



Volume 7, Issue 12

2022
December

The Trinity Times



HI TRINITY, WELCOME TO ADVENT SEASON

Yes! It is time to celebrate Advent. As we try to get our heads around the fact that we will soon be welcoming a brand-new year, we rejoice in this Holy time of preparation! This year the Advent Season Starts on November 27. As we prepare for the Christmas Holiday, each of our worship bulletins in Advent display candles. Why? They remind us of the light of Christ, who came into the world as a light, so that the world would not stay in darkness (John 1:4), and also to remember to shine our lights before all, so that all may glorify our God in heaven. (Matthew 5:16).

Each Sunday in our Advent season series this year is anchored from the book of Isaiah. The themes, in order, are *Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace*.

What does it all mean? The Advent Wreath has four candles on a wreath of evergreen that is shaped in a perfect circle. This circle represents the eternity of Almighty God. Three candles are purple, and one is pink. At the center of the wreath is the Christ Candle (White). Each Sunday the candle(s) is/are lit as:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Nov. 27, 2022 | Purple - Hope |
| Dec. 4, 2022 | Purple - Love |
| Dec. 11, 2022 | Pink - Joy |
| Dec. 18, 2022 | Purple - Peace |
| Dec. 24, 2022 | Christmas Eve Candlelight Service |
| Dec. 25, 2022 | Christmas Day – The Christ Candle |



Be sure to follow the Scripture Readings for celebrating Advent in between Sundays that can be found on page 3. May God bless you richly and abundantly during this joyous season and always let the light of Christ, guide you in hope, love, joy, and peace.

Pastor Jessica Lynn Ross



ADVENT



WE RANG THE BELL!

If you were shopping at the Lebanon Market on Saturday, November 26 between 8 & 2, you probably saw familiar faces ringing the bell for the *Salvation Army*. We thank Jack Stouffer, Barb & Dave Wallett, Liliana Harrison, Sally DeJesus, Larry Sheaf, David Weise, & George Wilkins for representing Trinity in this important mission!

Good Cheer Sunday

For many years we collect money on the first Sunday in December for a "Good Cheer" fund. This fund provides seed money for Christmas gifts for our home-bound members. Please consider giving an envelope designated "Good Cheer" with money or a check to help with expenses. Since we are not caroling to shut-ins this year, we need volunteers to visit and give these gifts to those we miss!



December 6th - Last Day to Order Poinsettias for the Sanctuary

At our combined "live and zoom" church service on Christmas Eve at 7:00, we will again be filling the sanctuary with a poinsettia garden in memory or in honor of loved ones. The cost of each poinsettia is \$7.00, and December 6th is the last day to submit your order. You may bring your order to church and place in the box in the hallway on a Monday, Tuesday, or Friday between 9:00 and noon, call the church office at 717-273-1970, or email lebanontrinity@comcast.net. Be sure to include the wording of your remembrances. The list of "Remembrances" will be included in the December 18th, 24th, and 25th bulletins.

LISTENING CORNER..



Liturgists

Date

December 4
December 11
December 18
December 24
December 25

Worship Service (9:15)

Dea Kishpaugh
Barb Query
Betsy Allwein
TBA
Carol Hollich



If you are unable to serve as lay reader, please call... 717-838-2812

CALENDAR DATES

Tuesdays – Rehearsals for Choir (1:30) and Chime Choir (2:30)

Thursdays - Rick's Bible Study at 10:30 via Zoom. Call 717-418-1963 to be included or for more information about this weekly Bible Study opportunity! (See article on this page.)

