

First Baptist Regina Weekly News

For the Week of December 6th, 2020

John's Gospel does not describe Jesus' birth. All those beautiful stories from Luke and Matthew are left out. In fact, according to John, we are the ones who need to be born.

We are like the man born blind (read John chapter 9 for this great story). After Jesus touched his eyes, he could see. In the confusion of the times, under the pressure from others, he admitted he did not understand Jesus or all that was going on in the world.

He wisely turn back to Jesus and remembered, "One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." He believed in Jesus, and was born of God. Or, as we used to say, "born again."



Advent is not simply a celebration of Jesus' birthday in the world. It is a celebration of his birth within us. It is a time to remember all that Jesus has meant in our lives, and an invitation to hear Jesus knocking at the door of our hearts, and to allow him further into our lives.

This is a reason to make use of the spiritual habits Pastor Richard has introduced this year. If you haven't seen the videos yet, look through his list and pick one to start with.

Perhaps Advent is an invitation for you to take this step of inviting Jesus into your life for the first time. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and knows you by name. Let someone else know so that you can celebrate together.

May Jesus be born within us. May we find in him healing and new life.

With love,

Pastor Joel

First Baptist Church Regina Update

First Baptist Church Regina continues to offer in-person worship services. We are limiting attendance to 30 people. If you have access to the internet, a good alternative to attending in person is to join us on Zoom. Go to [our website](#) and click on “JOIN our Worship Service.”

Is Christmas a difficult time for you because of a loss?

On Monday, December 21, we will be having a Blue Christmas Service at 6:30 pm, over Zoom. In this service, we will take time to recognize that for some, Christmas is a difficult time of year, due to loss.

This year, with the pandemic, loss has been experienced in many ways. Not only in the loss of loved ones, but also in the loss of employment, family connections, and simply being together. Then there is also the loss of things left undone, and the unresolved areas of our lives.

Another component of this service is hope – the hope we have as we anticipate the coming of Christ, and what this means in light of our loss. The service will give us an opportunity to recognize loss in our lives this past year through select readings, candle lighting, song, and a short message.

For more information, please contact [Pastor Richard](#).

Sermon Audio by Phone

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our church and affected many of us in different ways. Those of us without the devices, computers, and knowledge to connect to the Internet are feeling even more isolated. To help address this, First Baptist Church has implemented a service called “Dial-the-Sermon”.

A recent sermon is available to listen to on your phone—any landline or cell phone—by dialing (306) 992-1912 (toll-free within the Regina area). This is an easy way for anyone who is limited to a telephone for communication, to hear the sermon from a recent worship service. This number takes you straight to the sermon recording—there are *no* menu or option choices that you will be required to make.

If you know someone who could benefit from this service, please pass this information on to them.

[Dial-the-Sermon \(306\) 992-1912](#)

Music@First

Christmas Glory 2020 – Live Music and Archival Audio Recordings

This glorious tradition of Christmas music and special readings will happen on Sunday, December 13, 2020 at 7:00 pm. Due to the pandemic, it will be online—over Zoom and on Facebook—this year.

FBC musicians and friends, both past and present, are coming together in unique ways to present the telling of the Christmas Story through bells, carol singing, choirs, instrumental and vocal solos/duets/trios, and special readings. Be sure not to miss this opportunity to celebrate and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas. *Invite your friends* to join in as well. Go, spread the notable news and experience the Hope, Peace, Joy and Love of this special season!

Christmas Reflections

During Advent, a number of previous Christmas Glory concerts will be available to watch online. One or more will be uploaded each week. To view, go to [our website](#). Please share these with others!

Christmas Music to prepare for worship

For the four Sundays of Advent, there will be 10 to 15 minutes of Christmas music before the worship service, beginning at 10:45 am. Featured will be both archival recordings performed in years past, plus LIVE selections from Christa W and Mark A. The archival recordings will feature Gifts of Music from the Sanctuary Choir, Exaltation, JuBELLation, soloists, and instrumentalists. If you're joining the service via Zoom, be sure to tune in early to enjoy this special music.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to Hilary R, Kevin R, and Music Minister, Pastor John Nelson, for the many hours of work they have put into preparing this music for our enjoyment.

