

“When Your Sense of Self is Challenged: Joseph”

Second Presbyterian Church, December 3, 2017

**Getting to the Front of the Stable—By Ann Weems**

Who put Joseph in the back of the stable? Who dressed him in brown, put a staff in his hand, And told him to stand in the back of the crèche background for the magnificent light of the Madonna? God-chosen, this man Joseph was faithful in spite of the gossip in Nazareth, in spite of the danger from Herod. This man, Joseph, listened to angels and it was he who named the Child Emmanuel. Actually, Joseph probably stood in the doorway guarding the mother and child or greeting shepherds and kings. When he wasn't in the doorway, he was probably urging Mary to get some rest, gently covering her with his cloak, assuring her that he would watch the Child. Actually, he probably picked the Child up in his arms and walked him in the night, patting him lovingly until he closed his eyes. This Christmas, let us give thanks to God for this man of incredible faith into whose care God placed the Christ Child. As a gesture of gratitude, let's put Joseph in the front of the stable where he can guard and greet and cast an occasional glance at this Child who brought us life.  
 At this Child who brought us life.



“Joseph is a good man, and rises to a point that is absolutely remarkable for his day and time. He knows his Bible and loves his Bible and bless his heart for it. But he reads his Bible through a certain kind of lens, the lens of the character and nature of God, who is loving and kind. Therefore, he says, ‘I will not harm her, abuse her, expose her, shame her, ridicule her. I will protect her. . . .’ Where does it say that in your Bible, Joseph? I’ll tell you where it says that. It says that in the very nature and character of God.”  
 —Fred Craddock

**2017 SPC SESSION AND MINISTRY TEAMS**

Larry Hull, Clerk of Session

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Helen Pribesh  
 Jeff Stark  
 Marie Finch  
 Sandra Simmermon

**MISSION AND STEWARDSHIP**

Alice Allen-Grimes  
 Joe Morgan  
 Denise Tinkham

**ADMINISTRATION**

Sam Stearns  
 Dave Horner  
 Bill Reed

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Dr. Craig Wansink, *Senior Pastor*  
 Rev. Catherine Hart Monroe, *Covenant Associate Pastor*  
 Isaac Thomas, *Pastor of Music, Outreach, and Technology*  
 Katie White, *Director of Administration and Publications*  
 Philip Ndahi, *Director of Youth*  
 Shayla Friesen, *Nursery*  
 Hallie Edwards, *Nursery*  
 Tom Libbey, *Facility Manager*  
 Helen Pribesh, *Parish Cook*  
 Barbara Watson, *Housekeeper*

Our pastor since 2010, Dr. Craig Wansink received his Ph.D. in New Testament from Yale University, after having graduated from seminary in Chicago, and having studied at universities in Japan, Jordan, Germany, and Israel. Since 1993 he has been a Professor of Religious Studies at Virginia Wesleyan University. Craig is married to Nancy Chapman, and his two children—Katrina and Teddy—are college students.

Rev. Catherine Hart Monroe, our Covenant Associate Pastor for Discipleship & Spiritual Formation, received her M.Div. from Union Presbyterian Seminary in 2016. She and her husband, Chuck, live in Norfolk with their three children, Whitley, Hart, and Alden.

Isaac Thomas, our Pastor of Music, Outreach, and Technology, joined the SPC staff in 2014. He received his education at John Brown University and The University of Texas at Arlington. He is a published composer and has served as conductor for contemporary Christian recording artists Twila Paris and Fernando Ortega. He is a recent graduate of Dubuque Theological Seminary via the Commissioned Lay Pastor program. Additionally, he recently completed a six-week piano course through The Juilliard School under the instruction of Dr. Michael Shinn, Chair of Keyboard studies.

—We Gather in God's Name —

**GATHERING MUSIC “I Wonder as I Wander”**

—Music by John Jacob Niles; Arranged by Mark Hayes

**WELCOME**

**\*THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

The peace of Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

Greet your neighbor with the peace of Christ.

Whether we are old or young, whether we are first-time or longtime worshipers, whether we come full of doubts or confidence, joy or sorrow, in this place we all are family, because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. Welcome!

William Willimon quips, “If Mary is most blessed among women, Joseph is most embarrassed among men.”  
—William Willimon

*God with us. And Joseph almost missed it. Joseph’s initial response to the news that Mary was going to have a child was to dismiss her quietly, not wanting to expose her to public disgrace. Each and every day we have the opportunity to dismiss (quietly) God who is with us or to choose to open ourselves to the miracle of divine new birth.*

“We glorify God most not when we appear to have no flaws, but when those flaws point to God’s power and glory in their evident repair.”  
—Bob Munson

**CHIMING THE HOUR**

**PRELUDE** *“What Child is This?”*—Traditional; Setting by Michael W. Smith; Arranged by Isaac Thomas  
**Featuring Charlotte Dettwiler, cello**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

The Spirit of the Lord is upon us. **The Spirit of the Lord is in us.**  
To bring good news, **to comfort,**  
to proclaim favor, **to strengthen the downtrodden.**  
The day of the Lord is coming. **Amen.**

**LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLE**

O God, we light the first candle of Advent. We give thanks for those from the past, who have challenged us and called us into your light.  
**Merciful God, we give thanks that you send messengers to call us to greater faith.**  
**We ask that in these days we prepare for you in prayer and compassion towards others.**  
**Forgive us, and bring us to your light and to a joyful new beginning. Amen.**

**\*ADVENT CAROL (See Insert—Verse 1 only)** *“Light a Candle Bright and Tall”*  
—Words by David Wood; Music by Conrad Kocher (tune: *“For the Beauty of the Earth”*)

**\*CONFESSION OF SIN** (inspired by Matthew 1:18-25)  
**Holy God, there are times when we shy away from your calling.**  
**Forgive us for wanting to wander from your ways when we are faced with challenges.**  
**Guide us, by your Spirit, to follow your will and celebrate your love for us all.**

**\*MUSICAL RESPONSE #63 (Refrain Only)** *“My Soul in Stillness Waits”*  
—Words and Music by Marty Haugen  
**For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits; truly my hope is in you.** (Repeat one time)

**\*WORDS OF GRACE**  
Emmanuel, God is with us. There is no place we can go where God is not with us.  
There is nothing we can do that will cause God to abandon us.  
There is no darkness where God’s light cannot shine.  
**We are loved, forgiven, and restored. Amen.**

— **We Hear the Word** —

**TIME OF DISCOVERY** *“Prepare Ye”*—Words: Isaiah 40; Music by Stephen Schwartz (from *Godspell*)  
**Prepare ye the way of the Lord. Prepare ye the way of the Lord.**

*For those desiring childcare, the nursery is available during the service for children five years of age and younger. In addition, there is a “family room” available at the back of the sanctuary.*

**CHORAL ANTHEM** *“Who But the Lord?”*  
—Words by Susan Bentall Boerson; Music by Craig Courtney

**SCRIPTURE LESSONS** Matthew 1:1-25; 2:13-15

**SERMON** “When Your Sense of Self is Challenged: Joseph” —Dr. Craig Wansink

— **We Respond to God’s Word** —

*If you have a request you would like the congregation to pray for, please fill out a prayer request form (found in the friendship register) and place it in the offering plate. We will include that request in the bulletin for a month, unless you request for us to leave it longer.*

**INVITATION TO THE OFFERING: THE SHARING OF OUR LIVES AND GIFTS**

**OFFERTORY** *“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”*  
—Traditional 15th century French carol; Setting by Lynn Trapp **Featuring Dr. James Kosnik, organ**

**\*THE DOXOLOGY (See Insert)** *“Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow”*  
—Words by Thomas Ken; Music: *Traditional English Carol* (sung to the tune of *“The First Noel”*)  
**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below.**  
**Praise him above, ye heavenly host. Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**  
**Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel, born is the King of Israel.**

**\*ADVENT AFFIRMATION**  
We believe in God, the creator and giver of life,  
**who brought all creation to birth, who protects, nurtures, and cherishes us.**  
We believe in Jesus Christ: God born among us as a fragile baby,  
**embodying both love and the need for love,**  
**and calling us to rest in God as trustingly as a tiny child.**  
We believe in the Holy Spirit, breathed into us at our birth,  
**always drawing us on to be born again,**  
**encouraging, exhorting, nourishing our growth, and inspiring our living.**  
And we believe that each new child is a glimpse of the face of God,  
**a sign of the life to come, and a call to live in peace.**  
Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God’s people on earth. **Amen.**

**INVITATION TO THE LORD’S TABLE**

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**  
**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.**  
**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**  
**Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.**  
**And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**  
**For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.**

**WORDS OF INSTITUTION AND BREAKING OF THE BREAD**

**DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS AND COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE**  
*All are invited to come down the center aisle, take bread (or gluten-free crackers), and dip it in the cup (grape juice) and return using the outside aisle.*  
*Please tell an usher if you wish to be served in your pew.*

**MUSIC DURING COMMUNION** *“Silent Night”* —Music by Franz Gruber;  
Arranged by John Schmitdt, Al Van Der Beek and Steven S. Nelson  
**Featuring Charlotte Dettwiler, cello**

**PRAYER FOLLOWING COMMUNION**

**\*HYMN #67** *“Blessed Be the God of Israel”*  
  
— **We Are Sent in Christ’s Name** —

**\*BENEDICTION**  
Live in such a way that people do not focus on you, but that—through your words and actions—they come to experience God. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.**

**\*POSTLUDE** *“Toccata on ‘O Come, O Come, Emmanuel’”*—Music by Austin C. Lovelace  
**Featuring Dr. James Kosnik, organ**

“The heart of the story is about a just man who wakes up one day to find his life wrecked”  
—Barbara Brown Taylor

“Christmas is the end of thinking you are better than someone else, because Christmas is telling you that you could never get to heaven on your own. God had to come to you.”  
—Tim Keller

As you receive the elements, you may wish to receive them in silence or say words like “Amen” or “Thanks be to God.”

As you leave Second, know that God calls you beyond these walls, to serve Christ and others in your daily life.