



Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

Today marks the third week Advent, the first season of the new church year. Advent is a season of repentance and preparation as we heed the call of John the Baptist to make way for the Christ to who is to come. In that spirit, I am happy to share with you the third installment of our Advent sermon series on the birth of John the Baptist to his parents, Elizabeth and Zechariah, in the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, verses 57 to 66. In this passage, Elizabeth gives birth to their son, and names him John. There is a bit of a family kerfuffle as relatives want to name the baby Zechariah after his father, but Zechariah backs up Elizabeth!

Please use following phone numbers and links between 10:15am and 10:30am. You can join in one of two ways:

By computer, smart phone or tablet:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86757133623?pwd=OTFUQWJvU21MMmR6bkY5SitpelR1UT09>

By Phone: 1 (312) 626 6799 ID 867 5713 3623, Passcode 205879

(If you need a live link to the Worship link, you can go to the homepage of our website at www.vccbhm.org with the passcode 205879 OR click on "Links to Zoom" then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Christ's and yours, Pastor Eric

Valley Christian Church

Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

PRELUDE

"Gesù Bambino"

Margaret Cox
Pianist

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Bear fruits worthy of repentance, for I baptize you with water.

People: But the one who is more powerful than I is coming.

Leader: I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals.

People: He will baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Leader: His winnowing fork is in his hand.

People: To clear the threshing floor, and to gather the wheat.

(Luke 3:8, 16-17, NRSV)

HYMN OF PRAISE

"God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen"

*God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay
Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas
day*

*To save us all from Satan's power when we had gone
astray*

*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

*From God our heavenly father a blessed angel came
And unto certain shepherds brought tidings of the same
How that in Bethlehem was born the Son of God by
name*

*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

*Fear not then, said the angel, let nothing you affright
This day is born a Savior of the pure virgin bright, to
Free all those who trust in him from Satan's power &
might*

*O tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy
O tidings of comfort and joy*

Eve Harman
Worship Leader

INVOCATION

Eve Harman
Worship Leader

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

Incarnated God, as we join our prayers together, we hearken back to the groups of shepherds and magi who heard the Good News and praised you not as individuals, but together. We carry to you our own prayers as well as the prayers of our community and our world as we continue to await and prepare for the birth of your Son. We pray to you on behalf of the people whom we have named aloud here today and the people we've not named aloud but carry in our hearts as we pray for them silently and aloud by name at this time...

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

SPECIAL MUSIC

Duet by Linda Reeves and James Reeves (11 yrs old)
"Mary, Did you Know?"

Words and music by
Mark Lowry and
Buddy Greene

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:57-66

Eve Harman
Worship Leader

MESSAGE

"His Name is John"
See insert for message excerpt

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

HYMN

"From Heaven Above"

*From heaven above to earth I come
To bring good news to everyone
Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To all the world and gladly sing*

*To you this night is born a child
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild
This newborn child of lowly birth
Shall be the joy of all the earth*

*This is the Christ, God's Son most high
Who hears your sad and bitter cry
He will himself your Savior be
And from all sin will set you free*

SHARING OUR OFFERING WITH GOD

Share your financial offering with the church by mail or bring it by the church office. Thank you for your love gifts.

Eve Harman
Worship Leader

**OFFERTORY
PRAYER**

*Eve Harman
Worship Leader*

**CALL TO
COMMUNION**

May we remember the power that is in the many names of this meal: Eucharist, Holy Communion, the Lord's Supper.

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

**COMMUNION
HYMN**

"There's a Song in the Air"

*There's a song in the air, there's a star in the sky
There's a mother's deep prayer and a baby's low cry
And the star rains its fire while the angel choirs sing
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king*

*There's a tumult of joy o'er the wonderful birth
For the virgin's sweet boy is the Lord of the earth
See the star rains its fire while the angel choirs sing
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a king*

*We rejoice in the light and we echo the song
That comes down thru the night from the heavenly
throng*

*And we welcome the glorious gospel they bring
And we greet in the cradle our savior and king*

**COMMUNION
PRAYER**

Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer

*Sara Simon
Elder*

**HOLY
COMMUNION**

Partake of the holy communion (bread, juice, or whatever is available to you)

**WORDS OF
INSTITUTION**

Hear the words of Jesus when He said, "Take and eat, this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink, this is the cup of the covenant poured out for you."

