January 8, 2023
Epiphany Sunday
Theme: We keep seeking
Wisemen present in worship
Baptism
Receiving of Star Words

PRELUDE (Fantasia on) “O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!” - Roberta Rowland-Raybold

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WELCOME and GREETING

CALL TO WORSHIP
Calling all seekers, all dreamers, all believers…
Calling all glass-half-full optimists and lighthouse keepers…
Calling all star-chasers and bedtime prayer speakers…
Bring your questions, your hope, your faith and your fear
into this space
for God is here.

HYMN ELW 302 As with Gladness Men of Old

CALL TO CONFESSION
One of my favorite things about the Magi is that they go looking for God.…
Let us pray together. Let us seek God together. Join me in the prayer of confession:

God of starlight,
we know that faith isn’t a vending machine.
Good news can’t be bought or manufactured.
It does not arrive with a push of a button.
Instead, in this noisy world, we have to look for you in our midst.
We have to walk toward you, just as the Magi did.
We have to believe that love really can change the world.
We have to seek the stars beyond the city lights.
Forgive us for forgetting that.
Forgive us for seeking you with only part of our hearts.
We long to be more like the Magi; may we walk your way every single day.
Amen.

Friends, I have nothing but good news.
Since the very first day, God has taken the pieces of our hearts that we have offered up and has said, “I can work with that.”
Even in our failings, God has washed us with words of grace, belonging, and love.
No matter what star we’ve followed,
no matter how far we’ve walked,
no matter how lost we are—
we belong to God.

God loves you. God forgives you. God claims you.
End of story. Thanks be to God! Amen.

SONG OF REFLECTION We Three Kings of Orient Are

We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.
Oh, star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!

Glorious now behold him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice;
heav'n sings alleluia:
alleluia the earth replies.
Oh, star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright;
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light!

Text: John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1820-1891, alt.
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PRAYER OF THE DAY
God of starlight…Find us in these words.
Gratefully we pray,
Amen.

Please be seated.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Always Seeking
Sung to the tune of ELW 275 Angels, from the Realms of Glory

As the wise men scanned the heavens
There they saw Christ's natal star
Then began the long procession
Seeking him in country far
Always seeking, moving onward, following where God may lead.

When they reached King Herod's palace
Asking where to find the child
Herod schemed in all his malice
This new king himself to find
Always seeking, moving onward, following where God may lead.

Seeking signs or seeking power
Seeking safety, seeking home
Day by day and hour by hour
We press on toward the unknown
Always seeking, moving onward, following where God may lead.

GOSPEL READING: Matthew 2:1-23

At the beginning of the reading:
The holy gospel according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

At the conclusion of the reading:
This is the gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

SERMON

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH
We believe that faith is active,
found on long walks,
and in long talks,
in future days,
and down memory lane.
We believe that those who seek
will find, although it may not be what they expected.
We believe that God finds us first.
We believe that God drops breadcrumbs along our way
in the shape of people,
invitations,
and even starlight.
We believe that being a seeker—
of God, of justice, of community—
is a holy thing.
So we strive to live with an open spirit,
with soft hearts,
and with room to grow.
May it be so.
This we believe. Amen.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM ELW pg. 227

BAPTISM HYMN ELW 455 Crashing Waters at Creation
Crashing waters at creation,
ordered by the Spirit's breath,
first to witness day's beginning
from the brightness of night's death*:*

Cleansing water once at Jordan
closed around the one foretold,
opened to reveal the glory
ever new and ever old.

OFFERING

MUSICAL OFFERING What is This Lovely Fragrance? – French Carol, setting by Lani Smith
David Lewis, trumpet

A portion of the text is included here for reflection:

What is this light so fair, so tender
breaking upon our wond'ring eyes?
Never the Morning Star so radiant
followed his course o'er Eastern skies.

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OFFERTORY ELW 294 In the Bleak Midwinter

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him – give my heart.

OFFERING PRAYER

INVITATION TO PRAYER

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE
God of today, tomorrow, and yesterday…
So with grateful hearts, we pray together
the words your Son taught us to pray, saying:

LORD'S PRAYER
Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

STAR HYMN ELW 308 O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!
During the singing of the hymn, worshippers are invited to come forward to pick star words.

O Morning Star, how fair and bright!
You shine with God's own truth and light,
aglow with grace and mercy!
Of Jacob's line, King David's son,
our Lord and Savior, you have won
our hearts to serve you only!
Lowly, holy!
Great and glorious,
all victorious,
rich in blessing!
Rule and might o'er all possessing!

