

# Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia

From 1844 to 2023 (179 Years)

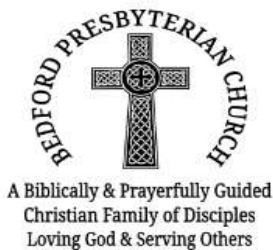


## Week of December 3<sup>rd</sup>

We will continue sending out this combination of the newsletter and bulletin to keep you up to date on announcements, prayers, needs and scheduled activities for those that are uncomfortable to attend service yet.

Included will be the usual newsletter information along with prayers, scripture and a sermon.

We hope that you can utilize this format to keep up to date while being away from actual services, meetings, activities and watching the online sermon.



*Bedford Presbyterian is a Biblically and  
Prayerfully Guided Christian Family of  
Disciples, Loving God and Serving Others*

## The Approach to God

One: The peace of Christ be with you

All: **And Also with you**

**Prelude**

*“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*

arr. Phil Perkins

**Lighting of the Advent Candle**

John & Judy Blair

**Reader 1:** This is the first Sunday in Advent. In four weeks we will celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ

**The first candle is lit**

**Reader 2:** Today we light the candle of FAITH. May the light of this candle enlighten our way with the assurance of His presence and guidance during our journey to Christmas.

**Hymn**

*“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”*

Hymn 153

**Prayer of Confession**

God, we come before You as children caught up in the frenzy of Christmas preparations. We decorate our homes, wrap our gifts, write our cards, prepare our holiday dishes – but forget to prepare our hearts. Forgive us when we get so caught up in the world’s celebration that we forget the reason for the season: You love us so much, You sent Your son to show us how to love. Help us to live and share the love of Jesus.

**Assurance of Pardon:**

One: Friends, believe the good news of the gospel.

All: **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Through Jesus Christ we have been born again to new life.**

**Gloria**

*“Glory Be to the Father”*

## Proclaiming the Word of God

**Introduction to Scripture**

**Scripture**

Luke 1:5-23, 57-80, Isaiah 40:3-5, Malachi 4:5

**Anthem**

*“Christmas is Coming”*

Joel Raney

## **Sermon**

## **THE STORY OF ZECHARIAH AND ELIZABETH**

Years ago when our children were little we always drove home for Christmas. We would pack up the car, put Joy and Tim in their car seats and head down the road from western North Carolina to Hampton Roads, Virginia. It was an opportunity for the grandparents to spend time with their grandchildren and for all of us to enjoy the Christmas season together. There was just one problem. It took a long time, about 6 or 7 hours of driving, to get there. Just before one of these holiday excursions Sherry asked our little daughter Joy, "Aren't you excited about going to see grandma and granddaddy?" "Mommy," she said, "It's going to be a long journey."

Yes, sometimes journeys are long. They can take an extended period of time with lots of twists and turns along the way. That was certainly true with regards to the birth of Christ. A number of people were caught up in a sequence of events that occurred before that little baby was born in Bethlehem. For some, like Mary and Joseph, it actually involved a long and a difficult journey, over a hundred miles probably on foot, all the way from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea. This December we will join with them and all of the others who were a part of that first Christmas so long ago. We will discover what they experienced and how God changed their lives as recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. We will also have an opportunity to learn a little more about the events and times in which they lived. Finally, we will discover how a number of Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled when God sent His Son into our world. So let's get started on our own journey to Christmas. It will be an exciting adventure. The first people we're going to meet during this journey is a senior adult couple by the name of Zechariah and Elizabeth. They are getting ready to enter the temple in Jerusalem. Let me introduce them to you.

Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth were an older couple. They have been happily married for many years, but without the blessing of children. This had become one of the great disappointments of their life together. The Scriptures clearly taught that children were like the arrows of a warrior. Blessed was the man whose quiver was full of them (Psalm 127:3-5). Unfortunately Zechariah's quiver was empty. Nevertheless, Zachariah and Elizabeth had been true to the Lord. They had been careful to keep all of the laws and commandments that God had given to His people. Recently they had even been blessed with a great honor. Zechariah had been chosen to burn incense in the temple at Jerusalem. He was a priest from the tribe of Levi. In fact, both he and Elizabeth could trace their heritage back to this tribe, the one that had been chosen by God to lead the Jewish people in worship. In a few moments Zechariah would be entering the Holy Place, the outer room of the temple. It contained the Menorah, the seven branched lamp stand that was always lit. It represented God's continuing presence and watch care His people. This outer room of the temple also housed the Table of Shew Bread on which twelve loaves of bread were placed, a symbolic gift to God from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Finally there was the small altar. It was the place where Zechariah would burn incense, representing the prayers of God's people being offered unto the Lord. Only a few priests were entrusted with this special responsibility. They were chosen by lot, a way that ensured that their selection was from God, not man. Elizabeth was thrilled that her husband had been selected. She and a gathering of friends waited outside the temple as Zechariah entered the building by himself. Gently swinging a censor to keep the smoldering incense aglow, he would pour its contents on the altar. Then he would offer the prayers of God's people as the smoke of the burning incense gradually wafted skyward. This day, however, something far different was about to take place.

