

**Tuesday 12:10pm PRE-ADVENT Online Bible Study**

***Exploring the Call of John the Baptist to “Prepare the Way For the Lord.”***

*Based on the book & the leader guide:*

*Prepare the Way For the Lord: Advent & the Message of John the Baptist* by Adam Hamilton

**4 Week Session: October 25 - November 15**

**SESSION 1 (October 25): The Annunciation: “God Has Heard Your Prayers”**

**Bibles Verses & Passages: Malachi 3:1, 4:1-2, 5-6; Luke 1:5-17; Zechariah 9:9**

**Opening Prayer:** *Holy God, who was and is and is to come: As we prepare to celebrate your Son’s birth in Bethlehem, keep us mindful of your call to prepare for his future coming and to stay alert for his presence among and within us today. By your Spirit, may our study of John the Baptist’s life, work, and witness to Jesus make us more ready to prepare Christ’s way into our world and in our lives. Amen.*

**Meeting Elizabeth & Zechariah**

**Luke 1:5-7**

**Thinking about Prayers Answered and Unanswered**

**Luke 1:8-13**

**Affirming God’s Choice of Those Who are “Very Old”**

**Being a People Prepared For the Lord**

**Malachi 4:5-6**

*The angel Gabriel makes clear [to Zechariah] that John is coming to be the Elijah that Malachi had spoken of more than four hundred years earlier. And for us, today, as in Malachi’s day and John’s day ... being prepared for the Lord involves turning back to one another, turning back to right ways of thinking.*

**Questions for Discussion:**

The author, Adam Hamilton, suggests that some people think about God as “the genie in the bottle.” What do you think he means and is this an image to be discouraged? Do you think it is easier to recognize others thinking about God this way than it is in ourselves?

“The miracles God works,” writes Hamilton, “sometimes come in different ways than we had imagined when we pray.” What “miracles” in this sense can you point to in your own or others’ experience?

Hamilton writes, “God often chooses older adults to do God’s greatest work.” What Bible stories about God using older adults can you remember? Which if these stories, if any, have had particular meaning for you, and why?

Who do you know or know of who has had their greatest adventure, or discerned their greatest calling, late in life? How can we, individually, and as congregations encourage older adults to see themselves as those “who never retire from God’s work?”

What does or what would turning people’s hearts back to one another look like, practically and concretely, in society today? In your community? In your congregation? In your own family?

**Closing Prayer:** *God of the future, you have never failed to call your people back to righteous living. We praise you for messengers in the past who have borne faithful witness to you and dare to pray you would make us people who prepare your way in our own time, for the sake of him whose coming John the Baptist proclaimed, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*