

Readings for December 17, 2023

United Church of Strafford Hybrid In-person and Zoom Service

Responsive Reading *adapted from Luke 1:46-55, the Magnificat of Mary*

Leader: “My soul magnifies you,
and my spirit rejoices in you,
the creator, redeemer and sustainer of the universe,

**People: for you have looked with favor
on the lowly state of one who serves you.**

Leader: Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed,
for you, O source of love and life and light,
have done great things in me and through me,
and holy is your name.

**People: All shall know that your mercy extends to the meek
who stand in humble awe before you
from generation to generation.**

Leader: You have shown strength with your Spirit’s arm;
you have scattered the proud
in the imagination of their hearts.

**People: You have brought down the powerful from their thrones
and lifted up the lowly;**

Leader: you have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.

**People: You have come to the aid
of all the hurting children of the earth,
in remembrance of your promise of mercy,
understood by the prophets of old,
for your children now and forever more.”**

from Luke 1:26-45

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And he came to her and said, “Greetings, favored one! The Spirit of God is with you.” But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?” The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now,

your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” Then the angel departed from her.

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Spirit of God.”