



Valley Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Dear Friend in Christ,

Today marks the second week of 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 who is to come. In that spirit, I am happy to share with you the second 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 39-45. In this famous passage, Elizabeth welcomes her younger relative Mary, who was just paid a life-changing visit by the archangel Gabriel. For her, and for humanity, nothing will ever be the same!

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 "Zoom Links" then the Sunday Worship link.)

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday.

Christ's and yours, Pastor Eric

Valley Christian Church

Second Sunday of Advent

December 6, 2020

PRELUDE

*"Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring/
Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"*

*Margaret Cox
Pianist*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The angel said, "He will be great, and will be called Son of the Most High.
People: The Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.
Leader: He will reign over the house of Jacob forever.
People: And his kingdom will have no end, for nothing will be impossible with God.

*Peggi Zinser
Worship Leader*

(Luke 1:32-33, 37, NRSV)

HYMN OF PRAISE

"People, Look East"

*People look east the time is near of the crowning of the year
Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and
Set the table. People look east: Love, the guest is on the way*

*Furrows be glad, though earth is bare
One more seed is planted there
Give up your strength the seed to nourish
That in the course the flower may flourish
People, look east: Love, the rose, is on the way*

*Stars, keep the watch, when night is dim
One more light the bowl shall brim
Shining beyond the frosty weather
Bright as sun and moon together
People, look east: Love, the star, is on the way*

*Angels announce with shouts of mirth
Him who brings new life to earth
Set every peak and valley humming
With the word, the Lord is coming.
People, look east: Love, the Lord, is on the way*

INVOCATION

*Peggi Zinser
Worship Leader*

SHARING JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYER

Miraculous God, as we continue our preparations for your arrival, we set aside this sacred and holy time in worship to pray to you, to lift our voices to you and, we pray, to hear your voice in response. 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 both silently and aloud by name at this time...

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

SPECIAL MUSIC

*Solo by Mary Ellen Caughran
"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"*

*Traditional melody
Arranged by
Michael Praetorius*

SCRIPTURE

Luke 1:39-45

*Peggi Zinser
Worship Leader*

MESSAGE

"As I Went Down in the River to Pray"
See insert for message excerpt

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

HYMN

"As I Went Down in the River to Pray"

*(Refrain)
As I went down in the river to pray
Studying about that good old way, and who shall wear
The robe and crown, good Lord, show me the way

O mothers, lets go down, lets go down, come on down
O mothers, lets go down, down in the river to pray
Refrain

O fathers, lets go down, lets go down, come on down
O fathers, lets go down, down in the river to pray
Refrain

O sinners, lets go down, lets go down, come on down
O sinners, lets go down, down in the river to pray
Refrain*

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.

*Peggi Zinser
Worship Leader*

**OFFERTORY
PRAYER**

*Peggi Zinser
Worship Leader*

**CALL TO
COMMUNION**

May we remember that preparation was not limited to Christ's birth, but that He had to prepare for His death too.

Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

**COMMUNION
HYMN**

"One Candle is Lit"

*Come surely Lord Jesus, as dawn follows night
Our hearts long to greet you, as roses, the light
Salvation, draw near to us, our vision engage
One candle is lit for the hope of the age*

*Come quickly shalom, teach us how to prepare
For a gift that compels us with justice to care
Our spirits are restless til sin and war cease
One candle is lit for the reign of God's peace*

*Come, festively sing while awaiting the birth
Join angels in dancing from heaven to earth
Wave banners of good news, lift high thankful praise
One candle is lit for the joy of these days*

**COMMUNION
PRAYER**

Conclude by praying together the Lord's Prayer

*Ginny Guindon
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 calls you to wait and prepare for the Christ also call you forth from worship to minister in His name, and may the blessing of that same Lord be with you on this day and on all days. Amen.

