

Countryside Community Church WORSHIP



Epiphany by Jan Richardson ~ Charcoal on paper.

January 5, 2025
Epiphany

† Indicates those places where those who are able are invited to stand.
Text in **bold** indicates places where the congregation is invited to join in response.

Gathering

COMMUNITY TIME (9:55)

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

PRELUDE

WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

One: Arise! Shine!

Many: God's light has come to reveal The Way in this New Year.

One: Arise! Shine!

Many: The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

One: Arise! Shine!

Many: God's light penetrates the darkness that covers the world.

All: Arise! Shine!

†GATHERING SONG

Hymn #173 *As With Gladness* (vs. 1)

†PASSING THE PEACE

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

One: The Peace of God be With You

Many: And also with you.

†HYMN OF RESPONSE

All Are Welcome (vs. 1)

CHILDREN'S MOMENT & DISCOVERY KIDS

Children are invited to join Heather for a lesson at the chancel and then head to Discovery Kids classes, Nursery is available for children 0-4 years. Sharing Star Words.

Hearing the Word

FIRST LESSON: Matthew 2:1-12

Reader: Adam Steinbach

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

'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.' "

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

MUSICAL REFLECTION

It Is Well

arr. Alex Ritter

POEM

The Map Our Dreaming Makes, A Blessing for Women's Christmas

by Jan Richardson

HOMILY

Rev. Dr. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Responding to the Word

Pastoral Prayer & The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

MUSICAL REFLECTION

So Many Stars

Sergio Mendez / Marilyn and Alan Bergman

SHARING OUR GIFTS

Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones

The Social Justice and Outreach Board has designated Heartland Family Service for the January Box donations.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

God, as we lift our voices, singing songs of hope, we also lift our hands, offering back to you the gifts we have been freely given. Receive now these offerings and bless them abundantly, so that others might receive the full blessing of your grace and peace. Amen.

SERVICE OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

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.

So 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:

We pray for those for whom 2024 was a year of personal loss and challenges.

We pray for those who lost loved ones in 2024.

We pray for those who struggled to make ends meet in the face of rising costs and uncertainty.

We pray for communities impacted by natural disasters and those rebuilding their lives.

We pray for families seeking peace and connection amid the busyness of modern life.

We pray for those whose dreams felt delayed, and for those yearning for a sense of purpose.

However, at the same time,

We also say a prayer of gratitude for all the stars you have left for us this last year—

The signs and mile markers of hope on the horizon.

For example, we give thanks for the joy of meaningful gatherings,

For the beauty of nature reminding us of your steady presence,

And for the creativity and innovation that bring new opportunities to life.

We thank you for acts of kindness shared among neighbors and strangers,

For the hard work of those dedicated to healing and justice,

And for the leaders and visionaries inspiring us to imagine a better future.

In so many ways, 2024 was a year of growth and reflection, and in so many ways, you were there,

Leaving stars in the sky, painting hope on the horizon.

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.

Arise, your light shines in the darkness

and the darkness has not overcome it. Amen.

Family of faith, the bread has been broken and the cup has been poured,

which means the feast is ready.

Words of Remembrance & Star Words

As you are able, please come forward to receive the bread and cup. If you prefer to take communion in your seat, raise your hand and a server will bring the elements to you. At Countryside, we serve gluten-free bread and non-alcoholic grape juice to support a diversity of needs. Communion cups may be discarded in the basket as you leave the sanctuary.

Star Words - *After you have received the bread and cup, upon returning to your seat, an usher will offer you a Star Word. Please take a word from the basket and return to your seat.*

COMMUNION MEDITATION

Prayer of Thanksgiving

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

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.

†SENDING HYMN

Hymn #173 As With Gladness (vs. 2-3)

†COUNTRYSIDE BLESSING

Adam Steinbach

POSTLUDE

Out of Nowhere

Johnny Green / Edward Heyman

Tyler Gruttemeyer, vocals - Matt Wallace, saxophone
Alex Ritter, organ and piano - Carlos Figueroa, drums - Steve Gomez, bass

Joys & Concerns

Join us as we pray for our congregation members and their loved ones who are on our Joys and Concerns list every week on Thursdays at 9 a.m. in the Sanctuary. If you have someone who would benefit from prayer, want to share a joy or be included on the bulletin list, and /or be included on Countryside's Prayer Chain, contact Rev. Sarah Rentzel Jones at 402-391-0350, ext. 225 or sarahrj@countrysideucc.org

Please join in praying for the following new and ongoing concerns:

Rick (Chris) Gilmore asks for prayers for his sister, Julie, who lives in Denver. She has been battling lung cancer for two years and has been fortunate to use oral medications. The oral meds are no longer effective, and she will begin with more traditional chemotherapy next week. She will have chemo weekly for three weeks and then be reassessed for next steps.

The Map Our Dreaming Makes

A Blessing for Women's Christmas

I cannot tell you
how far I have come
to give this blessing
to you.

No map
for the distance crossed,
no measure
for the terrain behind,
no calendar
for marking
the passage of time
while I traveled a road
I knew not.

For now, let us say
I had to come by
a different star
than the one
I first followed,
had to navigate by
another dream
than the one
I loved the most.

But I tell you
that even here,
the hope

that each star belongs
to a light
more ancient still,

and each dream
part of the way
that lies beneath
this way,

and each day
drawing us closer
to the day
when every path

will converge
and we will see the map
our dreaming made,
luminous in every line
that finally led us
home.

—Jan Richardson