Dec 4 – Second Sunday in Advent, Good Cheer Sunday, Communion Start Confirmation Class

Dec 6 – Last Day to Order Poinsettias (Article page 1)

Dec 7 - Staff Parish meeting (7:00 pm on Zoom)

Dec 8 - Worship Team (7:00 pm on Zoom)

Dec 11 – Third Sunday in Advent

Dec 12 - **Note: Change of Date**
Ad Council - (7:00 pm on Zoom)

Dec 18 – Fourth Sunday in Advent

Dec 19 – Last day to submit articles for January Trinity Times

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Service (7:00 pm)
In person & on Zoom (Article page 3)

Dec 31 - Watch Night Owlah Service (Article page 3)

Jan 1 – Communion

Jan 17 - Ladies' (& Men's) Luncheon - Hoss's 12:30



07 - Lori Grandi

13 - Joe Hollich

07 - Roxanne Miller

17 - Bob Neblock

12 - Linda Loeper

20 - Reba Sterner

12 - Nathan Sechrist

Thursday Advent Bible Study

This advent, Rick and the Thursday morning Bible Study group look at **The Angels of Christmas** by Susan Robb. Robb examines



the four Christmastime angelic visitations – to Zechariah, Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds – and their messages. She also explores the background of the angel Gabriel and discusses the angelic appearances in light of God's presence in history. Be sure to join the lively discussions and Rick's insightful comments by calling 717-418-1963 to get a copy of the book or simply follow the Zoom link that becomes available each Wednesday

Holiday HOPE

Trinity's generous mission giving in November is helping to make the holidays special for many in our community and beyond! The monetary donations for the Christmas stockings that go to nursing homes filled 30 stockings with 10 to 11 items in each stocking. The

Harvest Home collection bags netted 199 pounds of food for the Lebanon County Christian Ministries Food Pantry and 4 Cleaning Buckets were filled and will be sent to UMCOR for those devastated by Hurricane Ian. In December we are collecting hats, gloves, and scarves for distribution in our community.

Christmas Worship Services



Our traditional family Christmas Eve worship service on Saturday, December 24 will be 7:00. At this service we will celebrate the birth of Jesus with a small choir, chimes, scriptures, carols, a special message for the kids, and candle lighting. Preceding the service at 6:45, there will be an organ recital.

At 9:15 on Christmas morning, Sunday, December 25, we will gather for worship and follow the service with a Birthday cake for Jesus!

Both services will be available on Zoom and later posted on Facebook for those who are not able to attend in person.

LADIES' LUNCHEON AT HOSS'S



In the years before COVID, the 3rd Tuesday of the month found the Trinity ladies (and men) meeting at Hoss's in Annville for lunch and fellowship.

Although we are not getting together in December, we plan to get together at noontime at Hoss's on Tuesday, January 18th. All are invited to join-in the gathering for a whole lot of fun and good food!

Watch Night, New Year's Eve - 6:00 pm

Owlah Service of Repentance & Forgiveness

On the last night of the year it was traditional, particularly during the 18th century, to have a vigil service. Christians kept a vigil together to prepare themselves spiritually for a new year by ridding themselves of bad habits and renouncing evil and injustice. They used this opportunity to renew their covenant relationship with God. We will use this tradition for a service of prayer, confession, reflection, singing, burnt offering, pardon, and thanksgiving.

As we cross the threshold of a new year, it is an opportune time to re-evaluate our lives in light of the future. How will we use the coming years? What are our priorities? Are the things we do and give our lives to of most importance in the light of eternity? How strong is our covenant relationship with God?

From the mailbag...



I would like to say Thank You for your get-well cards, prayers, support and encouragement while I went through this heart surgery. (If they had told me what all was involved, I probably would have chickened out!) But I guess I'm on the other side of it now. I started Outpatient Cardiac Rehabilitation on November 28. I hope it makes me a bit stronger and more steady on my feet. Take care and God bless all of you.

Karen (Neblock)



Dear Sally,
You and your fellow church members are helping those in need here in Lebanon County by ringing the bell each year for the Salvation Army. Thank you!

Terry



Dear Trinity,
Just a note to thank everyone for all their cards and prayers during Mike's recuperation from his motorcycle accident. He is home now after 12 days in Hershey Medical Center. The ribs are healing slowly and he is walking around the house without the walker. Knowing all of you are keeping us in your thoughts and prayers helps a lot and keeps our spirits up. Love,

Barb and Larry (Mike) Query

Help keep our office neat!



