

**BLESSINGS ALWAYS**  
December 7, 2020  
Association Minister Message  
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*VOICE.* “*I am a (the) VOICE crying out in the wilderness...*” John 1:23. There seems to be a plethora of comments these days about everything—faith, politics, food, education, parenting, dating, how to live well, privilege, work, economics—that leads to divisiveness in our families and world. Whether it is an email, letter, or personal conversation, there is more *VOICE* than listening. “*I've made up my mind; don't confuse me with the facts.*” There are still people who believe that the world is flat and there is nothing that convince them otherwise. Racial tension and inequality continue because some people *VOICE* the opinion that God blessed “*their kind*” superior to others. Even in certain faith circles, there is a privileged class claimed as authoritative and blessed by God that is their exclusive spiritual righteousness.

In John’s Gospel, chapter 1, John, the Baptist, was asked by the priests and Levites, “*Who are you?*” and John confessed that he was neither the Messiah or the reappearing of the prophet Elijah. The Gospel writer continues introducing John, the Baptist, who claims to be the *VOICE* for his second cousin Jesus, “*I am the VOICE of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said.*”

It is an interesting question raised of John that is asked of all of us: “*Who are you?*” Who are you, really? What kind of *VOICE* are you with others? Disruptive, opinionated, welcoming, caring, loving, compassionate? Does our *VOICE* reflect being led in all that we do by the love of God, the saving grace of Jesus and being Spirit filled? Is our *VOICE* a blessing or curse? Is God’s love found in our thoughts, words and deeds? The Third Sunday of Advent’s theme is “*love.*” Jesus spoke often to His followers “*to love God with all your heart, mind and soul...and your neighbor as yourself.*” We are called by God to be the *VOICE* of hope, peace, love and joy with justice and extravagant welcome. Be the *VOICE* of God’s welcoming spirit. **BLESSINGS ALWAYS.**