



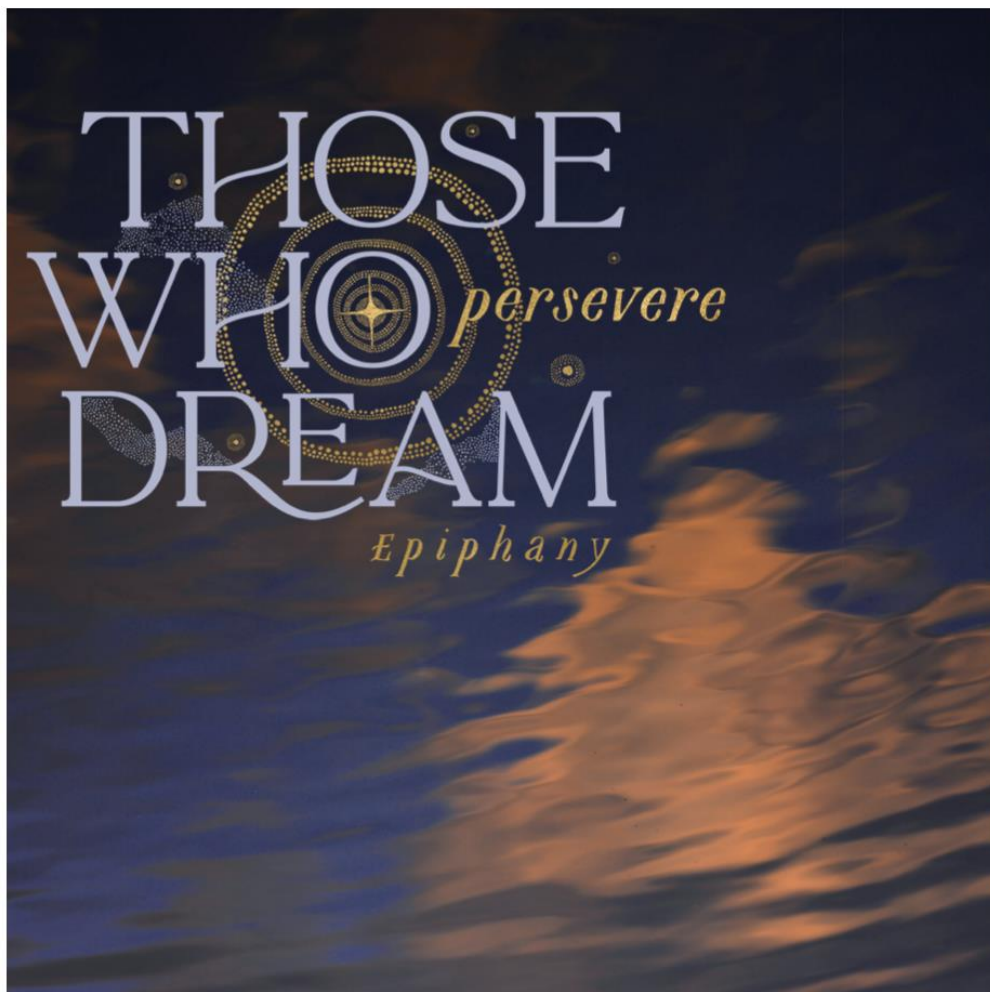
"A Community Of Many Faithing Communities Where All Belong!"

Living Waters Contemplative Life Center | Divine Intervention Ministry to the Homeless  
Tippecanoe just.good.food Garden | Food Justice Site PCUSA  
Arts and Science Literacy Camps for Children

# Welcome To Worship

January 7, 2024

9:30 a.m.



*Welcome to this time of being with God and each other.*

*"Guided by a Star" Rev. Trish Eckert*

✧ **Prelude:** *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* ~ Tippe Musicians

✧ **Welcome and community news**

⇒ **Membership class wrap up:** this Sunday, January 7 11:15 am – 12:30 pm

⇒ **Adult Education winter series: *Exploring our Resistance to the Unknown*, developed and facilitated by Betsy Gonwa**

To be offered in 4 or 5 sessions (to be determined)

January 28, February 11, 18, 25, and March 3

Topics of the sessions are:

- Resistance to the Mystery of the Unknown
- The Power of Love
- Accompaniment
- Finding the Light in the Darkness
- Moving toward the Light

✧ **Readying Ourselves for Worship**

***Surely God is in this place, Holy Ground!***  
***Surely God is in this place,***  
***Holy Ground!***

✧ **A Poetry Prayer as we Center Ourselves in this Moment**

***I Imagine***

I imagine they packed bags—  
Water and food, blankets and clothes.

I imagine they packed tools—  
Maps and telescopes that could bring the stars closer,  
As if the sky was a comforter they could pull near.

