

**Peace United Church of Christ  
January 4th, 2025  
Epiphany Sunday  
10:30am**



*King Tingz, Nicolette Faison*  
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Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Ringin of the Bells

\*Call to Worship

In the dark of morning,  
**the stars still shine.**  
In the depth of winter,  
**the birds still climb.**  
At the start of the year, tender and new,  
**God is here.**  
Do not dwell in fear.  
**God is here.**  
So like the stars and the birds,  
**Let us worship God.**

\*Song *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn* #107, *New Century Hymnal*

***Awake! awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning,  
sing out your joy, for Jesus is born, behold! the Child of our longing.  
Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together,  
to open wide the heavenly door, and lives now inside us for ever.***

***To us, to all in sorrow and fear, Emmanuel comes a singing,  
whose humble song is quiet and near, yet fills the earth with its ringing.  
Music to heal the broken soul and hymns of loving kindness,  
the thunder of the anthems roll to shatter all hate and injustice.***

***In deepest night Christ's coming shall be, when all the world is despairing,  
as morning light so quiet and free, so warm and gentle and caring.  
One without voice breaks forth in song, a lame one leaps in wonder,  
the weak are raised above the strong, and weapons are broken asunder.***

***Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though cold the winter and cheerless,  
the rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless;  
Love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our endless story,  
may God fill every day we share, and bring us at last into glory.***

\*Prayer of Confession

**Eternally loving God, we long for Christmas to usher in a season of peace and joy. But we know,  
just days after Christmas, we find ourselves face to face with fear once again. So today we pray:  
Forgive us when we allow fear to stop us in our tracks.  
Forgive us when our own fear prevents us from following your call.  
Forgive us when fear is louder than love.  
Transform our fear into action.  
Show us how to live like the magi who searched for you in a fearful world.  
With hope we pray, amen.**

\*Assurance of Forgiveness

Beloved, whether we are courageous or fearful, God's love for us knows no end. Let us proclaim God's forgiveness together:  
**Whether fear inspires us to action or stops us dead in our tracks, God's love for us is boundless. We are seen. We are surrounded with grace. We are sent to serve. Thanks be to God! Amen.**

\*Passing of the Peace

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

Mike Swanoski, reader

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east 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 magi 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 in the east, 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.

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word. **Thanks be to God.**

Story for All Ages

Sending the Children

***Jesus calls us in, sends us out bearing fruit in a world of doubt,  
Gives us love to tell, bread to share: God (Immanuel) everywhere!  
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again, pass the Word around: loaves abound!  
Jesus lives again, earth can breathe again, pass the Word around: loaves abound!***

Contemporary Reading      *How the Stars Get in Your Bones*, Jan Richardson

Sapphire, diamond, emerald,  
quartz:  
think of every hard thing  
that carries its own brilliance,  
shining with the luster that comes  
only from uncountable ages  
in the earth, in the dark,  
buried beneath unimaginable  
weight,  
bearing what seemed impossible,  
bearing it still.

And you, shouldering the grief  
you had thought so solid, so  
impermeable,  
the terrible anguish  
you carried as a burden  
now become—  
who can say what day it  
happened?—  
a beginning.

See how the sorrow in you  
slowly makes its own light,  
how it conjures its own fire.

See how radiant  
even your despair has become  
in the grace of that sun.

Did you think this would happen  
by holding the weight of the  
world,  
by giving in to the press of  
sadness  
and time?

I tell you, this blazing in you—  
it does not come by choosing  
the most difficult way, the most  
daunting;  
it does not come by the sheer  
force  
of your will.

It comes from the helpless place  
in you  
that, despite all, cannot help but  
hope,  
the part of you that does not  
know  
how not to keep turning  
toward this world,  
to keep turning your face  
toward this sky,  
to keep turning your heart  
toward this unendurable earth,  
knowing your heart will break  
but turning it still.

I tell you,  
this is how the stars  
get in your bones.

This is how the brightness  
makes a home in you,  
as you open to the hope that  
burnishes  
every fractured thing it finds  
and sets it shimmering,  
a generous light that will not  
cease,  
no matter how deep the darkness  
grows,  
no matter how long the night  
becomes.

Still, still, still  
the secret of secrets  
keeps turning in you,  
becoming beautiful,  
becoming blessed,  
kindling the luminous way  
by which you will emerge,  
carrying your shattered heart  
like a constellation within you,  
singing to the day  
that will not fail to come.

Choir Anthem

*Lux Aurumque*, Eric Whitacre

*Light,  
warm and heavy as pure gold  
and angels sing softly  
to the new-born babe.*

Sermon

Rev. Corinne Freedman Ellis

Song

*O Morning Star, How Clear and Bright*

#158, *New Century Hymnal*

***O Morning Star, how clear and bright,  
your beam shines forth in truth and light!  
My Sovereign meek and lowly!  
O Root of Jesse, Promised One, my God and Ruler,  
you have won my heart to serve you solely!***

**You are holy, great and glorious, all victorious,  
Rich in blessing, rule and might o'er all possessing.**

**Come heavenly Brightness, Light divine,  
and deep within my heart now shine,  
there make yourself an altar!  
Fill me with joy and strength to be your member,  
joined eternally in love that cannot falter;  
Longing for you does possess me; turn and bless me;  
Here in sadness eye and heart long for your gladness.**

Community Prayers and Pastoral Prayer

The Prayer of Jesus

**Our Creator, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kin-dom 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kin-dom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Sung Amen

Offertory

\*Doxology

**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 Holy Communion

God be with you.	<b>And also with you.</b>
Lift up your hearts.	<b>We lift them up to God.</b>
Let us give thanks to God.	<b>It is a joy to give God thanks and praise.</b>

Prayer of Consecration

Sharing the Bread and Cup

*(In the United Church of Christ all are welcome to participate in Communion. Gluten free crackers are on the tray and we use non-alcoholic grape juice.)*

Prayer After Communion

**Holy God, you always show up. Even in our fear, even in our uncertainty, you are with us. You are behind us, before us, and beside us, hemming us in with your love. Open our hearts to the gifts we have received. May this meal and these words challenge us, comfort us, and call us forward. Remind us of your presence as a star, a light shining in the darkness, pointing us toward you. Dwell with us through this moment, this season, and this year. With gratitude we pray. Amen.**

\*Closing Song *Hark! The Herald Angels Sing (Jesus, the Light of the World)* #127, *Glory to God Hymnal*

**Hark! the herald angels sing. Jesus, the light of the world.  
Glory to the newborn King, Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Refrain:**

**We'll walk in the light, beautiful light.  
Come where the dew-drops of mercy shine bright.  
O, shine all around us by day and by night.  
Jesus, the light of the world.**

**Joyful all you nations rise. Jesus, the light of the world.  
Join the triumph of the skies. Jesus, the light of the world. Refrain:**

**Christ by highest heaven adored; Jesus, the light of the world.  
Christ, the everlasting Lord; Jesus the light of the world. Refrain:**

**Hail, the heaven born Prince of Peace! Jesus, the light of the world.  
Hail, the Sun of righteousness! Jesus, the light of the world. Refrain:**

\*Benediction

\*Postlude

Assisting in Today's Service:  
Pam Kramer, Darlene Leafgren, and Laurie Berner, Ushers  
Lyn Kaim, Greeter