

# First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

## Introduction

## Invitation

## Prelude

### Call to Worship:

Here we are again, at the first Sunday of Advent. Here we are again, waiting and expecting to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Christ. Here we are again, longing for the peace Jesus offers and the reminder of God's love for us. Here we are again, thanks be to God! Let us worship!

### Lighting the Advent Wreath

**Hymn:** "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

**Reading the Word:** Isaiah 35:1-10

**Ministry of Music** Bevan Bloemendaal

**Message:** "Expectation"

### Prayer:

Loving God, here we are again, awaiting to celebrate the birth of Jesus, even in the middle of a pandemic. Our expectations for life have changed this year because we have been social distancing and wearing masks. Yet, we know that, even in the midst of our frustrations and longings to be together in community, you are with us, reminding us that we can grow in faith, find healing, and share your love with others. Thank you, God. Help us to trust Emmanuel, God-With-Us. Amen.

### The Lord's Prayer:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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.**

**Hymn:** "O Little Town of Bethlehem"

## Blessing

## The Return of the Redeemed to Zion

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.  
They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
“Be strong, do not fear!  
Here is your God.  
He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.  
He will come and save you.”

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.  
For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;

the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;  
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not travel on it,  
but it shall be for God's people;  
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.

No lion shall be there,  
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;  
they shall not be found there,  
but the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.



— WE CAN USE YOUR HELP —  
IN MAKING A DIFFERENCE —  
**THIS CHRISTMAS**



This year has been challenging in countless ways and we are reminded of that family traveling to Bethlehem who had nothing, but through the kindness of an innkeeper they were given a place to stay.

Our fundraiser this year is “Share The Joy” a collaboration between the FUMC Kids First program and with Airial Sillanpaa who is the President of the NHFAPA [NH Foster and Adoptive Parent Association] and FUMC Kids First program in making a difference in some local kids lives this Christmas.

You can help by visiting [https://fumcportsmouth.com/?page\\_id=4152](https://fumcportsmouth.com/?page_id=4152) and share the joy this season.



# PRAYER LIST

Bill and Gayle Gardei

Erin

Evelyn and Jim New

Erika

Earl

Fred

Jim

Juliann

Jayne Griffin & Family

Robert (Babe) Williams and Family

Jim Slater

Charles Gilman

Fickenscher Family

Amelia and Michelle

Barbara Glidden

Gil & Marilyn Stebbins

Danny Westbrook

Dan Strange

Bobbie Noble

Pixie & Wayne Balt

Fred

Durgin Pines Residents & Workers

Riverside Rest Home Residents & Workers

Those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19

Those in nursing and assisted living care

Our Denomination

Our Church Family



**SERMON TRANSCRIPT  
GIVEN BY  
Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson**

**Message “Expectation”**  
**Rev. Dr. Debra Hanson**

**November 29, 2020, Advent 1: Expectation**

Isaiah 35:1-10

We begin the season of Advent, a time of expectation, preparation, joy, and love as we travel a spiritual journey to Bethlehem and the birth of Jesus. Advent has often been pushed aside in order to make room for Christmas, and as much as I like Christmas, I also need Advent to help me prepare my heart once again as I wait to welcome the Christ Child. It is a time of waiting for God to act, of expecting God to act.

Expectation make me think of the waiting time during pregnancy. Recently, our youngest son and his fiancé waited for the birth of their first child. During those nine months, they looked forward to this baby’s birth and were busy learning about parenthood, planning and preparing with great anticipation and excitement. Anyone who has expected a child’s birth knows that those months of waiting aren’t spent just sitting around, but actively getting ready for the day when the baby arrives.

Whenever we expect something to happen, we may be filled with excitement and joy, or maybe even anxiety and fear, depending on what the situation is. In today’s scripture passage, we find the nation of Israel in exile, having been taken from Israel to Babylon. They were far from home and captives in another country. Their identity as a nation was in danger of being lost, and they must have wondered if they would ever be able to return home.

The prophet Isaiah, in Chapter 35, offered hope to an exiled people. His was a promise that God hasn’t forgotten them, and they would see the glory of the Lord. The signs would appear unexpectedly: the desert would bloom, renewal would happen, and they would return home with joy. During that time, not only would nature be restored, but the blind, deaf, lame, and mute would be healed. Humans would be restored to health, and God would lead them down the Holy Way to their home in Israel.

Verse 10 says, “. . . the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Jerusalem with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” They could expect God to save them from exile, to restore them to their homeland.

We might think that seems too fantastic to happen in our day and age, and yet, we do see the hand of God moving in our world. This happens through the church of Jesus Christ who is the incarnation of God. He was Emmanuel, God-in-the-flesh, who was born into poverty, lived, ministered, and cared for all people, opened eyes to inclusiveness, healed the sick, cured the blind, deaf, lame and mute, and taught his disciples about carrying on his ministry in the world. His message was that God loves all people and welcomes everyone into the kingdom of God.

We can expect God to be at work, but not without our help. God will work through us, as Christ's church because we are the hands and feet of Christ in the world. We make a difference as we manifest the presence of Christ to the downtrodden, as we love our neighbors, as we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, lift up the outcasts, and minister to God's children.

When we act in the name of Jesus Christ, we can expect God to work through us. It seems to me that, today, we have evidence of the work of Christ in the world in so many places, in spite of being in the middle of a pandemic. There are people who are collecting food and giving it to those who are food insecure. Think of the medical personnel, workers at essential businesses, first responders, teachers, and so many others who have put their own health and lives on the line in order to care for those who are sick.

We can expect God to act through us when we care for others. We become the signs of God's kingdom here on earth when we act in God's name. Our theme here at First United Methodist Church for this Advent season is "Share the Joy." It is one of many ways in which we have the opportunity to minister to and bring joy to foster children through our Kids First program. Check it out on our web site: [fumcportsmouth.com](http://fumcportsmouth.com). There are many opportunities to share the joy of God's love with others, and this is one way to help foster families who struggle to make ends meet and provide for them, not just at Christmas, but all year long.

We can expect God to act. We can expect God to act through our actions. What an opportunity we have to bring hope and joy and love to God's children in whatever ways we can! We CAN expect God to act. That is the hope and promise of Isaiah's message today. Thanks be to God! Share the joy! Amen.



## 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.



One way to make a donation to FUMC is to point your phone camera on QR code and it will guide you through the process...  
thanks for making a difference.



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