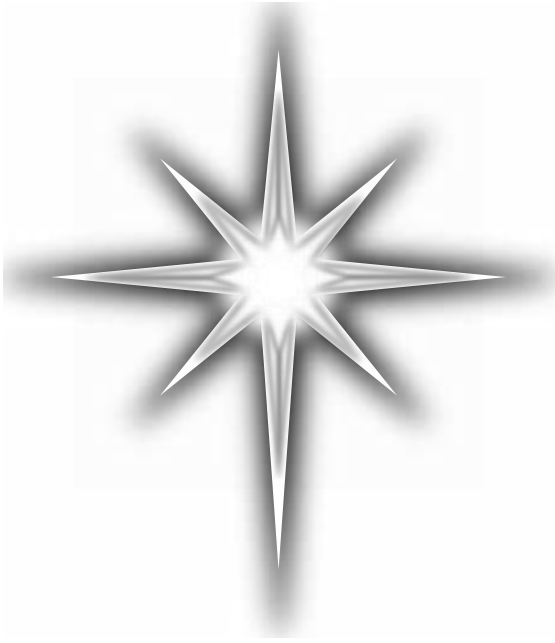


Epiphany Sunday

January 7, 2024

10:30 a.m. Worship



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. *Matthew 2:9*

First Presbyterian Church

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COMMISSIONED LOCAL PASTOR: DR. WENDY L. LAMB

MINISTRY OF PASTORAL SUPPORT: REV. DR. STEPHEN SMITH

MINISTRY OF VISITATION: LAURIE STAFFORD

MINISTRY OF MUSIC: CURTISS ALLEN, JR., DIRECTOR OF MUSIC;

WILLIAM ZEITLER, ORGANIST;

AMY GANO, BELLS

PASTOR EMERITUS: REV. JAMES C. HUFFSTUTLER

Welcome to Worship at First Presbyterian Church

This service is being livestreamed and can be viewed on our YouTube channel in real time or as a recording. **Large-print copies of this order of service**, as well as **audio enhancement devices** are available **from the ushers**.

“In ancient times, wise men and women fled out into the desert to find a place where they could be fully present to the divine and to their own inner struggles at work within them. The desert became a place to enter into the refiner’s fire and be stripped down to one’s holy essence. The desert was a threshold place where you emerged different than when you entered.

Many people followed these ammas and abbas, seeking their wisdom and guidance for a meaningful life. One tradition was to ask for a Word – this word or phrase would be something on which to ponder for many days, weeks, months, sometimes a whole lifetime. This practice is connected to *lectio divina*, where we approach the sacred texts with the same request – “give me a word” we ask – something to nourish me, challenge me, a word I can wrestle with and grow into. The word which chooses us has the potential to transform us.”
-Christine Valters-Paintner

On this Epiphany Sunday, you are invited to draw a star from the basket. Each one has a star-word on the back, which you may wish to use as a Word for beginning a new year. If your word does not appeal to you, you may wish to pray with it, and wonder about why you would not have chosen it. At the close of worship, you may exchange your word for another on your way out, should you wish. Thanks to Christa and Mary who made these star-words.

OUR NEXT COMMUNION will be Sunday, February 4th.

Morning Worship†

REFLECTION before the SERVICE

Isn't it about time? Wars and rumors of war blight the landscape where Jesus was born! Guns and bombs fill the air, so loud we can't hear the angels singing! But wait! Isn't that a choir, singing? Aren't those three men heading toward that little house? I think I see sheep heading toward that house: and isn't that a light over the house: NO, it's a star!! Do you suppose...? Yes, we're here, at last!

--Larry Marona

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME and ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

Gentle Graces

William Zeitler

INTROIT

*From the Rising of the Sun*¹

Eric H. Thiman

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name be praised.

*LIGHTING of the CANDLE²

We have followed the star to Epiphany. We light this candle to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, Light of the World.

✘ **The light shines in the darkness
and the darkness cannot put it out.**

Today we've come together to worship God as we hear and celebrate the story of Jesus' birth and the coming of the Magi. We've followed the star, God's light, to Bethlehem so come and join the celebration.

*HYMN 146

Gentle Mary Laid her Child

TEMPUS ADEST FLORIDUM

† The symbols you will see in this order of worship mean:

*** Stand if you are able** **✘ The congregation will read.**

¹ ©1962 The H. W. Gray Company. All rights reserved. Used by permission of OneLicense #A706254.

