

Worship at Home and ZOOM Worship for January 3 2021,
Epiphany Sunday

Our Worship at Home this week mirrors our ZOOM worship service. The prayers and reflection here – including communion – are the same as those we will be using together.

***Please make sure your microphones are muted during the service.
If you have called in on your phone, press *6 to mute yourself.***

Words printed in Italics would traditionally be spoken by the entire congregation. If your microphone is muted please feel free to speak those words along with our readers, and of course sing along with the hymns!

To participate in the ZOOM worship over your telephone, call 647-374-4685 or 647-558-0588, and when asked enter this meeting id: **851 8892 2164** and this pass code: **411841** You will hear the service and even be able to speak when it is appropriate.

If you would like to participate in communion, make sure you have some bread or a cracker and some juice handy!

Rev. Joanne

January 3, 2021
Epiphany Sunday

Centering Music: “Bathe Me in Your Light” MV 82 verse 1
*Bathe me in your light, O God of All, Creator;
let it shine upon my soul with healing and with grace.
Be to me a beacon bright through shadows of life’s wounding,
showing me the way to live in faith, in your embrace.*

Call to Worship and Opening Prayer

One: The Magi came from many places, following a star.
They travelled into the unknown with hope and expectation.

Two: *We enter into a time of worship,
and the star still sheds light on our lives.
Leading us into hope, with the expectation of celebration ahead.*

One: The Magi brought gifts to offer the Child.

Two: *We too bring gifts—ourselves, our hopes, our dreams.*

One: Shepherds and Magi—the meek and the mighty—
all were welcome in Bethlehem.

Two: *We too come to Bethlehem in our imaginations and with our hearts full,
returning to our lives rejoicing.*

One: Eternal God, radiant with grace,
thaw our fears and snow-bound spirits;
make us shine with your Word, our hope;
shine with your communion, our life;
shine with your peace, our joy;
through Christ, who is our Light.

Opening Music: “Arise Your Light Has Come” VU 79

Arise, your light is come!
The Spirit’s call obey;
show forth the glory of your God,
which shines on you today.

Arise, your light is come!
Fling wide the prison door;
proclaim the captive’s liberty,
good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come!
All you in sorrow born,
bind up the broken-hearted ones
and comfort those who mourn.

Arise, your light is come!
The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing;
God's power will make us strong.

Scripture Readings:

Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.
Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, 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 wise men 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 at its rising, 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.

Special Music:

Reflection: *included at the end of the service for those worshipping at home*

Hymn: "As With Gladness Men of Old" VU 81 verses 1-3

*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 God, 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 heav'n 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.*

Sacrament of Communion

One: The Holy One is here with each of us.

Two: *God's Spirit is with us wherever we are today.*

One: Lift up your hearts.

Two: *As God's people we lift them to the Lord.*

One: Let us give thanks to God.

Two: *It is right for us to offer thanks and praise.*

One: We give you thanks, O God, for making your love evident since the very beginning of time when you spoke the word which replaced the darkness of chaos with life-giving

light. A light which has nurtured generations of people, and plants and creatures, great and small. A light which also revealed the fear and powerlessness caused by corrupt and evil actions.

Two: And so you spoke the Word which would once and for all dispel the darkness of chaotic lives. Through your love for the world the Word became flesh and lived among us full of grace and truth. The angels carolled glory to you in the highest heavens and peace to all people on earth, and we join with them and with all people to praise your holy name:

MV 203

*O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space,
All earth and sea and sky above
bear witness to your grace.
Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise.
And blessed is the one who comes
and bears your name always.*

One: Holy God, as the travellers with their treasures were overwhelmed with joy on finding Jesus, so we also are overwhelmed on finding out the depth of his love for us.

Two: For Jesus showed just how beloved we are to him, by loving us and giving of himself. On that last night he had to spend with his friends and disciples, as he sat at the table and broke bread with them, he said: 'Take and eat; this is my body which is broken for you. Remember me each time you do this.'

One: After they had eaten, he took the cup, and said: 'Remember me as you drink from this, for it is my life, poured out for you—the beginning of a new relationship with God.'

Two: Remembering your boundless love for us in Jesus Christ, we offer you our praise, as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

MV 204

*Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,
Christ will come again!
Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen,
Christ will come again!*

One: Send the power of your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and wine, O God, that we may experience the presence of the Word-made-flesh—Jesus Christ. Breathe your Spirit in us that we may be one body with him—living out his ministry in the world today and every day.

Two: At this time, we also remember all those with whom you would have us share your feast.

