



SUNDAY WORSHIP

Epiphany Sunday

January 3, 2021

9:00am

**“Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”**
— Martin Luther King, Jr.

Prelude

We Three Kings
arr. Lennie Niehaus

Welcome

Call to Worship

The Magi had a dream.

They dreamed of a Messiah. They dreamed of just rulers. They dreamed of a new day for all people.

The Magi had a dream, and this dream led them to action.

They journeyed to unknown places. They followed a star. They walked for days to get to Jesus.

May we be like the Magi,

May our dreams inspire action. May we worship the one true God. Amen.

Opening Prayer

O God of the winter cold and of the summer heat, we worship you.

Yours is the earth in all its fullness, and yours are our lives with all their complications.

We gather to worship you and to commit ourselves in this new year to faith and faithfulness.

Tune our hearts to sing your songs; lift our eyes to see your light;

Give us voice to praise you in word and in countless deeds of faith and faithfulness. Amen.

Hymn # 152

What Star Is This, with Beams So Bright

Prayer of Confession

God, I love to worship you when the stars are bright above me. I love to worship you when the sky is clear, and the breeze just right. I love to worship you when the journey to Bethlehem is an easy one.

Unfortunately, as you know, this journey of life, love, and faith is rarely easy. Now and again, the stars disappear. My feet get blisters, and the journey is far too long and lonely. On these days, forgive me for giving up quickly. Forgive me for allowing the dream to die and for taking the shortcut home. I want to be as brave as the Magi. I want to persevere. Guide my feet. Show me the stars. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The God who sent Jesus to reveal eternal love has made provision for all our sins, now and long into the future.

So, let's not hide in the shadows but come out into the light of divine forgiveness.

Friends, hear, believe and share the good news:

In Jesus Christ, we all are forgiven. Alleluia! Amen!

Response

Glo-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o!
Glo-ri-a in ex-cel-sis De-o!

Angels We Have Heard on High

Ministry Updates

Giving and Receiving of Tithes and Offerings

Children's Message

Prayer of Dedication

Hymn # 151

We Three Kings of Orient Are

Prayer for Illumination

God of the Milky Way, we, like the Magi, are walking toward you. One foot in front of the other, we are walking toward you. It is our very prayer to move your way. So, if you can, leave the light on and the front door unlocked. Leave a fire in the hearth and food on the stove. And when we start to get lost or doubt our dreams, give us the will to persevere. We are walking toward you, O God. So, like the parent that throws open the door, open the door to us through this text. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

Wise Travelers for the East came to visit the Baby Jesus and to offer gifts.

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

God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen
arr. Lennie Niehaus

Prayers of the People

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

Hymn # 150

As with Gladness Men of Old

Scripture Reading

John 1:10-18

We are reminded that something as simple as a baby's birth can—and did—change the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Sermon

"The Big Picture"

Bob Sheldon

Affirmation of Faith

**We believe in God,
Who came to this earth as a child,
Was born to unmarried teenage parents,
And was quickly made a refugee.
We believe that this child grew up to heal the sick,
See the poor,
Dine with outcasts,
Welcome foreigners,
Wash the feet of sinners,
Offer second chances,
And bless the children.
And so, we believe that Christmas is only the beginning.
The dream does not end with a manger.
The dream ends with God's promised day.
So, until all God's children are home,
We will follow the Magi's lead—
Walking, seeking, and looking up.
May it be so, for this we believe. Amen.**

Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

Invitation to the Table

Prayer of Great Thanksgiving

Partaking of the Elements (*please gather your bread/crackers/etc. and juice/coffee/etc. in your home*)

Prayer after Communion

In this meal we have tasted and seen that you are good, O Lord. Give us hearts filled with your love, minds zealous to know you, hands and feet willing to serve you, and wills set on following you into the world, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Hymn # 459

O Word of God Incarnate

Blessing and Response

Postlude

Arrival of the Queen of Sheba
George Frideric Handel

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT FIRST PRES

Leading us in worship today are Rev. Bob Sheldon, Interim Pastor; Rev. Caroline Cupp, Executive Pastor; Sandor Kadar, Director of Music; Lyndsay Varsaci, soprano; Evan Roberts, trumpet.

Today we Celebrate Epiphany, which had its origins in the Eastern Christian Church and was a general celebration of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. We include the commemoration of his birth and the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem. Join us in celebrating and receiving the Newborn King, the Light of the World.

Spiritual Connections Women's Group: All women are welcome to participate in Spiritual Connections on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of every month at 6:30 p.m. Zoom has enabled this group to continue meeting through the winter. On January 11 and 25 the group will discuss specific broadcasts/podcasts of On Being. Links will be shared in advance. Starting February 8, the next book discussion will focus on *Holy Envy: Finding God in the Faith of Others* by Barbara Brown Taylor. We will seek to find the sacred in unexpected places. Please obtain your own copy of the book. Questions or requests for Zoom links: Ellen Endslow at eendslow@verizon.net.

New Bridge study starts this week: The Wednesday night adult study group resumes this week, starting at 6:30 pm on January 6. We will begin a six week study based on Brian McLaren's book *The Great Spiritual Migration: How the World's Largest Religion Is Seeking a Better Way To Be Christian*. The content presented will help us prepare for the transition conversations that First Pres will be having later this year. Contact Sara Pantazes for more information and the Zoom link.

The January Anti-Racism Conversation will take place on Sunday, January 17 from noon – 1 pm. This month's session will have a more prayerful focus as we spend time sitting with a prayer of lament written by a First Pres member, reflect on where we as a country and where we as a community have traveled since we started this anti-racism work last summer, and where we hope to go from here. This session coincides with the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday and we hope many of you will join us for this time of remembrance and reflection.

Winter Women's Group: All ladies are invited this winter to join in a monthly women's group via Zoom on the first Wednesdays of the month at 6:30 p.m. We'll spend an hour or so catching up with one another and having good conversation. No need to prep ahead and no need to sign up! Our next Zoom will be Wednesday, Jan. 6 at 6:30 p.m. Email Elizabeth Hess for the Zoom link, or access it in the weekly email (ehess@firstpreswc.com).