

Love

The Fourth Sunday of Advent



historic faith. present love. future hope.

We Welcome One and All

In the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ!

December 22, 2024

10:00 am

St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands

Founded 1660

www.strchurch.org

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:46b-55; Psalm 80:1-7;
Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 31:39-45

...**"WE GATHER IN GOD'S PRESENCE..."**

Featured Advent Prelude

'Masterworks Heralding the Lord of Love'

Kenneth Dake, organist

(Please take time to prepare for worship and silence electronic devices)

- "Comest Thou, Jesu, from Heaven to Earth Descending? "** J. S. Bach
"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming" Johannes Brahms
"From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" J. S. Bach
"Infant Holy, Infant Lowly" Polish Carol, arr. Dale Wood
"In Dulci Jubilo (In Sweetest Joy)" J. S. Bach

Greeting | Ministry Opportunities

Introit

"French Carol Medley"

arr. Dake

Nancy Ruffer, flute ~ Kenneth Dake, piano

Lighting the Advent Wreath -

David & Joy Mohr

Today we light the candle of **LOVE**. Jesus demonstrated self-giving love in his ministry as the Good Shepherd. Advent is a time for kindness, thinking of others, and sharing with others. It is a time to love as God loved us by giving us his most precious gift. From the Gospel of John we hear:

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Prayer

***Hymn 'O How Shall I Receive You' ST. THEODULPH**

O how shall I receive you
How meet you on your way
Blessed hope of every people
My soul's delight and stay
O Jesus, Jesus, give me
Now by your own pure light
To know whate'er is pleasing
And welcome in your sight

Love caused your incarnation
Love brought you down to me
Your thirst for my salvation
Procured my liberty
O love beyond all telling
That led you to embrace
In love, all love excelling
Our lost and fallen race

You come, O Christ, with gladness
In mercy and goodwill
To bring an end to sadness
And bid our fears be still
In patient expectation
We live for that great day
When a renewed creation
Your glory shall display

Call to Confession | Unison Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our
hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly
love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our
Lord. Amen.

Response 'Love Came Down at Christmas' Rosetti/Schaffer



Love came down at Christ - mas, love all love - ly, love di - vine.
 Love shall be our to - ken; love be yours and love be mine;



Love came down at Christ - mas; star and an - gels gave the sign.
 Love to God and neigh - bor, love for plea and gift and sign.

Words of Assurance and Hope

Dear children of God: do not be afraid. The promise given long ago has been kept once and for all in the birth at Bethlehem. Rejoice, rejoice, for Christ has come for you.

LOVE is the gift God has given to us, not only on this day, not only in this season, but in all the moments to come.

Thanks be to God!

AMEN.

Musical Offering "Salut d'Amour/Sicilienne" Elgar/Fauré

...TO HEAR GOD'S WORD...

Children's Message

***Hymn 'The First Noel' THE FIRST NOEL**

(Teachers and students are dismissed to faith formation classes)

**The first Noel, the angel did say
 Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay
 In fields where they lay keeping their sheep
 On a cold winter's night that was so deep**

Refrain:

**Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
 Born is the King of Israel**

**They looked up and saw a star
 Shining in the east, beyond them far**

And to the earth it gave great light
And so it continued both day and night *(refrain)*

This star drew nigh to the northwest
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay *(refrain)*

Scripture Memory Verse: Hebrews 11:6

"Without faith it is impossible to please God, since the one who draws near to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him."

Sermon series: Experiencing God:

"The Crisis of Belief" (#7 of 12)

-Pastor Jeff

...AND RESPOND WITH GRATITUDE...

(We give our gifts, tithes and offerings as an expression of gratitude for all of God's blessings. Giving "mites" are available at the church entrance for anyone who gives online and desires to join in the act of giving here today. Online giving is available at www.strchurch.org/give)

Offering

Offertory "A Christmas Gloria/Navidad Gloriosa"

Larter

Glory to God in high
On the earth be peace
And goodwill to all
For unto us a child is born
To us a Son is given
Who now is come from heaven
O, hear the heavenly angels
Their joyful tidings tell
This child is Christ, our Savior
Jesus, Emmanuel
Gloria in excelsis, gloria, gloria!
Sing, heralds of salvation
Sing out to all the earth
Till every tongue and nation

Hears of the Savior's birth
Gloria in excelsis, gloria, gloria!
So, let us come before Him
Love and adore Him
To Him our praises singing
Glad worship bringing
Gloria in excelsis, gloria, gloria!

