



*Gabriel Appears to Zechariah*  
*Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov [Public domain]*

**Harmony United Methodist Church**  
**November 29, 2020**  
**10:00am**  
**The First Sunday in Advent**

GATHERING MUSIC  
WELCOME  
PRELUDE

LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE OF HOPE

Tina Wilmoth, Meghan Walker, Ryan Walker

**First Reader:** This is the first Sunday in Advent. Today, we light one purple candle. This is the candle of hope. Advent is a time of waiting and of hoping. We wait for the day when we celebrate again the birth of Jesus. We hope that everyone will come to know God and to worship God.

**Second Reader:** When we look at the first candle, we remember God's promise. God promised to send a Savior to the people. When we listen to our Scripture reading, we hear what the prophet Isaiah wrote about God. God fulfills the promises made to care for people. God is loving and just. God brings peace. This gives us hope. We look forward to the time when everything is fair, when the world is at peace, and all people are treated justly.

**First Reader:** Read Isaiah 2:1-5 (Common English Bible)

**Prayer:** Dear God: Thank you for your son, Jesus. Thank you for the words of the Prophet Isaiah that remind us that you are the source of our hope. Help us to remember to walk in the light of the Lord.  
AMEN.

*Come, thou long-expected Jesus,  
Born to set thy people free;  
From our fears and sins release us,  
Let us find our rest in thee.  
Israel's strength and consolation,  
Hope of all the earth thou art;  
Dear desire of every nation,  
Joy of every longing heart.*

*Born thy people to deliver,  
Born a child and yet a king,  
Born to reign in us forever,  
Now thy gracious kingdom bring.  
By thine own eternal spirit  
Rule in all our hearts alone;  
By thine all sufficient merit,  
Raise us to thy glorious throne.*

## ADVENT BEGINS

Sandy Bruner

What will set us journeying in search of the Christ this Advent?  
How far are we prepared to go out of our way  
to look for the signs of His coming,  
and to prepare a path?

How will we travel through this season?  
Will we be burdened by responsibilities and tasks,  
loaded with others' expectations, overwhelmed by their needs?  
Will we be full of joy or weary of waiting?

What will guide our steps in these weeks?  
Will we follow a thread of longing,  
the hint of an alternative pathway,  
the words and music of worship?

Sisters and brothers in Christ, Advent awaits us.  
Let us place our feet on the road and begin the journey.  
May we find in familiar words, rituals and customs,  
the birth of the new thing that awaits us.

## PRAYER

Sandy Bruner

God our caring Father,  
you who gave your beloved Son  
to ransom all people,  
see our human fears  
and love us anyway.

Guide us through this season  
with quiet, glad anticipation.  
Help us to pay attention  
to the poor and needy,  
and to the lonely among us.

Give us a spirit of reflection,  
patience with each other,  
and hearts brimming with thanks.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Jessica Randall

RESPONSE

*Emmanuel*

UMH 204

*Emmanuel, Emmanuel,  
His name is called Emmanuel.  
God with us, revealed in us,  
His name is called Emmanuel.*

MORNING PRAYER

Pastor Debra

THE LORD'S PRAYER

SPECIAL MUSIC

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST FORETOLD

Luke 1:5-25 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup>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. <sup>6</sup>Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. <sup>7</sup>But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

<sup>8</sup>Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, <sup>9</sup>he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. <sup>10</sup>And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

<sup>11</sup>Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. <sup>12</sup>When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. <sup>17</sup>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."

<sup>18</sup>Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

<sup>19</sup>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. <sup>20</sup>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."

<sup>21</sup>Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple. <sup>22</sup>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. <sup>23</sup>When his time of service was completed, he returned home. <sup>24</sup>After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. <sup>25</sup>"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."

RESPONSE TO THE WORD

May these words of prophecy, promise, and preparation encourage us to steadfast hope and action.

SERMON

“The Hope of Zechariah and Elizabeth”

Pastor Debra

OFFERTORY PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Sandy Bruner

Thank you, God. Thank you for the opportunity to gather each week for worship, that we might encourage one another to stay on your path. And thank you for the opportunity to give these gifts for your ministry, that together we might help the world be ready to receive the hope given to us by Jesus, the Prince of Peace, in whose name we pray. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN

*Blessed Be the God of Israel*

UMH 209

*Blessed be the God of Israel,  
Who comes to set us free,  
Who visits and redeems us,  
And grants us liberty.  
The prophets spoke of mercy,  
Of freedom and release,  
God shall fulfill the promise  
Go bring our people peace.*

*Now from the house of David  
A child of grace is given;  
A Savior comes among us  
To raise us up to heaven.  
Before him goes the herald,  
Forerunner in the way,  
The prophet of salvation  
The harbinger of day.*

*On prisoners of darkness  
The sun begins to rise,  
The dawning of forgiveness  
Upon the sinner's eyes,  
To guide the feet of pilgrims  
Along the path of peace;  
O bless our God and Savior  
With songs that never cease.*

CLOSING COMMISSION AND BENEDICTION

Pastor Debra

POSTLUDE