As he was preparing to pour the incense on the altar, suddenly a tall, strong young man was standing in front of him. He was so startled that he dropped the censor and fell to his knees. The man spoke in a voice that clearly indicated that he had come from a heavenly realm. The man said, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayer has been answered. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to name

him John. He will be a joy and delight to you and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to drink wine or any other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. Many of the people of Israel will be brought back to the Lord their God because of him. He will go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to righteousness, to make ready a people prepared to meet the Lord.” Zechariah could not believe what he was hearing. He asked this angelic being, “How can this be? How can I know that what you say will take place? I’m an old man and my wife is well advanced in years.” The angel replied, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you the good news. However, because you do not believe what I have told you, you will be silent from this moment until the day when what I have said comes true” (Luke 1:11-20).

Meanwhile, the people waiting outside wondered what had happened to Zechariah. He had been gone a long time. When he finally stumbled out of the temple, everyone knew that something had happened. Zechariah couldn’t speak, not even a whisper. It was obvious to all that he had seen a vision. After he fulfilled his duties at the temple, he and Elizabeth returned home and guess what happened? Elizabeth became pregnant and she was thrilled by what the Lord had done for her. Nine months later she gave birth to a healthy little boy, just as the angel had promised. On the eighth day after his birth, the time had come to name the child. Everyone was surprised that the couple had decided to name their baby “John,” a name which means “God is gracious.” Usually a child was named after his father or some other close relative, but there was no one in the family named “John”. So they asked Zechariah, “What’s the boy to be named?” Zechariah took a writing tablet and wrote on it, “His name is John!” Immediately his tongue was loosened and he began to praise the Lord. Then taking the little child in his arms he said, “And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare a way for him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins.” (Luke 1:57-80)

And so it was. John grew up, a man strong in spirit, a prophetic voice crying out in the wilderness, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” Living in the desert, he was like the prophet Elijah, calling people to repentance and baptizing them in the Jordan River. Thus was fulfilled two key passages of Scripture in the Old Testament, passages of Scripture which foretold how John would prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah, the Son of God. Isaiah had written centuries earlier, “*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it’*” (Isaiah 40:3-5). Then at the very end of the Old Testament, there is this further confirmation of what the Lord was preparing to accomplish, a prophetic proclamation written by the prophet Malachi, “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the LORD.*” (Malachi 4:5) So you see, God had taken an older couple, blessed them with a son and included them in His plans to redeem all of mankind. John, their son, would prepare the way, even from before his birth, for the arrival of God’s salvation.

So what have we learned on this first Sunday of Advent as we begin our journey to Christmas? What have been able to discern from our encounter with Zachariah and Elizabeth that we can apply to our own lives? First, you’re never too old to serve the Lord. Zachariah and Elizabeth were both in the latter years of their lives. They had every right to stay home and say, “We’re just too old and tired to participate in religious ceremonies any more. Why just climbing those steps into the temple is way too hard on knees that don’t like to bend anymore.” But that’s not what they said or did. Zechariah was eager to fulfill his sacred duty as a servant of the Lord and he had the full support of his wife. All too often in today’s world older folks are consigned to the retirement syndrome. We are gently told to back away from being fully engaged in life, even with regards to our participation at church. We are encouraged to step aside and let the younger

folks take over. Sometimes we even adopt that attitude ourselves. Nothing could be further from the truth. I've seen older folks do some mighty impressive things, like my aunt Tootsie, who was confined to a wheel chair. Even though she was in her eighties, she hosted a "Good Morning Devotional" every day on the intercom at the nursing home where she was a resident. We must never let people put us on a shelf, no matter how old we are. God can still use us. Moses was eighty years old when he led the children of Israel out of Egypt. That's pretty good for an octogenarian and he kept right on going until he was 120.

Here's the second thing that we can learn from Zechariah and Elizabeth, especially Zechariah. We should never let the power of disbelief hold sway over our lives. Now Zechariah never had any doubts about the Lord. He believed in God with all of his heart. Otherwise, he would not have gone to the temple to burn incense. His problem was that he just did not believe that God was going to do something special through him and Elizabeth, like giving them a son. He knew that God had performed miracles in the past. The Bible was full of them, like the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah. He had just stopped believing that God could do something like that in his life. Maybe he thought he just wasn't good enough to be the recipient of such a blessing. Who knows? In any case, He had decided that he and Elizabeth were just too old. The opportunity to be parents had come and gone. How wrong he had been. His unwillingness to believe that God had something special in store for him and Elizabeth was a costly mistake. It had hushed him up for nearly a year. The same thing can happen to us when we stop believing that God can move and work through our lives. It can shut us up and destroy all the joy and happiness which the Lord desires to bestow upon us.

