

WELCOME TO...

## The Presbyterian Church of Saint David



**WE ARE  
CALLED TO  
BE GOD'S  
PEOPLE**

January 22, 2017

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EARLY SERVICE – 9 AM

**Gathering:** *Listen up, everyone! God has given us work to do. God has called each of us before we were even born. It was God who named us. It is God who claims us. The light of God's love shines in us. Let's shine God's love into all the world!*

**Hymn:** All earth is waiting (vs.1)

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**Opening Prayers** *You invite us to lead a life worthy of the calling to which we are called: We cannot do this alone, we dare not try this alone, Lord, have mercy. You invite us to lead a life worthy of our calling, a life filled with service and sacrifice. We come to be Christ's Body on earth, weak and weary though we are. Christ have mercy. God, help us lead a life which reflects your calling so that we can say 'God has become my strength', we would share the grace offered to us. Lord have mercy. Live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called. We gather as God's family at the Table prepared for us, waiting to be fed by the Bread of life.*

**Hymn:** We cannot own the endless sky (1-2)

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**Isaiah 49:1-7** Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away! The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God." And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength- he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you."

“When read this way, Isaiah 49, rather than being a prophecy about Jesus, presents two positive emphases that the church has always wanted to latch onto, namely the beloved community’s

chosen-ness (vv. 1-3) and the intentionality behind it on the part of Yahweh (v. 5). These characteristics are gladly shared with the antecedent community of Israel, who is the one being specifically addressed in Isaiah 49, of which the church believes it is an extension. Out of all of the peoples of the world, God chose us, the text suggests, and God did this even before anybody had ever heard of us, before there was any reason for anyone to have taken any note of us. God took us when we were nothing and turned us into a powerful conduit for God's work in the world. It is easy to see both why Judah and the church would be captivated by such an originating myth. Who would not be proud to be so chosen? Who would not revel in the tale of being marked for such success even prior to one's existence? How awesome is it to step outside of oneself and, from the perspective of everyone else, watch yourself come from nothing to such a great place of honour beyond that which was bestowed to other peoples and nations? Connected with such New Testament texts as Ephesians 1, the idea that God picked the church "before the foundation of the world" has exercised a powerful hold on Christian imagination through the centuries, particularly, although by no means limited to, my own Reformed tradition..." *Timothy Simpson – editor of Political Theology*

**Hymn:** We cannot own the endless sky (3) 717

**A Prophet's blessing:** John Wamboldt

**Invitation:** *When Jesus poured the wine, and the bread was broken;  
when everyone could eat -*

**the outcast and the beloved  
the arrogant and the gracious  
the wrong-doer and the wrongly done by -**  
*the table became a foretaste of love made real  
and of a world made whole.*

**Hymn:** Christ you call us all to service 585

The Politics (and Perils) of Exceptionalism: Isaiah 49:1-7  
excerpt

*It seems to me that this describes the self-understanding of American Christianity. The belief in its chosen-ness by God, and its exaltation apart from service or suffering, lies at the heart of the notion of what is regularly describes as "American Exceptionalism." From the composition of John Winthrop's "Errand into the Wilderness" nearly 400 years ago, down to the present, American Christianity has largely believed itself to be the divine favorite who can do no wrong and whose ultimate success has already been pre-determined. Like Jake and Elwood, the Blues Brothers, we see ourselves as being on a "mission from God" which excuses whatever shortcuts may be taken or mayhem produced in quest of obtaining our objectives. And, because we are so enmeshed in our national life, our objectives have more often than not dove-tailed perfectly with that of the state such that there has remained little space in which to articulate a critique that would reflect the values of the kingdom of God which we were chosen to represent. We have, for example, just lived through a decade of fighting two wars and dealing with the aftermath of the worst financial crisis in several generations, yet one could scarcely know of any of this based on an analysis of your average Sunday sermon, our discourse being dominated by such staggeringly crucial subjects as the merits of "blended worship" and discerning from demographic data what Millennials really want in a church.*

*If the American church is as chosen and exceptional as we imagine ourselves to be, it will be manifested first in our service to and suffering for the sake of the world. Like the ball player or musician who wants to perform before thousands, we must first proceed through the essential preparatory work to achieve that goal, a process we seem to have convinced ourselves we can avoid. What the world needs is not another group of people scrambling for advantage or clamoring for privilege, but rather a community of people engaged in acts of transcendence that move beyond the interests of the self towards the furtherance of*

*the common good. That will only happen when the church tells the truth about how and why it was so chosen by God and re-orders its practices accordingly.*

*Timothy F. Simpson is Editor Emeritus of Political Theology*

*A Prophet's Blessing*

This blessing  
finds its way  
behind the bars.

This blessing  
works its way  
beneath the chains.

This blessing  
knows its way  
through a broken heart.

This blessing  
makes a way  
where there is none.

Where there is  
no light,  
this blessing.

Where there is  
no hope,  
this blessing.

Where there is  
no peace,  
this blessing.

Where there is  
nothing left,  
this blessing.

In the presence  
of hate.

In the absence  
of love.

In the torment  
of pain.

In the grip  
of fear.

To the one  
in need.

To the one  
in the cell.

To the one  
in the dark.

To the one  
in despair.

Let this blessing come  
as bread.

Let this blessing come  
as release.

Let this blessing come  
as sight.

Let this blessing come  
as freedom.

Let this blessing come.

**Jan Richardson**

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.*

*Loving and gracious God who surrounds creation with abundant love, we give thanks and blessings to you. We bless you for your love, made known to us through Jesus, which reassures and reconciles us to you, to ourselves and to one another. As Christ is our light to you, may we be lights to others illuminating the path toward communion with you, the Holy Spirit and Jesus, our friend and brother (Continue in prayer) By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world, until Christ comes in final triumph, and we feast at the heavenly banquet. Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honour and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever more. (Our Father...)*

Hymn: Jesus calls us here to meet him

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### Communion

Prayer following communion: *Generous God, with these hands you give us, we have held gifts for you. With these arms you give us, we stretch to gather in the lost and alone. With these eyes you give us, we see opportunities to share your good news. With these hearts you give us, we pray for strength and healing for others. You have given us what we need to be your disciples; we give to you all that we are to praise your name. Use these gifts and your people to spread the saving love of Christ. Amen.*

Hymn: For the bread which you have broken

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