

## WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of  
Saint David  
February 24, 2013

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### CLAIMING THE COVENANT



**FOCUS:** Reformed theology is covenant theology – an expression of a unique relationship with God and others, first through Israel and now in Jesus Christ. Our Lenten journey will explore how this relationship has been lived out over the millennia. The readings are from the Lenten lectionary.

**Gathering:** *The Lord is our light and our salvation - why should we be afraid? The Lord protects us from danger - why should we worry? For God's house is our shelter and retreat. It is here that we find peace in the midst of the storm and turmoil of our lives.*

Hymn: We lay our broken world

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Prayer of Confession: *We hear the call to trust in God always, but honestly, some days our stresses and doubts are even more real to us than God, and trust is elusive. We remember how Abram dared to believe in God's promises, but belief like that is hard to come by. We are often inclined to think, "God helps those who help themselves," instead of daring to rely on the word of our Creator. When the world seems filled with dangers, we can be quick to protect ourselves, and we forget the wisdom of scripture, which reminds us that we find traces of evil both outside and inside of ourselves. With God's help, we confront our fears and struggles, and we call upon a power greater than our own to resist their pull. Hear us, Holy One, as we confess our frailty and failings.* (Silent prayers of confession)

Words of Assurance *Though fear should beset us; though danger cause us to close up our doors; though troubles assail and lead us away from the ways of grace; only one thing is necessary: just turn back to God's promise of grace. Remember that God is reaching out with loving arms, and let yourself be held. Only ask for forgiveness, and it is ours: know that in this moment we have asked and in Christ Jesus, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God! Amen*

Scripture: **Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18**

*Abram said, "You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir." But the word of the LORD came to him, "This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir." He brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness. Then he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." But he said, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" He said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds*

*in two. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land.*

**Continuing the conversation** *(from Sunday Starters – Church of Scotland):*

In two visions, Abram experiences theophanies. In the first, he is promised- against all the odds- a son and heir. In the second, his descendants are promised land. These promises echoes and adds to the covenant of Genesis 12, which first led Abram on his wanderings. Throughout there is a dialogue pattern of promise-objection-reassurance. The passage begins with Abram experiencing a vision in which God promises to protect and reward Abram. Abram is, not surprisingly, getting a bit exasperated after all this time, for without children of his own, his inheritance will pass to a distant relative. Yet the Word comes to him again, assuring Abram that he will not only have a direct heir, but that he will be the father of a great nation. Abram believes, and he is reckoned righteous, or more deeply understands God's righteousness (Romans 4.9) Abram understands that God will keep God's promise. This is not Abram's story; it is God's purposes which are being worked out. This is a passage about God's covenant trustworthiness (15.18a). Salvation is completely secure, for God cannot abandon us.

**Question:** Is there somewhere God is asking you to go in your life as Abram was asked to go?

Hymn: One more step along the world I go 641  
**Intercessory Prayers** God of the covenant, your presence fills us with awe, your word gives us unshakeable hope. **Fix in our hearts the image of your Son in glory, that, sustained in the path of discipleship, we may pass over with him to newness of life.**

Grant this through Christ, our deliverance and hope, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, holy and mighty God for ever and ever. **(we continue in prayer)**

**Invitation:** Come to the table. Feast and rejoice. Come for the meal. Receive that you may give.

Hymn: I greet thee (verses 1-3) 678  
(Note: this hymn was the traditional communion hymn in Geneva written by John Calvin - The past-present-future aspects of the Lord's Supper are conveyed in this hymn)

Prayer of Thanksgiving: *Pour out your Holy Spirit on all gathered here, that we might be your light in the world. Pour out your Holy Spirit on these gifts of bread and wine, that we might be infused with the gift of your nourishing guidance. Transform us with your nourishing grace, even as we eat of this bread and drink of this wine.*

*Transfigure us to be your presence in the world, even as we are redeemed and reclaimed by your great love.*

*And so we gather around your table and with this bread of life and this cup of salvation we proclaim the mystery of our faith.*

**Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come in glory.**

*(Prayer continues)*

Hymn: I greet thee (verses 4-5) 678  
**Communion**

**Prayer following communion**

Hymn: Lead me Lord 575

*Go now, trusting in God's promises. Seek the presence of the Lord and abandon yourself to prayer. Follow those who are faithful to God, stand firm against evil and seek healing for all. **We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, In the name of Christ. Amen.***