Don't let that happen to you. During your journey to Christmas this year, don't let a spirit of disbelief diminish your joyous expectation that the Lord is still present and able to do wonderful things in the lives of His people, even those who are getting a bit older. Always remember that with God all things are possible—for you, for me and for all of those who have entrusted their lives into His care.

## **Response to the Word of God**

### ***Invitation to Communion***

#### ***Hymn***

*"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"*

Hymn 232

#### ***Communion***

*"Of the Father's Love Begotten"*  
*"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"*

Instrumental

#### ***Doxology***

*"Doxology for Advent"*

### ***Prayer of Thanksgiving***

Almighty God, we thank You for the holy scriptures, in which You have revealed to us Your Son Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the law and prophets, the promised Messiah of Israel and the Redeemer of humankind. Grant that we, who gratefully celebrate His advent and acknowledge Him as your living Word, may walk in the light of His truth and make known the good news of His kingdom in all the world, to the glory of Your name. Amen.

### ***Sharing of Joys and Concerns***

### ***Lord's Prayer***

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

### ***Closing Hymn***

*"Blessed Be the God of Israel"*

Hymn 158

### **The Sending Forth**

### ***Benediction***

### ***Postlude***

*"Deck the Hall"*

arr: Carol Tornquist

### **A Journey to Christmas**

On this first Sunday of Advent we will be meeting Zechariah and Elizabeth. They are often the forgotten participants in the story of Christ's birth. Nevertheless, they have some important things to share with us about trusting in God to move and work in our lives in ways that are truly remarkable. Next Sunday we will be visiting with Mary and Joseph. The angelic announcement of the coming birth of Christ turned their world upside down. They too have some things to share with us that will help to make our Journey to Christmas a more meaningful experience. Along the way we will also discover each Sunday how the birth of Christ was predicted in various passages of Scripture in the Old Testament. Join with us in our Journey to Christmas and invite your friends and family to come along with you. It's going to be a memorable adventure.

### **BCM is in need of:**

Towels

Wash Cloths

Sheets of all sizes

## *Abendmusik*

**December 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 pm**

**Please bring some finger foods and join us at the reception following the service.**

# December 2023

| SUN  | MON  | TUE  | WED   | THU       | FRI       | SAT       |
|--|--|--|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|  |  |  |   |           | <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>3</b><br><i>10 am Worship<br/>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of<br/>Advent<br/>Communion<br/>Session</i>                                     | <b>4</b>   | <b>5</b><br><i>Office<br/>opening late</i> | <b>6</b><br><i>Something<br/>More, 3 pm</i> | <b>7</b>  | <b>8</b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>10</b><br><i>10 am Worship<br/>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of<br/>Advent<br/>5¢ a Meal<br/>BCM collection<br/>Abendmusik,<br/>6:30 pm</i> | <b>11</b>  | <b>12</b>                                  | <b>13</b><br><i>Something<br/>More, 3pm</i> | <b>14</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>16</b> |
| <b>17</b><br><i>10 am Worship<br/>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of<br/>Advent</i>  | <b>18</b>  | <b>19</b>                                  | <b>20</b><br><i>Something<br/>More, 3pm</i> | <b>21</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>23</b> |
| <b>24</b><br><i>10 am Worship<br/>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of<br/>Advent<br/>Christmas Eve<br/>Service, 7pm</i>                           | <b>25</b><br><i>He Is Born!<br/><br/>Office<br/>Closed</i> | <b>26</b>                                  | <b>27</b><br><i>Something<br/>More, 3pm</i> | <b>28</b> | <b>29</b> | <b>30</b> |
| <b>31</b><br><i>10 am Worship<br/><br/>New Year's Eve</i>  |  |  |   |           |           |           |

**Joy-** Ron Morris came home from hospital in Thanksgiving Day. Good to see both in church.

**Joy-** Becky Noell was thankful for the youth group who raked her yard

**Joy-** Barbara Nichols shared that a friend's daughter lost everything in a house fire. However, going through the rubble, she found a card her Mom had sent years ago which reminded her of God's promises.

**Joy-** Linda Benton shared that surgery on her brother-in-law, Fred Beeson (on prayer list), went well and cancer removed,

**Joy-** Larry Compter shared that Zoey (on prayer list) is doing well and that his back is better.

**Joy-** Ellen Foster thanked everyone for prayers for Tom and he is doing better. She also shared that his physical therapist donated a turkey for Shepherd's Table when they told him about the ministry.

