

Readings for December 3, 2023
United Church of Strafford In-Person and Zoom Service

Responsive Reading *adapted from Luke 1, the Benedictus of Zechariah, at the birth of his son, John the Baptist* Herbert Goertz

Leader: “Blessed is the Spirit of the Universe,
that looked favorably on the earth and its people
and redeemed them.

**People: The Spirit evolved a powerful source of salvation for us
in the house of its servant David,
as was foretold through the mouth
of holy prophets from of old,**

Leader: that we would be saved from evil ways
and from violence at the hand of all who hate.

**People: The Spirit has shown the mercy
promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered our holy covenant,
the oath our ancestor Abraham heard God make,**

Leader: to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of evil,
might serve God without fear,
in holiness and righteousness all our days.

**People: And you, child, will be called
the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the living source of our hope
to prepare the way,
to give knowledge of salvation to all people
by the forgiveness of their wrongs.**

Leader: By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,

**People: to give light to those who sit in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”**

Isaiah 40:1-5, 10-11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid...

A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

See, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, “See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”