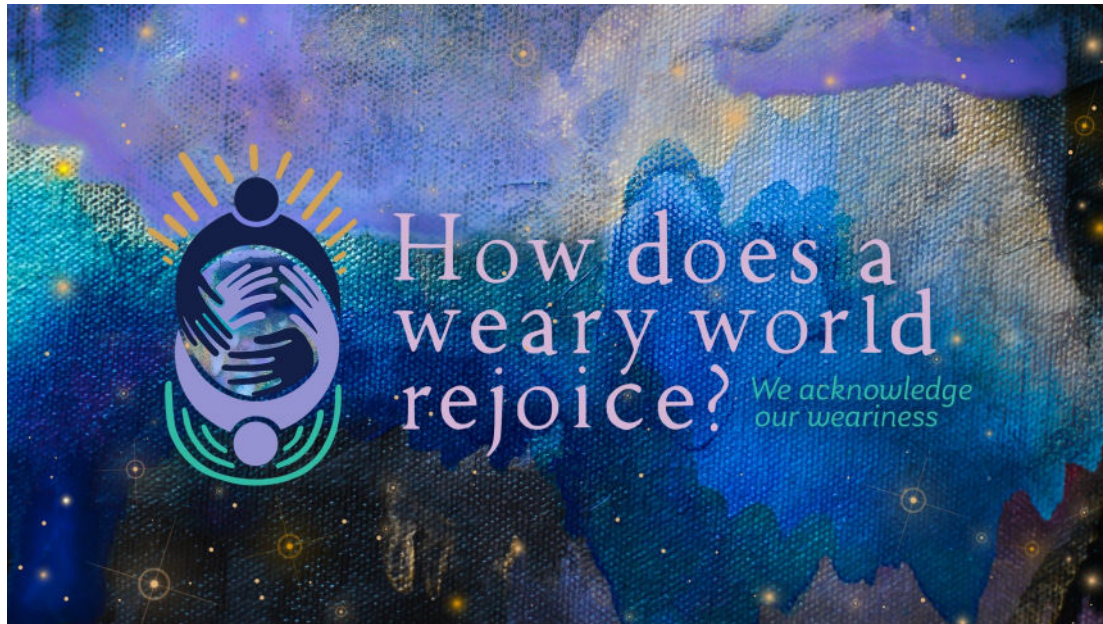




Sunday, December 3, 2023

First Sunday in Advent

In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years." The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news. And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak. When his time of service was completed, he returned home. After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Greeters: Pam McCartney, Eileen & Harry Flick, Reist Family, Anita & Larry Ewing

Ushers: Leigh Shuman, David Levens, Coleman Harris, David Regensburger, Donna Kinsey

The white rose recognizes and bears witness to the life and memory of M. Joan Baraney

The Chancel Flowers are Presented By:

The Fred Kiemle family, in memory of Harriet Kiemle

Sara Royer, in memory of Mac Marrs

John & Sandy Wolfe, in memory of Sarah E. Sedlak

Gathering in God's Name

Chimes & Prelude

Welcome & Ministry Highlights

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

Please sign and pass the "Friendship Pad" down the pew.

At the end of the row, pass it back so that we can greet one another by name after the service.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

* Call to Worship

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

Leader: In God's house, we can be joyful.

People: We can be grateful. We can be hopeful.

Leader: In God's house, we can be weary.

People: We can be anxious. We can be grieving.

Leader: In God's house, we can be honest—

People: inspired or tired, delighted or doubtful, connected or curious, and everything in between.

Leader: This is God's house. You are welcome exactly as you are.

All: Let us worship our loving God.

* Opening Hymn #2

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

Proclaiming God's Word

Call to Confession

Will Massey

Friends, in today's scripture passage, a man named Zechariah is given good news from God and his response is to ask, "How can this be?" Have any of you ever felt that way when receiving good news? It can be hard to receive good news when we don't expect it. It can be hard to accept God's grace and God's love when we think we don't deserve it. But friends, scripture tells us over and over again of a loving, generous, and gracious God. So may we come to the prayer of confession today, not with fear, but with an awe so deep that we ask ourselves, "How can this be?" Let us pray.

Prayer of Confession

Will Massey

Leader: Gracious God, we are weary. For weary bodies that ache and cry out, we pray:

People: Forgive us for pushing ourselves too hard. Reminds us that we deserve Sabbath rest.

Leader: For weary minds that feel overwhelmed and saturated with news, we pray:

People: Forgive us for creating so many distractions. Remind us that in the quiet, we can hear you.

Leader: For weary hearts that long to feel the joy of this season, we pray:

People: Forgive us for being impatient with ourselves. Remind us that healing takes time, and that joy and grief can coexist.

Leader: For the weary edges of our faith that struggle to hold onto hope,

People: Forgive us. Remind us of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Remind us that your good news knows no bounds. Amen.

Kyrie Eleison 572

Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us. Lord, have mercy upon us.

Assurance of Pardon

Will Massey

Leader: Family of faith, no matter how many times we wear ourselves thin, no matter how many times we lose ourselves to distractions, no matter how many times we ask ourselves, "How can this be?" God's love keeps showing up for us. So say this with me:

All: We are loved. We are claimed. We are forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing of the Peace

Will Massey

Leader: As we are forgiven and reconciled to God through Christ Jesus, let us be reconciled to one another. The peace of the Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

* Gloria Patri 579

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;

As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

At this time, children through 4th grade are invited to attend Sunday School. Teachers are stationed at the main doors of the sanctuary and will walk the children to the children's classrooms in the Narthex.

Parents/Guardians may pick up their children after the service in the classroom.

Choir Anthem

"One Small Child"

by David Meece

Scripture Reading

Luke 1:5-25

Message

"Acknowledging Our Weariness"

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

Responding to God's Word

Invitation To The Lord's Table

Rev. Dr. Ann Osborne

Prayers of Thanksgiving, Lord's Prayer

Rev. Dr. Bob Burns

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Words of Institution

Rev. Dr. Ann Osborne

Distribution of Elements

It is our custom at Highland to eat the bread, representing your individual relationship with God.

However, please hold the cup until all are able to partake together, representing our relationship as the body of Christ.

Prayer After Communion

Rev. Dr. Ann Osborne

Invitation to the Offering

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

Wooden offering boxes are located in the narthex

Going in God's Name

* Closing Hymn #8

"Lift Up Ye Gates"

* Charge and Benediction

Rev. Allison Beaulieu

* Choral Response

**O come, O come, Immanuel, and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel.**

Postlude

*PLEASE STAND IN BODY OR SPIRIT

MUSIC: DR. PAUL THORLAKSON, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

JONATHAN LEFEVER, ORGANIST

A/V: MARK ANDERSON, JERRY ROTHACKER

A description of the stained Chancel window can be found in the front of the hymnal.
FM sound devices are available. Please ask an usher for your own personal receiver.

Cell Phones should be silenced during the worship service.

Video Recordings of the service can be found on the Highland website at www.HighlandPC.org

In the event of an emergency, please refer to the card in the pew racks for evacuation and re-assembly information.