We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain . . .
all who are ill or alone . . .
Il who live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .
all whom the world counts as last and least
We pray for your church and its varied ministries . . .
for the nations as they strive for peace and justice . . .
for the earth, and the fragile web of life we share . . .
for our families and friends

The Lord's Prayer VU 960

One: Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory is yours, God most holy,
now and forever.

Two: *Amen*

Breaking the Bread and Filling the Cup

*This would be the moment for you to take your own bread and juice, perhaps sharing the words
"Jesus Christ the bread of life" and "Jesus Christ the true vine." If you are with another person,
you might choose to serve the bread and juice to each other.*

Prayer after Communion

One: Holy, wise and loving God,
you provide illumination to the world.

Two: *Light our hearts so that we, like the wise ones,
may be led to experience your presence.*

One: May we leave this table so filled with your
radiance that we may become beacons of your
love and hope to the world. Amen.

Closing Music: "A Light is Gleaming" VU 82

Refrain:

*A light is gleaming,
spreading its arms
throughout the night,
living in the light.
Come share its gladness,
God's radiant love is burning bright,
living in the light.*

*When light comes pouring into the darkest place,
it hurts our eyes to see the glow.
Sometimes a word of hope reminds us of our fears,
our memories and tears.*

Refrain:

*When night is round us and every shadow grows,
a star is there to light our way.
It tells a story of Jesus, who came near to say:
“God’s light will ever stay.”*

Refrain:

*So let us live in the brightness God has giv’n,
and let us rise to see the dawn.
We trust that God is here a sparkle and ablaze,
warming all our days.*

Refrain:

Blessing:

Go from this time of worship and celebration renewed
and re-committed to letting God’s light shine in your hearts.
Go back to routines and back to living spaces
accompanied and illuminated by God’s light in Jesus.
Go into the world which needs God’s light, led by the Spirit –
Amen

*For those who wish to remain to visit, you will be invited to turn on your microphones and
stay on the ZOOM call.*

Rev. Joanne's Reflection: Following the Light

Gazing at the night sky has always been an awe-inspiring event for me, whether it was sharing the new-found stars with suburban Girl Guides who had never seen the heavens without city light pollution, or laying on the cottage deck with my children on warm summer nights. We know that stars are suns and some planets flinging their light across time and space. We have a notion about how far away they are, and we can learn their patterns in the sky that can help us navigate or orient ourselves. Giant telescopes have given us images of space that could not have been imagined by the star-watchers in Matthew's gospel.

Yet they must have experienced some awe, some urgent importance in the stars they watched, especially in their discovery of the rising star in our story. Their observations led them to travel the long path to Jerusalem and eventually Bethlehem, bringing gifts that were precious to them. The light they followed must have been overwhelmingly compelling and its message to them clear: A king like no other has come into the world, one that should be seen and honoured, worshipped and adored.

These wise ones, these foreign ones, follow God's light and discover God's love come to life. God clearly wants this news shared beyond boundaries of culture, faith or belief, beyond the political borders of states or countries, beyond the powerful and the elite. Their visit to Herod and his resulting fear and trickery are no match for God's message – sent in a star, seen in the faith and surety of those travellers, and witnessed in a small child.

This is a larger-than-life story of learned ones using all their knowledge and perceptions as they did their work, open to revelation – open to an epiphany. And once that Godly light was discovered, they followed with action. As we do our daily tasks, are we as open as the wise ones to the possibility of encountering revelation? Are we open to signs pointing to God's love alive in the world? Could we follow the light?

In our congregation, I believe we see and follow the light when we recognize the needs of others, and act upon that recognition. This community recognized that LGBTQ+ individuals and other people who have found themselves on the margins of our society for many reasons had not always found welcome in our churches, and works to change that reality through its work as an Affirming Congregation. This community gives generously to the work of Mission and Service in the United Church, and to outreach projects that support others. This congregation follows the Light in paid staff that provide programming and connection for our children and youth. As individuals, we can continue to be open to that light as we continue through these pandemic days, remembering that staying apart may allow God's light to continue to shine in and through the people we love. We may not be able to travel like the wise ones, but our thoughts and our voices can travel to others.

One aspect of this story that has always been significant for me is the very last line: "And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road."

It reminds me that once we have encountered the light and the love of God in Jesus, our paths may never be the same. The wise ones saw it when Jesus was only a toddler. We have his whole life and teachings to point us in new directions, and to illuminate our thinking. Like the wise ones who contemplated the stars, perhaps Jesus should be the focus of our studies and our attention. Who knows where the light we experience will lead us?

Amen