

Home Church Package – Sunday, Jan 10 2021 – Epiphany Sunday

By Rev. Julie Lebrun - Inlet United Church, Port Moody BC

Welcome to a time of worship

I hope your Christmas included some time of joy. Maybe you were able to see a couple of people in person or talk on the phone. Maybe you enjoyed time for quiet and contemplation this Christmas. It is certainly a Christmas season we won't forget. I hope you are all keeping safe and I hope next Christmas we have the freedom to safely gather together in person. Today we celebrate Epiphany. Happy New Year!

Opening Prayer

Guiding God,
Bless us on the road we have chosen to seek your star.
Light our path that we may not walk in darkness,
but walk with you, a light of the world.
Enable us to bring the gifts of our best selves to those around us.
Teach us to be wise and to risk sharing our unique visions and gifts with the world.
Holy One,
We open ourselves to your light, for new moments of epiphany and renewal.
May it be so, Amen.

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12 (NRSV)

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.

Reflection

We find out later in Matthew that King Herod wanted to harm baby Jesus because he saw Jesus as a threat to his power. Jesus was certainly born into a hostile world. Yet his message was one of love and inclusion for all people. The wise men come to realize that Herod wants to kill Jesus so they do not tell Herod where Jesus is and they take a different road home. The wise men are changed. They are not religious men when they set out...but are changed and come to see God incarnate when they encounter Jesus.

The season of Epiphany in the Christian church calendar is a season of light and lasts until the season of Lent. It means to show, to make manifest. Epiphany is the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12). Epiphany is a time for us to see more clearly and understand more deeply.

I had an epiphany!

Have you ever said that?

That moment when things make sense in a new way...

That moment when we see the world around us and more importantly our place in it, in a new way.

We use this word...when we see clearer...when light shines.

This is what happened to the wise men.

This is what continues to happen to us today.

The star in the story of the wise men has inspired a tradition of “Star words” or “Star Gifts” in our congregation.

This is where we write words on paper stars and pass them around and each person chooses a star at random. The word they get is a word for them to pray about and ponder and think about all year. The word is an invitation to pay attention to how God is living in your life through that word all year long.

This year we can't be together, so you have been giving a “Star Word” with your take home package. But before you look at this new Star Word, can you remember the Star Word you received last year?

I received the Star Word “Forgiveness.” When I saw it, I remember thinking, “I don't want this word.” Forgiveness is too difficult. I want “Joy” or “Peace” to be my Star Word. The year before “Imagination” was my Star Word. I liked that one. But last year I randomly drew a star with the word “forgiveness.” I really didn't want to accept this word. But interestingly, numerous times in the year...it came to me...I need to forgive...the other person...sometimes myself. Often it was for little things...sometimes is was for deeper hurts. Anyway...this past year...I have practiced forgiveness. I also sense that I'm not done, just yet, with this word “forgiveness.” God continues to work in me in regards to forgiveness. I look forward to my new “Star Word” knowing I will continue to learn about forgiveness.

Please accept your “Star Word” this year as a blessing. You may not know what it means today, but you have a whole year to let God speak to you through your Star Word. Let it speak to you and call you to do and be your best self.

Going Forth

Go into this week
With the light of Epiphany
With the love of God
The teachings of Jesus
And the power of the Holy Spirit
Go in Peace, Amen

Note

- Star Words can also be randomly chosen on our website at www.inletunited.ca
- Our Epiphany worship service can be viewed on the Golden Ears United YouTube channel as of 10:00am January 10, 2021