

Links to 11-22-2020 Worship Recording and Upcoming 11-29-2020 Service at the end of News Flash

Dear members and friends of Idylwood Presbyterian Church,

Since **Amy Moore**, the church administrator, is on vacation this week, I prepared this News Flash in advance. If something urgent comes up, I will send a separate mailing. Less urgent matters will go into next week's letter. Enjoy your time off, Amy.

Don't forget to buy your **Christmas tree** from the **Marshall High School Boosters at IPC**. Thanks to **Bob and Leslie Osman** for coordinating this project.

The tree sale schedule is as follows:

Tree sale opens **Saturday, 28 Nov &** will remain till sold out.
We are hoping we can be sold out in two weeks.

Saturdays: 10:00 am -7:00 pm

Sundays: 12:00 pm -6:00 pm

Monday-Friday: 4:30-7:30 pm

Please designate a **Homestretch** gift for the holiday project by sending a check to IPC with a note in the memo line. Thanks, **Jane Duffield**, for coordinating this.

Stewardship reminder

If you have not already done so, please go to **IdylwoodPresbyterian.org** and press the **new burgundy button** that allows us to **pledge online**. Many thanks to **James Knowlton** for setting this up. It makes it possible for us to commit our resources in this age of Covid safely. Here's what the pledge button looks like online: If you do

The screenshot shows the Idylwood Presbyterian Church website. At the top, a welcome message reads: "Idylwood Presbyterian Church is a welcoming Christian congregation. Thankful for God's grace and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, we aspire to demonstrate the inclusive and expansive love of Jesus Christ to neighbors near and far." To the right, contact information is listed: "7617 Idylwood Rd, Falls Church, VA 22043, 703-573-3027". Below this is a "Click here for directions" link and a "JOIN OUR E-NEWSLETTER" button. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column has a heading "Planning Your Visit" and a photo of a building with red autumn leaves in the foreground. Below the photo is the text: "We invite you to worship with our laid-back and close-knit community! Here's what to expect." The right column has a heading "Upcoming Events" and a photo of a group of people. Below the photo is the text: "There's always something going on at IPC! Find out more about what's happening." At the bottom right of the screenshot, there is a "Donate" button with logos for Visa, Mastercard, American Express, and Discover. Below the "Donate" button is a red "PLEDGE" button.

not have access to the internet, do not worry. Idylwood still very much needs and wants your pledge. You can fill out the sheet at the end of this News Flash and mail it into the church. We thank you all for your generosity. We know that times are tough for some people, so we appreciate what everyone can do in terms of time, talent, and treasure. All three count.

Beginning of Advent Advent Meditation

It feels a bit strange that **Advent** begins in November this year, but Nov 29 is the first Sunday in Advent, as it is also Thanksgiving weekend. So, for the next four weeks, I will write a short series of meditations. I am following an outline provided by Amy Jill Levine in her small book called *The Light of the World: A Beginner's Guide to Advent* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019).

We will consider the **meaning of memory** as we reflect on Luke 1:5-25, 57-79. Next week our focus will be on the promise of potential in **Mary's Magnificat**. The following week we will consider **the journey to joy**. Finally, the week of Christmas, our attention will move **to the gifts of the gentiles**.

The Meaning of Memory (Luke 5:1-25, 57-59)

The Birth of John the Baptist Foretold

⁵ In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ Both of them were righteous before God, living blamelessly according to all the commandments and regulations of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no children, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were getting on in years.

⁸ Once when he was serving as priest before God and his section was on duty, ⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of the Lord and offer incense. ¹⁰ Now at the time of the incense offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside. ¹¹ Then there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. ¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. ¹⁴ You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, ¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He must never drink wine or strong drink; even before his birth he will be filled with the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ He will turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. ¹⁷ With the spirit and power of Elijah he will go before him, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." ¹⁸ Zechariah said to the angel, "How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years." ¹⁹ The angel replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. ²⁰ But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

²¹ Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. ²² When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them and remained unable to speak. ²³ When his time of service was ended, he went to his home.

²⁴ After those days his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. She said, ²⁵ "This is what the Lord has done for me when he looked favorably on me and took away the disgrace I have endured among my people."

The Birth of John the Baptist

⁵⁷ Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. ⁵⁸ Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her.