A space has been created in the copier room for the many items that are dropped off at the office. Placing them there and marking where they need to go will keep the front office tidy and insure the items don't get misplaced or given to the wrong person.

Since the office area is now being used to broadcast our worship services on Sunday mornings, the secretary has limited access to the computer and files. Your help in limiting secretarial requests on Sundays will be greatly appreciated!

DISCRETIONARY FUND



Many times throughout the year the pastor is asked to help members of Trinity or the community as they go through difficult times. Prior to COVID, monetary gifts that were given as we approached the communion table helped to support this special fund. In this season of Advent, please consider making a special gift marked for the "Discretionary Fund".

Reading the Bible in December



As we continue our journey through the Bible, this month we will focus on Advent and the coming of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ...

- Monday, November 28: Psalm 124; Genesis 8:1-19; Romans 6:1-11
- Tuesday, November 29: Psalm 124; Genesis 9:1-17; Hebrews 11:32-40
- Wednesday, November 30: Psalm 124; Isaiah 54:1-10; Matthew 24:23-35
- Thursday, December 1: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Isaiah 4:2-6; Acts 1:12-17, 21-26
- Friday, December 2: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Isaiah 30:19-26; Acts 13:16-25
- Saturday, December 3: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Isaiah 40:1-11; John 1:19-28

December 4: Second Sunday of Advent

- Monday, December 5: Psalm 21; Isaiah 24:1-16a; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12
- Tuesday, December 6: Psalm 21; Isaiah 41:14-20; Romans 15:14-21
- Wednesday, December 7: Psalm 21; Genesis 15:1-18; Matthew 12:33-37
- Thursday, December 8: Psalm 146:5-10; Ruth 1:6-18; 2 Peter 3:1-10
- Friday, December 9: Psalm 146:5-10; Ruth 4:13-17; 2 Peter 3:11-18
- Saturday, December 10: Psalm 146:5-10; 1 Samuel 2:1-8; Luke 3:1-18

December 11: Third Sunday of Advent

- Monday, December 12: Psalm 42; Isaiah 29:17-24; Acts 5:12-16
- Tuesday, December 13: Psalm 42; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Jude 1:17-25
- Wednesday, December 14: Psalm 42; Zechariah 8:1-17; Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34
- Thursday, December 15: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 2 Samuel 7:1-17; Galatians 3:23-29
- Friday, December 16: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 2 Samuel 7:18-22; Galatians 4:1-7
- Saturday, December 17: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 2 Samuel 7:23-29; John 3:31-36

December 18: Fourth Sunday of Advent

- Monday, December 19, 2022: 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Genesis 17:15-22; Galatians 4:8-20
- Tuesday, December 20, 2022: 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Genesis 21:1-21; Galatians 4:21-5:1
- Wednesday, December 21, 2022: 1 Samuel 2:1-10; Genesis 37:2-11; Matthew 1:1-17
- Thursday, December 22, 2022: Luke 1:46b-55; Isaiah 33:17-22; Revelation 22:6-7, 18-20
- Friday, December 23, 2022: Luke 1:46b-55; 2 Samuel 7:18, 23-29; Galatians 3:6-14
- Saturday, December 24 & 25, 2022: Nativity of the Lord - Proper I



Please keep the family of Marian Mitchell who passed away on Friday, November 25 in your thoughts and prayers. Your cards and condolences can be sent to her daughter: Judy Derr
1300 E. Kercher Ave. Lot 98
Myerstown, PA 17067

Our Church Prayer

Dear Lord,
We love you and we praise your Holy Name. Help us to be an obedient church. Help us to love one another, reach out with love to the needy and oppressed. We pray for strength to continue the work you have called us to do. Help us to reach out as we reach up to you. By your mercy grant us healing, compassion, and strength to do your blessed will for ourselves, our families, our community, our conference, & our world. In the Name of Jesus our Lord and Savior we pray. Amen.



