

Sunday Worship Service – January 4, 2026

Epiphany

Welcome

Land Acknowledgement & welcome Statement

Introduction to Epiphany

Today we celebrate the day of Epiphany which means “manifestation, appearance, or sign.” January 6 is actually the day of Epiphany but we are celebrating it this year on the closest Sunday to January 6. Epiphany concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God’s glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. The 12 Days of Christmas that we hear about in songs, etc are the 12 days between Christmas and Epiphany.

On Epiphany we also celebrate the wisemen following the star to find Jesus. Throughout the service you will hear the wisemen also referred to as the wise ones, magi, and sages. They were thought to be astrologers from Persia or Babylon.

#300 Gathering Hymn *“The First Noel”*

1. The first Noel the angel did say
 was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
 in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
 on a cold winter’s night that was so deep.
 Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
2. They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;
 and to the earth it gave great light, and so it continued both day and night.
 Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
3. And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;
 to seek for a king was their intent, and to follow the star wherever it went.
 Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
4. This star drew near to the north-west, o’er Bethlehem it took its rest;
 and there it did both stop and stay right over the place where Jesus lay.
 Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.
5. Then entered in those wise men three, full rev’rently upon their knee,
 and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.
 Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel! Born is the King of Israel.

Prayer of Confession¹

God of wisdom and truth, **forgive us when we choose to walk in darkness rather than in your radiant light. Shine through our doubts and despair, that we may trust in the hope of your mercy and grace. Shine into our selfishness and sense of entitlement, that we may live as people of generosity and compassion. Be with us now, Christ Jesus, and shine upon us! May the light of your birth shine into our darkest sorrows, and gather us into your holy presence this Christmas season and in the year ahead. Amen.**

Words of Assurance²

Arise, shine, for Christ's light has come! The glory of God has arisen upon us, and Christ's mercy has restored us with forgiveness and grace, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Arise, shine, for Christ's light is shining upon us now!

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Call to Worship³

God of gold, we seek your glory:

The richness that transforms drabness into colour, and brightens our dullness with vibrant light; your wonder and joy at the heart of all life.

God of incense, we offer you our prayer:

Our spoken and unspeakable longings, our questioning of truth, our searching for your mystery deep within.

God of myrrh, we cry out to you in our suffering:

The pain of all our rejections and bereavements, our baffled despair at undeserved suffering, our rage at continuing injustice.

¹ *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2014 Edition*, edited by Mary J. Scifres and B. J. Beu. Copyright © 2015 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.

² *The Abingdon Worship Annual 2014 Edition*, edited by Mary J. Scifres and B. J. Beu. Copyright © 2015 by Abingdon Press. Used by permission.

³ An Epiphany Prayer, p.88, written by Jan Berry from *Voices United: The Hymn Book and Worship book of The United Church of Canada*. Copyright © 1996 The United Church Publishing House

In our wealth, in our yearning, in our anger and loss,
we embrace you, God-with-us.

Holy Baptism

Sharing of the Peace

Prayer of the Day

*Radiant God, light for all people and all places, by the guidance of a star
 you led the magi to worship the Christ Child. By the light of faith
 lead us to worship you in peace and love, and guide us in your way.
 We pray in the name of Christ, light of the world. Amen.*

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

*In the reading from Isaiah, Jerusalem is assured that nations will make a
 pilgrimage to her because the light of God's presence is in her midst. The
 bountiful food of the sea and the profits of international trade will come
 streaming to Jerusalem and thereby declare God's praise.*

Arise! Shine! Your light has come; God's glory has shone upon you.
 Though darkness covers the earth and gloom the nations,
 God will shine upon you; God's glory will appear over you.
 Nations will come to your light and leaders to your dawning radiance.
 Lift up your eyes and look all around:
 they are all gathered; they have come to you.
 Your children journey from afar, escorted in safety.
 Then you will see and be radiant; your heart will tremble and open wide,
 because the sea's abundance will be turned over to you;
 the nations' wealth will come to you.
 Countless camels will cover your land, young camels from Midian and
 Ephah. They will all come from Sheba, carrying gold and incense,
 proclaiming God's praises.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:1-12

In Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus, we hear about what had been hidden from previous generations is now made known through the gospel ministry of Paul and others. In Christ both Jews and Gentiles participate in the richness of God's promised salvation.

This is why I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ for you Gentiles.

You've heard, of course, about the responsibility to distribute God's grace, which God gave to me for you, right? God showed me God's secret plan in a revelation, as I mentioned briefly before (when you read this, you'll understand my insight into the secret plan about Christ).

