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*Central and Algonquin United
Methodist Churches*

Sunday, December 14, 2025

With Pastor Marty Johnston

Mission Statement:

**Connecting all people to God by building bridges
of caring, outreach, and acceptance.**

PASTOR’S OPENING PRAYER *

God of joy and gladness, we thank You for the gift of this day and for the song of praise still ringing in our hearts. You are our help and our hope, our strength and our salvation, and we rejoice because You are faithful in every season.

On this Advent morning, light Your joy within us once again. Not the shallow kind that fades quickly, but the deep, steady joy that comes from knowing You are making all things new.

Teach us to be people who carry joy into the world—joy that listens, joy that welcomes, joy that encourages, joy that reflects the heart of Christ.

We pray with expectation, in the name of Jesus, who brings joy to the world and joy to our hearts.

Amen.

TIME FOR YOUNG CHRISTIANS

Advent Candle Lighting - Joy

First Reader: In the midst of our waiting and longing for God to make the world right again, we cling to the truth that God has saved, God is saving, and God will save. So today, we join our voices with the prophet Isaiah, who calls us to live in the joy of the truth of God’s salvation.

All: We choose to believe that the day is coming when “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” (Isaiah 35:10).

Second Reader: We light this candle of joy as a sign of the Truth that sets us free to live in joy as we wait and work for the day when all creation will flourish together.

Light the third candle (pink) of the Advent wreath. (Joy)

INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE READING:

Before we hear today's Scripture, remember where John the Baptist is. The bold prophet who once pointed to Jesus with absolute confidence is now sitting in a prison cell... wondering if he got it right.

Life hasn't unfolded the way he expected. He imagined a Messiah who would come with fire, judgment, and sweeping change. But Jesus is healing, forgiving, and lifting up the lowly. So John sends the question many of us have whispered at some point:

Jesus... are You really the One?"

And Jesus doesn't scold him. He simply says, "Look at what's happening. Look again. God is moving."

This passage reminds us that even faithful people struggle with doubt—and that Jesus meets our questions with grace, not shame.

With that in mind, let's listen to Matthew 11:2–11.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 11: 2-11

2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah,
he sent his disciples

3 to ask him, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect
someone else?”

4 Jesus replied, “Go back and report to John what you hear and see:

5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are
cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is
proclaimed to the poor.

6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

7 As John’s disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd
about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed
swayed by the wind?

8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No,
those who wear fine clothes are in kings’ palaces.

9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more
than a prophet.

10 This is the one about whom it is written: “I will send my messenger
ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.

11 Truly I tell you, among those born of women there has not risen
anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the
kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God

All: **Thanks be to God**

SERMON

When Faith Has Questions

INVITATION TO OFFERING

As God has met us with joy and faithfulness, let us now offer our gifts with grateful hearts, trusting that God will use them to bring light and hope to others.

OFFERTORY

“Peace Within”

Paxton

DOXOLOGY

UMH 95
OLD HUNDREDTH

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise him, all creatures here below;
Praise him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Gracious God, receive these gifts and use them for Your joyful work in the world. As You opened the eyes of the blind and lifted the lowly, open our hands and lift our hearts to serve You with gladness. May our offering today shine with the joy of Christ, in whose name we give and pray.
Amen.

HYMN

“My Hope is Built”

UMH 368
MY HOPE IS BUILT

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE,

Leader: Lord, in Your Mercy,
All: Hear our prayer.

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Leader: Lord, in your Mercy

All: Hear our prayer.

Pastor:

With confidence in the God who meets us in our questions, whose joy rises even in uncertain places, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

For the Church

Faithful God, You are the One who brings good news to the poor and strength to the weary. When Your people feel like John—waiting, wondering, longing—remind us that You are still at work opening eyes, lifting the lowly, and restoring joy. Give Your Church courage to trust You even when the way is unclear, and to witness boldly to the signs of Your kingdom among us.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the World

God of all compassion, Teach the leaders of the nations to seek wisdom rather than force, mercy rather than advantage, and justice that reflects Your heart for the vulnerable. Where people sit in their own prisons of fear or violence, let Your light break through. Where despair has taken root, let Your joy surprise and sustain.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Creation

