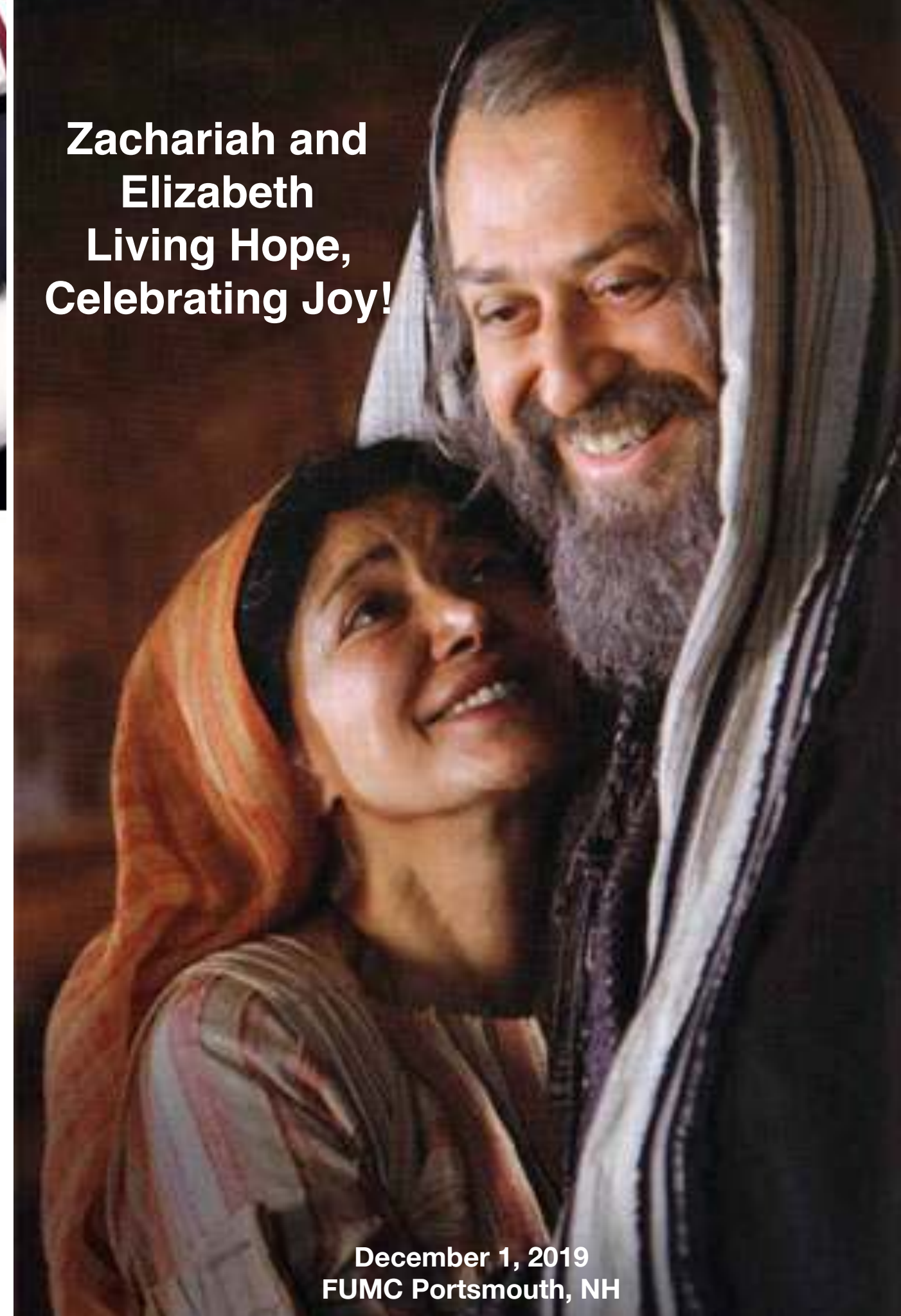




Zachariah and Elizabeth Living Hope, Celebrating Joy!



FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



New England Annual Conference Tri-State District
The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop
The Rev. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm
[call to ensure availability]
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

Like and Follow Us On:



December 1, 2019
FUMC Portsmouth, NH

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

***Call to Worship**

L: We join together in worshipping you, O God.

