

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of Saint David March 17, 2013



PREPARING FOR A NEW COVENANT

FOCUS: Reformed theology is covenant theology – an expression of a unique relationship with God and others, first through Israel of old 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: *Let us worship God, who has done great things. We rejoice in our God, who made a way through the desert of this world. Let us worship God, who has caused streams of mercy to flow in the wasteland. We are the people God has formed through Christ; we worship him, and we rejoice! Let us worship God in spirit and in truth. We praise God for the grace that has saved us. We rejoice!*
— from *The Worship Sourcebook*

Hymn: How shall I sing

697

Prayer of Confession: *Gracious God, our sins are too heavy to carry, too real to hide, and too deep to undo. Forgive what our lips tremble to name, what our hearts can no longer bear, and what has become for us a consuming fire of judgment. Set us free from a past that we cannot change; open to us a future in which we can be changed; and grant us grace to grow more and more in your likeness and image, through Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.*

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*

Hymn: Jesus, Lamb of God

745

Scripture: **Isaiah 43:16-21** Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings out chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild animals will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people, the people whom I formed for myself so that they might declare my praise.

Try this paraphrase... “Don’t brood over past history. Don’t brood over the mistakes of the years gone by. I the Lord God am doing a new thing in your life. Can’t you see it? Can’t you perceive it? It is like a bud springing forth from the ground. It is like a small crocus poking its head through the dirt. I the Lord God am doing a new thing in your life. Don’t you see it? Don’t brood over past history or things gone by.”

Continuing the Conversation: It may be paradoxical, it may be

ironic, but it's definitely surprising: right after describing God's actions in the past (and they were glorious, no question about it), the prophet says that we should "not remember the former things, or consider the things of old" (v. 18). What better way to get the attention of people who think that their glory days are over, that their story has run out? Maybe "the former things" are God's judgment and anger at the people's faithlessness in the past. Maybe. Or maybe "the things of old" are great works that are about to be outdone, as Bartlett puts it, by a God who can outdo anything God has done in the past. Does it matter? Both meanings are wonderful (full of wonder), and they hold true for us today as well. (Kate Huey)

"No one leaves the desert the same person as when he or she entered it. You can't spend that kind of intense time with God and not come out a new creation. That's the way the covenant works. Along the way, though, it's easy to get lost in the wilderness. That is why we have preachers. People need guides to help them get through." (Craig Barnes)

Hymn: One more step along the world I go **641**

Invitation: All who have entered the covenant of baptism, who have freely chosen Jesus and his church as the center of their lives, come, remember and renew that covenant. Eat the bread and drink the wine of the new covenant.

Hymn: I I heard the voice of Jesus say **671**

Prayer of Thanksgiving: *The Lord is here. God's spirit is with us. Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise.* (Continue in thanksgiving) **Come Holy Spirit, come. Bless this bread and bless this fruit of the vine. Bless all of us in our eating and drinking that our eyes might be opened, that we might recognize the risen Christ in our midst, indeed, in one another. Come, Holy Spirit, come.**

Hymn: Our Father **469**

Communion

A reflection after Holy Communion As we broke the bread and poured the wine, as we held out our hands and drank our fill, we became part of something beyond ourselves, part of Christ, part of each other, part of creation. We can scarcely imagine the significance of what we have just participated in; we only know it is a designated place of encounter, a thread that binds us across centuries and continents. We come expecting so little; Christ comes, wanting to give so much. Familiarity and repetition may blur the meaning, but a cloud of witnesses breaks into Alleluias.

Coming here has not changed our situations, but strength, hope, grace and love have been poured into us for the journeys we return to. Holy is this time, holy is this meal, holy is this sacred space we have set apart, and holy is the life to which we return to be broken and poured out for others. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. AMEN. (words of Anne Siddall)

Hymn: God be in my head

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Go now from this service of worship to the service of God's people near and far, refreshed by the living water that Jesus offers to you. Listen for the parched voices of the least of these; search out the dry places and the arid souls, and become for them a spring of living water. And as you go, may the blessings of the God of life, the Christ of love, and the Spirit of grace be upon you this day and forevermore. Amen.