sheep at night."

Shepherds *(pretend to watch over sheep;
hold sticks or pretend staffs)*

Congregation *(make soft sheep sounds: "Baa, baa!")
(This should be "flashed" on the screen for the congregation)*

Hymn "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks" VU #75

Narrator

"Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified!"

Angels *(spread arms wide)*

Congregation *(gasp loudly!)
(This should be "flashed" on the screen for the congregation)*

Narrator

"Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy for all people: Today, in the city of David, a Saviour is born. He is Christ the Lord!"

Congregation *(raise hands and say together)*

*"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth!"
(This should be "flashed" on the screen for the congregation)*

Scene 3: The Shepherds Visit the Manger

Narrator

"The shepherds said to one another, Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened!"

Shepherds Start walking to the manger

Narrator

"They hurried to the stable and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger."

Shepherds (*point to the "baby"*)

Narrator *"This is the Saviour!"*

Shepherds (*point to the "baby"*)

Narrator *"This is the Saviour!"*

Scene 4: Sharing the Good News

Narrator

"The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen."

Shepherds (*raise arms*)

Congregation (*join in*) *"Glory to God in the highest!"*

Hymn "Joy Is Now in Every Place"

VU #45

Story time

Offering of our Gifts

Prayer of dedication

Anthem

Holy Communion ¹

Opening responses

Starlight and song
have once again summoned us
home to the stable.

**And so,
with the beasts of the field,
and the humble and the high,
we have come to gaze
on the face of God.**

Story and supper
have once again drawn us
home to God's table.

**And here,
through words worn smooth with telling,
and gifts given life through sharing,
may we once again see and know you, Emmanuel –
God with us and for us.**

Confession

Christmas Child –

¹ Communion Service used with permission: "The Feast of the Christ Child," by Pat Bennett, published by Wild Goose Publications.

**becoming flesh, you showed what it was
to serve and share,
to live and love,
as God intended.**

**As we stand at the stable door
we confess that all too often
our living and loving
have displaced or distorted your image,
rather than making it present and plain.**

Silence

Kyrie

**Christmas Child,
as we kneel again at your manger
restore, renew and reshape us
so that our serving and sharing,
living and loving
may,
now and always,
embody you in the world. Amen.**

Invitation

This is the feast of the Christmas Child –
a place where heaven and earth coincide,
and eternity once more condenses into time
as God is seen and known
in the simple and the small,

in story and song,
and in bread and wine.

So come –
whether you are drawn by joy or driven by need,
whether you walk with confident step, or stumble on faltering
feet, whether you understand the meaning, or can only wonder at
the mystery – come and gaze on the face of God
for all are welcome in the stable.

Communion Narrative

The story of the Christmas Child
is the story of Jesus –
joyfully accepting the restriction of flesh
and entering the constraint of time
to show how life and love
fully lived and freely offered
transcend their limitations:

It is the story of Jesus –
seated at a table with his friends
breaking bread

the bread is broken

and pouring wine

the wine is poured

to show how life and love

fully lived and freely offered
change the world.

It is the story of Jesus –
accepting a kiss and carrying a cross
to show how life and love
fully lived and freely shared
count no cost.

It is the story of Jesus –
confined in a tomb but rising with the dawn
to show how life and love
fully lived and freely shared
defy and defeat even death.

It is the story of Emmanuel –
God, now and always
with us
and
for us.

Thanksgiving

So, as we take this bread and wine –
in remembrance of that life and love –
we give thanks
for the healing and hope
which spring
from the coming, living, dying and rising
of the Christmas Child.
And,
with those who gather round his crib,
with the angel choirs,

and the singing planets,
we join in creation's song of joy ...

Sanctus and Benedictus *Sung*

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed be the one who comes in the name of the Lord,
The King of Israel,
The Holy One of God,
Hosanna in the highest.**

Consecration

And as we follow the example of Jesus
send down your Holy Spirit
on us, and on these gifts of bread and wine,
that the story of the Christmas Child –
of life fully lived and freely shared –
may continue on
in us and through us,
until the world is transformed.

The Peace

May the peace of the Christmas Child –
the soft peace of a starlit night,
the noisy peace of a crowded stable,
the challenging peace of life and love
fully lived and freely shared –
enfold, enrich and energise you.

And also you.

The sharing of the gifts

Emmanuel
who came to us in the Christmas Child,
and who comes to us still
through the living, loving and sharing of others,
offers these signs of his Presence
and invites us to join our story with theirs.
Come, for all is ready -- all are welcome.

Bread and wine are shared.

Closing prayer

The starlight and song,
story and supper,
which called us home
now compel us to go out.

**May we who have knelt
at the manger
always have room
to hold within ourselves the Christmas Child.**

**May we who have gazed on the face of God
learn to live fully,
and to share freely
all that we have and are.
So may Emmanuel – God with us and for us –
be once again
incarnated in the world. Amen.**

Note: Candle is lit from the Christ Candle, shared with the congregation.

Hymn “Silent Night, Holy Night”

VU #67

Christmas Eve Blessing

On this holy night, may peace fill your hearts and warmth surround your homes.
May the light of love shine brightly in each of you, bringing hope, joy, love, peace and kindness to all you meet.
Carry the light of this season into the world with love and grace. Amen.

Hymn “Go, Tell It on The Mountain”

VU #43