

January 5, 2020 Epiphany
Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope

Isaiah 60:1-6, Matthew 2:1-12

Arise, shine, for your light has come!

Today in worship we celebrate Epiphany.

If you want to get technical, tomorrow, the 6th of January is the actual day of Epiphany.

Today is the 12th day of Christmas: 12 drummers drumming.

Yesterday: 11 pipers piping (thank you, Judy Ranheim, for adding your flute, your piping today!).

How could we resist this chance to bridge the seasons?

Epiphany literally means manifestation, revelation, as in: God is revealed in Jesus.

As in Christ's light is revealed in you, in me, in this community.

As in, the night doesn't overcome, the light shines and its reflection changes everything.

In our reading from Isaiah, looking forward to a time after exile,

the prophet speaks to a once-heartbroken community:

“Rise, shine, your light has come.

God's glory has risen, finally risen, upon you.”

We hear Matthew's version of the ancient story replete with astrologers following a bright star,
and Herod's insecurities on high alert, threatened.

This baby is a threat to the oppressive tactics of which Herod was so fond.

God is showing the world—very physically—a new way of salvation. That's Epiphany!

This morning we invite you into holy movement, all around our worship space.

For some, some of these stations will be familiar, others will be new.

Let me introduce you to these stations and then, I pray, you will participate as you feel led.

I encourage you to try a station or two, not all of them, that's what the world might push us to do.

In church we're doing the counter cultural, we're choosing, trusting, living with enough.

At this first station we lift up the ministry of the Arts and Environment Task Force, folks like Sharla
Aaseng and Muffi Abrahamson.

With the help of Trust grants, we have a number of new pieces of artwork all around the building.

Three of the newest are here on display, along with some background, and some questions to ponder.

Here we remember that light is at the center of this story.

At this station stop to personalize a candle holder to take home and use.

Here are candles for lighting as we add our prayers, trusting the the small flicker.

Pastor Barbara and Ann Beane are offering healing prayer.

You can come to one of them, and they'll pray with you.

Or you can pray at the communion rail.

These are prompts for conversations or reflection.

We're told the magi were warned in a dream to return to their country by another way.

Spirituality and politics and action are woven together in this story.

These questions prompt us to reflect on our spirituality and our action.

At these doors, way back here, learn more about the Epiphany practice of Chalking your door, blessing your home.

At these inner doors, we remember that the magi are threshold characters.

Here we honor the thresholds, the crossroads, at which we find ourselves.

We reflect on the past. We look to the future. We seek God's blessing.

Write on a star the blessing you seek for the new year, and tape it to the doorframe."

Here at the baptismal font we remember the strange, weighty gifts the magi brought to the child.

We too, carry gifts, burdens, baggage.

There are rocks at this station.

Pick a rock and let it symbolize the gifts and burdens you're carrying.

You can place the rock in the baptismal waters, trusting God's promises to hold you, and all that you carry.

Or you can take the rock with you: sometimes we just need to acknowledge our baggage.

While you are at the baptismal font, dip into the baptismal waters, remember the forgiveness, the new life, the healing, and identity of this water—water that will never let you go.

Remember, You are a beloved child of God, a brightly shining child of God.

In our house it is now the season of writing thank you notes.

There's something to living with gratitude.

Here, write a note, articulate your gratitude, name how you witness the light in someone.

Finally, here is the map of the world.

Herod's first reaction to Jesus' power was anger, and fear.

This kind of fear fuels violence and suffering, still today.

At this station, around the map, we pray for the world, and for its powers,
for the fears and hopes that live within each of us.

Use this map to focus your prayers.

Add notes with names and situations we pray for:

Families and children at the southern border, for instance.

Our Jewish kin and the anti-Semitism they are facing.

The exploding crisis in the middle east.

Our planet, the waters, the air, the glaciers, the creatures.

You can add to the map names of people and communities you hold close.

Our prayers are part of our resistance.

Lots of options, visit a station or two, or take time to pray and reflect.

The music of our hymn will call us back together.

May God bless our holy movement and our prayer.