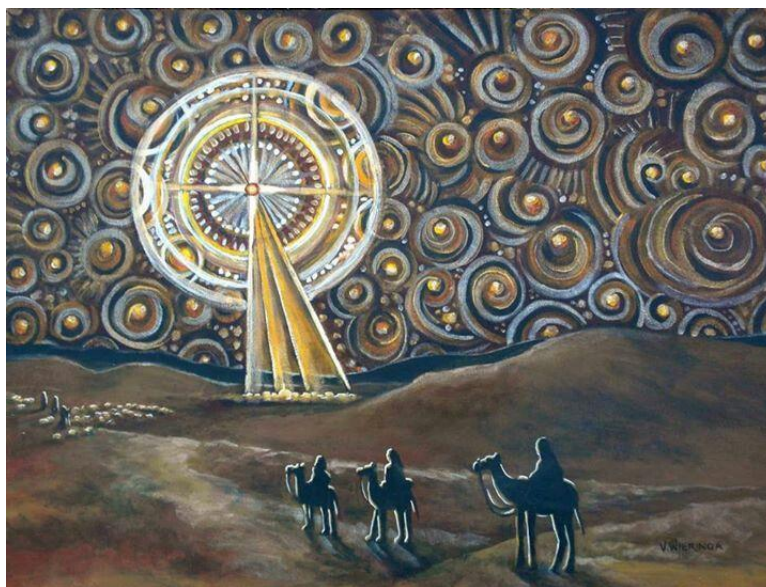
I imagine they hugged loved ones and said,  
“We’ll be back soon.”  
And when loved ones said,  
“Don’t leave,”  
“It’s risky,”  
“You don’t even know what you’re chasing,”  
I imagine they put lips to foreheads and said,  
“There is a light in the darkness. I must chase that.”

And then I imagine they walked.  
I imagine they walked until legs were tired and knees gave out.  
Maybe they told stories on the road and laughed into open sky,  
Or maybe they sat in silence and prayed for more light.  
However the road unfolded, I imagine it was not easy.

I imagine all of this, not because I've chased stars,  
But because I have dreamed.  
And these dreams for justice make the Magi's story my own.  
For every time we fight for justice,  
We start in the dark.  
We hug loved ones and say,  
"There's a light in the darkness, I must chase that."  
We walk until we're tired,  
And then we keep walking.  
We laugh at the open sky as a form of resistance.  
We pray in the night for signs of more light.  
And no matter how important the journey is,  
And no matter how much progress we make,  
The journey to justice is never easy.

And so I pray,  
That maybe one day,  
We will be like the Magi,  
And will walk ourselves into the light.  
Until then, don't forget—  
There's a light in the darkness. We must chase that.

Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org



*Advent Starry Night 5, Virginia Wieringa, Acrylic 2011*

## ✧ **Becoming Present to God and Each Other - Our Check-in**

~ **The Joy of Passing the Peace** ~

One: May the peace that surpasses all understanding be with you

All: **And also with you**

One: Thanks be to God

## ✧ **Time for Young Hearts**

✧ **Gathering as God's People: Our Theme ~ *Those Who Dream...Persevere***  
On Epiphany, we celebrate how God's love transverses cultural and geographical barriers to become good news for all people. We marvel at the persistence of God to shine the way for the Magi so that they might bear witness to the divine. We honor that the Magi trusted their dreams and returned home by another way. As we journey forward, we carry the dreams of our ancestors in faith. With courage and resilience, we dream on.

✧ **Gathering Hymn 151 *We Three Kings of Orient Are***

✧ **Opening Ourselves to God's Grace**

One: The Magi had a dream.

**All: They dreamed of a Messiah.**

**They dreamed of just rulers.**

**They dreamed of a new day for all people.**

One: The Magi had a dream, and this dream led them to action.

**All: They journeyed to unknown places.**

**They followed a star.**

**They walked for days to get to Jesus.**

One: So may we be like the Magi,

**All: May our dreams inspire action.**

**May we worship God together. Amen.**

✧ **Sharing our Innermost Lives with God**

One: God, we love to worship you when the stars are bright above us.

We love to worship you when the sky is clear, and the breeze just right.

We love to worship you when the journey to Bethlehem is an easy one.