Earlier generations didn't know this hidden plan that God has now revealed to the holy apostles and prophets through the Spirit. This plan is that the Gentiles would be co-heirs and parts of the same body, and that they would share with the Jews in the promises of God in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I became a servant of the gospel because of the grace that God showed me through the exercise of God's power.

God gave God's grace to me, the least of all God's people, to preach the good news about the immeasurable riches of Christ to the Gentiles. God sent me to reveal the secret plan that had been hidden since the beginning of time by God, who created everything. God's purpose is now to show the rulers and powers in the heavens the many different varieties of God's wisdom through the church. This was consistent with the plan God had from the beginning of time that God accomplished through Christ Jesus. In Christ we have bold and confident access to God through faith in Jesus.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

#310 Gospel Acclamation "Song of Thankfulness and Praise" (v.1 & 4)

1. **Songs of thankfulness and praise, Jesus, Lord, to thee we raise;
manifested by the star to the sages from afar,
branch of royal David's stem in thy birth at Bethlehem:
anthems be to thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.**
4. **Grant us grace to see thee, Lord, present in thy holy word;
grace to imitate thee now and be pure, as pure art thou;
that we might become like thee at thy great epiphany,
and may praise thee, ever blest, God in flesh made manifest.**

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

God's promise shines bright in the night as magi follow a star to honor a new king. Strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited messiah of Israel.

The holy gospel according to Matthew, the 2nd chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the reign of Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked,

“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.”

When Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born.

They said, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah, because from you will come one who governs, who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

“Go and search carefully for the child. When you’ve found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him.”

When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy.

They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother.

Falling to their knees, they honored him.

Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.

The gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

#302 Hymn of the Day “As with Gladness Men of Old” (v.1-3, 5)

- 1. As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold;
as with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;
so, most gracious Lord, may we evermore be led by thee.**
- 2. As with joyful steps they sped, Savior, to thy lowly bed,
there to bend the knee before thee, whom heav’n and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet ever seek thy mercy seat.**
- 3. As they offered gifts most rare at thy cradle, rude and bare,
so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin’s alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav’nly king.**
- 5. In the heav’nly country bright need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;
there forever may we sing alleluias to our king.**

Affirmation of Faith⁴

**As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world—
which some seek to control, but which others view with despair—
we declare with joy and trust: our world belongs to God!
From the beginning, through all the crises of our times,
until God’s kingdom fully comes, God keeps covenant forever.
Our world belongs to God! Let the earth be glad!
The Spirit is at work, renewing creation. Praise the Lord!
We rejoice in the goodness of God, renounce the works of darkness,
and dedicate ourselves to holy living and loving.
As covenant partners, called to faithful obedience,
and set free for joyful praise,
we offer our hearts and lives to do God's work in God’s world.
And we are confident that the light which shines in the present darkness
will fill the earth. Come, Lord Jesus! Our world belongs to you.**

Prayers of the People for All Epiphany⁵

⁴ Adapted from “Our World Belongs to God,” articles 1, 2, 6. Posted on the [Calvin Institute for Christian Worship](#) website.

⁵ written by Rick Morley, and posted on the [Rick Morley](#) blog.

Let us pray to God, who is made manifest in Jesus Christ. Prayer petitions will end with: “Radiant God, let your light shine upon us,” and the congregation responds by praying, “receive our prayer.”

As the prophet Isaiah rang out, “Arise, shine; for your light has come;” empower your Church, O God, to ring out the good news of the light of Christ, which pierces even the deepest darkness.

Radiant God, let your light shine upon us, **receive our prayer.**

As a star rose high into the nighttime sky to draw the nations to the Christ-child; send your blessing, O God, on this nation, and every nation, and draw the whole world to your peace and truth.

Radiant God, let your light shine upon us, **receive our prayer.**

Like the wise ones who traveled from afar to bring gifts and celebrate the Savior’s birth; we pray for this community, and for all those who have something to celebrate.

Radiant God, let your light shine upon us, **receive our prayer.**

As Jesus climbed the mountaintop, and proclaimed blessings on the people of the world; we pray for the sick and the distressed, the poor and the lame. Radiant God, let your light shine upon us, **receive our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, Light of the World, hear our prayers, and make us reflections of your Light, that the places of darkness in our world would be pierced by your Light, and that all nations would be drawn to you and be overwhelmed with joy. **Amen.**

Offering

Radiant Christ, shine through these gifts, that your love may shine through them for all the world to see and follow. Shine through our lives, that your love may shine through us for all the nations to see and embrace. Amen.

