



**ANNANDALE UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH**

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**The Grapevine  
December  
2022**

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## December 2022 Grapevine

*During the rule of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah. His wife Elizabeth was a descendant of Aaron. They were both righteous before God, blameless in their observance of all the Lord's commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to become pregnant and they both were very old. One day Zechariah was serving as a priest before God because his priestly division was on duty. Following the customs of priestly service, he was chosen by lottery to go into the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense. All the people who gathered to worship were praying outside during this hour of incense offering. An angel from the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw the angel, he was startled and overcome with fear.*

*The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayers have been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to your son and you must name him John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many people will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the Lord's eyes. He must not drink wine and liquor. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before his birth. He will bring many Israelites back to the Lord their God. He will go forth before the Lord, equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will turn the hearts of fathers back to their children, and he will turn the disobedient to righteous patterns of thinking. He will make ready a people prepared for the Lord." - Luke 1:5-17*

This advent season we'll follow the life of John the Baptist in Adam Hamilton's new book: *Prepare the Way For the Lord*. It's that time again to prepare ourselves to celebrate Christ's birth! What do we have to do to prepare the way of the Lord? What is God calling us to do this year? We'll explore these themes and questions together in the next five weeks. Today we're talking about how God hears our prayers by looking at John's very beginnings.

John's father, Zechariah, is a priest serving the temple in Jerusalem. He is part of the priestly division of Abijah. Abijah is one of twenty-four divisions of priests. Each priestly division would take turns serving two weeks out of the year. All twenty-four divisions would come together to serve at annual festivals like Passover. We see that Zechariah was lucky enough to be chosen by a game of chance to offer incense in the temple. This is a one-in-a-lifetime opportunity! Unfortunately, there's a lot of shame that he carries as

he enters in his role. People didn't understand the biological issues with infertility back then! They saw it as a sign of sinfulness that God hasn't blessed them with children. Thankfully scripture states how they weren't sinful as the author notes that Zechariah and Elizabeth were both "righteous" and "blameless". They had nothing to feel shameful about.

We read that Zechariah and Elizabeth were approached by the angel Gabriel. Like in many biblical stories, Elizabeth and Zechariah are parents struggling with infertility and turn to God for an answer to their prayers. Gabriel is there to give some good news! Just like Abraham and Sarah; just like Isaac and Rebekah; just like Elkanah and Hannah: they're going to have a son! We don't know how old the couple are, but we know that Zechariah and Elizabeth have been praying for a child for DECADES! Can you believe it? Just imagine the emotions they were going through: skepticism, excitement, and bewilderment (among many others).

It's important to note that God chooses the very old. Zechariah and Elizabeth were described as "very old". Abraham and Sarah were 100 years old and 90 years old when they had a kid. Moses was 80 years old when God called him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Most congregations have a large number of older adults and rightfully so! Older adults often have incredible gifts, wisdom, experience, and leadership. Some of my best conversations are with older people who have seen what I've seen. I get the best advice and direction from others. God calls to each and every one of us in whatever stage of life. God seeks to use us like God seeks to use Zechariah and Elizabeth to parent one of the most important prophets in scripture!

One thing really speaks to me in this scripture. Gabriel says something we all wish we could hear, "Your prayers have been heard." How many years have we prayed asking God for our prayers to be answered? Remember those times where you were at the end of your rope and reached out to God for help? Just imagine how heartwarming it would've been to hear that those prayers were heard. What are your prayers this year? What have you been asking God to hear? How has God been responding to your prayers?

I believe we all get our prayers answered in one way or another. We believe in a God who answers our prayers. May we

center our hearts and minds to God this season and turn to one another in love and care. May we prepare our hearts for when we experience Christ in others. It's through preparing that we can be open to God's will and even help *be* the answer for the prayers of others. We can spread the peace and joy of Christ and declare your prayers have been heard! Please join us this advent season as we learn more about John the Baptist and prepare for Christ's coming.

Blessings!

Pastor Mark Schlasner



December Worship Themes

December 4, 2022 “Pregnancy, Birth, Circumcision, and Zechariah’s Prophecy”  
Scripture Reading: Luke 1:57-79

December 11, 2022 “John’s Ministry and Preaching”  
Scripture Reading: Luke 3:1-8

December 18, 2022 “Compassion and Generosity: Fruits Worthy of Repentance”  
Scripture Reading: Mark 6:14-29

December 24, 2022 @ 4:30pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service  
Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

December 25, 2022 “Witnesses, Testifying to the Light”  
Scripture Reading: John 1:1-14

## **Annandale UMC Giving and Attendance**

### Giving –Nov. 2022      Attendance –Nov. 2022

Nov. 6, 2022	\$2,557.00	30 – in-person 16 – online
	\$100.00 Share Your Christmas Fund	
	\$105.00 Bldg./Maint. Fund	
	\$25.00 Thanksgiving Dinner Fund	
Nov. 13, 2022	\$1,312.68	29 – in-person 14 – online
	\$104.00 Mission March – Bldg./Maint. Fund	
	\$980.00 Share Your Christmas Fund	
	\$65.00 Thanksgiving Dinner Fund	
Nov. 20, 2022	\$989.10	25 – in-person 16 – online
	\$35.00 Share Your Christmas donation	

General funds needed each week: \$2,523.38

November income as of 11/17/22: \$6,129.95

November expenses as of 11/17/22: \$5,017.85

2022 apportionments = \$12,673.00

Monthly apportionments = \$1,056.00

Apportionments paid in November = \$0

Apportionments paid YTD = \$3,600.00



After our 8:30am worship on December 4, 2022 we will have a church conference to vote on the budget and pastoral compensation for the next year. Please plan on attending as we need everyone to approve the plans for the coming year.



## Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Saturday, December 24

Please join us at our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service on Saturday, December 24 at 4:30 p.m. Our Christmas offering will support the Annandale Food Shelf.



## Coffee Fellowship Serving Groups

December 4, 2022: Garry & Linda Elfstrand

December 11, 2022: Joni Walberg & Dianne Engler

December 18, 2022: Betsy Gridley

December 25, 2022:



## Usher Schedule

December 4, 2022: Dave Heberling

December 11, 2022: Dave Heberling

December 18, 2022: Alan Isaacson

December 24, 2022 (4:30 service): Need

December 25, 2022: Garry Elfstrand



Our December Mission March on Sunday, December 11, 2022 will go to apportionments. Apportionments are the share each annual conference or local church pays to support international, national, and local missions.



We will begin an Advent Study Group starting Monday, November 28 and continuing until Monday, December 19. Our group will meet here at the church at 11:00 in the morning.



- The family and friends of Jim Steinhaus, Mona Steinhaus' dad, who went to his eternal rest this past month.
- Debbie Vokaty who is dealing with health concerns.
- Trisha Woods' cousin's infant son who continues with medical issues.
- Tammy Grossinger who was recently diagnosed with kidney cancer and will be undergoing surgery on December 9.

Blood Drive



**Blood Drive - Friday, January 13, 2023**

The next Red Cross Blood Drive will be held at our church on Friday, January 13 from 10:00am – 4:00pm.

Donors can schedule an appointment now by using the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting [RedCrossBlood.org](https://www.RedCrossBlood.org), or calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767). Their goal is to collect 32 units of blood!

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