**All: Unfortunately, as you know,  
this journey of life, love, and faith is rarely easy.**

**Now and again, the stars disappear.**

**My feet get blisters, and the journey is far too long and lonely.**

**On these days, forgive me for giving up quickly.**

**Forgive me for allowing the dream to die and for taking the shortcut home.**

**I want to be as brave as the Magi.**

**I want to persevere.**

**Guide my feet. Show me the stars. Amen.**

✧ **Special Music *Love Came Down***

### ✧ **Prayer of Illumination**

God of the Milky Way,  
We, like the Magi, are walking toward you.  
One foot in front of the other, we are walking toward you.  
It is our very prayer to move your way.  
So if you can, leave the light on and the front door unlocked.  
Leave a fire in the hearth and food on the stove.  
And when we start to get lost or doubt our dreams,  
Give us the will to persevere.  
We are walking toward you, O God.  
So like the parent that throws open the door,  
Open the door to us through this text.

Holy Spirit, may we hear your gracious Word for us today. May we grow in wisdom, strength, and love as we open our ears, our minds, and our hearts to the transformative message you have in store for each of us. Amen.

### ✧ **Bible Wisdom Teachings**

#### **Matthew 2:1-12**

##### *The Visit of the Magi*

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 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.” 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 ‘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.’ ”

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 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.” 9 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. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 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. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

## **Isaiah 60: 1-6**

60 Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of Yahweh has risen  
upon you.

2 For darkness shall cover the earth  
and thick darkness the peoples,  
but Yahweh will arise upon you,  
and the Sovereign's glory will appear  
over you.

3 Nations shall come to your light  
and kings to the brightness of your  
dawn.

4 Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together; they come to  
you;

your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried in  
their nurses' arms.

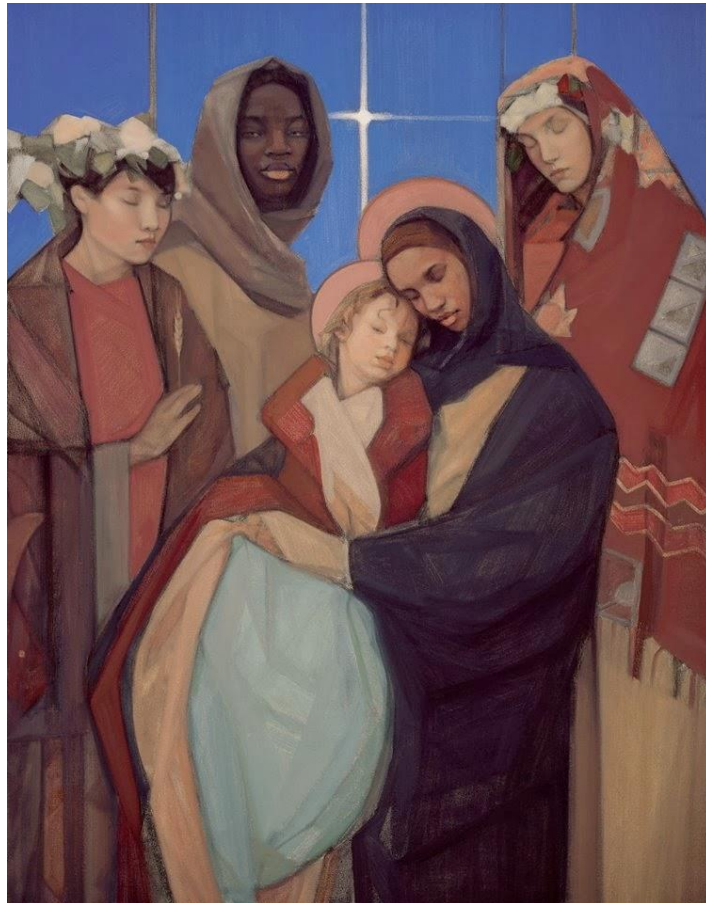
5 Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall  
be brought to you;  
the wealth of the nations shall come to  
you.

6 A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and  
Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.  
They shall bring gold and frankincense  
and shall proclaim the praise of the  
Sovereign.

One: May we hear anew the origin stories of our faith and draw from the roots of our tradition.

All: **Thanks be to our God.**

✧ **Message *Guided by a Star***, Rev. Trish Eckert





Art image: "Wise women throughout time and in every culture know themselves to be seekers and seers of the Divine. In Janet McKenzie's interpretation of the Magi, women around the world find an image of the Epiphany that includes and validates their encounters with the One Who Saves, celebrated here in the powerful, protective and tender manifestation of a mother and her child, embraced and nurtured by a loving community. Here is global inclusiveness and a vision of mutuality and interdependence – the giving and receiving of the three gifts essential to life itself: presence, love and daily bread. Epiphany proclaims again and anew: Christ for all people. God's favor extends to all!" -- *from the Janet McKenzie Christmas Card*

### ✧ Reflection Questions

*The Greek meaning of an "Epiphany" is a manifestation, an appearance. Compare this to the Greek definition of apocalypse (a revelation), which we discerned the first week of Advent.*

- What has been revealed to us throughout our Advent journey?
  - What is clear that was previously uncertain or hazy?
  - Where has the Divine appeared to us—or even intervened?
  