Christmas Decorations

On behalf of the FBC family, we thank Ron and Marilyn P, Marg and Marv F, Tracy and Jack S, Julie and Kevin R, Barb Z, Tom C, and head co-ordinator Dean G, for bringing the sanctuary alive with the colors and sights of Christmas. Thank you for taking the time and energy to decorate the sanctuary, not only for our enjoyment, but also to bring alive the Advent and, Christmas message of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. Thank you one and all!

Children's Ministry

As Advent begins, our children's ministry has again moved online so we can all prepare for Christmas together! Julie and Kayely have enjoyed seeing some of our kids in person and on Zoom, and hope to see, virtually, even more in the coming weeks.

This year, our families with children are being given an Advent activity called the "Jesse Tree," a way of preparing for Advent by journeying through the Bible stories about Jesus's family tree. While there are a couple variations of this concept, we will be looking at the story from creation to Jesus' birth. Each family will have a Scripture reading and short craft that reminds them of that day's story.

Here's a schedule of these Advent activities:

1. Dec. 1 to 25 – Jesse Tree crafts and readings at home – a look at the time from creation to Jesus' birth
2. Nov. 29 to Dec. 20 – Advent worship services offer lots of ways to engage kids as they watch from home. If needed, prepare some colouring or a notepad to sketch/write as you listen.
3. Nov. 29 to Dec. 27 – After the Sunday morning worship service, kids are invited to their own 'breakout' room to visit with friends and share about Advent. There will also be a short Advent-related story.
4. Dec. 3, at 8 pm – Parents night on Zoom

**Parents: Please contact [Pastor Kayely](#) if you need a link to join any of these events.

An invite from FBC Kids to our whole FBC congregation:

While we are not able to make enough crafts for all the adults in the congregation, we would like to invite you to follow along with the Bible readings from December 1st to the 25th. Here are this week's readings:

Dec 7 - Genesis 37-50; or short reading - Genesis 37:3-4, 12-24, 28, Genesis 50:18-21

Dec 8 - Deuteronomy 5:1-22

Dec 9 - Genesis 17:7-8; Numbers 13:1-2, 17-27

Dec 10 - Book of Ruth; or short reading - Ruth 1:16; 2:5-17, 22-23; 4:13-14

Dec 11 - 1 Samuel 16-17; or short reading - 1 Samuel 16:1, 13; 17:40-50

Dec 12 - 2 Kings 22:1-23:3

Dec 13 - Isaiah 11:1-5

For more information, please contact [Pastor Kayely](#).

What's happening at First?

Morning Prayer

Join us each morning, Monday to Friday at 7:15 am to begin your day with scripture and prayer, via Zoom. Visit our [website](#) for the link.

Children

Our children's ministry is once again online. For more information, see page 4.

Youth

Pastor Chris: "This past week for our Youth event, Xavier Russell-MacLean and I drove to many of the youth's homes to deliver some snacks and the Jesse Tree package (a way of preparing for Advent by journeying through the Bible stories on Jesus's family tree) and for Advent season. It was very good to spend time with Xavier, and to see the youth that participated in this "event." Most of the youth came outside to visit with us and I realized once again how blessed we are to have these groups of families as part of our community.

I have struggled with the reality that we need to be online again, so being able to briefly see the youth again, give them a hard time about something, and just hear a small update about how they and their family are doing, was so good. Julie and Kayley spent a lot of time and effort in putting the Jesse Tree packages together. We are hopeful that this activity will help prepare ourselves to celebrate the birth of Christ and add some joy to this season." For more information, please contact [Pastor Chris](#).

Adults

Learning for Life: Annabel R. is facilitating an online series on the book of Romans. The class is exploring how Paul's epistle to the Romans focuses on his message to the believers in Rome, who are under the shadow of Caesar. Paul states that God's plan for the world has been revealed through Jesus, and his message demonstrates that God has been faithful to his covenant with Israel. For more information, please contact Annabel, send an email to [the church](#), or call (306) 359-1450.

Voice is a small group for women who like to read and enjoy lively conversation. Voice meets every second Wednesday from 7 to 9 pm, using Zoom. At present, the group is reading *Jesus Among Other Gods* by Ravi Zacharias. For more information, visit [our website](#), send an email to [the church](#), or call (306) 359-1450.