P: Hear our praise and prayers!

L: Like John, we come before you with hope and expectations.

P: Like Elizabeth, we seek assurance and give thanks.

L: Today begins the season of Advent, when once again we wait for Christ's arrival.

P: Lead us and guide us through this season of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Lighting the Advent Candle

Sue and David Richards

***Hymn**

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

UMH #196

A Time for the Child in all of Us

Ministry of Music

Prayer (unison)

Fill us with hope today, God, so that we may see your hand in all we do. Guide us and lead us toward being your people offering hope to others. Forgive us for the times when we let discouragement keep us from doing your work. Forgive us for the times when we fail to offer encouragement and help to those who need it most. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: God hears our prayers, forgives us, and continues to lead us.

All: Thanks be to God!

Sung Response

"Emmanuel, Emmanuel"

UMH #204

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word Luke 1:5-25

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message "Zachariah and Elizabeth: Living in Hope, Celebrating Joy"

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

We Respond to God's Word

***Hymn**

"Star Child"

TFWS #2095

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

***Doxology** (*Please join in singing the following*)

UMH #94

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

***Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

May these gifts offer hope to a world that longs to see you at work, O God. We give freely and with joy from our own abundance. Amen.

A Carol Communion

insert

We Go Forth to Serve

***Hymn**

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" v. 1,2,7

UMH #211

***Choral Benediction** (*Congregation encircles the Sanctuary*)

May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.

***Pastor's Charge**

Postlude

**Please stand as you are comfortable*

TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters

Welcome!

Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshiping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!

Rev. Deb Hanson

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Pastor's Assistant - David Richards

Liturgist - Dave Atkinson

Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek

Acolyte - Jan Cansdale

Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Greeters - Shirley Russ

Ushers - Ken & Jenya Westbrook

Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek

Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott

Photographer - Dave Atkinson

Sunday School - Aerial Sillanpaa & Rosie Buswell

Prayer Team - Marilyn Stebbins & Christine Williams



**Come join us for coffee
hour after church service
in Sanborn Hall. We'd
love to catch up with you
and see how your week
has gone.**

WE LIFT UP IN PRAYER...