Creator of every good thing, Your world testifies to Your joy and generosity. Guard the land, waters, and creatures entrusted to our care. Restore what has been damaged, and teach us to live gently within the beauty You have made. Let creation itself rejoice as Your

redemption draws near.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Our Community

God of steadfast love,

Bless Sault Ste. Marie and all our surrounding communities. Where relationships are strained, bring healing; where households feel overwhelmed, bring peace; where people feel unseen or forgotten, surround them with the warmth of Your presence and the care of neighbors. Make this community a place where joy is shared freely.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Those in Need

Merciful Lord,

Draw near to all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit.

Be strength for the fainthearted,

rest for the weary,

and hope for those who wait for answers.

Comfort the grieving,

heal the sick,

and reassure those who feel caught between faith and uncertainty.

Let each one know that Your joy can reach even the hardest places.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

★ For Our Advent Journey of Joy

God of Joy,

As we light the candle of joy today,
shine that same light within us.

Free us from cynicism, hurry, and fear.

Help us, like John, to look again and see

the quiet, surprising ways Christ is already moving.

Shape us into people who carry joy into every corner of our lives—

joy that listens, joy that welcomes, joy that serves,
joy rooted in the faithfulness of Jesus our Lord.
Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Pastor:

Into Your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray,
trusting in Your mercy through Jesus Christ our coming King,
who taught us to pray:

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who 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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS – December 14, 2025

The Worship Committee is looking toward the new year and is always looking for additional ushers, liturgists, and communion stewards. Also, Robin Myers appreciates help with hosting the online service (it's REALLY easy to do!). If you cannot attend the service in person, but watch online regularly, this would be perfect for you. Contact Robin at (906)632-0682) if you would be willing to help.

**** Please Remember** that the youth will be outside on the 1st Sunday of the month after the service to collect a Mission Love Offering and new this year, we now have a ***Misson's Change Jar*** (located on the table at the top of the stairs). All proceeds will go toward helping elementary school children with their needs. \$579.00 has been collected so far this fall and \$620.00 has been spent on food and hygiene purchases. There was a carryover balance from last spring to cover the difference. The Borad of Education and Elementary school have sent a Thank You card for all our church has done.

Missions: is collecting shelf stable foods for elementary schools and also personal hygiene items. The kind of items needed are; small bottles of combined shampoo and conditioners, bar soap, small deodorant, as well as food items; such as oatmeal packets, pop tarts, granola bars, cracker packs, Chef Boyardi, canned soup and vegetables, easy Mac and cheese, and ramen noodles. There is a tub outside the elevator upstairs and in the fellowship hall that food can be left in. *They would also like to Thank the members who have drop off items.*

Join us for Bible Study

Sunday at 9:30 AM in the CUMC lounge led by Raymond Bell.

Central Birthday/Anniversary

Dec., 15th – Gwen Worley **Dec., 15th** – Mary Arfstrom

Dec., 16th – Pastor Marty **Dec., 20th** Dorothy Morley

Dec., 10th – Karen & Jim Aikins (3rd)

Dec., 24th - Doris & Mike Kelly (54th)

Save the Date

Mon., Dec. 15th – **Rebecca's Circle** will meet at 1:30pm in fellowship Hall, *to be hosted by Teri Lamoreaux & Lori Horner.*

Wed., Dec. 17th – Family Night at CUMC Fellowship Hall
5:30 PM – 7 PM. Dinner is served before the lesson.

Thurs., Dec.18th - Blue Christmas Service, 6:30 p.m. @ AUMC

Wed., Dec 24th – Christmas Eve service @ 7 p.m. Social gathering after services



Nursery is available for infants through age 3 during worship with Mallory Baier. The nursery is located downstairs, and ushers will be happy to assist you.

* CLOSING HYMN

“It Is Well With My Soul”

UMH 377
IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

“ The Snow Lay on the Ground”

arr. Hughes

Financial gifts can be mailed to Algonquin UMC or Central UMC at:

111 E. Spruce St., Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783

Website: www.cumcsoo.org

Online Giving: <https://cumcsoo.org/give/>

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Mon.-Thurs 9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m.

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