Reading through the Old Testament: In this online reading group, participants will read through the Old Testament chronologically. The group will be meeting weekly, via Zoom, at two different times: Sundays at 4 pm and Thursdays at 11 am.

Gospel of John small group study: Pastor Richard is leading a small group online that is looking at the Gospel of John. This group is meeting, via Zoom, on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 7 pm, and the 2nd and 4th Friday of each month at 10 am. For more information about this group or the Old Testament group, please contact [Pastor Richard](#).

Spiritual Disciplines Series: Sabbath

“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy” (Exodus 20:8-11).

Sabbath is such an important part of Israel’s story and actually, first appears in the opening chapters of the Bible. In Genesis 1 and 2 we find the creation account, which is capped in Genesis 2:4 with the image of God resting after the completion of creation. This becomes one of the arguments for Israel resting (keeping the Sabbath) – their God is a God who rested. Sabbath also reminds Israel of the truth that God is a God who provides for them in order that they might rest. Sabbath identifies them as the people of God (Deuteronomy 5:15).

Our culture is one of business, hurry and distraction. (If the COVID-19 pandemic has offered us anything that is good, it may be that, in some ways, it has forced us to slow down.) Walter Bruggeman sadly notes that “for the most part, contemporary Christians pay little attention to the Sabbath.” We, as the people of God, can and do get as caught up in the business, hurry and distraction of our culture as others. Sabbath is a call to stop.

Very simply put, the word Sabbath (שַׁבָּת) means to rest. Within the Old Testament Scriptures, it is a day of rest. A fuller understanding of Sabbath, however, recognizes that it is an event which happens in time, with the intent of redefining, or reminding one, of the nature of time, and how one lives in time. Sabbath rest is not only a day of rest, but a reminder that the other days in our week are to be lived under trusting the provision of God.

One of the reasons that Sabbath is so important is that it sanctifies time. Sabbath brings new life to the contemporary work-a-day world. Tilden Edwards notes that there is a hunger within humanity “for intimacy with the mysterious divine lover of our lives” and states that this hunger “cannot be fully satisfied apart from spacious times of restful presence.”

In his book *The Holy Longing*, Ronald Rolheiser notes that human beings are typically not at peace. There is something inside each person which seems at odds with the world around them, causing them to be forever restless. Rolheiser goes on to describe this as a fundamental disease of humanity which renders each human incapable of coming to full peace in this life. This results, argues Edwards, in all of one’s time then becoming work time. The basic purpose of life becomes “the cultivation of a separate ego needing to fulfill itself through the accumulation of many things, material and immaterial.” With this as one’s focus, there is no longer any Sabbath time, for, whether they are at work or leisure, people “are subtly working to produce, enhance, maintain,” and it becomes the individual’s responsibility to ensure success.

Walter Brueggemann joins the chorus in calling us to return to a Sabbath lifestyle: “In our own contemporary context of the rat race of anxiety, the celebration of Sabbath is an act of both resistance and alternative. It is resistance because it is a visible insistence that our lives are not defined by the production and consumption of commodity goods...The alternative on offer is that awareness and practice of the claim that we are situated on the receiving end of the gifts of God. To be so situated is a staggering option, because we are accustomed to being on the initiating end of all things...[T]he fourth commandment on Sabbath is the most difficult and most urgent of the commandments in our society, because it summons us to intent and conduct that defies the most elemental requirements of a commodity-propelled society that specializes in control and entertainment.”

—Pastor Richard

Website

As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our church events and schedules in every way. The [church website](#) is a valuable source of information that can help keep you connected and up to date with the various programs that are available.

One easy way to keep on top of upcoming events is to click on the calendar icon at the bottom of each page on the website. Each entry on the calendar provides a link to information about various events, such as Learning for Life, small group studies, and prayer times.

Also on our website are links to our Facebook page and YouTube channel, where you will find video reflections, devotions, and studies by a number of our members and pastors.



Have you heard about Murphy's Law? Anything that can go wrong will go wrong. How about Cole's Law? It's julienned cabbage in a creamy dressing.

A frog telephones the Psychic Hotline. His Personal Psychic Advisor tells him, “You are going to meet a beautiful young girl who will want to know everything about you.”

The frog is thrilled! “This is great! Will I meet her at a party?”