Rev. Charles & Anona Hartman

Dan Strange

Anne Coffey

Ken Young

Rev. Bill & Gayle Gardei

Marion Collishaw

Sylvia Bartlett

Gil Stebbins

Woodie Lange

Jim New

Bobbie Noble

Barbara Glidden

Judy Doyon

Charles Gilman

Ruth Griffin

Jim Slater

Barbara Sylvester

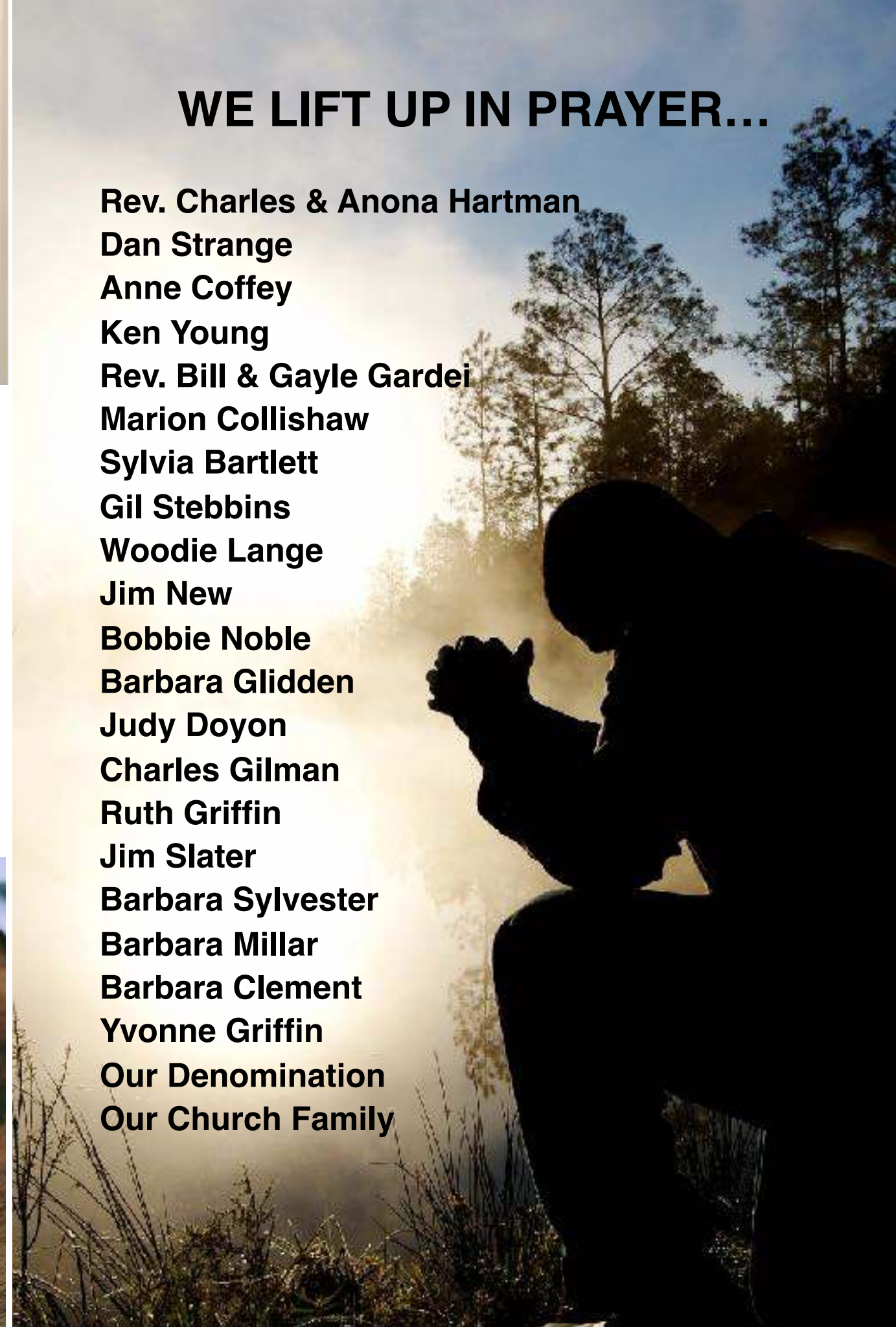
Barbara Millar

Barbara Clement

Yvonne Griffin

Our Denomination

Our Church Family



UPCOMING EVENTS

12/3 - Finance Trustee meeting is at 6 pm. The meeting will be held at the parsonage.

12/4 - Camp Wanakee open house will be in Sanborn Hall from 3-8 pm. All are welcome.

12/10 - The Peace Circle lunch will be held at the Dinnerhorn. It is currently set for 12 pm. but please note this can change. If you have questions check with Rev. Deb or the office.

12/11 - Service at Wentworth Senior Living at 11 am. There will be caroling. All are welcome.

12/15 - Wrapped Giving Tree gifts are due. Thank you for your generosity.

The Giving Tree is up. The deadline for the wrapped gifts to be returned is December 15th. Please attach red bell to each gift. One of the families on the list for the Giving Tree is looking for two bureaus - they can be used. If anyone has any of these items to donate, please contact Sue Sarosiek.

There are still 4 hand painted Christmas ornaments featuring FUMC in the office for sale at a price of \$14. Please feel free to drop in and look them over. It might be just what your holiday tree needs.

Donations are being accepted for computer updates. Computers are used in the office, our financial systems, our worship service and the Narthex. The amount needed for this upgrade is \$2,000. Please prayerfully consider donating to computer upgrade. Thank you

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

Church Conference News

Please pick up your Church Conference booklet in Sanborn Hall. They are alphabetical by last name.

In accordance with the Book of Discipline, the trustees submitted a request to accept a bequest from the Estate of Beverlea Meadows. As many of you know, Beverlea was a member of this church, the daughter of Ethel Mundy and lovingly designated the Portsmouth First United Methodist Church as a partial beneficiary of her estate. The Church Conference accepted the bequest unanimously. See David Richards for any questions.



**In Loving Memory of our family,
by Al & Jan Cansdale**



SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

“Zechariah and Elizabeth: Living in Hope, Celebrating Joy” 12/1/19
First UMC – Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Zechariah

What an amazing God we serve! As I look back on my part in the advent story I am in awe of the way God worked through the lives of ordinary people to change the course of human history.