² Many pieces of this service liturgy were adapted from Follow the Star: A Christmas Day All Ages Service of the Word

PRAYER of CONFESSION³

Lord Jesus, you were born for our salvation.

Forgive us when we forget to live your way:

Lord, have mercy.

✘ **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you came as Saviour to bring wholeness and peace:

forgive us when we are angry or hold grudges:

Christ, have mercy.

✘ **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you come to bring light into the darkness of our lives:

forgive us when we turn away from your light:

Lord, have mercy.

✘ **Lord, have mercy.**

(Moment for silent reflection and confession)

✘ **Help us, your servants, according to the promises you have made.**

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

Friends, the God who loved the whole world enough sent Jesus to be our savior. Believe the good news of the gospel:

✘ **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven and are being made whole. Amen.**

***GLORIA (113)**

GLORIA

Gloria in excelsis Deo! Gloria in excelsis Deo!

TIME with the CHILDREN

[Children are welcome in worship. There are activity bags on the Narthex.

Infants through pre-Kindergarten may go to the Nursery at any time.]

How many sources of light can you think of?

ANTHEM

Watchman, Tell Us of the Night⁴

Dale Wood

Watchman, tell us of the night, What its signs of promise are. Trav'ler, o'er yon mountain's height, See that glory-beaming star. Watchman, does its beauteous ray Aught of joy or hope foretell? Trav'ler, yes, it brings the day, Promised day of Israel. Watchman, tell us of the night; Higher yet that star ascends. Trav'ler, blessedness and light, Peace and truth its course portends. Watchman, will its beams alone Gild the spot that gave them birth? Trav'ler, ages are its own; See, it bursts o'er all the earth. Watchman, tell us of the night, For the morning seems to dawn. Trav'ler, darkness takes its flight, Doubt and terror are withdrawn. Watchman, let thy wand'rings cease; Hie

³ Joanna Harader, Spacious Faith, based on the Magnificat

⁴ Text. John Bowring, 1825. Music: Dale Wood. ©1965 The H.W. Gray Co, Inc.. All rights reserved. Used by permission of ONELICENSE #A706254.

thee to thy quiet home. Trav'ler, lo! the Prince of Peace, Lo! the Son of God is come!

SCRIPTURE

That first Christmas, there was lots of light around as Jesus the Light of the World was born. This is the story of how the wise ones saw a star in the sky and found their way to Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-12

New Testament, pg. 36

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✠ **Thanks be to God.**

HYMN 151

We Three Kings v. 1,2

KINGS OF ORIENT

**We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.**

Refrain: **O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!**

**Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never
over us all to reign. (Refrain)**

REFLECTION *Following the Star: The Manger* Pastor Wendy Lamb

HYMN 151

We Three Kings v. 3, 4

KINGS OF ORIENT

**Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a deity nigh;
prayer and praising gladly raising,
worshipping God Most High. (Refrain)**

**Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb. (Refrain)**

REFLECTION *Following the Star: The Cross* Pastor Wendy Lamb

HYMN 151

We Three Kings v. 5

KINGS OF ORIENT

Glorious now behold him arise,

King and God and Sacrifice:
Alleluia! Alleluia!
sounds through the earth and skies. *(Refrain)*

REFLECTION *Following the Star: The Doorway* Pastor Wendy Lamb

HYMN 151

We Three Kings *(Refrain)*

KINGS OF ORIENT

**O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!**

THE OFFERING of OUR TITHES and GIFTS

(We offer our gifts as a response to God's Word, to be part of God's purposes in the world. You may place gifts in the plate during the offertory, or on your way out – or by mail or online.)

OFFERTORY

***DOXOLOGY**

OLD HUNDREDTH

✘ **Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost, Amen.**

SACRAMENT of the LORD'S SUPPER

INVITATION to the LORD'S TABLE

SURSUM CORDA

The Lord be with you.

✘ **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

✘ **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

✘ **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

GREAT PRAYER of THANKSGIVING

The Congregation responds:

God, in your mercy

✘ **Hear our prayer.**

SANCTUS

James C. Huffstutler

✘ **Holy, holy, Lord Almighty, God of power and might.**

Heaven and earth are full of your glory, Glory in the highest.

