

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

December 14, 2026

10:30 a.m.

Third 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

Announcements

Birthdays & Special Occasions

Lighting the Candle of – Exodus / Peace

Reader 1 This morning we light the third candle,
the rose candle —
the colour of dawn breaking through night,
a pause in the heaviness,
a gentle lifting of the heart.

Joy comes not as fulfilment,
but as an interruption:
a sudden glimpse of hope,
a crack of light in a worn-out world.

**May this flame remind us
that joy does not wait for us to be ready.
It comes quietly,
in small mercies,
guiding us onward.**

Candle of Peace is lit.

Reader 2: Let this light lead us
into the quiet promise of God's nearness.

Amen.

Bible Presentation (During singing of the Introit)

***Introit** "Hope is a Star" VU #7 v.3

***Call to Worship**

In this season of deep purple,
we gather around a single rose-coloured light -
a candle that interrupts the solemn waiting
with a whisper of joy.

**We come, weary and hopeful,
ready for a breath of grace.**

Not the joy that fixes everything,
but the joy that finds us in the middle of things -
 in unfinished stories,
 in fragile days,
 in the places where light slips through.

**We come with open hearts,
 trusting that even a small flicker
 can guide our steps.**

Come, let us worship the One
 whose joy surprises,
 comforts,
 and awakens us.

***Hymn "People Look East"**

VU #9

Prayer of Approach

**Holy One,
 you meet us in the middle of our stories,
 not at the ending where everything is resolved,
 but in the tender places
 where we wait and wonder.**

**Open our eyes to the small joys
 that interrupt our weariness:
 the warmth of a familiar voice,
 a memory that steadies us,
 the courage of Mary's song,
 the honest questions of John.**

**May your Spirit breathe through this gathering,
loosening our burdens,
lifting our hearts,
and preparing a space within us
for joy to take root.**

Amen.

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 1:46b-55 VU #898-899

***Hymn** “My Love Colours Outside the Lines” MV #138 vv. 1, 2

Time for All Ages

***Hymn** “My Love Colours Outside the Lines” MV #138 vs. 3, 4

Call to Confession

On this Sunday of joy,
we pause from the weight and worry of our days.
Not to pretend all is well,
but to make room for the God
who meets us right in the middle of things.

So I invite you now,
step into this moment of honesty and grace.
Bring what is unfinished,
what is tired,
what is trembling for light.

Come, let us enter a time of confession together.

Prayer for Transformation and New Life

Let us come before God
with the openness Advent invites.

Holy Love,
we confess that too often
we wait for perfect moments
before allowing joy into our lives.
We cling to worry,
forgetting that joy can arrive
even in our uncertainty.

**Interrupt us, O God,
with your compassion.
Let small mercies open our hearts.**

When despair grows heavy,
when our questions feel larger than our faith,
remind us of John the Baptist —
still able to seek you
even from a prison cell.

**Remind us of Mary,
singing her brave song
into an uncertain world.**

May Your joy find us
exactly as we are.

Amen.

Assurance of God's Unending Love

Friends, hear this good news:
God meets us in the middle of the story.
We are held.
We are forgiven.
We are renewed.
And joy is already rising.

Thanks be to God.

***Hymn “Halle, Halle, Halle”**

VU #958

Presentation of Our Gifts

Invitation to Generosity

In this season when joy arrives as a welcome interruption,
we offer our gifts in the same spirit —
small signs of gratitude,
gestures of trust in the One
who is already at work among us.

Let us bring our gifts with open hands
and expectant hearts.

Offertory

***Presentation of Offering**

“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” VU #149 v. 4

***Offertory Prayer**

O God,
receive these gifts -
simple, hopeful, offered in love.
Bless them with your joy,
that they may bring light
to places still waiting for dawn.
Amen.

Listening for the Word

Prayer for Understanding

God of quiet revelations,
open our hearts to your Word
as you opened Mary’s heart to her song.
Interrupt our assumptions.
Lift our eyes.

Guide us by the soft light of joy,
deep and surprising,
gentle and true. Amen.

Sacred Word

Isaiah 35:1–10 (NRSV)

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,
and rejoice with joy and singing.
The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.
They shall see the glory of the Lord,
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,
and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
“Be strong, do not fear!
Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.
He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;
then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,
and streams in the desert;
the burning sand shall become a pool,
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.
No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Matthew 11:2–11 (NRSV)

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him,
“Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?”

Jesus answered them,
“Go and tell John what you hear and see:
the blind receive their sight,

the lame walk,
the lepers are cleansed,
the deaf hear,
the dead are raised,
and the poor have good news brought to them.
And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me.”

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John:

“What did you go out into the wilderness to look at?
A reed shaken by the wind?
What then did you go out to see?
Someone dressed in soft robes?
Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.
What then did you go out to see?
A prophet?
Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.
This is the one about whom it is written,
‘See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.’

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

Anthem

Responding to the Word

Prayer

Let the words of my mouth,
and the listening of all our hearts,

be held in your grace, O God.
May your peace rest upon us
and guide us into what is true and life-giving.
Amen.

Sermon Joy as Interruption

Reflective Music

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Holy One,
you walk with us through wilderness and wonder.
You slip joy into our days
like a warm ember in cold hands.

Today we pray for those
who are waiting for healing,
for clarity,
for strength.

May joy find them in small ways —
a comforting voice,
a quiet dawn,
a shared laugh that softens the ache.

We pray for those who feel imprisoned
by fear, illness, grief, or loneliness.
May joy interrupt their darkness
as it did for John,
a sign that hope is still alive.

We pray for our communities,
our Island,
our fragile earth.
Guide us toward compassion,
toward justice,
toward the gentle courage of Mary
who dared to sing of a world remade by love.

And for our own hearts,
we pray:

May joy root itself within us
like a candle glowing against winter —
small, steady,
enough for the next step.

In the Spirit of the One
who interrupts despair with life,
we offer these prayers. Amen.

***Hymn** “It Came upon the Midnight Clear”

VU #44

***Blessing**

Go now with the courage of Mary's song,
the honesty of John's questions,
and the quiet joy
that slips unexpectedly into weary places.

May the rose light of this day
guide your steps,

lift your spirit,
and remind you
that even in the middle of the journey
God is already near.

Go in peace —
and may joy find you
around every corner. Amen.

***Choral Benediction** “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” VU #1 v. 1

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