

Mary & Her Response to 2020

ON WATCH

As we approach the end of a year unlike any other, I have been thinking about Mary. She had a baffling experience in Luke. An angel appears to the unwed teenager. She doesn't do anything to earn her place in the Christmas narrative. The story comes to her. When it begins, she isn't a hero. There's nothing extraordinary about her. The Bible presents her as an average person. "God sent the angel Gabriel to a young, engaged woman. Her name was Mary" (Luke 1:26-27, paraphrased).

Luke's telling is honest. What happened confused Mary. Luke doesn't gloss over the difficulty of accepting an angel showing up. Her questions race around in my head. *Why is this happening? What do you mean? How can this be?* Her questions resonate with some of my questions from this year. If we are being honest, we struggle with this season. Whether we struggle with Christmas in a pandemic, or with the year-long season of a pandemic, it is hard. Yet, neither the pandemic nor Mary's confusion need to be permanent. New life is coming.

For Mary, though unorthodox, Jesus arrival dovetailed into a typical life in the first century. Jesus grew. He was a toddler. He stumbled when he learned to walk. She would have watched him like every other parent in every other time and place. Even though the Magnificat shows her awareness of God's presence, it doesn't say that she knew exactly what would happen. Only after Easter would his divinity become fully clear.

For us, 2021 holds new possibilities and the opportunity to live out our faith in new ways. Our story does not end in the middle of a pandemic. Vaccines are out. People are improving their

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE (Virtual Only)

December 24, 2020
5:30 PM

Sermon:

"Papa Panov's Special Day"
Dr. Matthew Tennant

Scripture:

Luke 2:1-20

Anthem:

"The Work of Christmas"
(Forrest)

SERVICE OF HOLY WORSHIP (Virtual Only)

December 27, 2020
11:00 AM

Sermon:

"What's Next?"
Rev. Val Fisk

Scripture:

Luke 2:22-40

Anthem:

"A Manger Carol"
(arr. Christopher)

social distancing. We are all getting better at Zoom. I have hope for what is next.

Even when we look back, 2020 produced a cornucopia of reforms and cultural awareness. These strides forward will not go away. They will produce fruitful results in the future. Reduced pollution from people staying at home will lead to improved environmental awareness. Difficult conversations around race can lead to greater reconciliation. Safety precautions like mask wearing might help us prepare for future viral threats.

The future was bright for Mary too, even though the path was difficult. After asking the angel, "How can this be," Mary accepted God's calling. She said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord." We can imitate this response to Jesus and apply it to our hope for 2021.

Here we are. We are servants of the Lord. We seek to be God's instruments to accompany hope and joy in the new year. We can join our voices together and say, "Merry Christmas! Jesus Christ is born!"

Peace,
Matt

Sam's Joy Ride

Recently, Sam Mackey, a longtime member of the UBC Family, enjoyed a day away from the Our Lady of Peace Assisted Living Home. He went for a ride in his 1976 Corvette Stingray. On his ride, he directed the driver on each turn as they traced his old Saturday-cruising route. It was a gift for both Sam and the privileged person who went with him.



SERVICE OF HOLY COMMUNION

January 3, 2020
11:00 AM

Sermon:

"In Praise of Wisdom"
Dr. Matthew Tennant

Scripture:

Sirach 24:1-12

Anthem:

"The Perfect Wisdom of Our God"
(arr. MacDonald)

CALENDAR

THURSDAY, December 24

1:00 Lectio Divina ([Zoom link](#))
(Cancelled)

5:30 Christmas Eve Candlelight Service (*Virtual Service Only*)

SUNDAY, December 27

9:40 Online Bible Study ([Zoom link](#)) *(Cancelled)*

11:00 Morning Worship
(radio and livestream only)

MONDAY, December 28

8:30 Morning Prayer ([UBC Facebook Page](#)) *(Cancelled)*

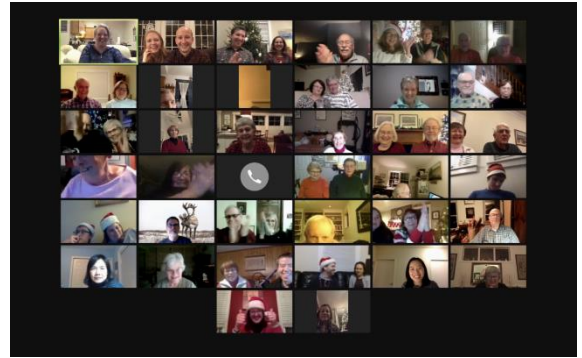
Please note that the church office will be closed from December 23-29.