⁵⁹ On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. ⁶⁰ But his mother said, “No; he is to be called John.” ⁶¹ They said to her, “None of your relatives has this name.” ⁶² Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. ⁶³ He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, “His name is John.” And all of them were amazed. ⁶⁴ Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵ Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. ⁶⁶ All who heard them pondered them and said, “What then will this child become?” For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

Zechariah’s Prophecy

⁶⁷ Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:

⁶⁸ “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.
⁶⁹ He has raised up a mighty savior for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰ as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹ that we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us.
⁷² Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors,
and has remembered his holy covenant,
⁷³ the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham,
to grant us ⁷⁴ that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies,
might serve him without fear, ⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness
before him all our days.
⁷⁶ And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,
⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people
by the forgiveness of their sins.
⁷⁸ By the tender mercy of our God,
the dawn from on high will break upon us,
⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

When and where were we born? These facts are not just statistics; they shape who we are. In the same way, Luke is not only giving us dry history; he is a storyteller, explaining critical information about who the important players were in Jesus’s life. After a brief introduction, Luke tells us that Jesus was born at the time of King Herod. Herod’s reign was not a good time to start life. Matthew tells us about the slaughter of the innocents. Scholars question this event’s historicity, but Herod killed his sons, wife, brother, and mother. Herod was also the one who began the reconstruction of the Temple, and he was responsible for other building projects; it was a time of political intrigue. It is in that context that John the Baptizer was born and lost his head. Herod was a big player, but he also had higher authorities to please. He sided with Marc Antony and Cleopatra and then shifted his loyalty to Caesar Augustus to keep in Rome’s good

graces, the same Caesar who, according to Luke, orders a census that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem.

Just as today, many of us are interested in our family tree. Some of us are proud to trace our families back many generations. Luke tells us of John the Baptizer's parents' priestly connections. John's father's name, Zechariah, means Adonai remembers. The Hebrew Lord is a God who remembers. Elizabeth's name probably means "My God promises." Zechariah and Elizabeth are righteous. Being righteous does not mean they are what we call pious today. It does not mean having the correct theology but living rightly. Like many other upright women in the Bible, Elizabeth is childless, which she shares with many biblical matriarchs and many contemporary women. I know the pain from my own family. My first pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, and both my daughters experienced miscarriages before they successfully gave birth, in one case, using IVF.

Biblical Elizabeth's joy is all the sweeter, therefore, when she finally conceives. Elizabeth and Zechariah live in the Temple, but Zechariah is not a high priest but an ordinary village priest. The announcement (or annunciation) takes place in the Temple. Zechariah is terrified by the angel. Zechariah was dumbstruck. He was caught between his old fears and desires on the one hand and this news on the other. He remained mute until his son was born. Only when he named the child as the angel had instructed him to do did he recover his voice.

Interestingly, Elizabeth tried to announce that the baby's name would be John since Zechariah had related it to her. Still, the crowd would not accept her authority since she was a woman. They had to hear it from the father. As the only child of an older couple, John would be expected to help turn the people. Zechariah's prayer is a beautiful assurance of God's faithfulness. He says that the child will be one who will go before the Lord to prepare his way, alluding to the words of II Isaiah from chapter 40: "A voice is crying out: Prepare the way of the Lord in the desert. Make a highway straight in the wilderness for our God." These words originally referred to the return of Judah from Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE. Jews and Christians, however, frequently repurposed older prophetic material to tell new stories; that is what Luke is doing here.

In John the Baptizer's mission, he would call people to ethical action. In Luke 3:11, he said people should share their possessions. John was born in the time of a corrupt leader, Herod Antipas, who would eventually cut off his head, but John's message lives on: Repent and be baptized. Jesus followed in his cousin's footsteps and experienced a similar, though even more excruciating end. But that is getting ahead of the story. For now, let us look toward the joy of his birth. Amen.

The Sermon from 11-22-2020

OT: [Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24](#)

Christ the King/Reign of Christ A

NT: [Matthew 25:31-46](#)

IPC 11-22-2020

Matthew 25:31-46

31“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ 40And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ 41Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ 45Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The Sheep and the Goats

Here we are on the last Sunday of the church year, called Christ the King Sunday. Next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent, and before we know it, Christmas will be here, but today we have a disturbing text to chew on before we face our Thanksgiving this week. If we are fortunate, we will eat with family and friends, but many of us will probably be at home this year, playing it safe. Some years we may have been able to help out at a shelter, but for most of us, that is not a good idea this year. But however you are going to spend Thanksgiving, I hope that we all will take some time off and reflect on our many blessings.