**Joy-** Judy Blair gave praise for the rain.

**Joy-** Margaret Lambert said her brother is going through therapy and doing better.

**Joy-** Russell Stevens shared that Carrie's tests were negative

### Concerns- December 3<sup>rd</sup>

**Avery:** Tinkie, hospice care

**Barnes:** Kim Hedrick- (friend) colon cancer  
Mark- (nephew) open heart surgery, caregiver of special needs adult

**Benton:** Tracey Thomas (daughter's friend) transplant problems  
Family of Judy Salmon

**Blair:** Ecumenical youth group

**Boone:** Linda Cole- heart transplant  
Don Bartz- (brother-in-law) enlarged hand

**Callahan:** Mary Jane (friend) cancer  
Steve Chaffin (friend) blood clots

**Compter:** two brothers- unbelievers  
Prayers for friends to come to the Lord  
Michael Compter- (brother) heart failure  
Steve & Mary- (friends) Steve disabilities  
Zoey Fisher-(child) doing well  
Vicky-(friend) recurring lymphoma  
May- (friend) breast cancer

**Cram:** Winslow's-(friends of Sally) family & medical problems  
Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care  
Ryan- (grandson) searching for faith  
Lory Graham- (friend) health issues, wife caretaker  
Brenda Wilkerson- UVA- seizures

**DeHart:** Dawn's mother gall bladder surgery  
Michael Rutter- septic shock, amputation

**Easter:** Ruby Key (friend) cancer  
Dallas (friend) heart issues

**Foster:** Ron (brother-in-law) out of hospital into home



Howard & Lynn (brother) difficulty with legs, wife dementia  
Tom- home  
Prayers for everyone on dialysis  
**Goode:** prayers for Eunice, health issues  
Rodney & Connie Groggins (husband's cousins) Connie  
Alzheimer's, Rodney caregiver, health issues  
Cynthia- (friend) physical therapy  
**Grigg:** Beth Falwell- starting cancer treatments  
**Heinrich:** Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder  
Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems  
**Kuhn- Kibbey:** Phyllis Smith (friend) heart attack  
**Lambert:** Margaret caring for brother, strokes, doing better  
**Mauser:** Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems  
Steven-(son's boss) going blind  
Barbara (AL's sister) intense headaches  
Gayle- doing better  
**Morris:** all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders  
Forensic scientists who deal with crime  
Kyle Coble- (cousin) leukemia  
Rev. Pam Ledbetter, recovering from stroke  
James Morgan (cousins husband) spot on lung  
John Hargett (friend) slow recovery may never walk  
Ron- heart issues  
**Narwid:** Ed- not doing well  
**Saunders:** (Ronnie) Colin Bridges- (grandson)  
Scott- (son-in-law) doing well  
**Scheurer:** Jim Hedrick- (friend) cancer  
Bob Lindell-(friend) prostate cancer  
Sonny (son) doing well  
**Smith:** Dorothy Smith- (John's mother) not feeling well  
**Stetson:** Clay Ramsey- thyroid cancer  
Nick, Tiffany, Savannah- Savannah back in ICU  
**Stevens:** Jackie Landis- heart problems  
Two firefighters who suffered falls  
**Van Dyke:** Rich Anderson (nieces' husband) recovering

**Prayers for our nation and our President**  
**Prayers for healing the divisive spirit among our leaders/nation**  
**Russian invasion ends and not resort to nuclear weapons.**  
**Prayers for new residents to come to worship with us**  
**Prayers for Ukraine**  
**Pray for World Peace**  
**Prayers for Israel**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

## **Activities for week of December 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Sunday: 10 am Worship  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent  
Communion  
Session

Tuesday: Office opening at 10am

Wednesday: 3 pm Something More

Sunday: December 10<sup>th</sup>  
10 am Worship  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Advent  
5¢ a Meal Offering  
BCM collection  
Abendmusik, 6:30 pm

### **December Birthdays**

Nancy Dwyer - 4  
John Blair- 10  
Bill Mitchell - 17  
Shawn Webb - 18  
Kathy Chryssikos - 24  
Gayle Mauser - 30

### **December Anniversaries**

Ken & Charlotte McManis - 3  
Al & Gayle Mauser - 12  
Roy & Libby Monk - 20

## **Trees for First Responders and Health Care Workers**

It's that time of year when we spread a little Christmas joy to those who must work over the holiday weekend. They give of themselves all year long and we want to give back and let them know in a small way, that we do appreciate their service. On Saturday, December 16th, the Ecumenical Youth Group will be "decorating" small Christmas trees with snacks that can be wrapped with string and hung on the trees. If you have a small 3-foot tree that you can donate, please drop it off at the church before the 16th. We also ask that you donate the snacks that we will need to hang on the trees before then also. After these trees have been "decorated," we will ask for folks to deliver them to various locations around the town and county. If you have any questions you can get in touch with Judy Blair. Thank you for joining us in this important ministry of service.