

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF BELMONT



SERVICE OF WORSHIP

December 1, 2024 – 11:00 a.m.

The First Sunday in Advent



Zacharias (?) and the Angel by Rembrandt van Rijn, c. 1635

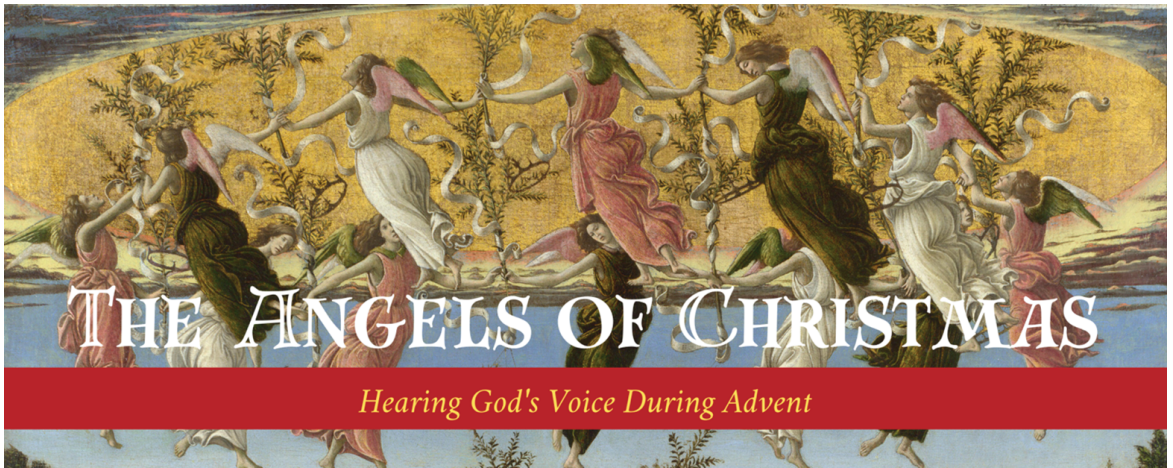
.....
***United in the Spirit, First United Methodist Church of Belmont exists
to be more like Jesus Christ for our community and beyond***
.....

THE REVEREND GEORGE RAGSDALE, SENIOR PASTOR

807 South Point Road // Belmont, NC 28012

P: 704-825-2106 // F: 704-825-2176

www.fumcbelmont.org



THE ANGELS OF CHRISTMAS

Hearing God's Voice During Advent

Good morning and welcome to First United Methodist Church of Belmont! This morning we begin the season of Advent, a four week time of spiritual reflection preparing us for the coming of Christ, not only at Christmas but his promised return to redeem and renew all of creation. This year we turn our attention to the angels who announce God's good news throughout the Christmas story. In today's Gospel Lesson, the angel Gabriel speaks a calming, hopeful word to Zechariah. Yet, Zechariah's heart is full of fear and he remains doubtful even after hearing Gabriel's message. What doubts and fears do we bring to this Advent season? Gabriel's announcement is for us, too: "Do not be afraid." Where do we need to hear and share his words this year?

MUSIC

"Christmas Processional and Medley"
Bellissimo Handbell Choir

Jeffrey Hall

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAISE AND PRAYER

PRELUDE

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

Mitchell Eithun

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLE

The Wilhelm Family

As we begin our Advent journey, we light the first candle on our Advent wreath as we celebrate the message of hope. "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard." Zechariah and Elizabeth longed for a child, and in their waiting, God brought hope.

We wait in hope for God's promises to be fulfilled.

This candle reminds us that even in darkness, God is working behind the scenes, preparing a way for us.

Gracious God, as we light this candle of hope, help us to trust in Your promises. May we be reminded that You are always at work, even when we cannot see it. May the light of this candle inspire us to look forward with anticipation for the coming of Christ into our lives. Amen.

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN NO. 196

"Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus"

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Doreen Collins

Almighty and gracious God, your promises are steadfast and your mercy is unending. We come before you confessing that we have often allowed fear and doubt to cloud our trust in you. We have questioned your promises, failing to believe in your power to accomplish what you have spoken. We have silenced the voice of faith within us and turned our backs on those in need. We have turned away from the joy of your steadfast love. Forgive us, O Lord, and strengthen our hearts to trust in you. Grant us the courage to walk in faith, the hope to rest in your promises, and the boldness to proclaim your goodness in the face of all despair and darkness. Through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.

*WORDS OF ASSURANCE

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven! Glory to God. Amen.

*GLORIA PATRI No. 70

MOMENTS WITH CHILDREN

Jennifer Martin

PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S WORD

*GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 1:5-25

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kimel

This is the Word of God for the People of God. ***Thanks be to God.***

SERMON

The Rev. George Ragsdale

SILENT REFLECTION

RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH No. 881

The Apostles' Creed

INVITATION TO PRAYER

"Sing Hallelujah"

Sing hallelujah

Sing hallelujah

Sing hallelujah for the things He has done

Come and adore Him

Bow down before Him

Sing hallelujah to the Light of the World

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

After each petition we enter into the prayer together with these words: Lord, in your mercy.

hear our prayer.

INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

GIVING OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Offertory

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

Timothy Kile

Jennifer Martin, Genora Cheshire, flute

O come, O come, Emmanuel,	And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
And ransom captive Israel,	Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
That mourns in lonely exile here,	And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Until the Son of God appear.	O Come, O Bright and Morning Star,
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel	And bring us comfort from afar.
Shall come to thee, O Israel.	Dispel the shadows of the night
O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,	And turn our darkness into light.

THANKSGIVING AND COMMUNION

*ACT OF PRAISE

"Doxology"

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!

Praise God above ye heavenly hosts!

Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

TAKING THE BREAD AND CUP

*THE GREAT THANKSGIVING (Hymnal No. 17-18)

*THE LORD'S PRAYER (Hymnal No. 895)

*BREAKING THE BREAD

SHARING THE BREAD AND CUP

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

arr. Christopher Brown

Doug Moody, alto saxophone

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXTENDING THE TABLE

This morning, lay communion servers come forward to receive consecrated bread and juice from worship to share with homebound members who cannot be present today. We pray for them, remembering God's grace unites us as one within Christ's holy church. If you are aware of someone who would like to receive but cannot be present, speak with Pastor George after service.

GOING FORTH AS WITNESSES TO THE WORLD

*BENEDICTION

*RECESSIONAL HYMN No. 213

"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates"

*POSTLUDE

"The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns"

arr. Austin Lovelace

**Those who are able please stand.*

Welcome to First United Methodist Church of Belmont! We're glad that you've chosen to worship with us this morning. We invite you to explore all the opportunities we have for children, youth and adults of all ages and stages of life. We seek to be a community of faith that welcomes all as we grow to be more like Jesus Christ for our community, loving and serving God and one another in all that we do.

If you are a guest, we are honored to have you with us. Please stop by the information center as you leave this morning to receive a small gift and more information about our church. We look forward to getting to know you in the days to come! Welcome!

Today's Bulletin Cover features a drawing of today's Gospel encounter between Zechariah and the angel Gabriel by Dutch painter Rembrandt van Rijn, generally regarded as one of the greatest artists in the history of Western art. Rembrandt's sketch is an attempt to capture something of the human emotional response to the moment of divine revelation. He does so here by eliminating context and setting. Scholars believe the character in the sketch is Zechariah because he resembles other, clearly identifiable sketches of the same scene by Rembrandt. Here, the angel rises up over Zechariah, gesturing forcefully in a way that is not entirely clear, due to Rembrandt's many revisions. What is unmistakable is the old man's quizzical expression, full of doubt and fear. Promised a long prayed-for son, the viewer can almost hear Zechariah respond, "How can I know that this will happen? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." His lips are parted to speak as he gestures to someone (perhaps his wife, Elizabeth?) not visible in the drawing.

Prayer after each worship service is available in the prayer room off of the Narthex. Our Congregational Care Ministers and retired clergy are available to pray with you.

CHURCH GATHERINGS

The Crossroads Christmas Party for children in fourth and fifth grades is today from 5:30 to 7:30 in the Old Fellowship Hall.

Candy Cane Family Night is Wednesday, December 4 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. in Carpenter Hall. Join us after Alleluia Choir for supper, hot cocoa bar, crafts and more. Register today at fumcbelmont.org/candycane.

Men of the church are invited to a time of fellowship, devotion and discussion over breakfast at the First Friday Men's Meeting on December 6 at 6:30 a.m. in the youth house. Contact Brandon Martin at bmartin@atticustechology.com with questions.

Youth Christmas Party is Sunday, December 8 at 12:15 p.m. after the 11 o'clock worship service. Youth will travel to Frankie's Fun Park in Charlotte before returning to the church to assemble lunches for Feeding the Children. Parents should pick up youth at 5 p.m. To sign up, reach Quanna at quanna@fumcbelmont.org.

First Kids Movie Meet Up is December 8 at Franklin Square in Gastonia. We're planning for an early matinee screening of The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. For more information contact Jennifer Martin at jennifer@fumcbelmont.org.

Sign up before December 8 for our Annual Christmas Dinner. Tickets are \$15 per adult, \$10 per child or \$45 max for a family of four or more. Sign up at fumcbelmont.org/christmasdinner or using the reservation forms at the narthex information center.

The Ladies of Square 2 will gather on Monday, December 9 to serve a meal at Catherine's House before going out for dinner and fellowship together. All are invited. Contact Cindy Meilike at cindymeilike@hotmail.com to sign up.

Our Primetimers adults over 55 will gather on Tuesday, December 10 from 4:00 to 7:30 p.m. for dinner and a drive through the McAdenville Christmas lights. To reserve your spot contact Doreen at doreen@fumcbelmont.org.

Our Annual Christmas Concert on December 15 at 4:00 p.m. will feature all of the musical ensembles at FUMC with guest musicians. The concert is free and all are invited. Our annual Christmas dinner follows.