Blessed, blessed,
blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna, hosanna,
Hosanna in the highest.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE, OUR LORD'S PRAYER

God, in your mercy

✘ **Hear our prayer.**

And now we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us

✘ **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.**

PRAYER of CONSECRATION

THE WORDS of INSTITUTION

WE SHARE GOD'S GIFTS

*As you return to your seats,
we invite you to take a star to pray with this year.*

(Communion will be served by intinction at two stations. As you feel ready, please come up the center aisle to a station, receive a piece of bread, dip it in the cup, eat it, and return to your seat by the side aisle. The cup is non-alcoholic. Gluten-free bread can be found at the station by the pulpit. There will be rovers to bring the elements to you if you do not wish to come forward.)

SUNG PRAYERS

As we go forward, as we wait and pray before & after- we sing our prayers together. The refrains are sung over & over as we make them our own.

SUNG REFRAIN 90 *Wait for the Lord*⁵ *Jacques Berthier*
Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord, be strong take heart!

⁵ Text: Psalm 27; adapt Taizé Community. Music Jacques Berthier., ©1984 Les Presses de Taizé (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.) All rights reserved. Used by permission of ONELICENSE #A706254.

SUNG REFRAIN 842 *The Lord Is My Light*⁶ *Jacques Berthier*

The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:
in God I trust; in God I trust.

The Lord is my light, my light and salvation:
in God I trust; in God I trust.

SUNG REFRAIN 583 *Gloria, Gloria*⁷ *Jacques Berthier*

Gloria, gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, gloria, alleluia, alleluia!

PRAYER after COMMUNION

✘ Here we have tasted your goodness and grace,
felt the nearness of your Spirit and the power of Community.
Help us to follow wherever you lead
And share the gifts we've been given. Amen.

*HYMN 145 *What Child Is This?* GREENSLEEVES

*MOMENT for REFLECTION

*CHARGE and BENEDICTION

*SUNG RESPONSE *Sevenfold Amen* *John Stainer*

*POSTLUDE *Improvisation*

GREETERS: Phyllis Hough, Meryll Davis

USHERS: Lynn Usher, *Lead Usher*

Chris Thomas, Tim Usher, *Security Ushers*

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord

LIVESTREAM ENGINEER: James Welte

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

⁶ Text: Psalm 27; adapt Taizé Community. Music Jacques Berthier., ©1991 Les Presses de Taizé (admin. GIA Publications, Inc.) All rights reserved. Used by permission of ONELICENSE #A706254.

⁷ © 1979, 1981, Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent. All rights reserved. Used by permission of ONELICENSE #A706254.

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

Ruth Alexander, Doris Schiavone, Judy Steppins

Elders: Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough, John-Paul Fletcher

Deacons: Chris Thomas, Dan Direen, Robin Edwards

This Weeks' Celebrations

Jan 10 Dwight Murray

Jan 13 Zane Preciado

Jan 11 Jean-Luc Nicks

Stephani Congdon

Dawn Morris

Annual Reports. The **Annual Reports for the year 2023 must be submitted to Session by Friday, January 12th.** If you are a committee chair (or co-chair), please send your report to Mimi Lange at pres.first@gmail.com, or to Amy Smith at amymys952@aol.com. Or you can turn them in to the church office.

Reimagine! Thank You! As of January 4, we have received **50 pledges** for a total of **\$324,744**. If you have not yet pledged, you can mail your pledge in, or drop it in the offering plate, or phone Laurie or Mimi at the church office, and we'll be happy to take your pledge over the phone.

Leonard Scholarship applications for Fall 2024 are available in the Church office and on the church website. All applications must be received in the church office no later than Feb. 28, 2024. Any questions can be emailed to Lynda Savage at Lksavage3@gmail.com

More News and announcements are available in your Friday *Keeping in Touch* emails. If you are not receiving these, and you would like to, contact Mimi in the church office.

Music Box

Once upon a time there were two towns: Erehwmorf ("fromwhere" backwards) and Erehwot ("towhere" backwards) and a highway ran between them. On this highway was an espresso stand, and the barista would chat with travelers who stopped for a grande, half-caff, double-shot, non-fat soy latte with a splash of almond milk and a pinch of nutmeg, stirred counterclockwise. Or maybe something else.

"I'm headed to Erehwot," said one customer, "and I'm wondering what the people there are like?"

