

Welcome to Grace United Methodist Church!!

Sunday – December 17, 2023 – 9:00 am



Meditation Verse: *“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John... He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light” – John 1:6 and 8*

Grace United Methodist Church

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Pastor John Britt

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Check us out on Facebook!

Church Staff:

Pastor	John Britt
Office Administrator	Phyllis Stevens
Children's Ministry	Kelly Carter
Youth Ministry	Kristal Hamm
Financial Administrator	Cindy Puckett
Custodian	Pam H./Tanya Taylor
Digital Campus Host	Kristin Britt
Audio/Visual	Steve Hilton
Lay Leader	Mike Marsland
Pianist	Julie Marsland

Order of Worship

Welcome and Opening Prayer

Call to Worship:

Leader: Have you noticed? Are you paying attention? God is doing a new thing.

People: We watch and wait in joy for the coming Messiah.

Leader: You know the captives? God is bringing freedom. You know the brokenhearted? God is bringing healing.

People: We watch and wait in hope for the coming Messiah.

Leader: Beloved, listen. God is calling *you*. To be freed and to free your neighbors. To be healed and to heal your community. To testify to the Light among us.

People: We watch and wait to be used by the coming Messiah.

Leader: So, let us join our voices and our hearts as we proclaim the story of the one whose coming and yet is already as close as our own breath.

People: We come to watch, to wait, and to worship Jesus Christ, the coming Messiah. Amen.

*Passing of the Peace

*Hymn #240 - Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Advent Candle Lighting:

Reader 1: When God's people were surrounded by hardship, suffering, and grief, Isaiah proclaimed, *"The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to provide for those who mourn in Zion — to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit"* (Isaiah 61:1-3a).

Reader 2: We come today as people who are also surrounded by suffering and grief. And yet, the Spirit hovers among us, tending and anointing, inspiring freedom where there is

captivity, declaring blessing in places the world has cursed, and igniting joy where mourning and heartache prevail.

People: We wait as people who experience hardship and pain, yet we are called to witness to the persistent joy that sustains our life as God's people.

Reader 1: We light these candles as signs of our hope, peace, and joy. May our lives shine with the fierce, tenacious joy of the Light who lives in our hearts as we wait and work for the coming of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

*Song: Light the Advent Candle - *Verses 1-3 and Chorus*

Scripture: John 1:6-8 and 19-28

*Song of Response: In Christ Alone

Kids Message

Message: "John the Doppelganger"

Morning Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Announcements

*Closing Music:

- Hymn #89 - Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee
- Glorious Day

*Blessing

(*Please stand if you are able.)

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

- 1) *Grow*. In the times when you've been 'accused' of being a Christian, how did this experience help you to grow in your 'fierce and bold obedience'? And if you've never been 'accused' of being a Christian...
- 2) *Pray*. As Mary sang, pray this week for 'the least of these' during Advent.
- 3) *Study*. Read Luke 1:5-25. What does this passage add to what we have been learning about and talking about concerning John the Baptist?

Next Week's Lectionary Readings:

2 Samuel 7:1-11,16 Luke 1:26-38
Romans 16:25-27 Luke 1:46b-55

To go a little deeper
with these readings
each day this week,
please go to:
pastorjohnb.org

Christmas Eve Lectionary Readings:

Isaiah 9:2-7 Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14 Luke 2:1-20

Next Sunday's Message: "The Subjunctive Space" - We enter the place of the impossible – the one who was barren and has entered old age is pregnant and the virgin is also with child. This flashback takes us to Elizabeth's home, where the bewildered Mary visits her cousin. Here it is revealed that nothing is impossible with God. We are invited to step into that space. But we often hesitate because we prefer to stay in the world of certainty and what is. Yes, this space roots us in reality and in the truth of who we are. But it can also prevent the work of the Spirit and it can cause us to accept a reality that does not have to be. Like Mary and Elizabeth, we are called to embrace the possibility of what God can do. We are called to connect the dots between the God we know and have always known and the God who is guiding our future and has big plans for us.

This Week at Grace

- Wednesday – 1:30 PM – Midweek Chat – Chapel
- Wednesday – 6:00 PM – Youth Group – Fellowship Hall
- Thursday – 10:00 AM – Disc. Small Group – SS Room
- Thursday – 5:30 PM – Men's Group – Fellowship Hall
- Friday – 6:30 AM – Women's Study – Chapel

Special Events at Grace

- Dec. 20 – Blue Christmas Service – 9 AM – Chapel
- Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve Services – 1:30 and 4:00 PM

Announcement:

The December Mission of the Month is for Piedmont Valley Elementary and Stagebarn Middle schools.

May God Bless you throughout the coming week!!