Come, precious diamond, light divine,
and deep within our hearts now shine;
there light a flame undying!
In your one body let us be
as living branches of a tree,
your life our lives supplying.
Now, though daily
earth's deep sadness
may perplex us
and distress us,
yet with heav'nly joy you bless us.

PRAYER AFTER RECEIVING THE STARS
God of open horizons and open roads…
And in a year, may we find ourselves here, together again, with mouths full of praise for the ways in which you have been present with us.
Together we pray, with the saints before us.
Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION
As you leave this place, may you go knowing that
from generation to generation,
we have been claimed and loved.
From generation to generation,
God has been by our side.
From generation to generation,
we are not alone.
The God of yesterday and the God of tomorrow
knows you by name, loves you, and calls you forth,
saying, "Go be the person you are called to be,
love wildly, do justice, and come back soon."
May it be so. Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW 308 O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright!

Oh, let the harps break forth in sound!
Our joy be all with music crowned,
our voices gaily blending!
For Christ goes with us all the way—
today, tomorrow, ev'ry day!
His love is never ending!
Sing out! Ring out!
Jubilation! Exultation!
Tell the story!
Praise to Christ, who reigns in glory!

What joy to know, when life is past,
the Lord we love is first and last,
the end and the beginning!
He will one day, oh, glorious grace,
transport us to that happy place
beyond all tears and sinning!
Amen! Amen!
Come, Lord Jesus!
Crown of gladness!
We are yearning
for the day of your returning.

DISMISSAL
Go in peace, guided by Christ.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE O Thou, of God the Father – J.S. Bach

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PRAYER LIST
Please continue to keep the following people connected to our congregation in your prayers: Bob Moran, Brian Allebach, Charles Krupp, David Mounts, Leah Crater, Steve Keyser, Sydney Crossin, Andrew Robison, Silas Reed, Ruth Jadick, Pat Ernst, Joan Miller, Pastor Jennifer Phelps, Paige & Peyton Seasock, Kathleen Casey, Barry Yoder, Karl Gross, Willie Herbst, Tal Umstead and Sandra Umstead.

In the living hope of the resurrection, we share the death of Shirley Clauser on Sunday, January 1, 2023. A memorial service to celebrate Shirley's life was held yesterday at Schantz Funeral Home. Messages and cards may be sent to Kim Kemmerer at 1010 Penny Road, Green Lane, PA 18054.

This morning, we welcome **Cassidy Jeane Reber** into the family of faith at St. John's through the sacrament of baptism. Cassidy's parents are Andrew James and Tiffany Marie (Detwiler) Reber.

Mark Your Calendar

Monday, Jan 9	7:30pm Council Meeting
Wednesday, Jan 11	7pm Confirmation Learning
Sunday, Jan 15	9am Faith Formation
	10:15 Worship—Baptism of our Lord
	Following Worship—Mkt and Comm Committee meet

Winter Book Club is looking for a book suggestions for the January read. Please email your suggestions to PastorBecky74@gmail.com. Once a book is selected, the book and a date will be announced.

Re-Member Indian Reservation Needs Help—There have been two back to back storms recently that have left roads impassable, groceries scarce and many households struggling. The Heavenly Helpers are sending 0 degree sleeping bags to help and are asking for your help to cover the costs. Please a check in the offering plate made out to Heavenly Helpers, or contact Elaine Keller for other ways to contribute.

Coffee Bar needs Volunteers! Please consider being in charge of the coffee bar for one Sunday. All that includes is to bring in treats to share (i.e. bagels, mini muffins, doughnut holes, etc), setting out the treats and plugging in the coffee pot and cleaning up at the end. Sign up at: www.signupgenius.com/go/9040D4EACAD2FAA8-coffee

Blessed to be a Blessing

a monthly collection in which people of St. John's share their blessings with others.

Each month of 2023, we will be identifying a ministry—some local, some a bit farther away—to support with an in-kind offering. Donations can be brought to church and placed in the parlor as indicated.

For the month of January, we will be collecting new underwear and socks for children of all ages/sizes for Mitzvah Circle. Donations can be placed in the parlor though January 31st.

Mitzvah Circle—When a family faces a crisis, we are here
We serve families walking along life's edge by providing over 100 products including clothing, diapers, new strollers and car seats, toiletries, household items and other necessities. *www.MitzvahCircle.org*