

# MUSTARD SEED

A Publication of Porter United Methodist Church

## YOUR STORY, GOD'S STORY

### Luke 1

Why is Christmas such a magical time of year? I think its because everyone is expecting a miracle at Christmas. Consider all the popular movies. Each one has a miracle as it's central plot. Whether it's a boy hoping his parents get back together, a shop-owner hoping he can keep his business running, or a town who needs a new hero to help "save Christmas."

You might be reading this and wishing for your own miracle this Christmas. It's probably much smaller than what makes a holiday movie. But it is no less important to you.

Maybe you're hoping your prodigal comes home. Maybe you're wishing for a job. Some are yearning for a special someone to sit next to you by the fire.

2,000 years ago, there was a couple who hoped for their own miracle. But like many, they had long given up on this dream. Zacharias and Elisabeth prayed for a child, but year after year, that prayer went unfulfilled. So, they gave up on the dream.

But this couple didn't give up on God. They stayed faithful. Then, one ordinary day, the extraordinary happened. Zacharias, a priest in Israel, was chosen to give the incense at the altar. This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance, a rare honor for such a common man. Then, as he performed this sacred duty, an angel of God appeared, breaking God's 400-year silence with Israel.

The angel told Zacharias that he and his wife, Elisabeth would have a son after all. He would have a special purpose and would prepare Israel for the coming of the Messiah, Jesus.

This all sounded impossible to Zacharias. Not the miracle itself—that Jesus would come, that John would be the forerunner. Zacharias, as a believing Jew, knew the Scriptures and believed this.

He just had a hard time thinking God could use silly old him. After all, he and his wife were well past the child-bearing age. But, true to His word, God performed this miracle in the lives of Zacharias and Elisabeth. You know the rest of the story. John the Baptist led revival in Israel and would later baptize Jesus Christ, the very son of God.

But let's focus on Zacharias and Elisabeth. They were faithful people in a time of unfaithfulness. And yet they had given up on the dream God had planted in their hearts—the dream of having a son. What's interesting is that Zacharias had no problem with the big miracle: God sending a Son to be born of a virgin and be the Savior. It was the little miracle he had trouble with, the miracle in his own life. Even though God had done a similar thing in Sarah and Hannah and Rebekah and Rachel, Zacharias refused to believe his wife, Elisabeth could bear a child.

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### Sermons in December:

- 1st Sunday of Advent, December 2nd*  
"Hanging of the Greens"  
*Life Interrupted*  
Luke 21:25 - 36
- 2nd Sunday of Advent, December 7th*  
*When the Word Comes to the Wilderness*  
Luke 3:1 - 6
- 3rd Sunday of Advent, December 16th*  
Children's Christmas Program  
*Same Question, Same Answer*  
Luke 3:7 - 18
- 4th Sunday of Advent, December 23rd*  
*Two Blessings for an Unwed Mother*  
Luke 1:39 - 45

**MISSION STATEMENT: "Nourishing Souls with Loving Hearts and Caring Hands."**



**Sunday, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 10:15 a.m. - Hanging of the Greens**

**Candle-lighters:** Deanna Burton & Family

Advent Dinner  
provided by Roxanne Micinski & family  
decorating the Sanctuary

**Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> 10:15 a.m.**

**Candle-lighters:** Jim & Linda Green

Luke 21:25 - 36

“Praying for a Whole New World”

**Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> 10:15 a.m.**

**Candle-lighters:** Tony & Judy Reales with Cooper & Jordan Schultz

**Children’s Program**

(under the direction of Roxanne Micinski)

**Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup> 10:15 a.m.**

**Candle-lighters:** Marcia Wood & Single Women

Luke 1:39 - 45

“Two Blessings for an Unwed Mother”

**Sunday, December 30<sup>th</sup>**

Luke 2:41 - 52

Guest Pastor: Pamela Thiede



**3:00 p.m. Family Worship with Communion**

**\*\* Christmas Eve Service \*\***

This year, it was decided to have only 1 Christmas Eve service at 3 p.m. If you would still like the opportunity to attend an 11 p.m. service, please be aware that Chesterton 1<sup>st</sup> UMC will be holding a service at this time.



**Quarterly Mission Focus:**  
***Frontline Foundations, Inc.***

This is the last month of the 2018 quarter and time is running out to support the mission of ***Frontline Foundations***. Their goal is to serve as a source of hope to young men and women suffering from drug and alcohol abuse while also providing an effective treatment and recovery support system.