Prayer Concerns

Christian Sympathy is extended to Margie Howell and her family in the passing of her husband, Nat Howell.

Zoom Christmas Party

It was great to see so many of your faces last week at our virtual Christmas Party. While we would have loved to be together in person--and we look forward to that next year!--the chance to laugh and sing and catch up online was a treat. Thank you to all who participated!



Upcoming Bible Study

As Will and Val plan the next few months of Bible studies, they want your input. What do you want to study? Give your 2¢ by filling out the Google form linked here! Don't forget, there will be no Bible study on December 27. Bible Study will resume as usual on January 3, with information about our January study emailed out in the New Year.

<https://forms.gle/PErFHshvbbQ7Wjqp9>

PACEM items still needed

PACEM is still in need of individually-wrapped snacks. These can be brought to the church and left in one of the boxes in the first floor lobby or on the Fellowship Hall stage.

Help needed to move mats!

We need a few volunteers, especially those with pickup trucks, to help load and transport mats and other PACEM materials to the next church the morning of Saturday, January 2. We have two trucks so far and could use a few more! If you are available to help, please contact Peter Ohlms at pohlms@gmail.com.

Virtual-Only Worship: December 24 and 27

For this year's Christmas Eve service and for our worship on Sunday, December 27, we will not have any live in-person worship in the sanctuary. The services will be recorded ahead of time and then broadcast at the usual times online, so that we can all participate simultaneously. With covid cases increasing in our area and with the potential for family members visiting for the holidays, we do not want to risk an outbreak due to gathering for holiday services. Pre-recording the services also gives our staff and our volunteer audio/video operators a break at the end of this long and trying year. We hope you will worship with us online for these special holiday services.

Kids and Families

If you haven't had a chance to check out the list of [31 Things to do this Advent and Christmas](#), check it out now!

For anyone hoping to take a light tour through Charlottesville, Peter has kindly shared the route he has used for past years' [Holiday Light Tours](#).

And for those with kids hoping to hear a Christmas story time, Erin has put together two options - one for the [youngest listeners/readers](#), and another geared toward [elementary schoolers](#), though both are fun and appropriate for everyone :)

What is "Lectio Divina"?

On our calendar and in the Word for the past few months, you may have seen a listing for "lectio divina." What is that? Well, I'm glad you asked! Lectio divina, or "sacred reading," is an ancient

way of reading Scripture. Rather than analyzing a passage and considering its context as we would in a traditional Bible Study, lectio divina invites us simply to listen to the passage and hear what God may be saying to us through it today. This is not a substitute for our typical study, but a complement to it. There's no prepwork ahead of time, and you don't need to bring anything with you. Simply come with an open mind and a desire to read the Bible together. It's a quick 20-minute session on Zoom. Hope to see you there! - Will

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!

Join us in wishing some of our church family a Happy Birthday this week!

December 27: Cindy Bryant, Margie Howell

December 29: Renfro Manning

January 3: Peter Ohlms

January 4: Jennifer Wagoner

January 5: Paula Price

January 6: Thomas Hill, Joanna Sivley

January 7: Sylvie Moore



Having a birthday and do not see your name here? Please help us update our records. Contact Lexi to provide your updated information at (434)-293-5706

Sunday Mornings Online

Even though we are not gathering in person, we are still joining together each Sunday morning for worship and Bible study. We hope you will join us!

Bible Study

At 10:00 am, we begin an interactive Bible Study. To join us, click this [Zoom link](#). Or, watch the Bible Study portion on [YouTube](#). We invite you to join in the conversation by adding comments during the session. To download the handout ahead of time, visit universitybaptist.org/live

Worship

Our Sunday morning worship service will begin, as usual, at 11:00 am. We encourage everyone in the congregation to join us from home. As always, you can listen by radio on WINA (1070 AM and 98.9 FM), or you can join us online for our live broadcast. To view the live video broadcast, visit our [Facebook page](#) or click [this link](#) to watch on YouTube.

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Connect with us

