

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



ADVENT PROGRAM

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Rooted in the Reformed tradition, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary is committed to the formation of women and men for theologically reflective ministry and to scholarship in service to the global Church of Jesus Christ.

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Graduate Certificate in Ministry

Graduate Certificate in Missional Leadership

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Graduate Certificate in Urban Ministry

Spiritual Formation Certificate

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Continuing Education

Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology

Miller Summer Youth Institute

Metro-Urban Institute

World Mission Initiative

Zeitah Excavations

FACULTY

In addition to their on-campus duties, our faculty are experts in their fields and are available to preach and teach. Learn more about their **topics of research and writing** and invite them to present at your congregation or gathering.

EVENTS

The Seminary hosts a wide range of events—many of them free!—on topics of faith including church planting, mission, vocation, spiritual formation, pastoral care and counseling, archaeology, and many more. Visit our **calendar** often for a listing of upcoming events.

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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 22, 2019

SCRIPTURE

LUKE 1:57-66

57 Now the time came for Elizabeth to give birth, and she bore a son. 58 Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her, and they rejoiced with her. 59 On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him Zechariah after his father. 60 But his mother said, "No; he is to be called John." 61 They said to her, "None of your relatives has this name." 62 Then they began motioning to his father to find out what name he wanted to give him. 63 He asked for a writing tablet and wrote, "His name is John." And all of them were amazed. 64 Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue freed, and he began to speak, praising God. 65 Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea. 66 All who heard them pondered them and said, "What then will this child become?" For, indeed, the hand of the Lord was with him.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Dr. Clinton C. Cottrell '00

Not unlike parents naming a baby today, Elizabeth and Zechariah were being pressured to name their eight-day-old son by the convention of the time, preferably by using Zechariah as the child's name. When Elizabeth used the name "John," there was immediate resistance—so much so that others were confused and turned to the mute father, who scribbled out the name "John" on a tablet (and who mysteriously regained his speech). No one in the family was named John—this just wasn't done!

But both Elizabeth and Zechariah knew the reason for naming the child "John": they were honoring what the angel Gabriel had declared (see Luke 1:13). In fact, Elizabeth and Zechariah honored the will of God, and clearly the aged couple were blessed. It was others who were filled with fear at what had happened, while still more were talking about what had occurred that day.

We are but a few days from the day we memorialize and celebrate the birth of Jesus. How much of our preparation for Christmas is about what the world expects? Parties, gifts, and even preparation for Christmas Eve worship can be all-encompassing in our lives. What is God calling us to do that goes against conventional wisdom? What can we learn from the example of Elizabeth and Zechariah? How are our actions giving others reasons to talk about the miracles of God this Advent season?

PRAYER

Gracious God, thank you for Elizabeth and Zechariah. Against all conventional wisdom, you granted them a child and much more. Help us in the final days of Advent to see how you, through us, are breaking conventions in the world today. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

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