With their unique approach, Frontline places a strong emphasis on young adults between the ages of 18-38. They offer support through recovery workshops, peer-to-peer group sessions and individual treatment plans that professional substance abuse counselors and program coordinators facilitate.

Your contributions have provided *Life Recovery Bibles* to graduates of their program. On average, each class has 16 young adults who complete the course.



**Westchester Neighbors  
Food Pantry**

Thank you so much for supporting our local food pantry throughout the year. Our small congregation always gives so generously to help those in need.

***During the month of December, we have been asked to collect boxes of cold cereal.***



## Children's Quarterly Offering: VNA Phoenix Center

Our last quarterly children's mission outreach offering is for the *VNA Phoenix Center*, a place where children and young adults who have lost someone in their lives and who need help processing their grief can go for support. Before the age of 15, statistics show that one out of every twenty children may lose a parent and one in five will lose a close family member or friend. When this happens, they feel all alone but when they have help coping during this stressful time, they learn don't have to be. Divided by age groups, meetings are held twice a month, during which time they discuss grieving strategies. The kids also have time hanging out with others who are going through the same thing. The program is free for participants.

The VNA Phoenix Center, located at 2401 Valley Drive in Valparaiso, is able to offer this service through support from the community and income through other VNA programs.

### Happy Holidays!

Since December is sooo busy, please make sure to jot a couple of these important dates down on your calendar for Sunday school and the Children's Christmas Program in December.

### Regarding PRACTICE for the Christmas program:

**PRACTICE** for the program will take place during the last 15 minutes of Sunday School class beginning November 25<sup>th</sup>. A complete run-through rehearsal will be held on **Saturday, December 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 a.m.** There will be a pizza lunch in the Fellowship Hall immediately following the rehearsal. Parents are always welcome to come with to see what we're doing and have pizza with us. We usually are done around 12:30.

### Regarding THE CHRISTMAS PROGRAM:

**The Children's Annual Christmas Program** will be during church on **Sunday, December 16<sup>th</sup> at 10:15 a.m.** (*please note that this has been moved from the usual 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of December to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday*). Be sure your child comes to Sunday school at 9 a.m. on the 16<sup>th</sup> to get ready for the program.

**PLEASE REMEMBER:** It is really important that your child be in Sunday school as often as possible before their program. If your child has a reading part and/or is singing with their group during the program, please go over it with them a few times. This is their Christmas gift to the congregation. They work very hard on this and need your support!

### TO FINISH OUT DECEMBER:

- **NO SUNDAY SCHOOL during Christmas break.** We will resume on Sunday, January 6<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m.

I hope each of you have a Blessed Christmas season!



Make this fun decoration as a reminder of the joy Jesus brings.



### What you need:

- Pencil
- Poster board
- Scissors
- Craft pompoms (red, white, green, silver, gold)
- Glue

### What you do:

1. Trace large capital block letters J, O and Y on the poster board.
2. Cut out the letters.
3. Glue pompoms on one side of each letter, completely covering it.
4. Share JOY by displaying the letters in your home.



*The Bishop's*  
**CHRISTMAS OFFERING**  
 of the Indiana Conference of The United Methodist Church

Beloved,

May the grace and peace of God, our creator, and of Jesus Christ, our Lord, surround each of you as we enter the holy season of Advent. During this sacred time we are reminded of the beauty of new life, humble beginnings, and a God who is forever faithful.

Throughout Indiana there have been countless stories of how God is at work, especially in the lives of our young people. Through the Bishop's Christmas Offering for Children, we've seen the fruit of ministries being birthed because of your faithful generosity.

I am particularly grateful to not only our commitment to, but also our partnership with organizations whose hearts are for the children within their midst. We will continue to hear countless stories of the lives being impacted through this special and long-lived offering as a result of your radical generosity. Stories like "Como Saludable" or "I Eat Healthy", a weekly program that provides a hearty and nutritious meal to children each week through Mission Guatemala, a long-standing partner with the Indiana Conference.

The smiling faces of the children and excitement in the air as lunchtime approaches each Wednesday clearly reflects the impact this program has on the children.

