

December 2, 2021



# Steeple Views

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA

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## Devotional Meditation

Elder Monica Stevens

December 1, 2021

### Zechariah's Song

Luke 1:68-79

When we think of the beginning of Luke's gospel, we immediately think of the narrative of Jesus' birth, but the gospel actually opens with the story of Zechariah, who was a priest in the temple in the days of King Herod of Judea.

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, who was barren, were getting on in years. One day while Zechariah was working in the temple the angel Gabriel appeared to him and announced that Elizabeth would conceive and bear a son whom they were to name John. Not only would they have a son, but God chose this son to be a prophet to prepare the way for the coming of the Lord. Zechariah responded in stunned disbelief. I think most people would have reacted like Zechariah, but Gabriel didn't see it that way. He told Zechariah, "Because you did not believe my words...you will become mute...until the day these things occur." Elizabeth did conceive, and in due course gave birth to John. When it was time to circumcise the child, the family and friends wanted to name him Zechariah after his father, but Elizabeth told them his name was John. They asked Zechariah and he wrote that the child's name would indeed be John. At that point, Zechariah was able to speak and he began praising God. This frightened those who had gathered and everyone wondered exactly what this child would become. The scripture lesson tells us Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to prophesy.

The first four verses praise God for his faithfulness to his promises to raise up a savior and rescue his people.

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David,  
As he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,  
That we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.  
Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestor, and has remembered his holy covenant,  
The oath he swore to our ancestor Abraham to grant us that we, being rescued

from the hands of our enemies,  
Might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all of our  
days.

The last four verses turn our attention to John and his mission.

And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;  
For you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,  
to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins.  
By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us,  
To give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,  
To guide our feet into the way of peace.

These words of Zechariah move me. As a parent, I try to imagine what it must have been like for Zechariah and Elizabeth to conceive a child so late in life and to know their child would prepare the way for the Messiah that all of Israel had been hoping for. The deepest longings of their souls would be satisfied in the birth of two related babies, and their son, John, would have an integral part to play in preparing people to receive the Promised One. Perhaps it was necessary for Zechariah to remain mute for nine months so that he could process what was about to happen. I know that I would have had a hard time taking it all in.

I am also moved by the fact that the first words out of Zechariah's mouth were words of praise, faithfulness, and purpose. Zechariah first praises God for remembering his promises and fulfilling them in the birth of the Messiah who will save and redeem Israel so that Israel may fearlessly serve God in holiness and righteousness. Then Zechariah addresses his newborn son. He proclaims that John will be God's prophet sent to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. John will preach the idea of salvation through the forgiveness of sins, and usher in the light that will dawn on a world living in the darkness and death.

The last part of Zechariah's song, in which he references Isaiah 9:2, especially resonates with me. I am sure there were many things in Zechariah's world that caused people to feel as if they were living under a cloud of darkness and the shadow of death. Even so, Zechariah was able to look forward in faith toward the light of the coming Messiah who would banish the forces of darkness. From our 21<sup>st</sup> Century vantage point, while we still have our share of darkness, we have the advantage over Zechariah in knowing how the story of Jesus, the Messiah, unfolded and is unfolding. We know of Jesus' birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. We know that he has come, is with us now through the Spirit, and will come again in glory. During this season of Advent, I pray that our lives will sing out with Zechariah's praise and thanksgiving to our God who keeps his promises to save and redeem us through the gift of our Messiah, our Lord Jesus. May we, like John, prepare the way of the Lord first in our own hearts and then wherever we go in the assurance that the light from above will break upon us and cast out our darkness and lead our feet in the way of God's peace.  
Blessed be the Lord, our God! Alleluia! Amen.

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***The Church is Open for In-Person Worship Service!***

The safety of our congregation and community are our highest priority. In light of increasing infections due to the Delta variant and in order to follow state and local guidelines and CDC recommendations, **we strongly recommend that everyone, regardless of vaccination status, wear a face covering that covers your nose and mouth while anywhere inside the church and sanctuary**

**The church office will open for limited appointments.** Please call to schedule. Please enter at the narthex for Sunday worship and during the week use the back door at the portico.

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Please join us for the second Sunday of **Advent** either **in person** or via **Facebook live** at 10:00 AM

**Sermon by Rev. Dr. Rusty Reaser**

“On Beyond Zebra: A New Category”

(Very God and Very Man)

Based upon John 1:1-14 and Isaiah 7:14 & 9:2; 6

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**Virtual Poinsettias**



Every year our sanctuary is decorated with poinsettias donated by members of the congregation in memory or in honor of loved ones. Due to the ongoing pandemic, we will not be buying flowers for the sanctuary, but you are invited to submit the names of those you would like to remember in this way. Your name and the names of your loved ones will be printed in the bulletin, Steeple Views, on Facebook, and on our website from December 12th to January 2nd. It is not required, but if you would like to make a donation for your virtual poinsettia, all donations collected will be sent to the MHC Warming Center. If you wish to designate virtual poinsettias, fill out the form below and mail it to the church office with your check or put in the offering plate (if you are making a donation, please mark your check "Poinsettia.")