***Doxology**

Pastoral Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

***Hymn 'Now Bless the God of Israel' FOREST GREEN**

Now bless the God of Israel
Who comes in love and pow'r
Who raises from the royal house
Deliv'rance in this hour
Through holy prophets God has sworn
To free us from alarm
To save us from the heavy hand
Of all who wish us harm

Remembering the covenant
God rescues us from fear
That we might serve in holiness
And peace from year to year
And you, my child, shall go before
To preach, to prophesy
That all may know the tender love
The grace of God most high

In tender mercy God will send
The Dayspring from on high
Our rising sun, the light of life
For those who sit and sigh
God comes to guide our way to peace
That death shall reign no more
Sing praises to the Holy One
O worship and adore

*Benediction

*Postlude **"Savior of the Nations, Come"** J.S. Bach

Announcements:

Special Guest Organist/Pianist:

This morning we welcome back beloved organist/pianist Ken Dake. Director, conductor, composer, and keyboardist Kenneth Dake served as Director of Music of New York City's historic Marble Collegiate Church for over 27 years. A native of Chicago, Ken attended Michigan's Interlochen Center for the Arts for 8 summers and 2 years of high school before moving to New York and earning his bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance from the Juilliard School. He later pursued organ studies under the tutelage of John Weaver and went on to serve eight years as organist/choirmaster of St. George's Episcopal Church on Manhattan's Stuyvesant Square. Known for his technical virtuosity and communicative passion, Mr Dake is equally at home as organ recitalist or piano soloist. His many choral and instrumental works are published by MorningStar, GIA, Hinshaw, H.W. Gray, and Kjos, and are performed nationwide with increasing frequency. Ken is absolutely delighted to be spending his second "retirement" Christmas with his longtime collaborator and dear friend Chanelle Schaffer, and with his beloved STRC family!

Special Guest Flautist:

Internationally acclaimed flautist Nancy Ruffer was born in Detroit and received a Master of Music degree from The University of Michigan. She received a Fulbright-Hays Scholarship in 1976 to study at the Royal Academy of Music, London, and she has remained in London working as a freelance flautist specialising in contemporary music. In 1984 she was awarded the Kranichsteiner Prize for Performance at Darmstadt and she was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. Ms. Ruffer has been principal flute in many ensembles, recorded many CDs, and worked with various chamber groups and orchestras including the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Sinfonietta, and ensembles of the Royal National Theatre. In addition, she records regularly for the BBC and performs in festivals and concert halls throughout Britain and abroad.

Thank you to everyone who purchased gifts for **The Salvation Army Angel Tree!** Gifts are due back **TODAY** for distribution tomorrow!

Special thanks Kayden Arthur for her help with the Christmas pageant!

A Pastoral Search Committee is being formed to begin the process of searching for the person **God** has prepared to serve as the next Senior Pastor at STRC. Elder VP Dave Whitter will share an update this morning.

Consistory update: Donna Groat has accepted the nomination to serve as a deacon beginning January. Thank you Donna! Also, thank you to outgoing deacon Ryan Wisehart for six years of faithful service on Consistory.

Are you or someone you know behind on your rent or utility payments?

STRC has funds remaining from the Federal Emergency Food & Shelter (EFSP) grant program. Please speak with Pastor Jeff or David Haddow ASAP to apply before the year ends!

Coming soon:

24 – Christmas Eve Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols @ 7pm! The Christmas Eve Offering will benefit Insight Outreach, Inc. providing much-needed mental health services to our community.

29 – Worship and the Sacrament of Baptism for Kyle Julian Richardson Jr. – son of Kyle and Sydney Comissiong Richardson

More STRC Christmas Cards featuring an original Christmas Eve painting by artist Tony Romano are available after worship today. Purchase a pack of 10 cards for \$25 to support the XYG Mission Trip 2025 to the DR!

Leading Worship Today:	
Ministers:	All of us worshipping together
Preaching:	Pastor Jeffrey Neevel
Music:	Chanelle Schaffer, Kenneth Dake, Nancy Ruffer & the Adult Choir
AV/Livestream:	James Anderson, James Cobb, Chase Rosenthal, Trey Thompson & Dave Whitter
Jeffrey Neevel -	Senior Pastor pastorjeff@strchurch.org
Chanelle Schaffer -	Minister of Music and Arts music@stthomasreformedchurch.org
Vicky Gomez-Christian -	Operations Administrator retreat@stthomasreformedchurch.org
Vicki Whitter -	Administrative Assistant officeadmin@stthomasreformedchurch.org