

OUTREACH

participating in ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy

{Outward}

2015 MISSION CALENDAR is calling. Want to see about getting a particular focus attached to a particular month? Have some thoughts about building upon 2014 initiatives or just an urge to do something for or with our neighbors? Join Rachel at the N. Robinson Starbucks, Saturday, January 3, 10:00 am. We'll take forty-five minutes or so, and outline the coming year in terms of outreach.

WITNESS

telling our stories, offering expressions of faith, being Christ-like

{Together}

AN HOUR ON CHRISTMAS EVE could be spent many places. Consider coming to Boulevard at 10:00 am for a cross between a service of worship and fellowship. Think of it as a casual and yet holy waiting with others outside the delivery room.

Boulevard United Methodist Church



The John of John's Gospel is never called the Baptist. His primary role is as a very human witness to a cosmic event. God is about ordering a new creation, a new presence of light in the world but it necessitates a fellow human to point to its presence, otherwise, human as we are, we might not see it. That human is John.

Karoline Lewis

December 14, 2014

321 N Boulevard
Richmond, Virginia 23220
www.boulevardumc.org

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

We make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (Matthew 28).

Order of Worship

(UMH) - The United Methodist Hymnal
(TFWS) - The Faith We Sing

* Please stand, as able.

Gathering

Introit

Prepare Ye

*Call to Worship

*Hymn *Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness*

Insert

Words of Welcome

Prayers of the People

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Interlude

Do You Hear What I Hear?

Proclamation and Response

Time with Children

First Lesson *Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11*

*Gospel Reading *John 1:6-8, 19-28*

Sermon *"This John"* Rev. Rachel Gene May

*Affirmation of Faith

**We trust in our Creator,
Whose intent is to heal and make whole.**

**We point to Jesus, our brother and friend;
Who in his living and his dying, pointed to the One beyond *him*.**

We practice the presence of God in our lives.

We pray.

**We trust the mysteries of light and love to transform us,
even as we doubt, and sometimes bend toward despair.**

**We look for the Church to be the body of Christ,
for our community to reflect the kingdom,
and for grace to reign, here and now. Amen!**

*Hymn *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*

UMH 240

Offering Tithes and Gifts

Offertory *When God Brought Zion's Remnant Band*

*Doxology (94 UMH)

*Prayer of Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer (895 UMH)

Sending Forth

*Hymn

We Are Called

TFWS 2172

*Advent Dismissal with Blessing

NURTURE

caring for one another, for our space, and for our growth as disciples

{Inward}

O LIGHT FROM THE EAST is an "O Antiphon"—the sixth of seven. These are an ancient Advent tradition, based on an even older vision; that of the prophet Isaiah. Today, the O Antiphons are often spoken instead of sung (in Latin):

<i>O Sapientia</i>	Wisdom	November 9
<i>O Adonai</i>	Lord	November 16
<i>O Rex Gentium</i>	Ruler of nations	November 23
<i>O Radix Jesse</i>	Root of Jesse	November 30
<i>O Clavis David</i>	Key of David	December 7
<i>O Oriens</i>	Light from the East	December 14
<i>O Emmanuel</i>	God with us	December 21

"O dawn of the east, brightness of light eternal, and sun of justice: Come, and enlighten those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

WE ARE PRAYING for Maria, Bill Rice and Debbie Bassett, Jamie and Lanier May, Shane, those in contact with Ebola, and Irene Wagner. Here, per your request, we publish a prayer list. Wish to add or restore a name? Say so via the offering plate. Or, leave a message with the main office.

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS typically shape our order of service, including the sermon. Next Sunday: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, Psalm 126, 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24. and John 1:6-8. 19-28

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;

² to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor,
and the day of vengeance of our God;
to comfort all who mourn;

³ to provide for those who mourn in Zion—
to give them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

⁴ They shall build up the ancient ruins,
they shall raise up the former devastations;
they shall repair the ruined cities,
the devastations of many generations.

⁸ For I the LORD love justice,
I hate robbery and wrongdoing;
I will faithfully give them their recompense,
and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

⁹ Their descendants shall be known among the nations,
and their offspring among the peoples;
all who see them shall acknowledge
that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

¹⁰ I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

¹¹ For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to spring up before all the nations.



Crossing Boulevard

with Rev. Rachel

⁹ **THEY ARE A PEOPLE** Isaiah 61

I know it's not my place. And so I push the thoughts aside. I wait to wonder. *Why are these verses selected for funerals?*

Maybe it's as simple as word recognition. Folks see "comfort" and "mourn". With that, the decision is made.

But what an incredibly communal passage this is! There. I said it. Communal, collective, not about one person (even as individuals are precious to us and to God)... "they" and "their" is front and center.

The prophet has a Word that stretches over 'all' and 'many generations'. It does not dismiss our particular hurts and hopes. It gathers them in with those of others, which is exactly how we ought to expect our God to work. If no man incurs devastation on an island (John Donne), his restoration probably isn't happening there either.

Today, where there is a traditional Advent wreath, in addition to two of the violet (or blue) ones, a rose-colored candle is lit. It is supposed to announce *Gaudete* Sunday—to direct us in the way of *Gaude*, meaning rejoice.

I cannot help but think of how difficult it will be for some persons to rejoice on command. At the same time, I know that there is joy to be found in what Isaiah puts before us. God is working out our well being with a clear view of interconnectedness and interdependence.

I can hear this good news in the voice of a friend: *God never told you that you were an isolated project! It's oaks of righteousness, not oak (v.3). Get on up and out there, Rachel May. Best quit all this pretending that it's otherwise.*

Community, for all the wear and tear it can exact, is what we have; here and elsewhere, perhaps. Showing up to it and for it would seem to be a good first step in experiencing the repair and recompense we long for on a personal level.

Elaine said it this week, and before I saw our text it in the rose-colored light. "I just think it's a time to step back and help each other see what we're thankful for..." She didn't have her holidays confused. She sure didn't. It's *Gaudete* Sunday v'all. Let's be who we are: A people whom blessing can then find (v.9).

John 1:6-8, (CEB)

⁶ A man named John was sent from God. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light. ⁸ He himself wasn't the light, but his mission was to testify concerning the light.

¹⁹ This is John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him, "Who are you?"

²⁰ John confessed (he didn't deny but confessed), "I'm not the Christ."

²¹ They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

John said, "I'm not."

"Are you the prophet?"

John answered, "No."

²² They asked, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

²³ John replied,

*"I am a voice crying out in the wilderness,
Make the Lord's path straight,*

just as the prophet Isaiah said."

²⁴ Those sent by the Pharisees ²⁵ asked, "Why do you baptize if you aren't the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

²⁶ John answered, "I baptize with water. Someone greater stands among you, whom you don't recognize. ²⁷ He comes after me, but I'm not worthy to untie his sandal straps." ²⁸ This encounter took place across the Jordan in Bethany where John was baptizing.