**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**December 24th, 2021**

**Invited Home**

1. Welcome Home

This Advent and Christmas season at Springfield, we’ve been

engaging with a theme called ‘Close to Home’ by Sanctified Art. During our four Advent Sundays, we’ve talked about what it feels like to long for home, to lay a foundation of what home could look like, to say that our home is a home for all and encouraged ourselves and others to seek sanctuary and sacred spaces to be in the presence of God.

 We have prepared the sanctuary, the candles have been lit, the greens and garlands are hung. In case you are curious, the invitation is here – the doors are wide open. Welcome home. Welcome to this space, whether you have been here every Sunday, whether you come once in a while, or maybe this is your first time here. We are overjoyed to welcome you into this space and may you find a home here as we welcome our Savior into the world.

 And furthermore, tonight, we say, after preparing our home, our hearts, and our minds, we are now ready to hear that sacred invitation. Tonight, God invites us in a new way to be part of the story, he brings the newborn Savior into our world. We are ready, we have been waiting, we have been hoping, we have been longing, and tonight as we hear the story that is well known, we rejoice that God would come down from the Heavens and dwell here among us.

 There’s more good news, though – even if we weren’t ready, even if the dishes weren’t done and the tree wasn’t lit up this year – the good news, every year, is that no matter what, whether we are ready or not – Jesus is here. We rejoice in a God who does not wait for us to be ready, but chooses to come and live among us, to show us a new way of living and being.

 Every year, as a pastor, you can imagine that this season is a little…busy. And every year I begin the Advent walk by telling myself, “No matter what I do, whether I flub up on people’s names, whether I make mistakes, whether I am ready or not, the good news, the great news, is that Jesus will be born on Christmas night.” It’s not dependent upon me, nor is it dependent on you – no, Jesus is the gift that we welcome, completely undeserved, but we rejoice and find awe every time we hear the stories that embolden our faith and the songs that uplift our hearts.

1. A new beginning

So may you hear these words afresh, may it signal a new beginning in a world where we

need so deeply to hear some good news – the God of us all has sent us his Son, Jesus Christ, and has given us new life by the leading of the Holy Spirit. May this news be one that not only carries you this night, but each night to come. May you feel the welcome and the love of our Savior and of this place, calling you to a life of love, of hope, of joy, and of peace anew each day. Amen.