“No,” says his advisor, “in her biology class.”

I am Zechariah

Pastor John's sermon from November 29, 2020

Scriptures: Zechariah 1:1-6; Luke 1:5-25; Luke 1:67-79

We are about to hear from Zecharias, also known as Zechariah, a priest of Israel, and the father of John the Baptist. Before calling on Zecharias, let me say a few things about him.

Strengths and Accomplishments

Zecharias, was known as a righteous man and was a priest before God. He was one of the few people to be directly addressed by an angel. He was also the father of John the Baptist.

Weakness and a Mistake

Like many of us, Zecharias had a weakness and made a mistake, in momentarily doubting the angel's promise of a son because of his own old age.

Vital Statistics

Zecharias' occupation was a Priest and his relatives were his wife, Elizabeth, and his son, John the Baptist.

Character

Both Elizabeth and Zecharias were upright in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commandments and regulations blamelessly. Sadly, they had no children because Elizabeth was barren and they were both well along in years.

What follows is an adaptation of Rev. Fred Penney's monologue, *I Am Zecharias*.

Pastor John: Zecharias, welcome. Please go ahead and tell us more about yourself.

Zecharias: Thank you for this invitation to come back and speak to you this morning. Rev. Penney has been very creative in the monologue that he has written.

It has been over 400 years since we have heard from a prophet and, as a result, things have been upside-down in our nation for far too long. We have long suffered under corruption and the incompetence of weak kings—kings that turned our nation away from God.

We have suffered under the brutality of the Assyrians and the Babylonians and now, for the past 63 years, we have been occupied and oppressed by the ruthless Romans. General Pompey conquered our holy land for Rome.

In 37 BC, following a failed rebellion, the Romans turned Judea into a Roman province, and installed the Jewish King, Herod (the Great), as administrator. King was too lofty a title...he was more like a provincial premier.

Meanwhile, we held tightly to the promise of a deliverer—a Messiah—who will set us free from our oppressors and be a King like David, and sit on David’s throne. [He will] establish a kingdom of righteousness and justice. Israel’s calling was to be a kingdom of priests who will serve God.

We know the words of Isaiah, *“for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulders and his kingdom will never end.”* We hold to the covenant God made with Abraham: *“I will bless you and make you a blessing....and through your seed, all the world will be blessed.”*

Let me tell you though, there has been a lot of waiting and hoping. Not much has been moving except injustice and oppression, and this seems to know no bounds.

DO YOU LIKE YOUR GOVERNMENT? DO YOU EVER WISH THINGS COULD BE BETTER?

In Israel, we have had enough...somebody please give us a good government!!!!

Here I am now, BUT I AM NOW AN OLD MAN.

I wonder if—in my time—I will ever see things change.

WILL HOPE BE REALIZED?

WILL THE PROPHECIES OF OUR PROPHETS EVER BE FULFILLED?

Yes, my name is Zecharias, but [I am] also known as Zechariah. I am a priest. I am a Jewish priest and I AM OLD. All my life I have known only foreign rule and oppression. The Romans—I despise them.

Well, I was not always old. I have just slowly gotten older and older and now here I am. I am old! Maybe even ancient. My wife is Elizabeth. She is not old. O NO! Elizabeth, she is most definitely not old. She is (let me get this just right—I learned this in marriage class) —*“Elizabeth is well along in years.”* That means she is getting better and better as the years go by.

All my life I have been waiting and praying for three things:

1. To serve in the temple as Priest
2. To be a father
3. To see the Messiah

For most of my life, all three of my prayers seemed to go nowhere.

The dream of having children is something that Elizabeth and I had given up on, as we were getting old and the calendar had punched a hole in that biological balloon. When

we bought our first house in a small subdivision on the outskirts of Jerusalem, we made sure that there were a couple of extra bedrooms for the children. We prayed and prayed for God to bless us with children. Our friends were so sweet when their children were born, for they would say, *"You will make such great parents someday"*, BUT the children never came and the rooms stayed empty. *Did God hear our prayers, we often wondered?* Slowly, the dream died, but the pain and disappointment lingered and grew.

As for serving at the temple, that was a great honor, I must say.