Person(s) requesting virtual poinsettias

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In honor or memory of (circle one)

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Send to:

First Presbyterian Church, 1901 Patrick Henry Ave.,  
Martinsville, VA 24112



### **HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO HOST CHRISTMAS MUSIC**

The Martinsville-Henry County Historical Society will host a Community Christmas Music Program on Sunday, December 12, 2021, at 3:00 P.M., at the Historic Henry County Courthouse. Talents from the

community will be featured, along with beautiful Christmas trees on display. Admission is free. The Martinsville-Henry County Heritage Center & Museum will be open prior to and following the program. The building is handicap accessible.

**King's Grant Christmas Parade is Thursday, December 16 at 4:00 PM** and is open to residents, Families, Staff, and Community. Decorated vehicles or golf carts are encouraged. There will be event signs posted for outside participants to follow to the starting point upon screening of temperature at the guard house. Due to COVID-19 precautions, we ask that all outside participants remain in your vehicle for the duration of the parade and depart the campus directly following the event unless you are intending to visit with a loved one. In that case, you will need to fill out a travel form at the guard house and check in with the receptionist at the front desk beforehand. **As a courtesy, please contact 276-634-1000 or email [etoler@kingsgrant.cc](mailto:etoler@kingsgrant.cc) to RSVP.**

**The Worship Committee** is currently making plans for a Christmas Eve service and we would like to have our youth participate in acting out the Christmas Story. If your child is interested in participating, please contact Sam Smith ([sam@peakspresbytery.org](mailto:sam@peakspresbytery.org)) or Monica Stevens ([mlkstev@hotmail.com](mailto:mlkstev@hotmail.com)) **no later than Wednesday December. 15 at noon.**

**By giving to the Christmas Joy Offering**, you honor God's perfect gift of Jesus Christ. This offering is an appropriate response to nurture members of the Body of Christ in their time of need; funds of support are used to develop our future leaders and provide financial assistance to current and retired church workers. **Christmas Joy envelopes will be available in the pews now through Dec. 19.**

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## [From the Transition Team](#)

When Pastor Mark retired on August 31, our church began the process of finding a new pastor. A Transition Team, made up of Monica Stevens, Denny Casey, and Joan Montgomery was appointed by the Session's Administration Committee. In an effort to keep the congregation informed we want to tell you the work that has been done and the work to be done.

- The Transition Team met with Carl Utley, our General Presbyter, on 9/16/21 for training.
- Responsibilities of the Transition Team are:
  1. Identify and recommend to the Session a candidate for Interim Pastor;
  2. Identify Transitional Priorities for Interim start up;
  3. Consult staff and elders about needs from Interim Pastor;
  4. Complete the Presbytery's Ministry Information Form (MIF) and seek appropriate approvals. The MIF describes our church in location, membership,

- mission statement, narrative questions, and top 10 Leadership Competencies, salary range, and basically what we are looking for in an Interim Pastor;
5. Work with the Interim during transition as requested by Interim; and
  6. Communicate to congregation about transitional process.

- We were charged with interviewing staff and session members for what they wanted professionally and personally in an Interim Pastor. That has been completed.
- The Transition team met several times to consolidate the interview responses and to complete the MIF.
- The Ministry Information Form was approved by the Session at its November meeting and has been sent to the Presbytery for approval.
- Upon approval, candidates will be identified based on matching our needs with candidate applications.
- The Transition Team is waiting for a date from the Presbytery for our second training on interviewing candidates for the Interim Pastor position.

Although the process seems slow, even to us, we want the congregation to know that the process is moving forward. The Transition Team welcomes input from the congregation by contacting Monica Stevens at [mlkstev@hotmail.com](mailto:mlkstev@hotmail.com), Denny Casey at [d.a.casey@comcast.net](mailto:d.a.casey@comcast.net), or Joan Montgomery at [joanmontgo@gmail.com](mailto:joanmontgo@gmail.com). We also ask for your prayers during this process.

