

BLESSINGS ALWAYS
December 18, 2024
Association Minister Message
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SURPRISE. Advent is more than anticipation and preparation for Christmas. It is the affirmation of *SURPRISE* of faith that is so much part of our experiences. Sometimes it takes the actions of little children to remind us that life can take one detour after another. Children have a way of saying things that embarrass us, make us smile, and most of all *SURPRISE* us to look at life in new ways. *SURPRISES* catch us off guard and often mess with our plans. *SURPRISERS* delight in bringing celebration and joy into the lives of other family members and friends

Luke 1:39-45 is filled with *SURPRISES*. Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth, and both are pregnant, *SURPRISINGLY*. Elizabeth waited a long time and finally is pregnant with John (the Baptist), a major faith figure. He is part of the Nazarite order in which he never cuts his hair, wears animal skins, and never touches liquor. His ministry is baptizing people as a sign of faith commitment and introduces Jesus as the expectant Messiah. John has a tragic death by being beheaded by King Herod. Mary is a teenager, not married, and is found to be pregnant with Jesus. When Mary and Elizabeth meet, they give affirmation and support to each other to the *SURPRISING* nature of God for sons who would be doing God's work.

The words of "*The Magnificat*" are recorded in Luke 1:46-55, words that praise God for showing favor by doing great things through them. The *SURPRISE* of the story is Mary and Elizabeth are not royalty, powerful, rich, or significant in their communities, and yet God chose them to be mothers of sons who would be all powerful, not militarily or by political position. God's gift of love, transformation, and hope enables us to overcome evil and sin, despair and trauma. *SURPRISE* is God's way of courage and resurrection, amazing grace and unconditional love. We, too, can sing *The Magnificat*, "*My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for God has looked with favor on the lowly state of God's servant.*" (Luke 1:46-48). *BLESSINGS ALWAYS*.