

Sunday January 4, 2026  
(Sunday before) Epiphany  
**We Gather In God's Presence**

**Prelude:** “

**Birthdays, Celebrations, and Life and Work of the Congregation**

**Lighting the Christ Candle:**

Jesus Christ, the Light of the world.

**Preparing Our Hearts for Worship**

**Call to Worship**

The Magi came from distant lands, following a star.

**We come to worship, and the star sheds light on our lives.**

The Magi brought gifts to offer the Child.

**We too bring gifts – ourselves, our hopes, our dreams.**

Shepherds and Magi – the meek and the mighty –

all are welcomed in Bethlehem.

**We too come to Bethlehem, and return to our homes rejoicing.**

**Hymn VU 36** “Angels from the Realms of Glory” Words: James Montgomery, 1816. Music: Henry Thomas Smart, 1867, alt  
Descant: Ruth Girard, 1994. Descant © 1996 Ruth Girard.

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Angels from the realms of glory,  
wing your flight o'er all the earth,  
ye who sang creation's story,  
now proclaim Messiah's birth:  
come and worship,  
come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds in the field abiding,  
watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with us is now residing,  
yonder shines the infant Light:  
come and worship,  
come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn King.

Sages, leave your contemplations;  
brighter visions beam afar;  
seek the great desire of nations;  
ye have seen his natal star:  
come and worship,  
come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn King.

Saints before the altar bending,  
watching long in hope and fear,  
suddenly the Lord, descending,  
in his temple shall appear:  
come and worship,  
come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn King.

**Opening Prayer (*unison*)**

God of Epiphany, we come to worship you, but, in truth, our motives, like Herod's, are not pure. We want you to reward us because we are here, and not someplace else. We want you to gift us with health, with wealth, with answers to our questions, with solutions to our problems. We want you to overlook our unfaithfulness, rather than shining the bright light of the Christ Child in our lives. Forgive us that we are not more like those wise ones of so long ago. In following a star, they found hope; in gifting a child, they received grace; in seeking you, they discovered life. Be with us, in mercy and joy, as we journey with your Son, Jesus Christ, the true Light of the world, in this season of light. Amen.

**Anthem:** Hymn Sing

**A New Creed VU 918**

We are not alone,  
we live in God's world.

We believe in God:  
who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus,  
the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others  
by the Spirit.

We trust in God.

We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.

In life, in death, in life beyond death,  
God is with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

**Hymn VU 81** “As with Gladness Men of Old” Words: William Chatterton Dix, alt.

Music: Conrad Kocher. Adapted by William H. Monk. Descant: Alan Gray.

Words, Music, Adaptation, and Descant in the Public Domain.

As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold,  
as with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright,  
so, most gracious Lord, may we evermore your splendour see.

As with joyful steps they sped, to that lowly manger bed,  
there to bend the knee before Christ, whom heaven and earth adore;  
so may we with eager pace ever seek your throne of grace.

As they offered gifts most rare at that manger crude and bare,  
so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin’s alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day keep us in the narrow way;  
and, when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last  
where they need no star to guide, where no clouds your glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright none shall need created light;  
you its light, its joy, its crown, you its sun which goes not down;  
there forever may we sing hallelujah to our King.

### **We Open Ourselves to Receive God’s Blessings**

**Responsive Reading: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14** VU 790 *parts one and two*

**Hail to God’s own anointed, who rules in equity.**

Give the ruler your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to the royal heir,  
**for judging your people rightly,  
and upholding the poor with justice;**  
that the mountains may bring forth peace for the people,  
**and the hills, prosperity with justice.**

**Hail to God’s own anointed, who rules in equity.**

May your anointed defend the cause of the poor among the people,  
save the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor.

**May your anointed live as long as the sun endures,  
as long as the moon from age to age.**

May your anointed be like rain falling upon the grass,  
like showers that water the earth;

**may your anointed be one in whose days justice shall flourish  
and peace abound till the moon is no more.**

**Hail to God’s own anointed, who rules in equity.**

May the rulers of Tarshish and the isles pay tribute,  
the monarchs of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

**May all rulers do homage,  
and all nations render service.**

For your anointed shall deliver the needy when they cry,  
the poor and those who have no helper.

**Your anointed shall have pity on the weak and the needy,  
and save the lives of the poor.**

From oppression and violence your anointed shall redeem their life,  
**and count as precious their blood.**

**Hail to God's own anointed, who rules in equity.**

### **Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12 The Visit of the Magi**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.' "

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

*The other lectionary readings for this week are: **Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12***

**Sermon: "Epiphanies Happen"**

**Hymn VU 91** "The First Nowell" Words: English traditional carol. Music: English traditional melody.  
Words and Music in the Public Domain.