"How were they back in Erehwmorf?" asked the barista.

"They were terrible. Rude. Cheat you at the slightest opportunity. Just generally miserable to be around," said the customer.

"I expect that's how you'll find folks in Erehwot too."

A little while later our barista was chatting with another customer. "I'm headed to Erehwot," they said, "and I'm wondering what the people there are like?"

"How were they back in Erehwmorf?" asked the barista.

"They were wonderful! Helpful. Friendly. You couldn't ask for nicer folks. Hated to leave!" said the customer.

"I expect that's how you'll find folks in Erehwot too."

+++

The words "pessimist" and "optimist" make it sound as if there are only two ways to be, but in fact there's an entire spectrum between the two, ranging from "utter destruction is right around the corner," to "world peace and the end of all want are nearly upon us." Reality is probably somewhere in between.

The problem is, predicting the future is about as reliable as predicting the weather. Weatherpersons do a good job of predicting the weather a week or so out, but farther than that things get increasingly murky, and frequently their predictions go completely off the rails. Same with trying to predict the future generally.

Meanwhile, both mega-pessimism and mega-optimism have their problems. If one is mega-pessimistic, then there's no point in doing anything. Might as well go climb under a rock and wait for the inevitable. Meanwhile, mega-optimistic can be problematic too. If you think "world peace and the end of all want are nearly upon us," those are enormous issues too big for little old me to do anything about. Someone else has to make those grand things

happen. So the temptation is to do nothing and just wait for this Promised Land.

In between I think there's a sweet spot which I call "micro-optimism." That is, wherever I am, I can make things just a little better. For myself, for my family, my church, everyone whose lives I touch in my micro-corner of the world. In short, my "neighbors," as Jesus put it. Micro-optimism is the belief that there's always SOMETHING I can do to make things micro-better. That frame of mind makes all the difference.

If you're the kind of person who is always looking for ways to improve things in your "neighborhood" even a little, that makes you a micro-leader. Who doesn't want to be around someone that's always trying to make things micro-better?

And since there are always micro-things we can do to make things micro-better, there's no excuse not to do them!

Here are just a few examples of what 'micro-optimism' might look like:

* Being considerate. Figuratively speaking, let's everyone hold open the door for everyone – let's have small acts of chivalry all around!

* Calm down and slow down – just a little. On the freeway, at the grocery store, everywhere.

* Listen to people. We have two ears and only one mouth. Make that your goal of how much listening vs. talking you do — two minutes of listening for every minute of talking. Bonus points if you can listen to someone with whom you disagree, and just try to understand their point of view a micro-bit better. Not embrace it — just walk in their shoes for a microsecond.

* Try micro-improvements on things you'd like to change about yourself. Overeating? Make your portions a little smaller. Need more exercise? Park a little farther away from the store. Of course, seriously tackling diet and exercise is much better. But micro-improvements at the very least are a good place to start.

* Read just one Bible verse every day. Just one!

Now is that time of year for the annual ritual of New Year resolutions that generally don't work out. Better are micro-resolutions that we really can keep! If you're alert to micro-improvements, they'll present themselves constantly. And since they're easy to implement and keep doing over the long haul, before you know it they'll make a mega-difference.

--William Zeitler



The seal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a symbolic statement of the church's heritage, identity, and mission in contemporary form. Its power depends on both its simplicity and complexity, as well as its traditional and enduring qualities.

The basic symbols in the seal are the cross, Scripture, the dove, and flames.

As a church of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), our congregational life is governed by the Ruling Elders of our current Session:

Jeanne Clark, Susan Skoglund, Alex Smith, Tim Usher, Mary Bolaños,
Brooke Dvorak, Pat Morris, Martha Pinckney, Lily Bolaños,
Margaret Doane, Jon Horstmann, Phyllis Hough,
and Clerk of Session Amy Smith

and supported by our Board of Deacons:

Rebecca Allen, Sharon Landeros, Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord,
Chris Wright-Thomas, Dan Direen, Robin Edwards, Rick Rodriguez,
Katie Smith, Brad Smith, and Dave Thomas

In this time of change for our congregation, a Mission Assessment Plan will be completed by our Mission Assessment Team:

Mary Bolaños, John-Paul Fletcher, Nancy Horstmann,
Marilyn Kraft, Jim Morris, Brent Nord, Irene Sandoval Suverkrup