

January 7, 2024 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.

Epiphany always falls on January 6th, so technically we're a day late.

But as with many years, how can 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.

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 also hear Matthew's version of the ancient story replete with astrologers following a bright star,

and Herod's insecurities on high alert.

This baby is a threat to Herod's oppressive tactics.

This story is filled with resistance as the magi who go home by a different way,

another road, civil disobedience at its best,

refusing to be caught up in Herod's evil.

God is showing the world—very physically—a new way of salvation, a new way of healing.

That's Epiphany!

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

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

Let me introduce you to the 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, following the spirit's lead,

living with enough.

Most of the stations have a note about how you can engage, some prompts, questions,

directions, if you will.

For those online, on Zoom and YouTube,

it may be helpful to have a pen available to note a few ideas you'd like to reflect on during this time.
Many of the ideas can be done at home.

This first station is our Prayer Wall.

We've been using it through Advent and will continue for a while.
Write reflections and prayers, roll them up, and add them to the prayer wall.

This station at this door, we call Seeing More.

With our hearts, our minds, for some, with our eyes, we see the world.
How can you be open to paying attention in new and different ways this season?
Write your thoughts on one of the stars.

In this corner is a space to write Thank You Notes, to consider gratitude.

Light candles here or on the other side, trust the small flicker.

Here at the baptismal font, dip into the baptismal waters,
the truth of your identity: a brightly shining child of God.

Also here 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.

These are prompts for conversations and reflection, and also some poetry

Spirituality and politics and action are woven together in this story.
These questions and the poetry prompt us to reflect on our spirituality and our action.

This is a station called Star Words.

There is information about how we can pick a word to guide us into the new season and thru the year.

And here is a station reminding us that we are all Star Dust.

Much to ponder when we recognize how we are made.

This station is an opportunity to make a small lantern, for you are the light of the world.

Up here in the front 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, add your prayers for the world,

for its powers,

for the fears and hopes that live within each of us,

and for our simple acts of resistance.

Toward the back: At the inner doors, we remember that the magi are threshold characters.

There we honor the thresholds, the crossroads.

We reflect on the past. We look to the future.

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

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

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.