The first Nowell the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay a-keeping their sheep  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
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.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel.

And by the light of that same star  
three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it went.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel.

This star drew nigh to the north-west;  
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest,  
and there it did both stop and stay,  
right over the place where Jesus lay.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel.

Then entered in those wise men three,  
full reverently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence  
their gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel.

Then let us all with one accord  
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,  
that hath made heaven and earth of nought,  
and with his blood our life hath bought.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell,  
born is the King of Israel.

### **We Respond To God's Grace**

#### **Invitation to Invest in God's Mission**

As the Magi brought gifts to offer the Child, we too bring gifts – ourselves, our hopes, our dreams.  
Let us present our gifts and offerings to God.

**Offertory Hymn:** “Star of Wonder” Words: unknown. Music: John Henry Hopkins, Jr., 1857; in the Public Domain.

Star of wonder, star of light,  
Star with royal beauty bright,  
Grant us God, the grace of giving  
Guide us to thy perfect light.

### **Prayer of Dedication**

Loving God, we come today to worship, just as the Magi did so long ago. We come with awe and wonder, following a star of hope, offering our gifts: ourselves, our time, and our commitment. Accept our gifts. Bless them and use them to build your kingdom. Just as the Magi left by a different way, send us home a different way, changed by coming here. In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession & The Lord's Prayer**

Gracious God, we pray this day for all who have come with us to Bethlehem.

We pray for all who are poor and cold and hungry like the shepherds, that they may hear good news, be offered a place of warmth, be clothed and fed.

We pray for all who are wandering and searching, like the magi, that they may find a place to leave their gifts and their burdens.

We pray for all who are busy, hurried, preoccupied, like the innkeeper, that they may know the peace that comes from genuine acts of hospitality.

We pray for all like Herod who have power, that they may use it with compassion.

We pray for all in need of comfort, peace, and joy.

We pray for our neighbours, this week we pray especially of the people of Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Palestine.

We pray for all who mourn a loss, and for all who are ill or dying, are awaiting medical intervention or are recovering from same, especially: Barb, Butch, Cindy, Gloria, Jeffery, Julie, Maxine, Rob, and their loved ones, and caregivers, and those known only in the silence of our own hearts.....

All this we pray in the name of the light of the world, Jesus the Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever, and who taught us to pray,

**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 trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Hymn VU 93** "When Heaven's Bright with Mystery" Words: Rob Johns, 1985.

Music: English traditional melody; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1919.

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Arrangement © 1931 Oxford University Press.

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When heaven's bright with mystery  
and science searches nature's art,  
when all creation yearns for peace  
and hope sinks deep in human hearts,  
appear to us, O Holy Light;  
lift from our eyes the shades of night.

When Herod barter power and lives  
 and Rachel's weeping fills the night,  
 when suffering's mask marks every face,  
 and Love's a refugee in flight,  
 reveal to us your word of grace  
 and make us witness to your peace.

When fragile faith, like desert wind,  
 blows dry and empty, hope erased,  
 when withered grass and fading flower  
 proclaim again our day's brief space,  
 breathe on the clay of our despair  
 and work a new creation there.

When heaven's bright with mystery  
 and stars still lead an unknown way,  
 when love still lights a gentle path  
 where courts of power can hold no sway,  
 there with the Magi, let us kneel,  
 our gifts to share, God's world to heal.

### **Commissioning and Benediction**

May God, who led the Magi,

**lead us also in our pilgrimage.**

May God, the Christ,

who made glad the hearts of shepherds and Magi alike,

**make glad our hearts and transform our lives.**

May God, the Holy Spirit, who spoke to Joseph and the Magi in a dream,

**also speak your wisdom to us, and may we heed it.**

**Amen.**

**Sung Response: VU 886** "Arise, Shine" Refrain Music: Lawrence M. Probes, 1980.

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Arise, be clothed in the light.

Arise, be clothed in the light.

Your light has come.

Your light has come.

Hallelujah.

**Postlude:** "

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Worship Committee** meets Wednesday, January 14 at 1:00 p.m.

**Spiritual Formation Group** meets Wednesday January 14 at 2:00 p.m.

**Congregational Dinner** noon Sunday, January 18

**Central Board** meets Monday, January 26 at 7:00 p.m.

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## **Lectionary Readings:**

Sunday, January 11, Baptism of Jesus Sunday, (First Sunday after Epiphany)

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17