In Our Thoughts & Prayers

Jim & Betsy Allwein	Dean Berger
Brossman family	Penny Brown
Judy Derr	Gail Emerich
Kim Hollich	Wilson Justiniano
Caroline Jacobs & family	Joshua Mullins
Steve Miller & family	Linda Perini
Family of Marian Mitchell	Alissa Plant
Karen & Bob Neblock	Mike Querry
Marilyn Smith	Snyder family
Tracy Snyder	Pat Swartz
Reba Sterner family	Brandi Tamayo
Joyce Twigg	Carol Yeagley
Dave Wallell Jr.	Judith Wentzel
Dave Wease & family	Wire family
George Wilkins family	Walt & Kathy Zehring

Our Church, Community, Country, and World Families & recovering victims of crime & abuse
All who are sick & shut in & their caretakers
All those devastated by natural disasters
Issues surrounding Ukraine
Our men and women in uniform
A Safe and Joyous Holiday Season!

Adult Sunday School – December



God's Preparation is the focus of our lessons in December as we begin the winter theme of *From Darkness to Light*. The quarter begins with four lessons from Luke's Gospel. These lessons highlight faithful people of God who longed to experience God's salvation. These people longed not merely for spiritual salvation, but for God's reign on earth. They desired a world where God would bring mercy and justice to his people. Luke's Gospel describes the ways that God's people came boldly to Him in prayer. The expectant hope that "all flesh shall see the salvation of God" was the foundation for their eagerness to pray. Through their prayers, the people were prepared to hear God's peculiar and unique call. Consider these topics and join us in our weekly discussions.

December 4	Zacharias Hears from God	Luke 1:8–20
December 11	Zacharias Speaks	Luke 1:57–66, 76–79
December 18	John the Baptist Appears	Luke 3:2b–6, 15–18
December 25	Mary Rejoices	Luke 1:46–55



A voice of one calling: "Prepare the way for the LORD ; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God." No one can mentor you through a wilderness event. The wilderness is a long hard Journey, never a quick trip across town. Picture in your mind Moses standing before Pharaoh, demanding that he, "let my people go!" Picture Joseph becoming the ruler of Egypt, or picture David, a young shepherd boy, boldly facing down a warrior giant that no soldier or king would dare challenge. How were these great men of the Bible prepared for those pivotal moments? And how are we, as followers of Christ, similarly prepared?.

We have seen how God dealt with the heroes of faith like Moses, David and Paul, and how He prepared them for His holy purposes. How does this line up with how He deals with us today? We know that *God does not change* , so it is reasonable to assume that His methods would be similar when dealing with individuals, whether in this age or the last. But assumption is never a good practice, so let's take a look to the scriptures for the answer. God gave each of the faithful "Heroes of the Bible" the experiences necessary to prepare them for a specific future work. It seems reasonable that the methods He used to prepare them are comparable to how the Lord deals with each of us now.



When examining how God prepared these Heroes, we should try to put ourselves in the shoes of the faithful ones being examined. It's easy to look at the final results of their experiences and forget that these individuals had no idea to where it would lead. They didn't know what God had in store for them.

This should strengthen our faith during very difficult trials, and help us to maintain hope. We know that God is working for a greater good. We have seen the results of His work in the lives of the great men and women of the Bible, so we can be even more assured that *He will never leave us or forsake us*. Join us in December as we discuss how God prepared the world for the birth of Jesus.

