

January 8, 2023 Epiphany
Rev. Jen Nagel, University Lutheran Church of Hope

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

Holy Movement

[This is more of an introduction to our Holy Movement stations than a typical sermon. Ask Pastor Jen to learn more about specifics and how to engage the stations.]

Grace to you and peace, beloved of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Friday was Epiphany—January 6th

There are the 12 days of Christmas and then, at the end of it all: Epiphany.

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, in the world around us.

As in, the night doesn't last, the dawn comes,

the light shines and its reflection changes everything.

When Epiphany lands on a weekday, we can choose to celebrate it on a Sunday,

That's what we're doing today.

In our reading from Isaiah, the prophet is looking forward to a time after exile,
speaking to a once-heartbroken community:

"Rise, shine, your light has come. God's glory has finally risen upon you."

In the gospel we hear Matthew's version of the ancient story of revelation,

replete with astrologers following a bright star,

and Herod's insecurities on high alert.

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

God is showing the world—very physically, by way of a baby human—

a radical new way of being community, a new way of liberation, a new way of salvation.

That's Epiphany!

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

There are stations set up and you who are here in person are invited into movement.

We've done this some other years, though it's been a while, since before COVID.

Some of these stations may be familiar, others will be new.

For you who are online this morning, some can easily be done at home.

Listen to my descriptions and then take time at home to light a candle
or find a pen and paper,
or pull out an atlas.

Let me introduce you to these stations and then, I pray, you will participate as you feel led.
I encourage you to move around, even into the areas of the sanctuary you rarely venture.
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 the Spirit, living with enough.

At this first station we remember that shining star.

There are small lanterns to make from a simple template.
There are plenty of supplies, you can personalize your lantern as you like.
These are for any age—Kids, please share with the grown ups.
Take your lantern home and use it in your life of prayer.

Here and across the way are candles for lighting as we add our prayers.

You can also pray at the communion rail.

Our congregation has transitioned our 500 some lights bulbs all to LED.

Here are LED light bulbs you can take home.
And a also a worksheet to use to quiz, and maybe surprise yourself, about your lightbulbs at home.

In the back are two stations:

At the big church doors, learn more about the Epiphany practice of Chalking your Door,
blessing your home.

At these inner doors, at the threshold, 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 trust God's grace..
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.

Here is a 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:

Those at the borders. The war in Ukraine.

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

Friends and loved ones and church community.

Our prayers, dear friends, are part of our resistance.

Up here: Gratitude.

Write a note for someone, articulate your gratitude, name how you witness the light in them.

Here are prompts for conversations or reflection with a partner.

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 engage this, too.

Finally, this station is called Seeing More.

It's not just seeing with the vision of our eyes, but as much, our hearts, our minds.

What do you want to pay attention to? To see more? To notice?

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.**