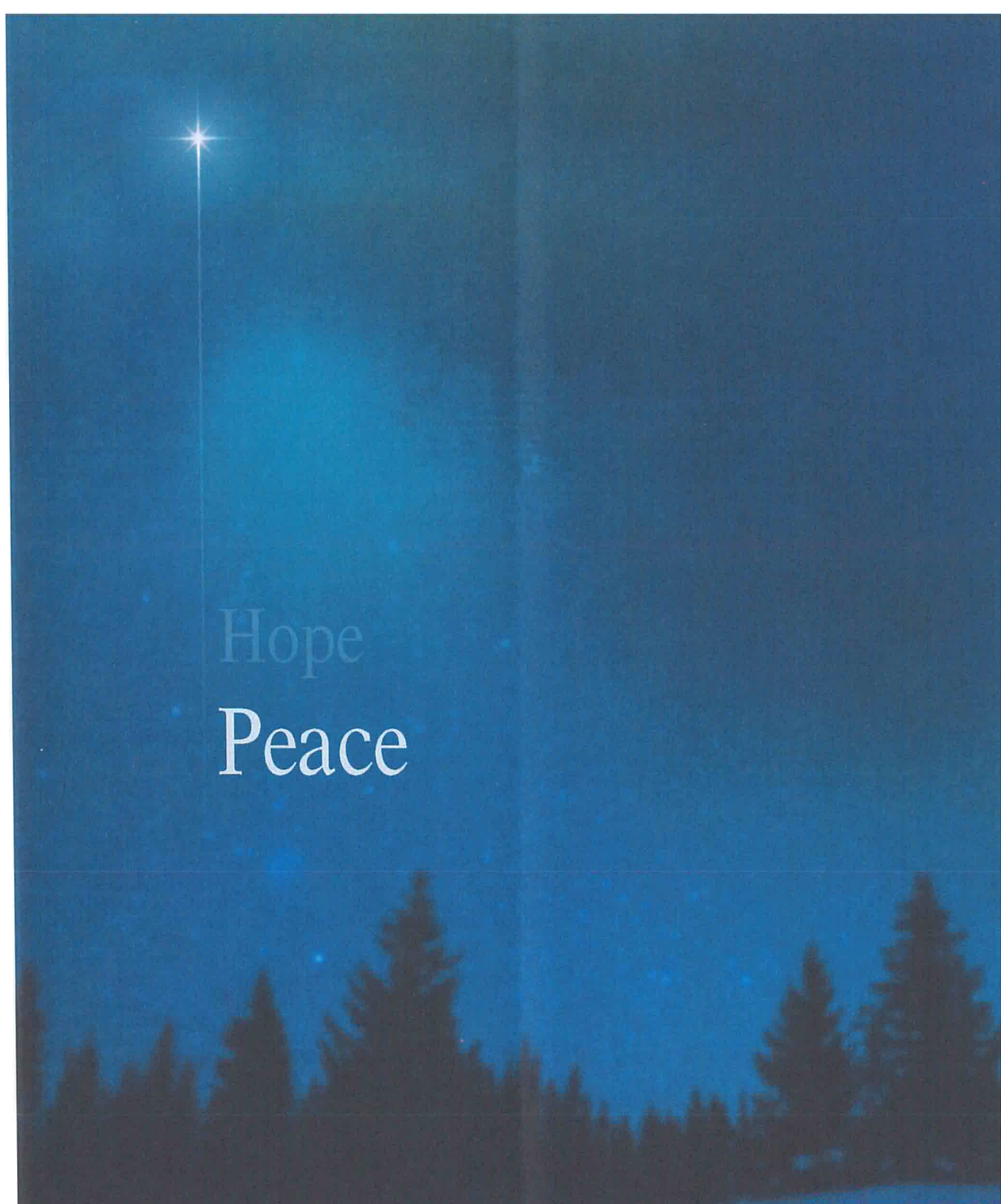
Rev. Dr. Eric Atcheson

POSTLUDE

"Let There Be Peace on Earth"

*Margaret Cox
Pianist*

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



MEDITATION
Sunday, December 6, 2020

“As I Went Down in the River to Pray,” Luke 1:39-45

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

Thursday, July 30, 2020, found my small family in their dark gray Ford C-Max utterly exhausted in every possible sense. Ten days ago, we closed on the sale of our townhouse in Vancouver and had begun the cross-country sojourn to Birmingham—Carrie in the C-Max with our two dogs, Sadie and me by airplane.

We had no idea what to expect on arriving here. Having driven through Missouri plenty in my childhood, and Arkansas some as well, I knew what the first day of our drive from my parents’ place in Kansas City would look like. I had no idea what the second day of our drive, from Memphis to Birmingham, would look like.

Carrie and I, bone-tired though we were, found ourselves happily surprised by the green trees and rolling hills of Alabama as we drove along I-22. And as we came near the city, not long before where I-22 intersects into I-65 and suddenly ends, Alison Krauss’s hymn *As I Went Down Into the River to Pray* started playing on Pandora:

As I went down into the river to pray, studying about that good old way, and who shall wear the robe and crown, good Lord, show me the way...

It was a profound moment of arrival—of the good Lord showing the way forward, and of trusting in following that way which was shown to us.

Such journeys are not so easy, but they are made easier in the knowledge that God is showing the way through them. And I think that is what made

Mary’s journey to see Elizabeth, after Gabriel announced to Mary her pregnancy with the Christ child, so doable for her.

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.

Last week, we focused on Zechariah, but this week, the narrative swings towards Elizabeth and her younger relative Mary. This is a deeply poignant moment in Luke’s Advent narrative, of Elizabeth greeting Mary with the news that John the Baptist had leaped for joy in utero at the presence of his aunt, Mary, and cousin-in-utero Jesus.

Maybe you do not feel quite so much like leaping at the end of 2020. Perhaps a cushioned recliner to fall into, or perhaps a litter to be carted around upon, would more fit the bill. But both women, Mary and Elizabeth, have seen through their own journeys and hardships to arrive at this point as well, and their children do still leap! If we listen to them, I believe that we very much still can as well.