BENEDICTION

May the God who sees you and calls you by name call you forth once more from worship into ministry and from prayer into preparation for Christ's arrival. May the blessing of that same God be with you on this day and on all days. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

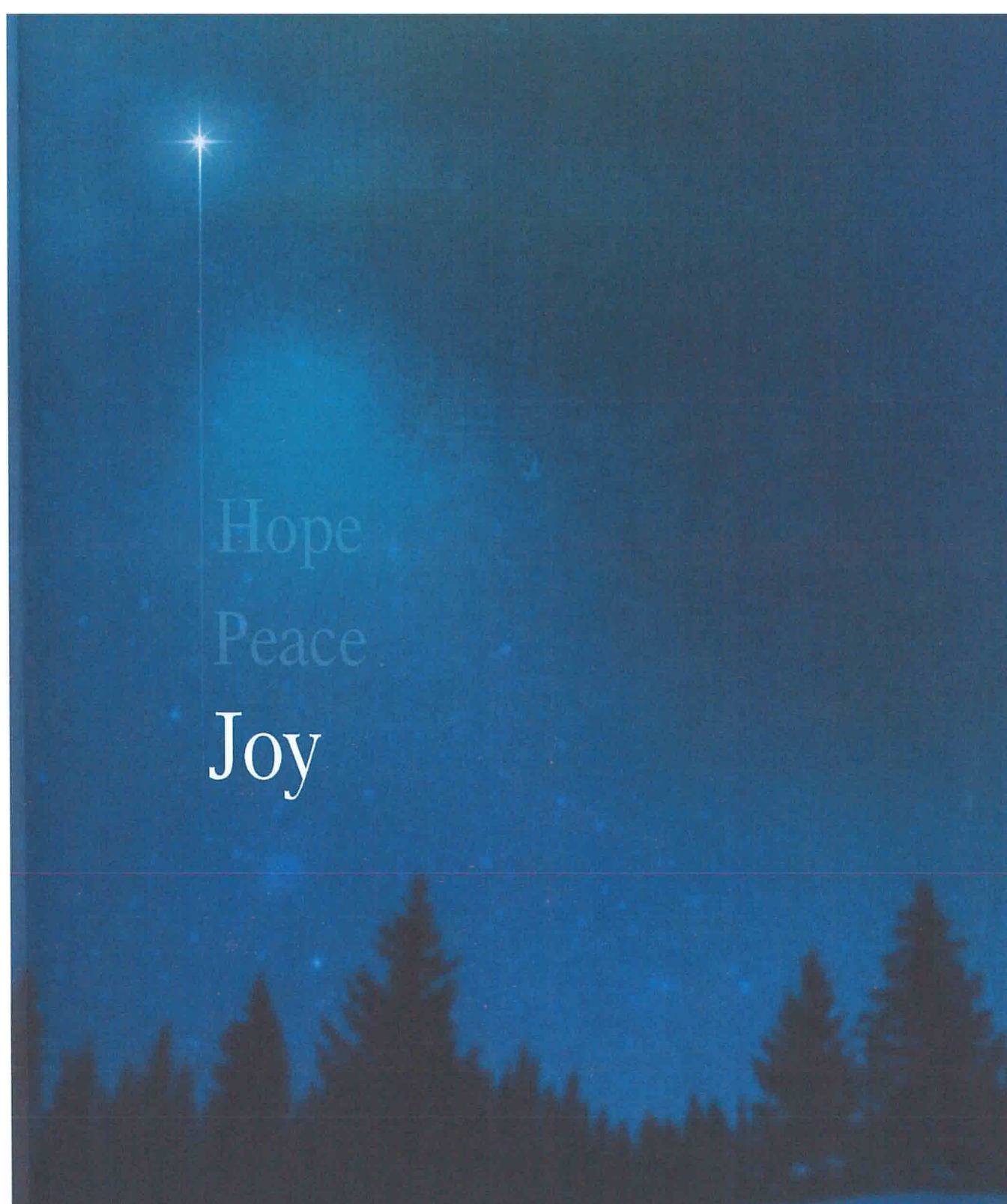
POSTLUDE

"O, How Joyfully!! Joy to the World"