I kept hoping and praying, but once again the years slipped by and I had become impatient and a little frustrated. After all, I am a priest. My father was a priest. Serving at the Temple in Jerusalem is the highest honor a priest can have. A priest served at the temple for one week each year.

I was a member of one of 24 divisions in the priesthood, one of approximately 18,000 priests, of the eighth order of Abijah.

A priest only officiated at the sacrifice once in his lifetime, and was selected by lottery. In other words, you could be a priest all of your life and never be called to serve in the Temple.

FINALLY, my name was called!!!! The answer to Prayer #1 had arrived!

Well, there I am in the temple – it is our most holy place in all of the world. I am feeling very excited and yet guarded in my excitement, for I do not want to make a mistake. My job was to burn incense, symbolizing the prayers of God's people rising toward heaven.

The altar of incense was made of acacia wood with a veneer of gold. Acacia is a beautiful hardwood that is almost indestructible.

The altar was 36 inches high (91 cm) and eighteen inches (45 cm) square (Exodus 37: 25). It served as a place for the daily burning of incense, both morning and evening.

This twice daily exercise consisted of a priest taking burning coals from the bronze altar in the temple court, to the altar of incense, and placing the coals upon the incense (Exodus 30:7-8). The incense was a mixture of five spices. When the hot coals hit the incense, a burst of smoke and smells floated up to the heaven.

Daily prayer at the temple occurred at 9 am and 3 pm and is called the time of the "perpetual offering". In that moment, as I was placing the coals on the incense, symbolizing prayer, well, you would not believe what happened! An ANGEL appears and says, *"Your prayer has been heard."* When I saw him, I was startled and was gripped with fear.

It is not every day that you see an angel, BUT the angel said to me: *"Do not be afraid, Zecharias; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son."* (Luke 1: 13)

MY PRAYER HAS BEEN HEARD???? My response was more of a question than an utterance of belief. How could this be? It has been years and years...I think it is too late, BUT the angel continued, *“And you are to call him JOHN. He will be a JOY and DELIGHT to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”* (Luke 1: 14-17)

I recognized those words...from Isaiah 40: 3...and Malachi 4: 6.

Well, as you can imagine, I WAS STARTLED AND SHAKEN...AND WITHOUT THINKING I BLURTED OUT...*“How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”* (Luke 1: 18)

I still think it was a fair question. After all, it has been many, many years. To be honest, I was not expecting this when I woke up this morning, and besides, I was already excited to serve in the Temple. I MAY HAVE OVERREACTED!

The angel looked at me with incredulity, *“I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this Good News. And now you will be silent and you will not be able to speak until the day all this happens, because you did not believe my words that will come true at their appointed time.”* (Luke 1: 19-20)

Then I realized that this is no low-level angel – this is Gabriel!!!!

Gabriel, as you may know, is a high-powered Angel. He appeared to Daniel when God wanted to talk about the future—what some call—I love saying this word— “eschatology.”

When Gabriel shows up right in front of me—I should have known that something big was on the agenda. Before I had time to apologize....BOOM. Immediately, I lost my speech. Talk about bad timing.

You see, when the priest comes out of the Temple—after burning incense—he gives a blessing to the people—but I could not speak...all I could do was use sign language.

The people who gathered at the Temple that day knew something had occurred. *“What took you so long Zecharias? What happened?”*

Hmm, Hmm! And of course, I could not say a word. I was tongue-tied. And like I said earlier, if you want to talk when an angel is around, you might be wise to keep your mouth shut. I just made motions with my hands. I think I must have looked shaken and I may have staggered a little. People seemed to figure it out. *“He has seen a vision. I think something happened in there!”*

I just wanted to go home and be with Elizabeth, BUT again, I could not even talk to her! Believe me, all I could do was use hand signals and scribble a few words.

TWO PRAYERS answered, all in one day, and after ALL these years of waiting and waiting. Those words are still ringing in my ears—*“your prayer has been heard.”* Except, I had lost my tongue. It was as if Gabriel had put duct tape over my mouth. Nothing was coming out. NOT A SOUND! He shut me down! Talk about putting my foot in my mouth. I discovered something about angels—they like to have the last word!