December 4

1. The mother of John the Baptist was named _____ . Luke 1:13
2. The angel caused Zacharias to become deaf. T/F. Luke 1:20

December 11

1. Some people expected the child to be named after his father. T/F. Luke 1:59
2. The child would be called a _____ of the Most High. Luke 1:76

December 18

1. John preached about the baptism of _____ . Luke 3:3
2. Where was the prophesied voice said to call? (the wilderness, the valley, the mountain) Luke 3:4

December 25

1. What would people of "all generations" call Mary? (humbled, blessed, dignified) Luke 1:48
2. Mary declared that God's mercy extends to those people who _____ Him. Luke 1:50

Trinity UMC - Minutes – Charge Conference October 25, 2022 (LIVE and ZOOM)



Facilitator: West District Superintendent, Reverend Jenny Freymoyer

Minutes: Carol Hollich

Attended: Gloria Clark, Maria Clark, Rev. Rick Clark, Sally DeJesus, Leslie Dissinger, Tod Dissinger, Keith Earle, Rev. Jenny Freymoyer, Carol Hollich, George Hollich, Dea Kishpaugh, Jack Kishpaugh, Pastor Jessica Ross, Marilyn Smith, Pat Swartz, and Tina Washington

Welcome by District Superintendent, the Rev. Jenny Freymoyer – She recognized all those present in the sanctuary, and asked those present to introduce those watching on Zoom.

Hymns sung: *How Great Thou Art* and *Great is Thy Faithfulness*

Prayer was led by the District Superintendent

Pastor's Compensation Report – After her opening welcome and prayer, Rev. Freymoyer asked us to give words that describe Pastor Jessica. Some of the words that were suggested included: caring, positive, optimistic, happy, present in the church, responsible, visible in the community, honors our traditions, and presents new ideas. The DS explained that Pastor Jessica is assigned to Trinity as a half-time pastor. Her compensation packet for 2023 is a salary of \$17,000 plus housing expenses of \$8,000 for a total of \$25,000. The conference also lists her as ¼ time hospice minister, so that she is eligible to receive conference benefits. The report was approved.

Pastor's Report - Pastor Jessica read a very thorough and exciting report about all the different teams, leadership, and volunteerism that is going on at Trinity. She expressed appreciation for her assignment to Trinity and gave thanks for the many people that she has met while at our church. A copy of her report was included in the November 2022 Trinity Times.

Nominations report – Rev. Freymoyer read the names of Chairpersons of Trinity's teams and committees and the new members that would be added to each of Trinity's work teams. The report was approved.

Membership updates: The list of those folks who had not supported Trinity by their time, treasure or talent in 2021 and were identified in last year's Charge Conference report was approved with no additions or subtractions for 2022.



Finance Report: Keith Earle - All bills including the conference apportionments are paid. Currently we have the following assets: General Fund - \$15,850.37, Money Market - \$43,158.57, and Capital Campaign - \$176,001.40. We also have an Ameriprise Financial Services Fund of \$239,339.61 that came to Trinity in a bequest. Keith noted that the 2023 budget for Trinity Church is \$ 118,150 but the anticipated income is \$20,000 less. The budget was approved, and Pastor Jessica prayed that we will be able to make up the difference. The DS suggested that we consider moving some funds into an endowment fund that would permit leaving the principal in the bank and only spending the interest each year.

Trustees Report – After reading the report to the body, Rev. Freymoyer said that she was impressed with Pastor Jessica's report and all that the trustees are doing at the church.



Christ Servant Ministers – The four CSMs at Trinity - Carol Hollich, George Hollich, Marilyn Smith, and Jack Stouffer – were all recognized for the contributions to the work of the church and approved as Christ Servant Ministers for 2023. The District Superintendent and Pastor Jessica signed the forms. The CSM Conference Director, George Hollich, will enter the reports of the CSMs into the Conference Journal and send copies to the CSM West District Director.

Our Mission LINK program – There was much discussion on how the Link is supposed to work by combining projects from linked churches in the area. The DS acknowledged that some work well and others don't. Our mission link has included about 7 churches in Lebanon who regularly get together for services on Thanksgiving Eve, Ash Wednesday, and Good Friday. However, most of the downtown ministers are recent appointees and although they are still meeting, the laity are no longer part of the meetings, and new joint projects are few. Rev. Freymoyer asked us how we might be able to help "fix" this issue. Carol Hollich mentioned that the combined choirs have been successful and could be the talking group for doing some activities together. Sally DeJesus mentioned that the Easter sunrise services have been well attended by the different churches in the past. The success or failure of the Link seems to depend on the people in our city UMC churches talking about **Link** and suggesting different ideas we could do together.