I am sure we will continue to see and hear similar stories in the days, months, and years to come as our God continues to go before us, preparing the hearts of the people in Indiana to not only reach but directly impact the future leaders of our beloved Church. May each of us in this season continue to share in these stories as we play a vital role in the impact of this offering. It is through this legacy that I pray that you would continue to bless these ministries with your generosity.

I invite you to join me in giving to this long-lived ministry. The Conference Mission and Justice Team prays for and selects ministries that are committed to improving and providing hope, in a variety of ways, to children of all ages, backgrounds, and beliefs. Many of these ministries have direct ties to Indiana, impacting children in our towns, which makes their outreach even more special to us.

On behalf of the countless children whose lives will be changed as a result of this offering, I thank you.

Be encouraged,

Bishop Julius C. Trimble  
 Resident Bishop Indiana Area

**\*\*To give via text, send a text message to:\*\***  
 855-389-1555 with the words "BC018"

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He did something we often do. We believe in the big things of God—sending a son to be our Savior, Creation, Heaven—but when it comes to littler miracles, we limit Him. It's as if we say, *Yes, God can create the earth in six days, be born of a baby, and send us to Heaven, but He can't possibly change me, fix a relationship, get me a job.*

And God's answer is *Yes I can.* You see, the biggest miracle has already been done—Jesus. Everything else is small to God.




So maybe today, like Zacharias, you're letting God know that there is something too big for Him. Something even He can't fix.

And the story of Zacharias tells us that there is nothing too hard and that God is still in the business of doing miracles. Even in your own life. May you grab hold of the miracle of Christmas this year!

**Valparaiso University**  
**Advent Christmas Vespers**

Once again, Valparaiso University will present their annual service of lessons and carols on **Friday, December 7<sup>th</sup> at both 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.** This year's Vespers titled "*Come, Lord Jesus: Reconcile Your People*" will feature music by the Kantorei, the Choir of the Chapel of Resurrection, the VU Resurrection Ringers handbell choir, and the Jubilate Choir of Immanuel Lutheran Church of Valparaiso.

Admission is free, but seating tickets are required. You can order via phone by 11/30 (219) 464-6517.

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
2 Sunday School 9:00 a.m.  Worship 10:15 a.m.	3	4	5 8 p.m. AA Meeting	6	7	1 8 7 p.m. Models Club
9 Sunday School 9:00 a.m.  Worship 10:15 a.m.	10	11	12 8 p.m. AA Meeting	13	14	15  <i>Newsletter Deadline for January</i>
16 Sunday School 9:00 a.m.  Children's Program 10:15 a.m.	17	18	19 8 p.m. AA Meeting	20	21	22  3 p.m. Models Club
23 Worship 10:15 a.m.	24  Christmas EVE 3 p.m. Service	25 	26 8 p.m. AA Meeting	27	28	29
30 Worship 10:15 a.m.	31 	<b>Church Office Closed</b>				



- 3 Richard Sexton
- 6 Dana Johnson
- 9 Becky Muraro
- 13 David Marshall
- 19 Pam Furdo
- 20 Christi Kalbe
- 21 Saira Fulton
- 21 Autumn Smith
- 21 Haley Thatcher
- 24 Don Peterson
- 27 Kayla Miller



- 12 David & Deb Marshall
- 19 Robert & Dana Kalbe

**ATTENTION**

*The church office will be closed the week of December 24<sup>th</sup> through December 30<sup>th</sup>. Kim will be back in the office on Monday, December 31<sup>st</sup>. The office will again be closed on New Year's Day.*





**Porter United Methodist Church  
Christmas Poinsettia Order Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost: \$13.00 per Poinsettia

Quantity:        Red \_\_\_\_\_ White \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory / Honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

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Plants will be displayed Sunday, December 23<sup>rd</sup>.

***Please return form and payment to the church office  
NO LATER THAN SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup>.***



Porter United Methodist  
Church

*Dee L. Miller, Pastor*

Summer Worship: 9:30 a.m.  
(beginning 6/2)

Regular Worship: 10:15 a.m.  
(9/9 - 5/26)

Office Hours:

Monday - Thursday

9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

(219) 926-1586

### VISION STATEMENT

As the community of Christ,  
which is one in Jesus Christ,  
we will nurture and care for  
one another, spread God's  
word and love  
throughout the  
community thereby  
fulfilling our mission to make  
disciples of Jesus Christ.



*Porter United Methodist Church  
100 E. Beam Street  
Porter, IN 46304*