A word of advice, when you are around angels, keep your mouth shut, so you can talk! Maybe it was God’s way of saying to me *“Stop talking and just watch. I’ll take things from here.”*

What more could happen to startle me—shake me up? Yes, you guessed it, not long after this Temple “experience”, Elizabeth announces that she is pregnant. IT IS REALLY HAPPENING! Just like Gabriel had said. I wanted to tell all of my friends how exciting it was to finally serve in the Temple. Secondly, I am going to be a father too, BUT I AM TONGUE TIED! I guess I will post it on Facebook.

Yes, Gabriel appeared to me, but I am not Daniel caliber. I am just a rank and file priest, one of 18,000 priests. I recalled Gabriel’s words...*“His name will be called John. He will be great in the sight of the Lord. He can never drink wine, but he will bring back many to the Lord and he will be powerful and full of the Spirit—like Elijah.”*

During the 9 months’ pregnancy, I was filled with eager anticipation, BUT I could not get a word out...not one word...for NINE MONTHS!

Being unable to talk, I had time to think and read. I remembered our Patriarch, Abraham, and his wife Sarah. They also had no children and they were old. They also had a visit from an angel to talk about a baby. Their baby, Isaac, was a fulfillment of the covenant God made with Abraham. IS OUR BABY GOING TO HAVE SIGNIFICANCE ON THE SCALE OF ISAAC? IS THIS THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW COVENANT? The one Jeremiah prophesied about 500 years ago? The implications are amazing and overwhelming.

Then I started kicking myself. Why did I question Gabriel? Why? Why? I understand now why he reacted the way he did. *“I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent to you and your prayer has been heard.”* (See Luke 1:19)

Suddenly I feel relieved that I only lost my speech! It could have been so much worse.

Well, my time is almost up, but let me tell you just a little bit more. Six months into the pregnancy, another piece of the puzzle appears. Elizabeth’s cousin, Mary, arrives for a visit. YOU WILL NOT BELIEVE THIS, but it turns out she too had had a visit from the same angel, Gabriel.

Mary is young and not yet married. She is pledged to be married to a fine young man named Joseph, BUT Mary is a virgin and Gabriel had announced that she is going to have a baby too.

NOW, you may think it is a miracle for Elizabeth and I to have a baby, BUT for a virgin to have a baby, well, that is just on an entirely different level. I think Mary needed to talk to Elizabeth.

As soon as Mary walked in the door and said hello, our baby in Elizabeth's womb jumped, or kicked. Elizabeth felt the baby move and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke these prophetic words to Mary: *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why I am so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"* (Luke 1:42-45)

Mary could put two and two together, knowing that somehow these two miracles were connected. For Elizabeth and I, *"Get ready for the King."* For Mary, *"Give birth to the King. Bring the kingdom into reality."*

Mary would stay with us for 3 months, right up until the time Elizabeth delivered our baby. I think Mary wanted to see phase one through to completion. Honestly, since I was not making much conversation, Elizabeth needed someone to talk to! Mary also felt safer being out of town as the "scandal" of her pregnancy spread.

No doubt you are wondering as to what happened next? Well, I was only to talk to you about Elizabeth's and my story, Luke 1:5-25. Was I going to recover my ability to speak? When and how would this happen? I will leave it to other storytellers to answer some of these exciting questions.

As for our son, John, and the birth of Mary's baby boy, Emmanuel...our Messiah, I will give you a few hints. [First,] let me give you a few hints about our son Johnny...I mean John. John was challenged by both his personal grooming and his food menu; however, when it came to his preaching—well, I think I have said enough. I will leave you with that tease.

Here is something that I would like to leave with you. Remember, your prayers are heard no matter how old you might be. Waiting for the answers to your prayers only serves to make it sweeter!

Now, as an old man, I am very excited and very hopeful because of this assurance. My prayers were answered and so I encourage you to keep on praying. May your prayers rise to heaven like incense.

Thank you for listening to my story.

Pastor John: I want to thank Zecharias for sharing his story with us this morning. It has been a great honor.

In conclusion, Zecharias was too humble to tell you a few important elements of his story. The following information comes from a commentary:

1. Zecharias was told before anyone else that God was setting in motion his own visit to earth;
2. Zecharias and his wife, Elizabeth were also known for their personal holiness;
3. They were well suited to doing a special work for God, BUT they shared the pain of not having children. In Jewish culture, this was considered not having God's blessing. Zecharias and Elizabeth were old, and they had stopped even praying to have children.