- How are God's dreams manifesting in our world?
  - What must we do to foster and further them?

### ✧ Short period of silent reflection

### ✧ Sharing Our Wisdom

### ✧ Hymn *Do You Hear What I Hear* (song sheets)

### ✧ Affirmation of Faith

**All: We believe in God,  
Who came to this earth as a child,  
Was born to unmarried teenage parents,  
And was quickly made a refugee.  
We believe that this child grew up to heal the sick,  
See the poor,  
Dine with outcasts,  
Welcome foreigners,  
Wash the feet of sinners,  
Offer second chances,  
And bless the children.  
And so we believe that Christmas is only the beginning.  
The dream does not end with a manger.  
The dream ends with God's promised day.  
So until all God's children are home,  
We will follow the Magi's lead—  
Walking, seeking, and looking up.  
May it be so, for this we believe. Amen.**

### ✧ **Our gifts of support**

We rejoice in our ability to share, but long to do more. Help us to be like the magi and carefully plan the gifts we bring you. May we not be satisfied with what is enough, but instead be inspired to do more. May these gifts be used so others may know the hope that is found in you. Amen.

### ✧ **Community Prayers & the Pastoral Prayer**

### ✧ **Words of Invitation and the Breaking of the Bread Communion of the People**



*Communion, by Mike Brennan*

### Welcome

#### Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of starlight,

There has always been something holy about stars for us.

We wish on them.

We look for them.

We celebrate when we see them streaking across the sky on summer nights.

We map out their designs, and consider glimpses of the Milky Way holy enough for bare feet.

There has always been something holy about stars.

We know that.

You know that.

The Magi must have known that.



Today we come to you in prayer, trusting that if you can paint the stars in the sky,  
Then surely you can hear us over the noise.  
So first we pray for people wishing on stars:  
Those who are sick and suffering.  
Those who are lonely and isolated.  
Those who are seeking a miracle.  
Those searching for your grace.

And at the same time, we also say a prayer of gratitude for all the stars you have left for  
us this past year—the signs and mile markers of hope on the horizon:  
New jobs and new friendships  
Closer connections with our loved ones  
Clarity after discernment  
Healing after estrangement  
News of remission and improved health

So today, in this new year, we ask that once more you would give us a sign.  
Pour out a double portion of your Spirit on this bread and cup, and on these star words,  
So that these ordinary objects might provide us a glimpse of something more.  
For like the Magi, we are seeking you.  
Like the Magi, we are looking up.  
Like the Magi, we just need a sign.  
Guide our feet. Show up in the mundane and the extraordinary.  
Be in the stars in the sky and in our everyday lives.  
We are hopeful, O God. We are hopeful.  
And now with the confidence of children wishing on stars, we pray together -

### ✧**The Lord's Prayer**

One: The story is out! Jesus Christ, Light of the World has been born to dispel the  
darkness! God's glory appears in human form. Life on earth will never be the same  
again!

**ALL: God, our holy and ever present Light,  
With your Light our spirits are fed with daily joy and purpose.  
Forgive us when we contribute to the darkness.  
Help us to call out those who also, contribute to the darkness.  
Lead us always into the Light.  
In the darkness of the world today, illumine our paths with righteousness.  
For yours is the Light of glory, power and honor, forever and ever. Amen.**

Words of Invitation and the Breaking of the Bread

Communion of the People

## Star Words



### Prayer after Communion

God of ink black skies and starry nights,

Like the Magi so many years ago,

We are here, seeking you.

Step by step, we have wandered into this space<sup>1</sup>

With the hope of feeling you in our midst.

And step by step, you have claimed us, loved us, and fed us.

Today we have all drawn star words.

For some of us, these words are full of meaning, challenge, and invitation already.

For others, these words are a blank canvas—inviting you into our lives.

So as a new year dawns, we pray that you would be in our dreams and in our waking.

Allow us to use these star words as a tool to see you in our everyday life.

May they guide us, as the star guided the Magi.

May they illuminate your path, as light always does.

And in a year, may we find ourselves here, together again,

With a mouth full of praise for the ways in which you have been present to us.

With hearts full to the brim,

Together we pray, Amen.

### ✧ **Benediction**

The Light of the Star, the light of God's love, shines before you as you leave this place.

Go in peace, go in joy, go in love to meet God's people in the world and greet them with the good news as the light grows day by day. Amen.

*Now that the worship has ended, may the service truly begin.*

### ✧ **Our Response:**

***Holy One, now we your servants go in peace. Your Word lives on in us.***

✧ **Postlude** *Climb Every Mountain* (Rodgers and Hammerstein) ~ Tippe Musicians