

Order of Worship

Epiphany Sunday, January 3, 2021

WELCOME

PRELUDE *Puer Nobis Nascitur* N. le Bègue

CALL TO WORSHIP Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 UMH 795-796

HYMN 245 *The First Noel* THE FIRST NOEL

SCRIPTURE Isaiah 60:1-6

PASTORAL PRAYER AND 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.

HYMN 254 *We Three Kings* KINGS OF ORIENT

SCRIPTURE Matthew 2:1-12

MESSAGE Rev. Kari Riley

GENEROSITY, INVITATIONS and CELEBRATIONS

HYMN 219 *What Child Is This?* GREENSLEEVES

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Postlude on REGENT SQUARE* A. Rowley

Prayer Corner

We lift up Darlene and Derald Kell as they grieve the sudden loss of their son, Steven, on Dec. 22. Lord, hold them with your arms of comfort and heart of compassion. Bring your peace and healing as they grieve with their extended family, including Steven's widow Cheryl, sons Brian and Jason, and many other family and friends. Amen.

LEAVING HOME Rev. Kari Riley, Buena Vista UMC, Amherst

Epiphany is the “Aha” moment. We gain clearer perspective and it all comes together in our minds. The Magi are the first non-Jewish people God nudged to seek Jesus. Jesus came for all people, for us. Sometimes we question if we are in **the right place at the right time**. Yes, we are! God wants us here and He is present in the details of our lives.

You might have recently read about the Christmas Star from the news or social media sources. The alignment of the planets Jupiter and Saturn created a bright “star” in the sky on the winter solstice. It has not happened for 800 years and won’t happen again for some time. How many people would have known of this event if it wasn’t in the media? Most of us don’t follow or watch stars for changes or occurrences. We have modern sources, weather apps, calendars, and GPS to guide, inform, and lead us, right?

We can speculate on the similarities of the planet conjunction to the first Christmas Star or a comet. Whatever the “Star” was, it intrigued the scholars (Magi) whose job was to study the sky. It led them to Jesus. It was God’s stupendous sign of a magnificent event. They were in **the right place at the right time** for their “Aha” moment. I would presume the star may not have been the most accurate GPS. How do you follow a star on a cloudy night? Did it shine during the day, like a moon? The star guided them, but they needed to seek Christ as well, listen to credible sources, do the traveling and the “hard work”.

When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem to “ask directions”, I envision something like a news brief session with Herod, high priests, and religious leaders all discussing the prophet Micah’s words, the Star appearance, and time frame. The people gathered around listening in, and everyone getting uptight because of Herod’s anxiousness. In a private meeting with the Magi, Herod declares: *“Go find this baby, leave no stone unturned, when you find him, let me know where he is so I can go worship him.”* Leadership can really drive outcomes, both today and in days of antiquity.

The Magi continue to follow the star and find the child in Bethlehem in Mary’s arms. They bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They go another route home because they are warned in a dream to not tell Herod. Certainly, the Magi listened and were in the **“right place, at the right time!”**

Mary and Joseph, the Magi, and the Shepherds have some things in common. They were all leaving home. They were nomadic, itinerant, living and working where they landed. Making a home in fields, caves, family units, and villages. Some of us feel we are living like this, moving from town to town, house to house, and job to job, day to day. Good News - God is with you always! You are in **the right place at the right time** by God's grace and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Sometimes good news feels like bad news. It is inconvenient, hard, frustrating, or unfair. Like in Jerusalem, Herod and his advisors wanted the status quo. They didn't want change and the thought of this "infant king" frightened them. We are called to share the Good News, but sometimes that causes a negative reaction and resistance among people and situations.

The prophet Micah wrote "A leader will Shepherd-rule my people". I know pastors get coined "Shepherds" to our congregations. I need to share that I am also a shepherd farmer to goats...yup! About 300 of them! It's a full-time job, but I don't watch over them in fields day and night. They do require daily care, interaction, and supervision. Shepherds care, tend, feed, lead, and protect their herd. People are not much different. We need a community to care, tend, feed, guide and protect one another. We need leaders who Shepherd-rule - to care, protect, and lead people closer to God. This is not exerting power for power's sake, but actually caring for all people and stewardship of the earth's land, animals and resources.

We, who are looking for the sign like the Star, will have the "Aha" moment, our Epiphany. Those who are sensitive and who are willing to open their hearts will *really* have their lives changed. Our hearts are a reflection of our Christian homes. We are Christ's family. What will we do to reflect Christ? The Fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5 are a great starting point. We can filter our daily actions through Galatians 5:22-23. Are we choosing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity/goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control in our actions? What risks will you take for Christ's sake? What financial gifts and talents can we give our families, community, and churches? Where can we show up at **the right place at the right time** and do the hard work as the hands and feet of Jesus? Perhaps we are called to participate in food pantry collections, serve community meals, volunteer at crisis shelters and homeless shelters,

join a prison ministry, stand up for injustice, be a voice for minorities? Look in your own backyard.

We are called to Shepherd-rule like Christ, protecting Earth, keeping people safe, promoting equality for all people, and sharing the “Good News of Jesus Christ”. I wrote a prayer that each of my families received in their 12 Days of Christmas envelope attached to Crayola Multi-cultural crayon box, showcasing all the hues of people around the world.

Crayon Prayer, by Pastor Kari Riley

God, you created the universe! You are amazing!

You created ALL people, even ME!

ALL people from every corner of the globe.

People of all colors, creeds and nations.

ALL created in Your image, the “Imago Dei”.

Diminish my natural prejudices against those who are different than ME.

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, help me reach out & stand up to injustice against the minority, underprivileged & oppressed, just as He has done so many times for me.

ALL people are created in Your image! Color my world with many hues.

Thank You Jesus! Amen (*Genesis 1, Genesis 11*)

Shepherd-rule means loving and caring for neighbor, taking risks for others and having faith in Christ and ourselves despite the conditions we are up against. We are in **the right place at the right time**. We may not follow stars, we do follow Christ, who Shepherd - rules. We need to continue to be a reflection of Christ in our daily lives.

The first verse of *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light* (206 UMH) is fitting:

“I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.

God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus.”

Follow your Star, Jesus Christ! Open your hearts and see your “Aha” Epiphany. Because Christ lives in our hearts, we are in **the right place at the right time**, no matter where home is. Glory to God, Amen