Today, we are going to think about Matthew’s description of Judgment Day. Jesus divides everyone into two groups, the sheep and the goats, or the righteous/just and everybody else. The group that is called righteous in most translations, in Greek, οἱ δίκαιοι, represents the Aramaic *tsaddikim*, which means the just, not only the righteous, which sounds like someone who is merely pious. There’s no correct word in English to translate this term, so think of a person who is both just and righteous, and you’ll have the concept.

Two things disturb people about today’s New Testament lesson. The first is that this passage seems to conflict with the Protestant principle of justification by grace through faith. If

we're "saved" by faith, then why are we being sorted into sheep and goats and judged based on whether we've taken care of the poor and visited people in prison?

Faith in Jesus's time meant trust and only secondarily came to mean belief in the sense of believing an idea such as that Jesus rose from the dead. That is why no conflict exists between faith and good behavior. It is hard to have this second kind of faith, i.e., belief, without having the first kind, i.e., trust in God. And when we trust in God who sent Jesus, and Jesus and his message, it's not very useful to believe things about him without being transformed in the process and living the kind of life he wanted people to live. Remember the old saying that a good tree produces good fruit. If no apples are on the apple tree during apple season, we suspect that the tree is unhealthy.

The second problem with this passage is the violent image of God. Many people reason that Jesus counseled his followers to act non-violently. He did not tell them to be milk toast, passive, lie-down-and-walk-all-over-us, take-advantage-of-us sort of people, but he did not advocate fighting the Romans on their terms either. Instead, Jesus told his followers to turn the other cheek, walk the second mile, etc. The reason he did this, however, was quite pragmatic. As powerless, oppressed people, they could not afford to use violence. They had no chance of winning against the Romans using the same tools as the Romans. They were completely outmatched. However, neither did Jesus think it was good just to let the oppressors walk all over them. Instead, he counseled a third way as NT biblical scholar Walter Wink calls it. By turning the other cheek, they were in effect telling the Roman soldier who had slapped them that the slap had not had the intended effect of insulting them and that the soldier should move on to the other cheek. The only problem was that the soldier could not extend his hand across to slap the other cheek because it involved reaching across awkwardly. The soldier would need to punch the Jew, which was reserved for equals, putting him in a quandary. Jesus's strategy was smart. It helped the Jew hold on to his dignity without doing anything that could get him into trouble.

So, it is true that Jesus counseled what might be called militant non-violence, but that does not necessarily mean that in different circumstances, he might not have given other advice. After all, he was a Jew, and there are plenty of stories of heroes in the Bible who used violence very effectively. Think about Jael, who was able to kill the Canaanite general Sisera who had been oppressing her people for twenty years. When he fled to her tent, where he had no business being in the first place after the battle, he lay down to rest. She had no way to know whether after he had rested, he might decide he wanted to rape her, so she took a tent peg and mallet and drove the peg into his head. The narrator declares her "most blessed of women" in the Bible. That story is in the fourth and fifth chapters of the book of Judges. Similarly, the judge Ehud can kill King Eglon, putting a dagger into his fat belly; the narrator describes the scene quite graphically, so I will spare you the details but go look it up in Judges 3. And, of course, there are various battles, which the Israelites fight, so violence is not considered evil in the Hebrew Bible.

There is a tendency when I recall these stories from the Old Testament for Christians to say, Well, these are in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is a book of law and judgment; the New Testament is a book of grace and love. But this is a false dichotomy. Jesus said that he came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. Secondly, there is an incredible amount of grace in the Old Testament. God gave the law so that people would know how to live. God gave the covenant and kept God's side of the deal over and over, even when the people kept on straying. God sent prophets and wise individuals to help Israel get back on track, and, when necessary, God punished Israel, sending the chosen people into a painful exile that forever changed them. And turning to the New Testament, the very text we are reading today is evidence that the New

Testament has its share of judgment; it is not solely an Old Testament phenomenon. Remember, Jesus was a Jew. He did not come to start a new religion but to reform his religious tradition.