Great Thanksgiving⁶

May the light of Christ shine in you and through you.

May the light of Christ shine in you and through you, as well.

Children of God, lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the One who guides us with the light of love.

People of God, let us give thanks to the One

who shines the light in us and through us.

It is right to give our thanks and praise to the Love and Light of our lives.

Epiphany: Eucharistic Prayer⁷

We give you thanks, O God, for making your love evident since the very beginning of time when you spoke the word which replaced the darkness of chaos with life-giving light. A light which has nurtured generations of people, and plants and creatures, great and small. A light which also revealed the fear and powerlessness caused by corrupt and evil actions. And so you spoke the Word which would once and for all dispel the darkness of chaotic lives. Through your love for the world the Word became flesh and lived among us full of grace and truth.

The angels carolled glory to you in the highest heavens and peace to all people on earth, and we join with them and with all people to praise your holy name:

Holy Lord, God of endless love,

heaven and earth are surely full of your glory.

The angels sang of it—we have been lavished with it.

Blessed is the One who was born that we might have life.

Glory to God and on earth peace to all people.

Holy God, as the wise ones with their treasures were overwhelmed with joy on finding Jesus, so we also are overwhelmed on finding out the depth of Jesus' love for us. For Jesus showed just how beloved we are by loving us.

⁶ Written by Rev Lynn Robertson, January 6, 2023.

⁷ Moira Laidlaw, on [Liturgies Online](https://www.liturgiesonline.com/). Visit that site for many other excellent worship resources.

In that same night, in which he was betrayed,
 Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
 broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
 Take and eat, this is my body, given for you.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, Jesus took the cup,
 Gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:
 This cup is the covenant in my blood,
 Shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
 Do this for the remembrance of me.

Send the power of your Holy Spirit upon these gifts of bread and wine,
 O God, that we may experience the presence of the Word-made-flesh—
 Jesus Christ. Breathe your Spirit in us that we may be one body with him—
 living out Jesus' ministry in the world today and every day.
 This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
 Give us today our daily bread.
 Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
 Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.
 For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever.
 Amen.**

Communion Distribution

#715 Communion Hymn "*Christ Be Our Light*"

- 1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to you.
 Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see.**

Refrain:

**Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.
 Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.**

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us. Make us your living voice.

Refrain

3. Longing for food, many are hungry. Longing for water, many still thirst.
Make us your bread, broken for others, shared until all are fed.

Refrain

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless. Longing for warmth, many are cold.
Make us your building, sheltering others, walls made of living stone.

Refrain

5. Many the gifts, many the people, many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another, making your kingdom come.

Refrain

Communion Blessing

May the love and forgiveness of God, that is present in this meal of bread and wine, strengthen you and nourish you in your journey of faith, confident in God's unconditional love for you.

Prayer after communion⁸

God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Announcements

Blessing: *Blessed Are You Who Bear the Light*⁹

Blessed are you who bear the light in unbearable times,
Who testify to its endurance amid the unendurable,
Who bear witness to its persistence
when everything seems in shadow and grief.
Blessed are you in whom the light lives,

⁸ <https://members.sundaysandseasons.com/Home/TextsAndResources#texts>

⁹ Jan Richardson from "*Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons.*" Janrichardson.com Copyright © 2015 Wanton Gospeller Press Orlando, Florida.

In whom the brightness blazes –
 Your heart a chapel,
 an altar where in the deepest night
 can be seen the fire that shines forth in you
 in unaccountable faith,
 in stubborn hope,
 in love that illumines every broken thing it finds.
 In the name of + God our Creator,
 Jesus our Friend,
 and the Holy Spirit our Comforter. Amen

#314 Sending Hymn “*Arise, Your Light Has Come!*”

- 1. Arise, your light has come! The Spirit’s call obey;
show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today.**
- 2. Arise, your light has come! Fling wide the prison door;
proclaim the captive’s liberty, good tidings to the poor.**
- 3. Arise, your light has come! All you in sorrow born,
bind up the brokenhearted ones and comfort those who mourn.**
- 4. Arise, your light has come! The mountains burst in song!
Rise up like eagles on the wing, God’s pow’r will make us strong.**

Sending

Go in peace, to love and serve God through word and deed.
Thanks be to God!

Sources: Bible passages (except where otherwise indicated) from Common English Bible (CEB).