

## *Epiphany Sunday* January 3, 2021

(If you are home read the prayers and scripture readings and recite the Creed aloud, even if you are by yourself, in order to hear with the ears each one. Sing or read the final hymn aloud. If you are worshipping in person, please follow along silently.)

**Prepare for worship:** Sit in silence or with soft music for a few moments

**Call to Worship:**

*What Gift Can We Bring v.1*

What gift can we bring, what present, what token?

What words can convey it, the joy of this day?

When grateful we come, remembering, rejoicing,  
what song can we offer in honor and praise?

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**Centering Words:**

Light shines in the darkness. A star guides our way to the Christ-child. Hope is born again.

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**Prayer of the Day:**

God of promise and light, open our eyes this morning, that we may see your light in the darkness. Open our hearts that we may perceive your promises of justice and righteousness fulfilled on the babe of Bethlehem. May we, like the Magi, have a star to guide us on our journey quest to find the one who will truly set us free. May this time of worship bring us closer to you, that the good news of the birth of light and love will transform our lives. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray:

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**The Lord's Prayer:**

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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

**Affirmation of Faith:** Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

Old Testament Reading Isaiah 60: 1-6

Psalm72: 1-7, 10-14

Epistle Reading Ephesians 3: 1-12

Special Music

Gospel Reading Matthew 2: 1-12

Sermon *What Gift Can We Bring?*

**Hymn:**

*In the Bleak Midwinter*

1. In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,  
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;  
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,  
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.
2. Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;  
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign.  
In the bleak midwinter a stable place sufficed  
the Lord God Almighty, Jesus Christ.
3. Angels and archangels may have gathered there,  
cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;  
but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,  
worshiped the beloved with a kiss.
4. What can I give him, poor as I am?  
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;  
if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;  
yet what I can I give him: give my heart.  
From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989 The United Methodist Publishing House, (221)

**Benediction:**

Like the Magi let us follow the light to the Christ child. Let us give to him the most desired gift, our lives. Amen.

**Response:** *God Be with You till We Meet Again*

God be with you till we meet again;

by his counsels guide, uphold you,

with his sheep securely fold you;

God be with you till we meet again.

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## Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: *John D. Jordan* AV Assistant: *K. C. Warble*  
Church Musician: *Christopher A. McCroskey*

**“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...”**

Francis Hipp Steve Aiello Patsy Shuler John Ballentine Oren Edwards  
Jimmy Grahl Steve White Esther Carter Latson Lewis Ellen Matthews  
George Taylor

**Shut-Ins:** Shirley Butler; Sara Efron; Carolyn Hardee; Francis & Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Georgeann Pace; Shirley Padgett; Jean Raynor; Grover Shuler; Claudia Sineath; Wayne Tallon; Irvin Wells

**Family and Friends:** **Kelly Knapp** (wife of Laurie Knapp's nephew); **Paul Kidney** (son-in-law of Charles & Jackie McNeill); **Ruby Pennington** (friend of Laurie Knapp); **Rick Baldwin** (nephew of Tommy Johnson); **Iris Turlington** (aunt of John Zeigler); **Billy & Betty Jean Newton** (brother and sister-in-law of Mary Kamoroff); **Ellen Smith** (sister-in-law of Dee Senn); **Jimmy Brooks** (Brother-in-law of Boots Morgan); **Tonya Spires** (friend of the Derricks); **J. B. & Stephanie Martindale** (cousins of Christopher McCroskey); **Linda Hargett** (stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); **Ollie Shelly** (friend of the Derricks); **Brenlee Carnes**; **Danielle Spotts** (co-worker of Kathy White); **Vickie Edwards** (neighbor of Kathy White); **Vicki Beatty**, **Connie Mason**, **Brenda Grier** (friends of Lynn Martin); **Allen & Lisa Fort** (cousins of the Jordans); **David Price & Family**, **Ty Moore**, **Julie Stroud**, **Fran Huck**, **George Dorn** (friends of Kay Jordan); **Teddy Derrick** (uncle of Arvan Derrick); **Haidee Baehr** (friends of Ruth Frady); **Dianne Schmotzer** (sister-in-law of Gale Frady); **Denise Paul** (cousin of Gale Frady); **Billy Johnson**, **Max Johnson**, **Beth Branham** (friends of Gale Frady); **Ray Culbreth's Group House**; **Nellie Gantt** (mother of friend of Ray Culbreth); **Amelia Zinski** (great-niece of Linda Maloch); **Wayne Blair** (son of Dot Johnson); **Xavier Crane** (grandnephew of John Ballentine); **Janet Beck** (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); **Charles & Vera Von Glahn** (brother & sister-in-law of Jo Ann Heiting); **Michael Carter** (son of Esther Carter); **Adam Lavender** (son of Phil Lavender)

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at [trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com](mailto:trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com).

### OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 12/27 Worship: 13

### OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 12/27 \$ 30,540.00

### OUR SERVICE ...

### OUR WITNESS.”



Ministers	The Congregation
Pastor	John D. Jordan
Resident Bishop	Jonathan Holston
District Superintendent	Rev. Dr. Cathy Jamieson

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***Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.***

***Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform***



## EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

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The wise men from the east came to Jerusalem seeking the child born king of the Jews. They saw the star in the sky and recognized its importance. Apparently, they had been watching for such an astronomical event and discerned its meaning. They journeyed to Jerusalem to the palace of the King where they were certain the king of the Jews would be. Not finding the baby there they continued on following the star to the place where the child was. They presented their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. After their encounter with the child, they went home by a different way.

We all want an encounter with the king; not any earthly king, but the king whose kingdom is that of heaven. We want to encounter the king who God sent into the world to save the world, the one who would restore humanity into its proper relationship with God. Like the wise men we search and wait for the sign of the coming king.

While the wise men watched and waited for the sign of the star which foretold the birth of the king, we may also watch and wait for the sign of the coming king. Does that mean we scour the sky looking for astronomical signs, like the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn that we may have watched on the 21<sup>st</sup>?

No, we don't watch and wait for astronomical signs, but we do discern the sign of the king in other ways. We discern the sign of the king in the means of grace, which Wesley defines as "outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men, preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."<sup>1</sup> We discern the sign of the coming of the king into our lives in our daily devotionals, prayer and Bible reading. We discern the sign of the coming of the king into our lives in our communal worship. We discern the sign of the coming of the king into our lives in the sacraments: Baptism and Communion. We discern the sign of the coming of the king into our lives in our acts of mercy: feeding the hungry, visiting the sick, clothing the naked, and other acts of kindness. We discern the sign of the coming of the king in our lives as we work for justice in the world. We discern the sign of the coming of the king in our lives in the ways that God conveys to us divine grace.

God may not reveal the coming of the king to us in the ways and places we may expect. The wise men expected to find the child born to be king of the Jews in the king's palace in Jerusalem. That would be the most logical place, but that was not where the child was. God does not always reveal the coming of the king to us only in church on Sunday mornings. God may reveal the coming of the king into our lives in other places and in other ways.

Though the king of the Jews was not in the palace of the king in Jerusalem, the wise men continued on following the star to Bethlehem, where they found the child born to be the king of the Jews. Though they did not find the child in the expected place they continued on their journey until they found the child. When we do not find the king coming to us in the expected places, we continue looking, following the guidance of God as the wise men followed God's guidance of the star. We listen. When we attune ourselves to the mysterious nature of God, we may discern the king coming to us in very unexpected ways.

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<sup>1</sup> John Wesley, Sermon 16, "The Means of Grace", From the Thomas Jackson Edition of *The Works of John Wesley*: (Accessed 7 February 2007) available from <http://new.gbgm-umc.org/umhistory/wesley/16/>, Sec II par 1

The king may come to us as a street person who guides a distressed young woman lost in a strange city back to her car. The king may come to us as we stand over the grave of a loved one. The king may come to us in situations in which there is conflict, giving the courage and strength not to retaliate with words of hurt and anger. The king may come to us in the words of a stranger on the street, or in a song. The king may come to us through the notes of music or the sounds of nature. The wise men found the king in a small insignificant village with a common laborer and his young wife as parents. We may find the king coming to us in just such extraordinary ways as we keep ourselves open to the guidance of God, just as the wise men continued to follow the star.

The wise men presented their gifts to the king: gold, frankincense, myrrh. They paid homage to the king with these gifts. We may want to present gifts to the king who comes to us. But what gifts can we bring? What gifts can we give to the divine king? Our money is worthless. Our talents seem so inadequate. Whatever resources we may have are too puny. What gift can we give to this king who comes to us?

The gold, frankincense, and myrrh that the wise men gave were tokens to the king for whom they were searching. Gold, frankincense and myrrh were not the real gift that they gave the divine king in that encounter in Bethlehem. The real gift that they gave was that they went home by another road. The word for road can also be translated as way. So, while literally they went home on another road, they also went home by another way. After all the watching and waiting, after the long journey to this unexpected place, after their encounter with the king, they went home another way. They followed the command of God instead of the command of Herod, indicating a change of heart, and they went home another way.

What can we give him, this king who comes to us? This is the question in the final verse of the hymn *In the Bleak Midwinter*.

What can I give him poor that I am?  
if I were a Wise Man, I would do my part;

If I were a shepherd, I would give a lamb;  
yet what I can give him: give my heart.

I can give my heart, not in the sense of emotion and sentimentality but in the sense of our very being. We give to the king that comes to us ourselves, our very existence. We give our lives.

The wise men gave their lives to watching and waiting for the coming sign of the king of the Jews. When the sign presented itself, they followed the star. They followed the star to the place that was expected and then onward to the unexpected place. After they encountered the king, they were transformed and went home a different way. This was the real gift of the wise men. Not the gold frankincense and myrrh, but their lives dedicated to finding, paying homage and following the rule of the king who came.

When we dedicate our lives to searching for the signs of the king who comes to us, we follow those signs to our encounter with the king. From the encounter with the king, we are transformed from following the rule of the world to the rule of God by living a different way. We give the gift that the king truly wants. The king who comes to us wants our lives to be lived according to the rule of that king, a rule of peace, love, mercy and compassion. Let us give the king that comes to us the gift of our lives, the gift truly desired.