

DORCHESTER UNITED CHURCH

EPIPHANY THREE

JANUARY 25TH 2026

GATHERING

Prelude Take My Life and Let it Be with I Surrender All Henry A. Caesar
Milan art. Tom Fettke

Lighting the Christ Candle

The light of Epiphany has come into the world.

It shines upon those who sit in the darkness of exile.

It shines upon those who sit in the darkness of suffering.

Those who have lost hope see the light and are comforted.

Let us rejoice in the light of Christ.

Call to Worship

We have come from the gloom and shadow of a troubled world.

We come with joy to the light who is Jesus.

We move away from the jealous rivalries that darken our days.

We come to confront and overcome all that divides us.

We leave behind whatever stands in the way of serving God.

We will focus on worshipping the one true God.

Opening Prayer

God is active in our world, but we fail to see God's work among us. There are times and seasons when we were inattentive and missed a great deal. God has blessed us in so many ways that we have been unaware of or simply ignored. Challenge us, Living One, with the opportunities you have set before us. Break down the barriers we have erected between ourselves and others so that this world may be drawn to you again. Amen

Hymn VU 218 We Praise You, O God

We praise you, O God, our Redeemer, Creator;
in grateful devotion our tribute we bring.

We lay it before you; we kneel and adore you;
we bless your holy name: glad praises we sing.

We worship you, God of our mothers and fathers,
through trial and tempest, companion and guide.

When perils o'ertake us, you will not forsake us,
but faithful to your promise, you walk by our side.

With voices united our praises we offer,
and gladly our songs of thanksgiving we raise.
Our sins now confessing, we pray for your blessing,
to you, our great Redeemer, forever be praise!

Prayer of Confession

Source of life, you are the light in our darkness. We live in the radiance of your love. You sent your servant Jesus to illumine our pathway. But we have forgotten how to reflect your light in the world. We have fallen under dark shadows and cannot find a star to follow. Show us how to look up again and fill us with your radiant promise of Epiphany. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

The promise of new life flows from Jesus.

We have been set free by the Risen One.

The darkness can no longer overwhelm us.

The light of forgiveness flows from the cross.

May the grace and mercy of God be yours.

THE WORD

First Lesson Isaiah 9: 1-4

But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied exultation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as people exult when dividing plunder.
For the yoke of their burden
and the bar across their shoulders,

the rod of their oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

Psalm 27 VU page 754

God is my light and my salvation, who then shall I fear?
God is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?
When the wicked close in to devour me,
it is they, my enemies and my foes, who stumble and fall.
If an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not be afraid,
if war should arise against me, even then I will not be dismayed. R

Refrain: God is my light and saving health, I shall not be afraid.

One thing I have asked of God, for which I long:
that I may dwell in the house of God all the days of my life,
to gaze on your beauty, O God, and to seek you in your temple.
For the time of trouble you will give me shelter,
you will hide me under the cover of your tent,
you will set me high upon a rock.
And now you have raised my head about my enemies round about me.
Therefore I will offer in your dwelling
a sacrifice with great gladness. R

Hear my voice, O God, when I call; have mercy and answer me.
Your face, O God, I seek.
Do not hide your face from me; do not reject your servant in anger,
you who have been helper.
Do not cast me off, or forsake me, O God my saviour.
Though my father and mother forsake me my God will take me up. R

Teach me your way, O God,
lead me on a level path, safe from those who lie in wait for me.
Do not give me up to the will of my enemies,
for liars and false witnesses arise against me.
I believe that I shall see God's goodness in the land of the living.
Wait for God, be strong, take courage; yes, wait for God. R

Gospel Matthew 4: 12-23

Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

"Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,

on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the gentiles—
the people who sat in darkness
have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death
light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea—for they were fishers. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Sermon "Metanoia"

Hymn VU 562 Jesus Calls Us

Jesus calls us, o'er the tumult
of our life's wild restless sea,
day by day his clear voice sounding,
saying, "Christian, follow me."

Long ago apostles heard it
by the Galilean lake,
turned from home and toil and kindred,
leaving all for Jesus' sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship
of the vain world's golden store,
from each idol that would keep us,
saying, "Christian, love me more."