My name is Zechariah, I am the father of the boy who became John the Baptist, God’s messenger for the coming of the Christ. To have been the father of God’s special servant - what an honor that was.

It all started many years before, when Elizabeth and I were first married. What a beautiful young woman she was. We were so excited, we couldn’t wait to start our family. I had always wished for a house full of sons and daughters. One of my favorite Psalms, number 127, says:

Sons are a heritage from the Lord,
 children a reward from him.
Like arrows in the hands of a warrior
 are sons born in one’s youth.
Blessed is the man
 whose quiver is full of them.

How we dreamed of a table surrounded by our children. I especially wanted to have sons. As a member of the tribe of Levi, my sons would have followed me as priests or Levites. When I read the stories of Eli and Samuel, and how their sons did not obey God and were rejected as priests, I vowed that my sons would be raised to honor God in their priestly service.

But as the years passed, we came to realize that Elizabeth was barren. In our day, that was often seen as a sign of God’s displeasure. That hurt us deeply because we both tried so hard to serve God in all that we did. It was especially difficult for me because I was a priest. Everyone wondered, why is God punishing one of his priests? What great sins have Zechariah and Elizabeth committed?

I prayed every day that God would lift this disgrace from us, but nothing happened. Years and years went by. I kept praying, even after Elizabeth was beyond the time of bearing children, though I did it more out of habit than faith. I was so disappointed in God. Why would he not do this one simple thing for us?

Finally there came the most exciting and frightening day of my life. My division was serving at the Temple in Jerusalem. What a magnificent building the Temple had become. During the rule of Herod the Great, God’s Temple was completely rebuilt. It had been under construction for over 15 years when I was there. It wasn’t nearly finished, but it was becoming an amazing building. It was over 150 feet high, and on the temple mount it could be seen from almost anywhere in the city. I never understood how a man as evil and corrupt as Herod could be part of such a wonderful undertaking as the rebuilding of God’s Temple.

When the lots were cast to select the priest to enter the Holy of Holies to offer incense, I was chosen. I knew this would be the high point of my priestly service. For the only time in my life I would be inside the Holy of Holies itself, almost in the very presence of God. I was in awe, and somewhat

frightened, when I entered through the curtain to make the offering.

Because I was already so nervous, I almost fainted with fright when I heard a voice beside me. There shouldn't have been anyone else there. I turned around and saw an angel of God. I couldn't believe my eyes. When he spoke to me I couldn't believe my ears either. He told me that Elizabeth and I were going to have a son at last. And more than that, our son would have the power and spirit of Elijah, would be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, and would prepare Israel for the coming of the Lord. I was so shocked that I simply could not believe it. An old man and his barren wife having a child? How could this be?

If you think being in the presence of an angel is frightening, try being in the presence of an angry angel. When I doubted, the angel said "I am Gabriel and I stand in the presence of God Himself!" I felt so foolish. How could I doubt God's message of joy? God was at last answering my years of prayer, and I wouldn't believe it. Because of my unbelief, I was unable to speak throughout Elizabeth's pregnancy.

When I left the Holy of Holies, a crowd was waiting. Because I had taken so long, they were curious. When I was unable to speak they were amazed. For me, it was unbelievably frustrating. Here I had a great revelation to tell, and I couldn't even speak. How badly I wanted to tell of what I had seen and heard. But of course the story of the coming Messiah was for my son to tell, not me.

For over 400 years God had been silent. Since the time of His last great prophet, Malachi, there had been no revelations from God. In Israel we began to wonder if God had forgotten his promise. As wave after wave of conquering armies swept over our land, we asked "When will you deliver us Lord, when will you send your Messiah?". At last God had spoken. Through Gabriel I learned that the prophecy of Malachi was about to be fulfilled: "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty". But because of my unbelief, I could tell no one.

God had answered my prayer at last, and in a way that was beyond my wildest dreams. I had asked for sons to follow me as priest. What I got instead was as son who was to be the messenger who prepared Israel for the coming of the Christ. What a magnificent God we serve! We can live with hope and celebrate with joy!

Elizabeth

What a magnificent God we serve! The Lord our God is able to do marvelous things for all of us because of God's love and power.

