

# Epiphany Celebration

1-10-2021

J.V. Trautwein

Vicar Karen Pugatch

## Announcements

- Sunday 1:00-4:00 PM Nativity Village Open

## Celebrate (Introduction)

“Epiphany means ‘manifestation.’ On this day we celebrate the revelation of Christ to the Gentiles – that is, to all nations. Some Christian traditions celebrate three great epiphanies on this day: the magi’s adoration of the Christ child, Jesus’ baptism in the Jordon River, and the first miracle in which he changes water into wine. The word and sacraments are for us the greatest epiphany of God’s grace and mercy. We go forth to witness to the light that shines brightly in our midst.”

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

## Opening Hymn: [“Brightest and Best of the Stars”](#)

### Psalm: 72:1-7. 10-14

“Give the king thy justice, O God,  
and thy righteousness to the royal son!  
<sup>2</sup> May he judge thy people with righteousness,  
and thy poor with justice!  
<sup>3</sup> Let the mountains bear prosperity for the people,  
and the hills, in righteousness!  
<sup>4</sup> May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,  
give deliverance to the needy,  
and crush the oppressor!  
<sup>5</sup> May he live while the sun endures,  
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations!  
<sup>6</sup> May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth!  
<sup>7</sup> In his days may righteousness flourish,  
and peace abound, till the moon be no more!  
May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles  
render him tribute,  
may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts!  
<sup>11</sup> May all kings fall down before him,  
all nations serve him!  
<sup>12</sup> For he delivers the needy when he calls,  
the poor and him who has no helper.

<sup>13</sup> He has pity on the weak and the needy,  
and saves the lives of the needy.  
<sup>14</sup> From oppression and violence he redeems their life;  
and precious is their blood in his sight.”

**Hymn of Praise:** [“Alleluia, Song of Gladness”](#) (Long Introduction)

### **Prayer of the Day**

“O God, on this day you revealed your Son to the nations by the leading of a star. Lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives, and bring us at last to the full vision of our glory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.”

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Isaiah 60:1-6](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [Ephesians 3:1-12](#)

**The Gospel:** [Matthew 2:1-12](#)

Hymn of the Day: “As With Gladness Men of Old”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6UzYlhF4ffw>

**The Angel Tree, and The Message by Vicar Karen Pugatch** ([Video Link](#))

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

<sup>1</sup>In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Judeans? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage.” <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup>“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.”

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

Today in the church year, is the celebration of the Baptism of Jesus. I was planning on preaching on the texts for the Baptism of Jesus. About how God meets us in ordinary places, giving new meaning to ordinary things. How our God stepped into the water to be baptized by John, how the heavens were torn apart and the Holy Spirit descended and the voice claimed Jesus as the beloved Son. The Holy Spirit active with the Father and the Son in creation, active in this baptism is still active today- the living, motivating spirit that changes our hearts and lives coming to us in the ordinary elements of water, bread and wine, in community-leading us, driving us out into the wilderness, showing us the way to be God incarnate in the world.

As Lutherans, we tend to speak very little of the Spirit-she is difficult to understand, uncomfortable to speak of. Hildegard of Bingen a 10<sup>th</sup> century nun, mystic, poet, composer, artist- said this of the Spirit

*The Holy Spirit as Caritas (Grace/World Soul)*

"I am the Supreme and Fiery Force who kindles every living spark.... And I am the fiery life of the Divine essence: I flame above the beauty of the fields; I shine in the waters; I burn in the sun, the moon, and the stars. And, with the airy wind, I quicken all things vitally by an unseen, all-sustaining life...Even the stars glisten in their light as if alive."

Even the stars...so let us now turn and think of the last piece of the Nativity of Jesus-that beloved Christmas Pageant show-stopper featuring a star.....the Visit of the Magi- a story where I see the Holy Spirit at work. Let's spend some time with the story from which this short season of the church year gets its name -Epiphany. The word comes from the Greek "epiphaneia," meaning "appearing" or "revealing." Throughout the story of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is active showing a different way to go, appearing to reveal the winding tortuous path of following Jesus. Revealing too, the great Joy we feel when we encounter the "newborn king".

The magi- are non-Jews, most likely practitioners of Zoroastrianism-astronomers. There were likely more than three-a caravan is how they would have traveled and among them would also have been female practitioners- wise women if you will (we all know their gifts would have been better suited to a newborn). These gentiles are led to Jerusalem by a star-by the Spirit, to Jerusalem the seat of power-religious and political, seeking the new "King of the Judeans", Maybe expecting the new king to be the son of Herod, they inquire of him the new king's whereabouts. Herod is frightened by their question, and when Herod is frightened, all of Jerusalem goes on high alert-anxious of the outcome no doubt. He is frightened because he knows he is not who they seek. After consulting in secret with the palace priests (meeting in secret is Biblical code for when something nefarious is going on), Herod sends them to

backwater Bethlehem. They had no reason to trust Herod, as we know, he shows himself to be an illegitimate, duplicitous “king” like the “Herods” before and after him, he is a puppet of the Roman empire and clueless about the prophecy, a non-believer. Only interested in maintaining his own power through fear and tyranny. Herod has killed and will kill many more in an attempt to maintain control. Yet he is who the magi visit first. Maybe this is a narrative element intended to reinforce the vast difference between the kingdom of men and the kingdom of God. In any case, these magi, are compelled, led by the Spirit to find this child even when his birth has gone unnoticed in the temple and the palace, bearing gifts they assume to be of great value, they set off to find him.