Young Adults will gather for lunch on December 20 at 11:30 at the Spruced Goose Station. Contact Quanna at quanna@fumcbelmont.org with questions.

OPPORTUNITIES TO GIVE AND SERVE

Support Dahlia Grove Community Café on Thursdays from 11:45 to 1:15 p.m. in Carpenter Hall. Dining at the café provides financial support and training for women recovering from human trafficking, domestic violence and drug addiction. Learn more at dahliagroves.org.

Stock the B.C.O. Sunday is December 8. Remember to bring non-perishable food items to benefit our neighbors in need and drop them off in the narthex.

Room in the Inn begins this month as we again partner with Christ UMC in Charlotte to provide emergency housing for our neighbors without a home on December 7 and 28. Learn more and sign up to help at fumcbelmont.org/roomintheinn, where you can also find our Amazon Wishlist with items to donate for our guests, including rain gear, flashlights and toiletry items.

Share the Warmth this Advent season by donating gloves, hats and socks. You can place your items on the tree in the narthex. All items will be donated to the S.O.C.K.S. Crisis ministry in the Springwood community.

Help us Feed the Children! Visit fumcbelmont.org/feedthechildren to sign up to pre-pack, cook and assemble or deliver lunches and bags of shelf-stable food to children during their Winter break.

Give Gifts That Matter this Christmas by supporting the children and families of our ZOE Empowerment community in Rwanda. For as little as \$10 you can purchase a gift that will transform the life of a child and honor a loved one at the same time. Visit the ZOE table in the narthex after worship throughout Advent.

COME CELEBRATE WITH US
Christmas Eve Worship
Candlelight Service with Holy Communion
December 24 | 4 & 6 p.m.



WEEKLY CALENDAR

Sunday, December 1

8:30 a.m. Worship
9:15 a.m. Fellowship Breakfast
10:00 a.m. Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Worship
5:30 p.m. Connect
5:30 p.m. Crossroads

Monday, December 2

Deadline To Order Poinsettias
10:00 a.m. Staff Meeting

Tuesday, December 3

12:00 p.m. Congregational Care Minister Mtg.
1:30 p.m. Advent Small Group
6:00 p.m. Charge Conference (Zoom)

Wednesday, December 4

5:30 p.m. Alleluia Choir
6:00 p.m. Handbell Rehearsal
6:00 p.m. Candy Cane Christmas Night
7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 5

11:45 a.m. Community Cafe'
6:30 p.m. Hope & Consolation Serv.

Friday, December 6

6:30 a.m. Men's Meeting

Saturday, December 7

Room in the Inn

Sunday, December 8

Deadline for Dinner Reservations
8:30 a.m. Worship
9:15 a.m. Fellowship Breakfast
10:00 a.m. Sunday School
11:00 a.m. Worship
12:30 p.m. Youth Event

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Jaxon Forbes

Barb Lange's brother, Bob Shaffer

Trevis Lunsford's sister, Shirley Hunt (Adrian and Trevis Lunsford)

Richard Rumpfelt and his family (Becky and Tom Fortenberry)

Sister-in-law, Jill Atkins (Chris and Connie Atkins)

Lynda Jenkins, Nancy, Clyde, Adam & Alex Underhill, Patsy Deese, Bill Griffin, Linda & Gerald, along with other family members who are all facing health issues (Cindy and Jim Griffin)

Alice Goins Ratterree (Cindy Goins aunt)

Nicole Stanforth's grandfather

Paul Wallace, Judy Harris' brother and also her friend Herb Carnes

Greg Stanforth

Graham Baakko (Teri Wilson)

Kenneth Harris' father, Larry

Erin Carver, Renee and Tim Painter's daughter

Murphy Clark and family



Christmas Poinsettias

We will be decorating our worship space with poinsettias during the Christmas season. Each poinsettia is \$10. and the deadline to order is **Dec. 2nd.**

Use this QR code or order forms are available at the information desk.





**Deadline
to sign up for dinner
is December 8**

Christmas Concert & Dinner

*December 15 - 4 pm
dinner to follow*

*Tickets - \$15 per adult, \$10 per child
or \$45 a family of 4 or more*

*Forms are available at the Information desk
or sign up using the QR code*





Service of Hope and Consolation



A time of reflection, prayer and hope for all
those who have experienced loss this year



Thursday, December 5 | 6:30 p.m.
Refreshments will be served
following the service.



OUR STAFF

Carole Bertino | Administrative Assistant | carole@fumcbelmont.org
Doreen Collins | Director of Adult Discipleship | doreen@fumcbelmont.org
Heather Gaskins | Director of the Child Development Center | heather@fumcbelmont.org
Margie Ligon | Director of Missions | margie@fumcbelmont.org
Jennifer Martin | Director of Children's Ministry | jennifer@fumcbelmont.org
Quanna McAlister | Director of Youth Ministries | quanna@fumcbelmont.org
George Ragsdale | Senior Pastor | george@fumcbelmont.org
Ellen Robison | Minister of Worship and the Arts | ellen@fumcbelmont.org
Mark Sutton | Business Administrator | mark@fumcbelmont.org