

## Upcoming Services:

Sun. Nov. 28, 10am: Tamar

Sun. Dec. 5, 10am: Rahab

Sun. Dec. 5, afternoon:

Children's Program

Sun. Dec. 12, 10am: Ruth

Sun. Dec. 12, 7pm:

Blue Christmas

Sun. Dec. 19, 10am: Bathsheba

Sun. Dec. 19, evening:

Live Nativity

Fri. Dec. 24, 7pm:

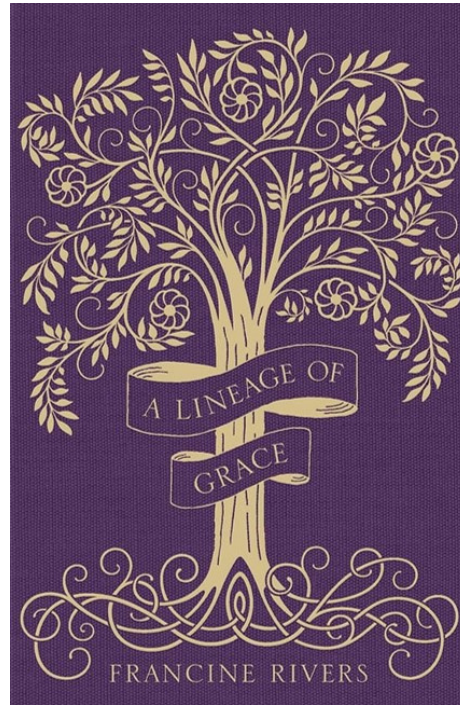
Candlelight Service

Sat. Dec. 25, 10am: Mary

Sun. Dec. 26, 10am:

Fri. Dec. 31, 7pm:

New Year's Eve Service



Throughout the four weeks of Advent our sermon series will be referencing the book *A Lineage of Grace* by Francine Rivers.

We've ordered some copies for you to borrow, or you can purchase your own. Copies are available at the church office.



# Lineage of Grace

Advent & Christmas 2021



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## AN EXPLORATION:

At the very beginning of the New Testament we get a genealogy. Something that doesn't really look like much on the surface, but reveals some surprises as you dig into it. In the ancient world, genealogies were designed to confirm the legal status of someone important. So, the genealogy of Jesus shapes his legal status as a descendant of Abraham and David. It establishes his credentials as the heir of David, and so as the promised Messiah, the true King of Israel and of the entire world.

But the women in Jesus's lineage speak of other things as well. Tamar. Rahab. Ruth. Bathsheba. Mary. Each one of these women experienced extraordinary—even scandalous—challenges, but they clung to faith and courage. Sometimes they made big mistakes, and yet God still used them to bring forth the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. Their stories still hold great meaning and inspiration for us today.

Tamar risked her life and her reputation to be the woman she was called to be. Rahab was exploited by men who saw only her beauty, yet she held fast to her faith in God and was rewarded. Ruth's loyalty, especially toward her mother-in-law Naomi, helped her to persevere in the face of tragedy, and God gave her a second chance at love. Bathsheba's scandalous affair with David did not end in one night. Mary is one of the most revered women in history. But first, she was an ordinary woman striving to please God in the same way that women still do today. When God spoke, Mary responded in obedience which changed the world forever.

For advent this year we will be walking through the stories of these four women in Jesus' genealogy. We will see how they form an Advent theme of their own. They point to the moment when this promise of the Messiah became a glorious historical reality offered to all people and can encourage us as we continue to wait for his return to set all things right.

Through them we will see how God uses our circumstances and our steps toward him, however faltering, to fulfil his plan. We will discover how God seeks and finds those whose hearts are tender toward him, no matter how far away they are. We will be encouraged that God will provide even when all hope seems lost. We will learn that God is willing to restore those lost in the depths of despair who call out to Him, and that he works through ordinary people who open up their lives to his plan.

A book that has been very useful for me to see these women as real people going through real life challenges is *A Lineage of Grace: Five Stories of unlikely women who changed eternity* by Francine Rivers. This is not a typical Bible study as the book is historical fiction, and so she fills out the stories with things we know from historical research and things she imagined. However, that kind of story telling can make these women come alive in ways that a typical Bible study may not. If you have copies of this book, we would encourage you to dig them out and read through the stories. Maybe even read them out loud with others. There will be a few copies available from the church for those who do not have one and would like to join in this journey.

**May this Advent season be a time when we see a little more clearly how God is willing to engage in our messy world.**

**May we also be encouraged to see him active in our own lives and learn to trust more deeply in his timing as we long for Jesus's return.**