

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

*We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also know that this is the unceded territory of the Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ people. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting the injustice in our history. We ask that the God of love and justice lead us along the path of reconciliation, bringing accountability and healing. May we be inspired to forge new relationships of respect and solidarity.*

PWS&D Message      ***From Outcast to “Owner” in Ghana***

When Aruk was a small child, he contracted polio, losing partial use of his legs. For a long time, when people looked at him, they only saw his disability.

One day, a staff member from the Garu Community-Based Rehabilitation program in Ghana noticed Aruk during a survey of his community. (*The Garu Community-Based Rehabilitation project is a program of The Presbyterian Church in Ghana and supported by PWS&D.*) Aruk received a tricycle through the project, as well as the opportunity for an education.

Support for small business development through the Garu program meant Aruk received a loan and training to start a business. Aruk started small—selling mobile phone credits, under a simple umbrella. Now Aruk has earned enough money to move into a permanent shop space.

Reflecting on the help he received through the Garu program and what is now possible for him, Aruk comments, “I am so grateful.”

Thank you for faithfully responding to those in need with compassion and justice this Advent season. Through support for PWS&D, we are helping create a world where everyone can realize their full potential.

***Gabriel’s Secret Mission #3: Heaven, 6 months before the birth of Christ***

➤ ***Hope is a star*** (verse 3)

**119**

Call to Worship / Advent Candles

*(Light the candles of Hope and Peace)*

God’s gifts can surprise us.

**God brings us joy.**

God’s plans are to bless us.

## **God brings us joy.**

Even when things are difficult,

## **We can find joy.**

*(Light the candle of Joy)*

### Gathering Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

God of Joy, help us as we listen to the story of Elizabeth. Help us to feel your presence. Lift us from sadness into joy. We rejoice and give thanks for all you have done for us. We pray together as Jesus taught... ***Our Father, who art in heaven – hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come – thy will be done – on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen***

➤ *Joyful, joyful we adore you*

**410**

### ***Meet Elizabeth***

Elizabeth's name means "God's promise." Elizabeth was married to Zechariah, and they lived in the hill country of Judah. She was a relative of Jesus' mother, Mary. Moses' brother Aaron was one of her ancestors. Just like Aaron, Elizabeth was an Israelite and she stayed faithful to God, following God's commandments. In the nativity story, Elizabeth is already old and did not have any children. God gave her the miraculous gift of a son named John. This John is later known as John the Baptist, the one who baptizes Jesus in the Jordan River.

### Prayer for Understanding

**God of justice and joy, we turn to your Word to hear your will and your wisdom for our times. Open our hearts and minds by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit so that we might hear what you are saying to the church through Christ, our Friend and Saviour. Amen**

Scripture: **Luke 1: 39–56** [NT 57]

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, *"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes*

*to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."*

And Mary said,

*"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowly state of his servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name; indeed, his mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty. He has come to the aid of his child Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."*

And Mary remained with her about three months and then returned to her home.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

➤ *The first one ever*

664

### Questions / Reflection

1. When have you felt joyful about something? How is joy different from happiness?
2. Where are the different points in the story where someone feels/shows joy? What does this tell us about the different ways joy can be felt?
3. How can we experience joy during the Advent season? Why do we associate joy with Christmas? Are there ways to be joyful even when times are challenging?

➤ *Jump with joy*

406

### Activity – **decorating a table runner**

One way we can practice joy is by celebrating with gratitude around a table, sharing a meal. Decorate our table runner with designs or words or pictures that will welcome guests to the table. Think of reminders of joy! (If you are at home – share your joy with family and friends around a table, with a phone call, or through a written note.)

Offering and Prayer     *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*     306

This Sunday we celebrate the Advent of Joy, rising in us through in Jesus Christ. Think of your gifts as seeds of that joy which we can plant in the world God loves for Christ's sake.

**Holy God, our Judge and our Joy, receive our gifts as seeds of gratitude for your gift to us in Christ Jesus. Bless these seeds with growth so that joy will blossom for people depleted by challenges, and places overwhelmed by scarce resources. Be their justice and their joy, through Christ our Lord. Amen**

➤ *Oh come, oh come, Emmanuel (verses 1, 3, 6, 7)*     122

Closing Prayer

God of Joy, thank you for bringing goodness into our lives. Thank you for asking us to love each other so that our joy may be full. Help us to remember those who don't have what they need. May we feel your joy and may it spill out onto those who need it.. Amen

Blessing

Go with joy renewed this day, energized to share that joy with justice and generosity in the world God loves. And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

➤ *Emmanuel soon will appear*

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<sup>1</sup>Service idea from [Journey to Christmas Advent Devotional](#) (PCC) and [Conversations with Gabriella](#) by Patricia Souder ([skitguys.com](#))