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- 1 Anne Vipperman Madonia
  - 2 Carol Belcher
  - 3 Dru Rothrock
  - 4 Ashby Pritchett
  - 9 Chris Wingfield, Joan Montgomery
  - 11 K.J. Joyce
  - 14 Dr. Mervyn R. King
  - 15 Helen "Pat" Baumann, Kim Boyd
  - 17 Matthew Mason
  - 18 Bill Kirby
  - 20 Evan Hatchett
  - 22 Grayson Russell
  - 24 Jackie McLachlan
  - 26 Smith Chaney
  - 27 Cathy Stone, Gael Chaney, Nancy B. Moore



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## Prayer Requests

These members and friends of the congregation need our prayers:

### PRAYER CONCERNS

Carl and Georgette Bishop, Ernest and Marilyn Bremner (S. Ford), Catherine Bridges,

Jim Brunt (N. Davis' brother), Tommy Cobb (M. Dunn), Judy Epperly (Nancy Baker), Daniel Handy, Leonard Kelley (Monica Stevens' brother), Betty Carol Lamm, Mary Manning, Laura Stevens Milton, Brenda Pendelton (A. Pinkard), Anne Peterson, Scott Stevens (M. Stevens), Bruce Thomas (M. Stevens), Carl Utley, Tammy Tucker Wardinski (Susan Pilson), persecuted Christians and all troops in defense of freedom throughout the world.



Please submit prayer requests to Rita in the church office, (276) 632-3431, [office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org](mailto:office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org).

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### Congregational Care and Fellowship

If you are in need of prayer, a meal, transportation, etc...due to a death in the family or the birth of a baby, please reach out to the Congregational Care and Fellowship committee by contacting Lynn Pritchett at [276 252-6068](tel:276-252-6068).

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### *Please remember* Canned Soup



The 4th quarter food donation item is **\*\*canned soup\*\***  
**(\*\*please NO tomato\*\*)**

Please consider donating extra when you are able to get out and about as your donations will become more important than ever.

### ***Hygiene Items - We are always in need of these items!***

*\*Items may be brought to church but please call the office to make sure Rita is there. Alternatively, you may drop off at Grace Network, Monday - Friday, 9-2 PM*



*Steeple Views Reminder*

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MARTINSVILLE, VA



**Steeple Views** is published weekly on Thursdays. **DEADLINE** for submission of articles is Tuesday evening.

If you have information you want included in Steeple Views, **PLEASE SEND TO:** [steepleviews@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org](mailto:steepleviews@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org). If you send to another email address, the information may get lost and subsequently not included in the newsletter.

We reserve the right to edit all submissions. Sharon Kirby, Editor

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## Presbytery of the Peaks



For updates and announcements, please click on the link below or copy and paste into your web browser:

[https://www.peakspresbytery.org/images/2020\\_Peaks\\_Postings/PP\\_Aug18\\_2020.pdf](https://www.peakspresbytery.org/images/2020_Peaks_Postings/PP_Aug18_2020.pdf)

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### Our Mission

Share God's Love, Embrace Our Neighbors, Nurture Each Other

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**Printed copies of Steeple Views** are available at church. Current and back issues are also on our website:

[www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/page.cfm/topic/newsletter](http://www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/page.cfm/topic/newsletter)

### Useful Links

FPC website:

[www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/](http://www.firstpresbyterianmartinsville.org/) or [www.fpcmartinsvilleVA.org/](http://www.fpcmartinsvilleVA.org/)

FPC online directory: [members.instantchurchdirectory.com/](http://members.instantchurchdirectory.com/)

FPC Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/FPCMartinsvilleVA](https://www.facebook.com/FPCMartinsvilleVA)

Presbytery of the Peaks: [www.peakspresbytery.org/](http://www.peakspresbytery.org/)

Presbyterian Church (USA): [www.pcusa.org/](http://www.pcusa.org/)

Daily Bible Readings: [www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/devotion/daily/)

**Church Office Phone:** 276-632-3431

### Our mailing address is:

First Presbyterian Church

1901 Patrick Henry Ave.

Martinsville, VA 24112

### STAFF

Sam Smith, Youth and Family Ministries Director, [sam@peakspresbytery.org](mailto:sam@peakspresbytery.org)

Cynthia Dobrinski, Music Director & Organist, 276-734-0212

Rita Bateman, Secretary/Office Manager, [office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org](mailto:office@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org)

Drema Austin, Bookkeeper, [bookkeeper@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org](mailto:bookkeeper@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org)  
Carol Carter, Weekday School Director, [wds@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org](mailto:wds@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org)  
Deborah Burgess, Contemporary Music Director,  
[contemporarymusic@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org](mailto:contemporarymusic@fpcmartinsvilleVA.org)

**THE SESSION**

Clerk: Nancy Baker

Treasurer: Henry Moore

**Class of 2021**

Lynn Pritchett: Congregational Care and Fellowship

Rob King: Facilities

Monica Stevens: Worship

**Class of 2022**

Brooke Cundiff: Mission/Outreach

Pamela Rakes: Stewardship and Communication

Betty Hudson: Christian Education

**Class of 2023**

Billy Kirby: Administration

**TRUSTEES**

2021: David Garland, Ed Linker

2022: Joan Montgomery, Ashby Pritchett

2023: Sandra Ford, Joe DeVault

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