

good news

Family Connect Newsletter
Week of December 17-23
Preparing for December 24
The Fourth Sunday of Advent

Sunday's Gospel
Luke 1:26-38

Parent Connect

Thoughts on Luke 1:26-38

John was sent to prepare the way of the Lord. In this lesson we learn how the Lord will come among his people. As the prophet foretold (Isaiah 7:14), God himself will come as a child born of a virgin, a child who will be called Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

The angel Gabriel tells Zechariah that his wife Elizabeth will have a son. That son will be John, who will prepare the way of the Lord. When Elizabeth becomes pregnant, she stays hidden at home for five months, perhaps to shelter the coming child from harm. In the sixth month (Luke 1:26) of Elizabeth's pregnancy Gabriel is sent to earth again to announce another birth. This time the angel is sent to a virgin named Mary in the town of Nazareth. Mary is betrothed to a man named Joseph, a descendant of the great King David. Betrothal was a serious form of engagement before marriage. The man and woman were promised to each other and considered husband and wife, although they did not yet live together.

When Gabriel tells Mary she will give birth to a son, Mary rightly wonders, "How will this be?" She is an unmarried virgin! She is faithful to Joseph and faithful to the laws of God. How could she become pregnant? The angel answers, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you." The coming child will be Mary's son and the Son of God! Mary is to name her son Jesus, a name that means "salvation" or "God saves." It's the perfect name for Mary's baby! Mary responds in faith to this astounding news: "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word."

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

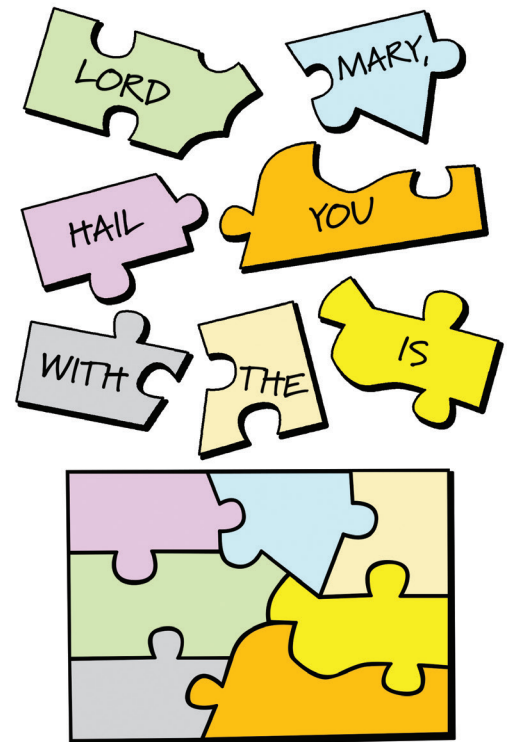
December 21 is the winter solstice. This is one of the two days a year when the earth's equator is tipped farthest away from the sun (the other date is June 21). On the winter solstice we experience the fewest hours of daylight of the entire year. Ancient Romans celebrated the solstice on December 25 (the event occurred at a later date in ancient times) as the "birthday" of their god Sol, the "unconquerable

sun," because after the winter solstice the earth received more hours of sunlight each day. Early Christians adopted the pagan solstice celebration and turned it into a birthday celebration for Jesus Christ, the unconquerable Son of God and the Light of the world! John's Gospel says of Jesus: "In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:4-5)



Full of Grace

Unscramble the words of the angel Gabriel's greeting to Mary. Which words did he say? Don't be puzzled! Just put together the pieces below.



Read Luke 1:26-38 for the whole story.

Let's Talk Around the Table!

- Discuss how it feels when we know a new baby is coming to a family. What questions do children ask their mothers?
- Who gave Jesus his name? Who/what determined the names of your family members?
- Who gave John the Baptist his name? (an angel) In the Bible, special babies are sometimes given their names through God's special messengers, the angels.



Pray Today!

Lord God, thank you for your good will toward me and all people who need your Son as our Savior and friend.