

## WITNESS

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

**{Together}**

KEEPING HOLY TIME is an expression of who and whose we are. The time bookended by the Nativity and the Epiphany is called “*The Twelve Days of Christmas*,” with Christmas itself being the first day, and Twelfth Night, January 5, being the last. Who’s having a Twelfth Night party next year?

The season of Christmastide lasts until the Baptism of the Lord (today, January 10). In some traditions, Christmas further continues until the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple (Candlemas) on February 2. Wish a preacher Happy Candlemas and she might fall over in a fit of marvel.

The entire Christmas Cycle is a building or blossoming of the revelation of God in Christ—to the shepherds, to the Magi, at the Lord’s Baptism, to Simeon and the prophetess, Anna. Christmastide *liturgically* ends on January 10. But Christmas doesn’t end *spiritually*—i.e., **the celebration of the events of Christ’s life as a child** and the great Christmas Cycle doesn’t end—until Candlemas. There will be a test.

# Boulevard United Methodist Church



“New things are possible, especially when that new thing is a reliving of that past experience of deliverance. Sometimes the hardest thing to accept is that what has happened before can indeed happen again.”

Howard Wallace

January 10, 2016

321 N Boulevard  
Richmond, Virginia 23220  
[www.boulevardumc.org](http://www.boulevardumc.org)

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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

## First Sunday after the Epiphany/Baptism of the Lord, Year C

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

\* Please stand, as able.

### Gathering

Introit *Unclouded Day*

Greeting

\*Call to Worship

\*Hymn *Down to the River to Pray*

Insert

Prayers of the People

Joys and Concerns  
Pastoral Prayer  
Interlude

### Proclamation and Response

Time with Children

Scripture Lessons  
Isaiah 43:1-7  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Song for Illumination *Insert*

Sermon *Rev. Rachel G. May*

\*Hymn *You Are Mine* TFWS 2218

Offering Tithes and Gifts

Offertory *What Ruler Wades*

\*Doxology (94 UMH)

\*Prayer of Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer

### Sending Forth

\*Hymn *How Firm A Foundation* UMH 529

\*Dismissal with Blessing

## NURTURE

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

### {Inward}

WE ARE PRAYING for Maria, persons suffering because of addiction, the working poor, and incarcerated residents of metropolitan Richmond. We just began this list anew. Wish to add or restore a name? Say so via the offering plate or the church's e-mail address.

REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY READINGS typically shape our order of service, including the sermon. Next Sunday:

Isaiah 62:1-5  
Psalm 36:5-10 (UMH 771)  
I Corinthians 12:1-11  
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

GIVING GROWS YOU and us.

	Ministry Costs	Your Gifts
December 2015	8,613	6,717

## OUTREACH

*participating in ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy*

### {Outward}

2016 MISSION CALENDAR: Thoughts about building upon 2015 initiatives or just an urge to do something for or with our neighbors? Join Rachel at Alchemy Coffee on 814 W. Broad next Saturday, January 16, 10:00 am. We'll use forty-five minutes or so to imagine/outline the coming year in terms of outreach.

A CIRCLES USA INFORMATIONAL MEETING is scheduled for January 20 at St. John's Church (2401 East Broad). The Circles Mission is to inspire and equip families and communities to resolve poverty and thrive. A group of local citizens is inviting others, including persons from faith communities, to explore the possibility of a Circles Chapter in Richmond. Why? Because the Circles model has made an impact elsewhere. It's a Wednesday. 7:00 pm. Speak up if you can be our third person in attendance that evening.



## Crossing Boulevard

with Rev. Rachel

<sup>15</sup> **CONCERNING JOHN** Luke 3

I may have already told you about how this nearly inexhaustible bit of wisdom first came to me. It was a divinity school thing. I can hear their wise, jovial, outright *funny* voices as I type: “Stay in your lane.”

By which was meant something more nuanced than “mind your own business”. We were lifting up the boundaries that are helpful for self and others. When one of us spoke too forcefully outside our knowledge-zone or we too regularly chimed in before receiving another’s contribution, it was time for a lane check.

It takes a fair amount of trust and goodwill for these words to be exchanged and actually be a force for good. I feel like we have precisely those conditions at the breakfast table I inhabit most Tuesday mornings. Yet no one told me I needed to stay in my lane this week! I was for sure swerving.

We were discussing Luke and his account of Jesus’ baptism. I carried on for most of the hour as if John were there with Jesus when it happened. That much would be true according to Matthew 3. But we weren’t in Matthew.

I could have at least taken the time to notice the verses before the start of Sunday’s section! “But Herod the ruler had been criticized harshly by John...he [Herod] locked John up in prison (vv.19-20).” Nope. On I went with what this moment probably meant to John, still imagining John on the scene, a free man.

Realizing my gaff the next day, I thought of this lane-staying business. Though no one said *Rachel May, stay in your lane*, our practice of being present to one other and to the Scriptures had brought to light my swerving for me to notice.

If being prepared is a way to honor one’s lane; and allowing ourselves some unuttered thoughts is another; maybe keeping our appointments with community is a third. I think what I’m trying to say here is that we ought to keep showing up to people and places where we are likely to notice when we are all over the place. God uses groups to reveal so much more than things ‘concerning John’ (v.15) which to this reverend, this week, feels like mercy.

### Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

<sup>15</sup>As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, <sup>16</sup>John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup>His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

<sup>21</sup>Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, <sup>22</sup>and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

Isaiah 43:1-7

But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. <sup>2</sup>When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. <sup>3</sup>For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. <sup>4</sup>Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life. <sup>5</sup>Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; <sup>6</sup>I will say to the north, "Give them up," and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth— <sup>7</sup>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."