Advent Devotional December 23, 2026

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.

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Andrew Taylor-Troutman '24

"What then will this child become?" (v. 66)

This poignant question is prompted by the miraculous circumstances of John the Baptist's birth: his father, Zechariah, having seen a vision in the temple and struck mute by an angel; and his mother, Elizabeth, advanced in age and previously childless.

But as every child is a miracle, I ponder the same question today in the life of my congregation: when I walk the center aisle with an infant whom I've just baptized; when a kindergartener scribbles a prayer request for her grandmother on the back of her bulletin; and when a youth preaches about our calling to care for our watershed.

"What then will this child become?"

As we are all children of God, we can ask the same question of ourselves at moments in our lives: when we walk down the aisle with our spouse after our wedding ceremony; when we go back to school or start a new calling; or when we retire.

"What then will *I* become?"

Hugh Thomson Kerr, former pastor of Shadyside Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, Pa., wrote a hymn that's special to me: "God of our life, through all the circling years, we trust in thee." Kerr wrote this hymn at the fiftieth anniversary of the congregation—a poignant moment of reflection on the past and future.

"What then will this *church* become?"

In our time, many ask the same question—some with anxiety, others with hope. Our age brings new threats from climate change, AI, and more. Yet, I trust the grace of "the circling years" and God's steadfast love. People are still called, like John, to prepare the way of the Lord, while God's mysteries will guides us through the dark, occasionally flaring up, causing us to exclaim with wonder and awe.

“What then will this church become?”

Prayer

Through all the circling years, O God, we trust in You. We believe. Help our unbelief. Guide us to become who we are meant to be, and bring to completion Your kingdom on earth. Amen.