



*Central and Algonquin United
Methodist Churches*

Sunday, December 24, 2025

With Pastor Marty Johnston

Mission Statement:

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

We rejoice in the joy of this night—in songs that have shaped our faith, in familiar words that steady our hearts, and in the good news that still changes lives. Lift our spirits, renew our hope, and remind us that Your grace has truly appeared.

We offer this prayer with joy and expectation, trusting in the One born for us, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

ADVENT WREATH CANDLE LIGHTING - *Pastor*

Reader: Tonight, we light the candles of Advent, symbols of our journey toward the light of Christ.

The first candle is the **Candle of Hope**, reminding us of the promises of God and the hope that sustains us in every season.

The second candle is the **Candle of Peace**, pointing us to the Prince of Peace who calms our fears and restores our brokenness.

The third candle is the **Candle of Joy**, celebrating the good news of great joy brought to all people through the coming of Jesus.

The fourth candle is the **Candle of Love**, reflecting God's unending love revealed to us through the birth of His Son.

Now, as we light these candles, we prepare to welcome the greatest light of all—the light of Christ, born into our world to save us.

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:

Come, Lord Jesus, light our hearts with Your love.

First Reading – The Promise of Light - *Liturgist*

Isaiah 9:2, 6–7 (NKJV)

The people who walked in darkness Have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, Upon them a light has shined.

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Pastor:

The light was promised long before it was seen.

HYMN

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

UMH 196
HYFRYDOL

Psalm of Joy - *Liturgist*

Psalm 96 (selected verses, NKJV)

Leader: Oh, sing to the Lord a new song! Sing to the Lord, all the earth.

People: Sing to the Lord, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.

Leader: Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples.

People: Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.

Leader: Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns; the world also is firmly established, it shall not be moved; He shall judge the peoples righteously.”

People: For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.

SPECIAL MUSIC #1 “Away In A Manger” arr. G.Schuster
 Clarinet – John Wilkinson

Second Reading – The Meaning of Christmas -*Pastor*

Titus 2:11–14 (*adapted for congregational reading*)

The grace of God has appeared—bringing salvation to everyone.

That grace doesn't just rescue us; it teaches us how to live. It helps us turn away from what pulls us down and learn to live with wisdom, integrity, and devotion to God—right here, in this present moment.

We live with hope, watching for the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us—to free us from what binds us and to shape us into a people who belong to Him, eager to do what is good.

Christmas is not only the birth of a child—it is the appearing of grace.

HYMN “Amazing Grace” (v1,2) UMH 378
 AMAZING GRACE

The Christmas Story - *Liturgist*

A Responsive Reading (based on Luke 2:1–20)

Leader:

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. So all went to be registered, each to their own city.

Joseph went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was expecting a child.

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she brought forth her firstborn son, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger—because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now in that same region, there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.

And suddenly, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were afraid.

People (Angels):

Do not be afraid. For behold, we bring you good news of great joy, which will be for all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Leader:

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying—

People (Heavenly Host):

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward all.

Leader:

When the angels had gone away into heaven, the shepherds said to one another—

People (Shepherds):

Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.

Leader:

And they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in a manger.

When they had seen Him, they made known what had been told them about this Child, and all who heard it marveled.

But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.

SERMON The Grace That Appeared

Offering

Pastor (Invitation):

On this holy night, we give not out of obligation, but out of gratitude. God has given us His greatest gift—Jesus Christ, the light of the world. As the ushers come forward, we offer our gifts as a joyful response to the grace that has appeared among us.

SPECIAL MUSIC #2 “I Wonder As I Wander” Niles/arr. G. Lanier
Clarinet – John Wilkinson

Lighting of the Christ Candle -*Pastor*

Pastor:

Tonight, we light the Christ Candle—the light promised, the grace that appeared.

The darkness has not overcome it, and it never will.

Congregational Response:

Thanks be to God.

*HYMN “Joy to the World” (v1,2) UMH 246
JOY TO THE WORLD

CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

1. Explanation of Protocol:

Pastor explains how to pass the flame safely and the symbolism of sharing the light. Ushers come forward - light is taken from the Christ candle and is shared with the congregation.

2. **Music plays** until everyone has their candle lit.

MUSIC

“Silent Night”

UMH 239

Closing Blessing (by Candlelight)

The grace that appeared in Bethlehem shines still. Go into the world carrying His light—quietly, faithfully, joyfully.

The Lord bless you and keep you.

POSTLUDE

“Postlude on “Antioch” ”

Peterson

Announcements – December 24, 2025

You are all invited to continue our Christmas celebration with us downstairs for light refreshments.

Central Birthdays/Anniversaries

Dec. 27th – Kristen Hartman **Dec. 30th** – Bernie Arbic
Jan., 1st -Marge Tomlinson **Jan., 3rd** -Kathy Packman
Jan., 4th -Doris Kelly **Jan., 7th** – Tony McLain

Dec. 24 – Doris and Mike Kelly (54rd)
Jan., 2nd – Evelyn & Pete Bush (49th)

Thurs., Dec., 25th - *Christmas Day – May it be filled with laughter and cheer!*