

**December 20, 2020**

Good morning! Welcome to Stay-At-Home worship from St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Oakland, Maryland. I am Pastor Scott Robinson, and today we welcome our music directors Debi and Sean Beachy, who are providing special music. We are still waiting for a safe time to resume public worship. Pandemic cases, hospitalizations and deaths are at record highs. But there is some promising news these days.

When we shut down public worship last March, we all hoped it would be for only a few weeks. As the virus spread, it became obvious it could instead be months, and some warned it could be years before it would be safe to gather indoors again. Today it may well again be only a matter of weeks, as mass vaccinations have begun. We have been through many difficult months now. We can handle a few more weeks. In the mean time we must be vigilant about wearing masks in public, hand washing, maintaining social distancing and avoiding indoor gatherings until we are protected. Let's be safe. And cautious. And for a welcome change, let us again be hopeful.

Meanwhile, if you want to help St. Mark's pay its bills and keep its mission and benevolence commitments during these difficult times, there is a secure Donate button on the church's website, which is [stmarksoakland.com](http://stmarksoakland.com). You can also donate through our Facebook page. The Christmas Youth Pageant is a part of today's service. Christmas Eve Candlelight service and our half hour prelude of sacred music will be available on or before Christmas Eve. Watch for the links, coming by email. Now today's stupid joke.

A parishioner called me up last night, saying, "I need some advice. Your doctorate is in Dental Surgery, isn't it?" And I said, "Yes it is, but it's been a long time since I last practiced."

She said, "Well I was just wondering if anything could be done about my husband's snoring." I said, "Well he may benefit from a uvulo-palato-pharyngo-plasty. But without examining him, it's really hard to say." She called back an hour later and said, "You're right Scott. That really IS hard to say."

### *Music*

**The Lord be with you. Let us pray. Stir up your power, O Lord, and come. Take away the hindrance of our sins and make us ready for the celebration of your birth, that we may receive you in joy and serve you always; for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, Amen.**

A reading from Luke, the first chapter. The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.

And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the

servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

### **The Gospel of the Lord.**

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