The meeting was ended with prayer by Pastor Jessica.

Minutes submitted by Carol Hollich

Trinity United Methodist Church

757 Willow Street, Lebanon, Pa. 17046

Where "Faith, Hope and Love abide to encourage all to respond to the call of Christ."

December 4, 2022 - 2nd Sunday of Advent

(The service begins at 9:15 with the fellowship area opening at 9:00.)

To be a part of worship on the computer go to... <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85414184795>
or join by phone by dialing 1-646-876-9923 and entering 854 1418 4795 when prompted.)

Flowers on the altar are from Jim & Betsy Allwein – In Memory of father, Winslow Allen

Prelude: **Dimanche de l'Advent - Chauvet** Organist: Caroline Jacobs

Welcome & Announcements Dea Kishpaugh

Advent Candle Lighting The Candle of Love The Jacobs Family

Response:

L: O wisdom, who came forth from the mouth of the Most High, reaching from end to end, and ordering all things mightily and sweetly:

P: Come and teach us the way of prudence

Hymn # 211 **O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (vs. 1 & 2)**

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

O come thou wisdom from on high and order all things far and nigh; to us the path of knowledge show and cause us in her ways to go. Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Call to Worship

Psalm 72: 1-8,15-17

L: Give the king your justice, O God,

P: and your righteousness to the royal son.

L: May he judge your people with righteousness

P: and your poor with justice.

L: Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

P: May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

L: May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

P: May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

L: In his days may righteousness flourish, and peace abound, till the moon be no more.

P: May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth....

L: Long may he live! may gold of Sheba be given to him. May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all day long.

P: May there be abundance of grain in the land; may it wave on the tops of the mountains; may its fruit be like Lebanon;

L: and may they blossom forth in the cities like the grass of the field.

P: May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun. May people bless themselves by him, all nations call him blessed!

The Apostle's Creed

Hymnal #881

First Song **On Jordan's Bank**

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry announces that the Lord is nigh

Awake and hearken, for he brings glad tidings from the King of kings!

Then cleansed be every Christian breast; And furnished for so great a guest,

Yea, let us each his heart prepare for Christ to come and enter there.

For thou art our salvation, Lord, our refuge and our great reward;

Once more upon Thy people shine and fill the world with love divine.



Opening Prayer

Merciful God, you sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation. Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may celebrate aright the commemoration of the nativity, and may await with joy the coming in glory of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, forever and ever. Amen.

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 11: 1-10

page 640

Gospel Reading

Matthew 3: 1-12

page 2

Special Music

Bethlehem Wind

Trinity Choir with Mary Zehring - flute

Doxology

Celebration of Gifts

Pastor Jessica Ross

Hymn # 706

Soon and Very Soon

Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King,
Soon and very soon, we are going to see the King.
Soon and very soon,, we are going to see the King,
Hallelujah, hallelujah, We're going to see the King.
No more dying there, we are going to see the King,
No more crying there, we are going to see the King,



Pastor Jessica Ross

Sermon. Preparing the Way

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Celebration of Communion

Hymnal page 12

Hymn #203

Hail to the Lord's Anointed

1. Hail to the Lord's Anointed, great David's greater Son!
Hail in the time appointed, His reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression, to set the captive free;
to take away transgression, and rule in equity.
2. He comes with succor speedy to those who suffer wrong;
to help the poor and needy, and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing, their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying, are precious in his sight.
3. He shall come down like showers upon the fruitful earth;
love, joy, and hope, like flowers, spring in his path to birth.
Before him on the mountains, shall peace, the herald, go,
and righteousness, in fountains, from hill to valley flow.
4. To him shall prayer unceasing and daily vows ascend;
His kingdom still increasing, a kingdom without end.
The tide of time shall never His covenant remove;
His name shall stand forever, that name to us is love.



