

WELCOME TO...

The Presbyterian Church of
Saint David
December 1st, 2013



HOPE

First Sunday of Advent

Preparing for worship:

- What is it we hope for?
- What do I really hope for and how broad is my hope?
- Is it just for me, or my family, or my friends, or is it for the world?
- And then, what are my expectations?
- How can I act on those expectations, so that God will say on that day, “well done, good and faithful servant.”

Gathering: *May the joy of the advent season with its message of mighty hope be with you all! And also with you!*

We begin Advent by celebrating the expectation that the Christ who came, who comes again to be with us in every age and every place, and who will come again in a glorious finality to consummate the healing work which he began at Bethlehem. He shall judge between nations, and arbitrate between many races; they shall beat the swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

~ written by Bruce Prewer,

Hymn: Come my way, my truth, my life

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Prayer of Confession: *O God beyond time, we are an impatient people. As the days grow shorter and the darkness longer, teach us to wait with faithful expectation.*

In this time of worship, open our eyes and hearts to the Advent blessings in our midst. May every day be a day of gratitude for your compassion and grace. Through the guidance of your Spirit, lead each one of us in the pathways that make for peace. In the name of Emmanuel, ‘God with Us’, we pray. Amen.

Hymn: All earth is waiting

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Scripture: **Matthew 24:36-44** [Jesus said:] "But about that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and

would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour."

Continuing the Conversation: As we wait, and trust, in that extravagant mercy of God, Matthew gives us a very strong hint of how we are to live in preparation for Jesus' return, for his next chapter contains the familiar terms of judgment Jesus will use. David Bartlett writes: "One day Jesus may appear in the clouds, suddenly, like a thief in the night. But before that – as Matthew reminds us – Jesus will appear just around the corner, suddenly, like a hungry person, or a neighbor ill-clothed, or someone sick or imprisoned" (*Feasting on the Word Year A, Vol. 1*). How we respond to Jesus in these terms will shape, Matthew says in chapter 25, how Jesus encounters us on that great day of fulfillment. And that fulfillment isn't the end but just the beginning, Richard Swanson's excellent commentary claims: "Jewish and Christian hopes are better characterized as expecting the Beginning of the World, not the end, the freeing and fruition of creation, not its destruction. It is a good exercise to raise your eyes to the horizon of this event" (*Provoking the Gospel of Matthew*).

Hymn: Emmanuel, Emmanuel 114

Invitation: *When Jesus sat at table and broke bread with tax collectors, lawyers, rich elites, and poor peasants, he proclaimed that God's gracious love and abiding presence know no bounds. This is our hope. Through these occasions of sharing food, women and men experienced God, and shared in a foretaste of God's reign. This is our hope. A coming reign where all are welcome, worthy, and invited. This is our hope. When people sit at table with Jesus lives are transformed and empowered. This is our hope. In hope come to the table spread for you. All people, including each of us, are invited to share in this sacred meal of celebration, and be strengthened by the presence of God in this place. This is our hope.*

Hymn: Here is bread, here is wine 546

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.*

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: Tomorrow Christ is coming 131

Keep awake! **You know not when God comes.** There will be signs: **A flood to cover the earth**, the Red Sea parting, the walls of Jericho tumbling, **a giant slain by a boy**, a barren womb birthing a son, **a man sleeping in a den of lions**, another surviving the belly of a fish, **a virgin conceiving in her womb!** Keep awake! **God is coming!** Behold the signs!