*Margaret Cox
Pianist*

*You are warmly invited to remain in our Zoom worship space for some online
fellowship time following the postlude.*

Photo: Shutterstock Design: Ken Strickland Abingdon Press Litho in U.S.A. 9781501890253



MEDITATION
Sunday, December 13, 2020
“His Name is John,” Luke 1:57-66

“The Other Holy Couple: An Advent with Elizabeth and Zechariah,”
Week Three

Satenig Toumajan Mouradian lost her mother Altoon in the middle of a genocide in 1916, and she and her brother Harry split up to flee to the United States. Harry fled from Anatolia across Europe before crossing the Atlantic Ocean to the United States. Satenig, meanwhile, made her way across the breadth of Russia to Vladivostok, where she first met Krikor Mouradian.

They crossed the Pacific Ocean, she to Seattle and he to San Francisco, and they married here in the United States. They raised three children, one of whom, Albert, would enlist in the Marines during World War II and be killed in action on Okinawa only four months before the war’s end. According to family lore, Satenig refused to decorate the house for Christmas that year, and it was only now that I learned that this is an Armenian tradition—that when you lose someone who would have otherwise decked the halls with you, you do not deck the halls at all.

And another one of their children, Marianne, would eventually become my grandmother. Sadie and Krikor would raise not only Marianne and her siblings, but for several years, my mother and her brother Al, named for my great-uncle Albert. I only have a few, poorly-defined memories of Satenig from when I was a very young boy, but one of my memories was that she was not Satenig to me, she was the familiar diminutive version of the name.

Sadie.

When it came time to decide on a name for our daughter, Carrie and I did not know who would come out, so to speak, so we decided on both masculine and feminine names. We arrived at Sadie Lou in a matter of minutes, and never needed to look back.

(over)

What is in a name? Sometimes, generations of love and sacrifice. Sometimes, a moment of inspiration. Sometimes, a direct call from God. And none of these need be mutually exclusive.

This is a sermon series for the church season of Advent, or, in much of popular American culture, the “Christmas season.” But the Christmas season does not traditionally begin until Christmas Day. The four weeks leading up to Christmas are set aside in the church calendar to be a time of preparing the way for the Lord, and in that spirit, the origin story of John the Baptist, who preached that message of preparing the way for the Lord, seems an appropriate sermon series for now. So, for this Advent, we will be walking alongside the other Holy Couple of Luke’s Gospel—not Mary and Joseph (though we will of course be at their side on Christmas Eve), but Mary’s relative Elizabeth, and Elizabeth’s husband Zechariah. They end up overshadowed by Mary and Joseph’s dramatic saga in the end, but there is much in Luke’s telling of their story to capture and hold our attention as well.

We just spent a week each separately with Zechariah and Elizabeth, and now we see them in the storyline together, as their child is named in accordance with Gabriel’s instructions.

The dramatic inflection point comes in Zechariah’s powers of speech being restored after he writes out “His name is John,” but that line is originally uttered by Elizabeth, in response the rest of their family wanting to name the child after Zechariah. It is a wonderful thought, as we know from Luke’s earlier writing that Zechariah is a faithful and devoted man, and this keeps in an ancient custom that we participate in today of naming children after familial role models from previous generations.

But, what is in a name here? Naming the baby Zechariah would be full of meaning, but even for Zechariah, the person to be so honored, there is far more at stake. And there is for us as well.