

WELCOME TO

The Presbyterian Church of

Saint David

December 18, 2016 Advent 4



*Carry on, love is coming
Love is coming to us all*
Crosby Stills Nash

Gathering: *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*

Hymn: Lord, you were rich (1)

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Opening prayer: *as we stand on the cusp of Christmas day, we pray that we are able to keep our focus on the birth of Jesus;*

The love he brings, the peace he bestows, the hope he carries, and the joy in our hearts. *We pray that as the star shone the way to his birth so long ago it would light the way for us today. We pray that we are able to carry that light in our hearts for others whose way has grown dark. Restore those around us whose lives are broken, wounded, hurt and diseased. Make us all whole. bring us your salvation. Be Emmanuel, God with us.*

Hymn: Lord, you were rich (2)

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Scripture **Matthew 1:18-25** Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Hymn: Lord, you were rich (3)

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A QUICK COMMENTARY: A Child is to be born, but the details of to whom the child is born are essential to the picture: to a woman who strikes fear into the hearts of the powerful by her independent spirit (she dares to answer all questions

regarding paternity by saying the child within her is Holy); to a man who casts his lot with her, knowing this will be a very bumpy ride. And to the raggle-taggle folk of the world who have nothing to lose by stepping outside the conforming expectations of a world that has never been ready for the wildness of God. The family gathered at the manger are not each other's friends and neighbours, and there are no blood relations among them at all. Mary and Joseph, barely married; the shepherd cowboys, who've never heard of these two before; three foreign dignitaries, not Jewish, not local, and not to be seen ever again; an assortment of patient beasts. Trust is not a given here, it is a choice. Heavenly peace belongs to the community of those who need it enough to seek it among strangers. And good men like Joseph are the strangers we long to find.

*Sin fractures the Vision, not the Fact; for the Exceptional is always usual And the usual Exceptional. To choose what is difficult all one's days As if it were easy, that is faith. Joseph, praise. — from W. H. Auden's **For The Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio** (Nancy Rockwell)*
How, at the end of Advent, can we prepare ourselves to welcome this child who is so 'Other' from us, but who in becoming like us makes it possible for us to be welcomed by God?

Hymn: Come my Way (2-3) **565**

Prayer: *You call us to live in this world as courageous bearers of hope, standing in the face of all that seems to contradict your Gospel and demean life. **Let us be courageous.** As families gather and tensions run high, save us from false expectations and exclusivity; from holding onto old hurts and resentments, and from seeking love instead of giving love. **Let us be loving.** Let our celebration of Christmas be characterized by our willingness to risk doing it differently, and our witnessing to a deeper source of hope than that which can be wrapped in bright paper. **Let us celebrate!***

Invitation: *Just as Jesus' birth was for the whole world this bread and wine is for everyone - for the hungry **for the lost** for those who search **and those who are found** for those who question **and those who know love** this is bread and wine for everyone.*

Hymn: The Love of God comes close (1-3) **474**

Prayer of Thanksgiving: *May God who brought love to birth be with you! **And also with you!** People of God, lift your hearts to the One who created you. **Our souls glorify the Lord and our spirits rejoice in God my Saviour.** God's children, come to the Table of grace. **Here God fills the hungry with good things** (we continue in prayer) *Come to us, Spirit of our Lord of love, and let the bread and wine before us bear your life to our life, nourish us with his vision of hope, and unite us in one body of peace. **Renew us by your Spirit, inspire us with your love, and unite us in the body of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord You are our life; You are our hope; You are love incarnate; And we praise you.****

Hymn: The Love of God comes close (4-5) **474**

Communion

Following communion *Eternal, loving God, we thank you for this simple common meal that offers us the joy of the Lord as our strength. **May our lives be inspired by your love, and may your love touch others through us.***

Hymn: I come with joy (4-5) **530**

May this eternal truth be always on our hearts that the God who breathed this world into being, placed stars into the heavens and designed a butterfly's wing Is the God who entrusted his life to the care of ordinary people became vulnerable that we might know how strong is the power of Love
A mystery so deep it is impossible to grasp

Postlude