In her children’s book, *Home by Another Way*, BBT reimagines the story of the magi, what they learn about themselves, their gifts, and the gift of holding the new king close to their hearts. They come from different countries having spent their lives working to perfect their own abilities. One a scholar of ancient language, one an ascetic who lived on herbs steeped in water, and the last with the ability to walk on hot coals. All three living with an empty feeling that they were missing some great truth in their lives. They each have a star lodged in their right eye and, unsure if it is real or in their own imaginations, each sets out to find where it leads them- somehow knowing that something greater is calling them away from their old lives- understanding that what they seek will fill the void they each feel. Away from all they know- from their own self built identities, onto a road as yet untraveled, following a star.

They meet on the road and travel together to Jerusalem where they gain entry to the palace and meet the King. The author describes him as lumpy, rumped, and sickly. He perks up when they ask about the newborn king and he sees the stars in their eyes- his own puffy, squinty eyes opening wide, becoming round “like those of a snake.” The king excuses himself and meets in secret with the palace priests, learns of this prophesied king and where he was to be born. He cleans himself up, reports back to the wisemen, sending them off to Bethlehem- bidding them to return so he can visit and bring flowers to his replacement.

The wise men are surprised at the lowly nature of the town and the house. Upon entering they feel the love inside and see the child whose eye shone with the same star as theirs! They fell on their knees and presented their gifts which they now knew were not useful. Then, wonder of wonders, they got to hold the baby and feel the “soft, damp living weight of him”! Soon, the household fell asleep and when the magi awoke, each from the same dream, the star in their eyes was gone. They did not need it they had found something they couldn’t lose- that empty feeling was gone. No longer interested in living their old lives, forgetting the ancient language, swearing off herbal water and hot coals, they thanked Mary- for the gift they had received- the scent and weight and skin of the baby, a home filled with love and a really great story to tell- smiling, they kiss the baby good-bye. They knew not to return to the city, not just because of the dream, but because if the King really knew what was going on, he too would have come here bearing gifts. So, no longer interested in their old lives they return home by another way!

Their encounter with Jesus has changed them, the Spirit has filled them with a new light- how will meeting this infant king change our lives? What is revealed to each of us, what empty space

can this soft, damp living weight of Jesus fill for us? These are the questions which beg to be answered in this season of revelation. These are the questions whose answers cause us to turn away from the emptiness of our old lives and set us on a different path.

Where is the Spirit at work guiding and leading you in your journey? What can we as followers of Jesus do to change the path forward especially in light of the events in Washington DC this week? What was revealed on this Epiphany 2021 was far from justice, peace and love-the sordid underbelly of our political and social division was brutally exposed for all to see!

My prayer this Epiphany season is that we can shine the light of Christ into the darkness of this division, that hearts are opened My prayer for this new year is that this new path is one we can all walk together, despite our own political and social differences, a path that leads us to Jesus and then out into the world by another way, bearing his light. That this path is one of reconciliation, justice, and hope. That having been led by a star from our old self-centered lives, we meet the Christ child and are truly changed for the better. Moved by the Spirit to follow as Jesus' disciples in this world, moved to pay homage not to illegitimate kings but to shine with the joyous light of Christ- to be for our world the very incarnate light, leading others to worship the one true king.

**When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:**

**To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among others,  
To make music in the heart.**

-Howard Thurman, "The Work of Christmas"

**Offering\*:** ([On-Line Giving Link](#))

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

### **The Prayer**

Father of love and peace, during this time of turmoil open our eyes to see the light of the star which led the magi to the Christ child. May this light brighten the darkness of our tumultuous

lives in order to live the message of the incarnation – the ,message of love and peace. May we be enlightened in order to see the truth as found in the Word which you have given us. Give us the strength and wisdom in order to live this truth by helping those who are in need of our helping hand.

With the increasing spread of the pandemic give strength to those who are caring for the sick and dying. Give us the perseverance to make the sacrifices in order to help curtail its spreading devastation. May we find ways in helping those who are affected economically.

We pray for all whole need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Elfei family, Betty Fultz, Katie Hawkins, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, Donna Mayhew, Bev and Jim Mertz, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, David Otto, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Linda Rigby, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Linda Stephens, Yongyin Sun, Esther and Buck Trautwein, Linda Williamson, Pastor Jack, and all those who are suffering pain, and sorrow as a result of this pandemic.

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

**The Lord's Prayer:** [The Mormon Tabernacle Choir](#)

#### **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make His face shine upon you;

The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters

Live on knowing God's love,

The joy of living this life of love,

And the peace which only come through the power of His presence within you.

So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn:** ["Bright and Glorious is the Sky"](#)

We are discontinuing in person worship services on Sundays until further notice. The online worship experiences will continue as well as the Midweek Thoughts.

Bible Study with Vicar Karen Pugatch, Tuesdays, 12:30-1:30 PM more information attached below.

\*Offering to be sent to:

Bob Brackbill

10274 Raleigh Tavern Road

Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church  
9122 Sybert Drive  
Columbia Hills  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: [https://tithe.ly/give\\_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291](https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithely/give-one-time/2627291)

Zoom Bible Study

Meeting ID: 941 432 0826

Password: 300maple

OR

By Telephone: (929) 205-6099

Meeting ID: 941 432 0826

Password: 914022