As for Zecharias' trip to the temple of Jerusalem, it was his turn at duty, BUT it included an unexpected blessing. Zecharias, was chosen to be the priest who could enter the Holy Place to offer incense to God for the people. Yet, suddenly, and much to his surprise and terror, he found himself face to face with an angel.

The angel's message was too good to be true, but Zecharias did not respond to the news of the coming Savior as much as he expressed doubts about his own ability to father the child the angel promised him. Zecharias' age spoke more loudly than God's promise. As a result, God prevented Zecharias from speaking until the promise became a reality.

The record of his prayer in Luke 1 is our last glimpse of Zecharias. Like so many of God's most faithful servants, he passed quietly from the scene once his part was completed.

Are there lessons to be learned from Zecharias' life?

- Physical limitations do not limit God.
- God accomplishes his will, sometimes in unexpected ways.
- Zecharias becomes our hero for those times when we doubt God and yet are willing to obey. We gain HOPE from Zecharias story that God can do great things through anyone who is available to him.
- Your prayers are heard...and answered...in God's time.

Thank you to Rev. Fred Penney for this remarkable account of Zecharias, created in a monologue format, with very minor additions, deletions and abbreviations by Rev. John Nelson.

Please note: To hear the full sermon on your phone, call our "Dial-the-Sermon" line at (306) 992-1912.

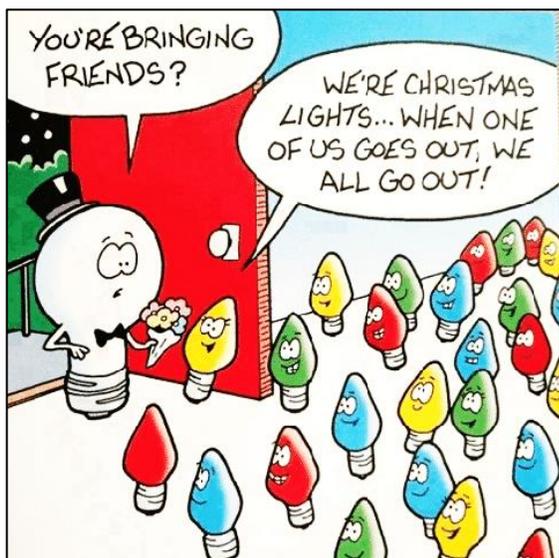
Tithing during the pandemic

With the COVID-19 crisis limiting contact with others and restricting meetings of groups, please do not neglect the financial needs of our church.

We have several ways to provide your regular tithes and donations to the church:

1. Mail your gifts to the church or call and leave a message at (306) 359-1450 to arrange for an in-person pick-up. Please place your cheque in your regular offering envelope (or any envelope marked "Offering"), and seal that inside another envelope addressed to: First Baptist Church, 2241 Victoria Ave, Regina, SK S4P 0S4.
2. Establish a **Pre-authorized Remittance (PAR) Plan**. This will automatically transfer funds from your account into the FBC Regina account on a regular basis. Please email the church or contact the Treasurer if you would like to set up PAR, or change your commitment.
3. Make an online donation:
 - Use **Interac e-Transfer** to donate from your phone or computer to FBCRegina@gmail.com (*no fee or cost to the church*)
 - Use a credit card with a PayPal account via the **PayPal Giving Fund** (*no fee or cost to the church... 100% of your donation reaches us and contributes to our mission*)
 - Use a credit card or PayPal via **CanadaHelps** (*a fee of 4% is deducted from the donation*)
 - Use a credit or debit card via **FBC ChurchTrac** (*the church is charged a fee of approximately 3% for each donation*)

PLEASE refer to our website at firstbaptistregina.ca for more specific information on these contribution methods. You may also contact the treasurer at (306) 775-1497 or email the church at main_fbcregina@sasktel.net for further details.



Q. What is a vegan's favorite Christmas carol?

A. Soy to the World!

Q. Why didn't Rudolph get a good report card?

A. Because he went down in History!

Q. How did Scrooge win the football game?

A. The ghost of Christmas passed!

Q. How much did Santa pay for his sleigh?

A. Nothing—it was on the house!