My name is Elizabeth, the wife of Zechariah and the mother of John the Baptist. I was astounded when Zechariah returned home from Jerusalem after his time of serving at the Temple. I had never seen him so excited before. But he was also very frustrated because he couldn't talk. Fortunately, he could read and write, so he was able to communicate a little of what he wanted to say.

When he told me that we were going to have a son I was shocked. I had been past the age of

bearing children for years, and even when we were young, I was barren. Having a son at my old age? Unbelievable! Now I know how Sarah must have felt when the Lord told her and Abraham that they would have a son in their old age. I laughed to myself just as Sarah did.

The Lord was faithful to his promise though, and the next month I began to feel nausea and tiredness (I mean being more tired than us old women normally are). It became news throughout the entire region - Elizabeth the childless one was pregnant in her old age. I went into seclusion as a sign of gratitude to God, and to escape from the stares and whispers of my neighbors. It didn't take long for the joy of God's gift to be tempered by reality though. Believe me, God was wise to have given childbearing to the young and strong. Being pregnant at my age has some serious drawbacks.

The most wonderful time during my pregnancy was when my niece Mary came to visit. I was about six months along by then. When I heard Mary's voice, something strange happened. It was almost as though John was able to hear her from inside of me. It seemed as though he leapt with joy because she was here. I don't know how I knew it, but at that same moment I suddenly understood - Mary was with child too, with the Lord's Christ.

What a pair we must have been, laughing, crying, hugging. On the one hand, there I am. This ancient withered old woman, with my big pregnant belly sticking out. On the other hand, there's Mary. So young, still almost a child herself. And off to the side stands Zechariah, not saying a word of course, with this gigantic knowing smile on his face. He knew exactly what was going on, but he couldn't tell anyone.

Who but our magnificent God could have planned such a scene? Who but God would choose an old couple to raise the man who would announce the coming of our Savior? Who but God would choose this one teenage girl, from among all the women of Israel, to bring God's Son into the world? Who but God would think of becoming a man so we could see him, touch him, be saved by him?

The three months of Mary's visit must have flown by for her, but they were the longest months of my life. Towards the end I could hardly move. I felt like that giant fish that swallowed Jonah. I thought John was never going to come. I'd have tried to go for some walks to shake him loose, but that would have been too much of a spectacle. Those who didn't die from laughter would have talked about it for years. Elizabeth, the ancient one, waddling around town nine months pregnant.

Finally the day came, and John was born. All memories of the pain and discomfort vanished in a moment. When I held him in my arms for the first time, I thought I'd burst with joy. What an amazing gift of new life from our amazing God.

When it came time to name him, several of our relatives expected us to name him Zechariah, after his father. They didn't understand when I told them he was to be named John. I'm sure they thought that the old woman had gone completely crazy, but I wouldn't change my mind. Finally, they gave Zechariah a writing tablet and he wrote "His name is John". As soon as he finished writing, Zechariah was able to speak, and he hasn't stopped since. Zechariah can't stop praising God for all that God has done. We are both so excited to have been used by God as part of the plan to bring the Messiah to Israel.

Shortly after this, Mary had to leave. I was so sad to see her go, but I was glad she had been able to come. I kept thinking to myself "If God's plan includes a child for us, what does the Lord have in mind

for Mary?” God proved to me that miracles do happen, and God is a marvelously unpredictable God. I prayed that God would strengthen Mary for the burdens she was to carry.

While we could only see a very small piece of God’s plan, it was amazing to watch it unfold. With my unexpected pregnancy and Zechariah’s angelic vision, loss of speech and then regaining speech, the whole region was wondering about what John would become. Even before John was old enough to speak, his ministry had begun. People were beginning to ask if God was again at work among us. Because of that, when John did begin to teach, they were ready to listen, prepared to hear a message from God.

An old woman and a young girl, each bearing a son to fulfill the Lord’s plan of salvation. One is born to prepare the people’s hearts, the other to pay the price for their sins. What an incredible God we serve! We can live in hope and celebrate with joy!

From Advent Stories by Joe Loth

NOTES: This worship drama is part 1 and part 2 of a 4 part series on the Advent Story. In this series Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary reminisce about their roles in the Advent of Christ. In part 1, Zechariah talks about his memories about the angelic visit and subsequent birth of John the Baptist.

https://www.writing.com/main/view_item.php/item_id/1314448-Advent-Stories