

December 23, 2018
The Fourth Sunday in Advent



Luke 1:39-45 | Pastor Alf Halvorson Preaching

8:30 AM BLENDED

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH Rick & Marty Chapman Family • Rick & Gwen Lillioft
***SONGS OF PRAISE**
***PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON** Brett Hurst
GIFTS OF GRATITUDE Dave Steane
MESSAGE A Thrill of Hope | Luke 1:39-45 (NRSV) Alf Halvorson

9:45 AM CONTEMPORARY

WORSHIP INVITATION
LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH Rick & Marty Chapman Family • Rick & Gwen Lillioft
TIME OF CONFESSION Tara Reynolds
CHILDREN'S MOMENT Meliza Gómez
MESSAGE A Thrill of Hope | Luke 1:39-45 (NRSV) Alf Halvorson

Musicians in these services: Meliza Gómez and Michael Middleton, worship leaders; Daniel Amaya, bass; George Heathco, guitar; Daniel Martinez, keys; Asher Pudlo, drums

11:15 AM TRADITIONAL

PRELUDE *O Little Town of Bethlehem with Debussy's Reverie* arr. McKechnie
WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP Dave Steane
LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH Rick & Marty Chapman Family • Rick & Gwen Lillioft
CHORAL INTROIT
Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light (from Christmas Oratorio) J. S. Bach (1685-1750)
***HYMN OF PRAISE** *Joy to the World* #40; Vs. 1, 3, 4 | ANTIOCH
***PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND ASSURANCE** Sarah Stone
***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH** from The Apostles' Creed
***CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE** *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing* #31; Vs. 1 | MENDELSSOHN
ANTHEM *Go Tell It on the Mountain* arr. Carolyn Jennings (1925-2015)
OFFERTORY *Et misericordia (And His Mercy) from Magnificat* John Rutter (b. 1945)
MESSAGE A Thrill of Hope | Luke 1:39-45 (NRSV) Alf Halvorson
***HYMN OF RESPONSE** *Lo, How A Rose E'er Blooming* #48; Vs. 1, 2 | ES IST EIN' ROS'
POSTLUDE *Angels We Have Heard on High* arr. Burkhardt

Musicians in this service: Beth Case, prelude pianist; Charles Hausmann, conductor; Kathryn White, organ; Lisa Vickers (soloist), Laura Coale, Jason Amos, Ivan Ley, quartet; Sanctuary Choir

* Please stand if able.

CCLI # 182374



The World Through Our Eyes is a wonderful collaboration of photos and essays by Sam Gainer and Dave Peterson. Copies of the book are available at the Front Office or online at samgainerphotography.com.

MDPC Car Decals

There are a few MDPC car decals still available! The three color options are printed on ultra-removable vinyl, designed to not leave a film on windows or paint. Pick one up today and represent your church home. It might even make you a better driver! (Although, if you're prone to a little road rage...maybe don't take one.) Pick up your FREE decal at the Connection Center.





Join us for Christmas Eve

4:00 PM
Family Service
Visit the Nativity Animals in the Breezeway.

5:30, 7:00, & 8:30 PM
Candlelight Services

Invite others to celebrate with you!
sharecandlelight.mdpc.org • sharefamily.mdpc.org

Mission Market: Final Day to Shop!

Need last-minute gifts? Still haven't found something for hard-to-shop-for great-aunt Nilda? Visit Mission Market! Your gifts in their honor feed children, shelter the homeless, spread the Gospel, and so much more.

Between Services | Sanctuary Lobby
missionmarket.mdpc.org

Sign Up Now for REACH

Spring into fun and learning with rec classes at MDPC. We have 2 NEW classes (Guitar for all ages and Chess for kids), plus athletic, arts-y, and educational favorites!

See more & register: reach.mdpc.org

Married Life Prep

Couples are invited to join us for a four-week course taught by Brett and Kellie Hurst of Home Encouragement. It combines Biblical teaching with the best current marriage research. Open to engaged couples and those in their first 2-3 years of marriage.

Sundays, January 6-27 | 10:00 AM-Noon | CLC 171
Register: mlp.mdpc.org

Partner In Prayer

How wonderful is it to know that, as a member of the MDPC family, your name's been lifted in prayer each day by your assigned Partner In Prayer? In 2019, covenant with Pastor Alf and other PIP volunteers to privately spend a few minutes each day bringing others before God.

Help meet Pastor Alf's goal of 1,000 pray-ers!
Learn more and sign up: pip.mdpc.org

B90: Read the Bible in 2019

Read 12 pages a day starting January 1, and meet once a week for support and encouragement. This could be the best new year's resolution you'll ever make.

Classes begin January 6

Details: b90.mdpc.org

Alpha Winter 2019

Alpha is a great place to invite people to explore faith and discuss the big questions of life. An 8-week series of interactive sessions that allows people to experience Jesus for themselves and make their own decisions about faith. Free dinner and free childcare.