Benediction

Benediction Response

O Come All Ye Faithful

O come let us adore Him, o come let us adore Him,
O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

*Postlude

The King Shall Come - Callahan

Organist: Caroline Jacobs

Study Texts: Luke 1:5–23

KEY VERSE: *The angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. —Luke 1:13*



Does History Rhyme?

A popular claim is that history repeats itself. But does that claim hold up? Perhaps a more accurate claim is that history does not repeat itself, but it rhymes. This means that while no one historical event is exactly like any other, similarities may exist between the two events. Events in God’s plan of salvation are frequently similar to His earlier work among His people. These similarities can help people understand the singular, focused plan of God. His work consists of more than isolated events in history. Instead, His work is a grand epic to turn rebellious, hostile humanity into His holy people. Today’s Scripture text highlights one of these rhythms of God’s plan. Would the recipient of this good news trust that God would be faithful to His promises?

Influencer Marketing

Have you ever heard someone claim to be an influencer? An influencer is a person with whom brands collaborate to sell a product on the influencer’s social media platforms. The more followers an influencer has on social media, the more valuable that influencer’s platform will be to brands. And so, brands and businesses pay to be showcased on that influencer’s social media platform. Through social media, the influencer can advertise brand-name makeup, trendy clothing, or the latest electronic device. One influencer has even reported being offered thousands of dollars to place a brand-name beverage in the background of a video that he filmed for his social media! While an influencer’s advertisements appear innocent, they are essentially pointing people to consume—perhaps mindlessly. Followers of Jesus, however, should be *spiritual* influencers for the world. John the Baptist would influence many of his peers to turn to the Lord. He would be an influencer for spiritual matters and would point others to the Lord’s salvation.

A Messenger of Life

A little after midnight local time on July 30, 1945, an enemy submarine torpedoed the USS *Indianapolis*. 12 minutes later, the ship sank in the Philippine Sea. This was a tragedy for my family—my great uncle was among the hundreds of sailors who died on the ship. Several days after the ship sank, an official military messenger informed my great aunt of her husband’s death. Military families fear the worst possible message from these messengers. Not all messengers bring news of death. Through a heavenly messenger, Zacharias received a message of life. God frequently calls the unassuming or the seemingly ill-equipped. Zacharias and his family was just another example of God’s working through people who least expected it. Of course we are not the parents of the forerunner of Christ, but Zacharias’s story shows us that God will work through our lives as well. Will we believe and trust that God, who has worked through ordinary people, in the past will work through ordinary us?

Thoughts to Consider

1. **How can we respond with joy rather than fear to God’s unexpected acts?**
2. **Are we living as a spiritual influencers, advertising through daily living that we have been changed because of the influence of God?**
3. **How can we be a messenger for Jesus to those around us?**

An Astonishing Story

Cut out the following statements and distribute a statement to each learner in your group. Take turns in order of the statement's number and communicate the main point of the statement without using words. Decide whether to act out the statement or draw it on the board. Guess each statement to find out the entire story.

1. I was chosen by lot to burn incense in the temple.	6. The boy will be filled with the Holy Spirit before he is born.
2. I was afraid when I saw an angel of the Lord.	7. The boy will turn many people back to the Lord.
3. An angel told me not to be afraid—my wife would have a baby.	8. The boy will turn the hearts of parents to their children.
4. The baby will be a boy, and he will bring joy.	9. The boy will make ready a people prepared for the Lord.
5. The boy will never drink wine or fermented drink.	10. I did not believe the angel's promises, so I am unable to speak until the baby is born.

Baby Announcement

In your pair, read each Scripture reference and fill out the chart.

Reference	Greeting	Promise(s)	Instruction(s)
1. Luke 1:11-20			
2. Genesis 17:1-8, 15-22			
3. Judges 13:2-14			
4. 1 Samuel 1:1-18			