In our joys and in our sorrows,
days of toil and hours of ease,
still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
"Christian, love me more than these."

Jesus calls us: by your mercies,
Saviour, may we hear your call,

give our hearts to your obedience,
serve and love you best of all.

THE RESPONSE

Offertory Investing in God's Mission

It was when I saw the words 'Mission Accomplished' emblazoned on the US aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln with President George Bush standing proudly before it that I knew they had coopted the word 'mission.' It was following the Iraq War in which far too many had perished because of the hubris of the Empire.

Like Jesus we must know when the time is right to move on, even from the use of a word. Vocabulary matters. It is how we speak and the words we use to communicate that matter. God's reign or God's rule point to a different reality. And still, we continue to use 'mission statements' as do private corporations and political institutions. Even the use of 'Mission and Service Fund' to designate how we provide for the financial needs of the UCC begins to sound hollow.

Should we jettison words and expressions that have been at the heart of our faith? When we use 'Creator' instead of 'Father' in the 'Lord's Prayer' or the 'Prayer of Jesus,' what have we compromised? We know where this is leading us. It is the kind of change that Jesus embraced when he moved from his hometown and family in Nazareth.

When God's way begins to take precedence in our lives we make no apology for the newness in our lives. Let us offer to God what is ultimately God's.

Offertory Hymn VU 537 Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands

Your work, O God, needs many hands
to help you everywhere,
and some there are who cannot serve
unless our gifts we share.

Because we love you and your work,
our offering now we make:
be pleased to use it as your own,
we ask for Jesus' sake.

Offertory Prayer

For all that we have received,
May we be thankful.

For all that we hold dear,

May we be grateful.

For all that we are called to give,

May we answer with glad and generous hearts.

Giving in love, we seek only God's blessing.

Prayers of the People

God of wonder and mystery we come with gratitude for the gift of your constant presence and your trustworthy guidance. You dare to take the risk of loving us in our unworthiness, to care for us when we deliberately hurt others and to walk with us despite our fickleness.

As we journey to our own destinations, you accompany us along the road of our wilfulness. Be our guide and companion along the way and teach us to seek your justice, love your kindness and walk humbly with you. As we struggle with the injustice of this world, its greed, its violence against the innocent, you remain steadfast in your love for us.

We cannot atone for the pain of broken relationships, yet you remain firm in your devotion to us. In all our doubts and disbelief, you never fail to accompany us on the way. We pray for your peace in this broken world, the peace that celebrates diversity even as it is challenged by adversity. May your grace reach the lonely and the hungry that they may be fed and comforted.

Your presence in the deep shadows of danger, fear and despair comforts us and prepares us to join in the struggle of those who are longing for companionship. Fill us with your dreams of a better day that we may walk the path of justice.

We thank you for the ministry of one whose sojourn among us is ending. He has filled us with a new spirit as he journeyed with us. May that same spirit continue to energise us in the search for a leader who will not only fill the breach, but show us your grace, your favour and above all your blessing. We join in the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples.

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 563 Jesus, You have Come to the Lakeshore

Jesus, you have come to the lakeshore
looking neither for wealthy nor wise ones,
you only asked me to follow humbly.

Refrain: O Jesus, with your eyes you have searched me,
while smiling have spoken my name;
now my boat's left on the shoreline behind me;
by your side I will seek other seas.

You know so well my possessions;
My boat carries no gold or weapons;
you will find there my nets and labour.

Refrain:

You need my hands, full of caring
through my labours to give others rest,
and constant love that keeps on loving.

Refrain:

You, who have fished other oceans,
ever longed for by souls who are waiting,
my loving friend, as thus you call me.

Refrain:

Commissioning and Benediction

We have been bathed in the light of God's love.

We will go to proclaim the good news of light and love.

We have been empowered by the Spirit to serve in the world.

We will follow with courage, conviction and joy.

Go now in the peace and grace of the living God.

Closing Hymn VU 376 Spirit of the Living God

Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.
Melt me, mould me, fill me, use me.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the living God, move among us all;
make us one in heart and mind, make us one in love:
humble, caring, selfless, sharing.
Spirit of the living God, fill our lives with love!

Postlude "Cast Thy Burden Upon the Lord" Felix Mendelssohn, art Jan Sandborn