I want to return for a moment to the story of Jael. In this story, the narrator depicts the general Sisera's mother waiting anxiously for him when he does not return as quickly as she had anticipated. She imagines that he has not yet returned because he is raping women; it's not put quite that bluntly, but that is, in essence, what the text says. Kathleen Sakenfeld, a biblical scholar at Princeton, took a trip to Asia to find out how women there looked at stories like Jael's since so many American women have problems with Jael's violent killing of Sisera. She was talking with a group of Korean women and theorizing about why American women have these problems. She suggested that we have not experienced war in our homeland, among other reasons. Here is what one of the women responded after a brief pause:

If you American women would just realize that your place in this story is with Sisera's mother, waiting to collect the spoils of your interventions across the world..." and her voice trailed off. Dr. Sakenfeld said those words were the most disturbing of her whole trip because they explained the real reason we do not like the violence in the story. It is because we don't want to deal with our aggression. It's the old beam and splinter problem.

So, a simple message remains. It is not enough to believe in God and Jesus as Christ the King (today being Christ the King Sunday in the liturgical calendar, which is why the banner is white rather than green). We have to do what Jesus told us to do if we want to be part of the Kingdom of God. Doing this means choosing life in the here and now, not just in the bye and bye. It may not always seem so, but there are many paradoxes in this world. The first shall be last and the last first. So, we'd better make sure that we are among the sheep and do the kinds of things that Jesus told us to do. It will also make life a lot more interesting.

So, on this Stewardship Sunday, let us be like sheep as a congregation. Let us pledge our resources so that as a congregation, we can serve the needs of our members, friends, and the community around us and beyond. Amen.

Lectionary Readings for the First Sunday of Advent
Year B

Isaiah 64:1-9

64:1 O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence--

64:2 as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil-- to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

64:3 When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

64:4 From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

64:5 You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

64:6 We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

64:7 There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

64:8 Yet, O LORD, you are our father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

64:9 Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

80:1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth

80:2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up your might, and come to save us!

80:3 Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

80:4 O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

80:5 You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure.

80:6 You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

80:7 Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

80:17 But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

80:18 Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

80:19 Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

1:3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,

1:5 for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind--

1:6 just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you--

1:7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:9 God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Mark 13:24-37

13:24 “But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,

13:25 and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken.

13:26 Then they will see ‘the Son of Man coming in clouds’ with great power and glory.

13:27 Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

13:28 “From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near.

13:29 So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates.

13:30 Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place.

13:31 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

13:32 “But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

13:33 Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come.

13:34 It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch.

13:35 Therefore, keep awake--for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn,

13:36 or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly.

13:37 And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake.”

Important: New Zoom Worship Link

Alice Bellis is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: IPC Worship

Time: Nov 29, 2020 10:30 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Every week on Sun, until Jan 31, 2021,	Jan 3, 2021 10:30 AM
10 occurrence(s)	Jan 10, 2021 10:30 AM
Nov 29, 2020 10:30 AM	Jan 17, 2021 10:30 AM
Dec 6, 2020 10:30 AM	Jan 24, 2021 10:30 AM
Dec 13, 2020 10:30 AM	Jan 31, 2021 10:30 AM
Dec 20, 2020 10:30 AM	
Dec 27, 2020 10:30 AM	

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Weekly: https://zoom.us/meeting/tJMtdu-hrTgoGtxB08s_6SDKTEmItyDq2K1M/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCvrjosE9eWshmpRowEAoj4M_PztnZBjbdFvk-9EB8FUSfdAsdPG6ZmNMmC

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/97016933208?pwd=dFo0Z3duMi9sd0RvQ2p2VzY4ZEZBUT09>

Meeting ID: 970 1693 3208

Passcode: **pcJY1z**

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Passcode: 531963

Find your local number: <https://zoom.us/u/aboEmT133q>

Pledge Card on the next page

Pledge Card

Name(s) _____

Phone Number(s) _____

Address _____

Email Address (if any) _____

Amount (\$\$) Pledged Weekly _____ or Monthly _____ or Annually _____

Time/Talent Pledged _____

Please send to Idylwood Presbyterian Church, 7617 Idylwood Road, Falls Church, VA 22043,
ATTN: Amy Moore