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*Central and Algonquin United
Methodist Churches*

Sunday, December 21, 2025

With Pastor Marty Johnston

Mission Statement:

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

Central and Algonquin UMC's Worship Gathering
Pastor Marty Johnston
December 21, 2025
Forth Sunday of Advent
CCLI License# 3999519

Ushers/Greeters: Barb Carlisle, Kris Donarski

Liturgist: Sherri Hutchens

Advent Readers: Jim & Kathy Bankson

PRELUDE “Come, O Saviour of the World” arr. Chesterton

CHOIR INTROIT “Come, O Redeemer, Come” F. Ortega

WELCOME/MISSION STATEMENT

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

***Call to Worship:** (Inspired by Psalm 80)

Leader: Come, people of God—you who feel strong today and you who feel worn down; you who come with gratitude and you who come with questions. The God who shepherds Israel is the God who meets us here.

People: *Stir up Your strength, O Lord, and come to save us.*

Leader: When life feels overwhelming, when the world seems frayed at the edges, when we wonder if God still hears—the ancient prayer of the psalmist becomes our own:

People: **Restore us, O God; let Your face shine on us.**

Leader: We gather not because we have everything together, but because we trust the One who does—the One who listens, who sees, who never stops working for our good.

All: With Mary and Joseph, we choose to wait, watch, and listen for the way of Love instead of responding in fear to the world's judgment.

Reader: We light this candle of love as a sign of our faithfulness as we seek, find, and follow Emmanuel, God with us.

(Light the fourth candle of the Advent wreath.)

INTRODUCTION TO SCRIPTURE READING:

This morning we come to a part of the Christmas story that doesn't always get center stage. We usually picture shepherds and angels, a manger and a star...but before any of that happens, there's Joseph.

Joseph doesn't get many lines in Scripture, but in this moment, his whole world is turned upside down. What he thought his life would look like... suddenly doesn't. What he believed he understood... suddenly feels uncertain. And right in the middle of his confusion, God steps in with a word of love, a word of reassurance, a word that changes everything.

Matthew reminds us that Christmas isn't just about a baby being born—it's about God entering real lives with real fears and real questions. It's about the kind of love that chooses to draw near when everything feels messy or unclear.

So we listen now to Joseph's story—a story of courage, trust, and the surprising ways God works.

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 1: 18-25

18 This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit.

19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:

23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

24 When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

25 But he did not consummate their marriage until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.

Leader: The Word of God for the People of God

All: **Thanks be to God**

CHOIR ANTHEM

“Christmas in About Three Minutes”

arr. M. Weston

SERMON

When Love Shows Up Unexpectedly

INVITATION TO OFFERING

As God's unexpected love has come to us, let us offer our gifts with gratitude and trust, that His love may continue to shine through us.

CHORAL ANTHEM "Lully, Lullay, Emmanuel" arr. D. Eddleman

OFFERTORY "Song of Thankfulness" Denton

DOXOLOGY

UMH 95
OLD HUNDRETH

**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 to bring light, hope, and love into the world; shape our hearts as we give, that we may serve You with joy through Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN "Joseph Dearset, Joseph"

TFWS 2099
JOSEPH DEARSET, JOSEPH

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE,

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

Pastor:

With confidence in the God whose love shows up even in our confusion, whose presence steadies us when our plans fall apart, let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

For the Church

Faithful God, You come to Your people in ways we do not expect—speaking courage into fear and calling us, like Joseph, to trust Your love even when the path is unclear. Restore Your Church, O Lord. Where we hesitate, give us courage; where we cling to our own plans, open us to Yours; and where we grow weary, remind us that Emmanuel is still with us, still guiding, still loving, still redeeming.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the World

God of all nations, Speak Your word of peace where fear and suspicion hold sway. Guide leaders to choose compassion over convenience, justice over self-interest, and truth that makes room for the dignity of every person. In places where conflict rages or communities are fractured, let Your unexpected love take root and bring healing.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Creation

Creator of heaven and earth, You entrusted this world to our care, yet so often we treat it as though it belongs only to us. Restore the waters, fields, and forests that reflect Your beauty and sustain Your creatures. Teach us to live lightly, give generously, and protect the wonder You have made. May creation itself feel the nearness of Emmanuel.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Our Community

God of steadfast love, We lift before You Sault Ste. Marie and all our neighboring communities. Where families feel stretched thin, bring peace; where households face uncertainty, bring courage; where individuals feel isolated or overlooked, surround them with Your presence and the care of this community. Make our town a place where Your love becomes visible through kindness, generosity, and shared life.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For Those in Need

Merciful Lord, Draw near to all who carry burdens this season—those who are sick, grieving, anxious, or afraid. Speak Your word of reassurance, as You did to Joseph: *Do not be afraid.*” Strengthen the weary, comfort the brokenhearted, and kindle hope for all who wait for good news. Let each one know that Emmanuel—Love in the flesh—is with them even now.

Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

★ For Our Advent Journey of Love

God of Love, As we light the fourth candle today, let Your love be born again in us. Disrupt what needs disrupting, heal what needs healing, and guide us, like Joseph, to trust Your presence in the unexpected places of our lives. Shape us into people who carry Your love into the world—love that listens, love that serves, love that stays.

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 Emmanuel, 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 21, 2025

**** 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

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., 20th – Lois Horner **Dec., 20th** Dorothy Morley
Dec., 27th – Kristen Hartman **Dec., 30th** – Berni Arbic

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

Save the Date

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 “Love Divine, All Loves Excelling” UMH 384
LOVE DIVINE, ALL LOVES EXCELLING

CHORAL BENEDICTION “Until Jesus Comes” D. McIntyre

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE “Aria Pastorella” Rathgeber

Financial gifts can be mailed to Algonquin UMC or Central UMC at: 111 E. Spruce St., Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783	
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