

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of
Saint David
August 11, 2013

Early Morning Service

LIVING INTO THE PROMISE

god promises
a safe landing...
not a calm passage.

Gathering: *God beyond all seeing and knowing, we meet you in the night of change and crisis, and wrestle with you in the darkness of doubt. Give us the will and spirit to live faithfully and love as we are loved. Amen.*

Confession: *Confessing our sins to God is a lot like cleaning out our homes and taking out the garbage. We know that God can take out what is polluted in our lives and give us a clean heart and fill us with a new and right spirit.*

The book of Hebrews tells us that we can “come near to God with a sincere heart and a sure faith, with hearts that have been purified from a guilty conscience and with bodies washed with clean water.”

Through God’s love in Christ we are made clean and forgiven. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: Give me the faith (vs 1-2)

584

There are defining scriptures in people’s lives – like Micah 6:8, John 3:16 and this passage from Hebrews. I have continually come back to this ‘definition’ of faith and even more so, back to the lives of God’s people who are seeking to live in to the promise.

Focus Reading Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16 Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Indeed, by faith our ancestors received approval. By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was made from things that are not visible. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he stayed for a time in the land he had been promised, as in a foreign land, living in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith he received power of procreation, even though he was too old—and Sarah herself was barren—because he considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one person, and this one as good as dead,

descendants were born, "as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore." All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of the land that they had left behind, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.

Hymn: Give me the faith (vs 3-4) **584**

What is the meaning of life? What makes it worthwhile? Perhaps the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews provides a good answer to that age-old question: faith. Frederick Buechner unfolds this beautiful theme, this foundational truth, in his book, *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*, when he asserts "that the madness and lostness we see all around us and within us are not the last truth about the world but only the next to the last truth." Like the writer of Hebrews, Buechner knows that faith, that is, trust, is a thing of the heart that helps us to see the truth hidden sometimes beneath appearances, "the last truth about the world," the truth of God's love, and God's peace. ... The author of Hebrews begins our passage with an eloquent, often-quoted definition of faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (11:1). He then goes to the lived experience of one person of faith after another who trusted in God's goodness and the unfolding of God's plan, including Abel, Enoch, Noah and Abraham. In fact, the very first example is "we" – the community of faith – who understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, with the seen made from the unseen. Faith, then, is the ability – or the openness – to see the invisible in the visible, the eternal in the earthly. (*excerpts from Kathryn Matthews Huey*)

Hymn: To Abraham and Sarah **478**

Hymn: We come as guests invited vs. 1 **524**

Invitation: Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at table in the kingdom of God. According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him. This is the Lord's table. Our Saviour invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.

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 prayer)

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.

Hymn: We come as guests invited vs. 2-3 **524**

Communion

Hymn: Now let us from this table rise vs 1-2 **556**

Prayer after communion *Loving God, we thank you that you have fed us in this Sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in your eternal kingdom. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Hymn: May the Lord bless you **553**