Tuesdays, February 5-March 26 | 6:30-8:15 PM

Info and RSVP: alpha.mdpc.org

Girls' Getaway: Spring is Coming!

Join us on our annual retreat for a time of refreshment, laughter, and fun! All adult women are welcome.

February 1-3 | Jordan Ranch in Schulenburg, Texas
\$160 (includes all lodging and meals)

Details and registration: getaway.mdpc.org

2019 Young Adult Mission Trip

The Micah Project is doing amazing work in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, ministering to children who live on the street. If you want to see the love of Christ, see the beauty that is Honduras, and grow in community with other Young Adults, come check out this amazing mission partner.

March 20-24 | \$600 out of pocket/\$600 fundraiser
Visit micah.mdpc.org or email Trevor: tharris@mdpc.org

This week, please pray for these MDPC Ministry Partners:

The Women's Home helps women build the skills and self-confidence necessary to overcome mental illness and addiction and achieve self-sufficiency.
thewomenshome.org

Women's Pregnancy Center reaches out to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of pregnant women. It fosters the truth of Jesus Christ in their lives by teaching biblical principles, redeeming lost hope, and healing wounded hearts.
wpc-houston.com

The Woods Project develops leadership and life skills in low-income youth through outdoor education/environmental awareness programs. It prepares students for college and beyond by encouraging interest in science and nature, and expanding their experience with challenging situations and diverse environments.
thewoodsproject.org

The End of 2018 Is Almost Here!

For gifts of check or cash to be included in your 2018 giving statement they **must be received by MDPC or postmarked no later than December 31, 2018.**

Gifts from IRAs or Donor Advised Funds **must be dated before the end of the year.**

Gifts of stock should be requested for transfer soon as they **must arrive in MDPC's account before close of business December 31, 2018.**

Contact Ava Caliendo for information on making a stock gift or to let us know if you plan to make one:
acaliendo@mdpc.org, 713-953-2574

Enjoy the convenience of online giving: give.mdpc.org

WEEKLY FINANCIAL UPDATE

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 2018 Operating Budget | \$11,600,000 |
| Actual Income to Date (12/16/18) | \$9,187,300 |
| Needed to Meet 2018 Budget | \$2,412,700 |



A THRILL OF HOPE

The weary world
Rejoices

Luke 1:39-45

Alf Halvorson preaching

This is the fourth and final message of Advent 2018, in preparation for Christmas Eve tomorrow. We've wrestled with the hard words of John the Baptist, who tried to *prepare the way of the Lord*. Now we explore how Mary and Elizabeth help each other after both receive news that, though exciting, must scare them half to death. The Angel Gabriel comes to Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, while he is serving in the Temple (Luke 1:5-25). Gabriel tells Zechariah that Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, who is barren and

too old to have children, will in fact become pregnant and bear a son (John the Baptist) who will turn many people to God and prepare the way of the Savior.

Then, in Luke 1:26-38, in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, the Angel Gabriel visits Mary to tell her she *also* will have a baby and His name is to be Jesus. Gabriel tells Mary that her relative, Elizabeth, is already pregnant, for "nothing is impossible with God." Mary replies, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me, according to your word." But what happens next? What happens after the encounter, when you start to doubt all that you had seen and heard and even said?

1. When you have something Really Big happen to you, do you normally isolate yourself from others so you can process it alone or do you seek companionship? Why or why not?
2. Read Luke 1:39-45. Mary has been living in Nazareth. She travels, most scholars believe, around 100 miles to a place near Hebron, which probably took her a week to navigate. Do you think she traveled alone? Was she running from God, or to God? What are some questions, if you were Mary, you would have wanted to ask Elizabeth?
3. We talk a lot in the Reformed Tradition about internal call and external confirmation. What happened when Mary entered Elizabeth's house? What did Elizabeth's word mean to Mary? And what did Mary's presence (and what it caused in Elizabeth) mean to Elizabeth?
I shared a story from my life about an internal call and external confirmation. Do you have a story of internal calling and external confirmation? Share it.
4. Where, in your life right now, are you more like Mary? And where, right now, are you more like Elizabeth? What does each do for the other?
5. As you think about Christmas this year, or just your life in general, who are the people who come to you with some need or question? And who are the people you go toward because they function like Elizabeth from Luke chapter one?
6. I shared a clip from an old Hallmark commercial that has five or six people look into a camera and say, "Tell me...tell me that we will grow old together; tell me that I am beautiful; tell me I'm yours; tell me I can do it; tell me 'I've still got it; Tell me..." What has God "told you" this Christmas, with the birth of Immanuel named Jesus? What do you need to hear from God or someone else as we start a new year? What might you need to say to God this Christmas? What might God want you to say to someone else as we start 2019?

