

January 5, 2025
10:15 AM
Sunday of the Epiphany
Communion

THEME: The road isn't straight

Paragraph for bulletin cover:

Too often, we've been told that a successful life is a linear one. But in reality, our lives unfold with many unexpected twists and turns. The Magi follow a star, embarking on a long journey in a foreign land in order to honor the newborn Christ. Instead of returning to Herod as commanded, they trust their dreams and go home by another way. Their road isn't straight, but God "makes a way in the wilderness" (Isaiah 43:19) as they follow their intuition and diverge from the expected path.

+ GATHERING +

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

PRELUDE Winds through the olive trees – Dale Wood

WELCOME AND GREETING

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Friends, ... Let us begin again. Let us pray:

God of new beginnings, we admit that we often follow the well-worn path, simply because others have been there before. Sometimes this is holy and humble, but there are days when a new path needs to be tread. On those new-beginning days, O God, give us the courage to follow your star. Give us the courage to go home by another way. Give us the courage to kick up some dust and walk in a new direction for the sake of justice, love, and neighbor. For when you are doing a new thing, we want to have the courage to follow. With hope in our hearts we wander, we travel. Amen.

Dear travelers, no matter the roads you've taken, the steps you've made, or the paths you've traveled, there is nowhere you could go that would land you outside of God's love.

Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel:

**Regardless of the path we travel,
of how lost we may get,
or the twists and turns along the way,
we do not walk alone.
We are loved.
We are forgiven.
We have every chance to begin again.
Thanks be to God for God's deep and abiding love!**

HYMN ELW 300 The First Noel

The first Noel the angel did say
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
shining in the east beyond them far;
and to the earth it gave great light,
and so it continued both day and night.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

And by the light of that same star
three wise men came from country far;
to seek for a king was their intent,
and to follow the star wherever it went.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of starlight... Reveal what it is you want us to hear today, so that we can follow you. With hope in our hearts we pray,

Amen.

+ WORD +

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

READING: Isaiah 43:16-32

At the conclusion of the reading:

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al-le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12

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

HYMN OF THE DAY The Road Winds Ever On

Fears of stray - ing from the path - way Plant - ed deep in child - hood
 All our best laid plans can sha - tter Leav - ing us to mourn the loss
 A world con - stant - ly in mo - tion E - vades our at - tempts to know

Come to haunt us when the road ends And the way a - head is ob - scured Then the Spi - rit
 Of the fu - ture we im - a - gined And feel like our life is on pause At the edge the
 What may be a - round the cor - ner Or where a - ny road will go So the Spi - rit

wraps a - round us To pro - tect and re - as - sure And the road winds e - ver on
 Spi - rit's wait - ing There to fer - ry us a - cross And the road winds e - ver on
 stirs with - in us To be car - ried by the flow And the road winds e - ver on

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

**We believe in a with-us God,
 a God who is beside us in the mountains and valleys,
 holding our hand through every bump and turn.**

**And in the chaos of our journey,
 we believe that God sees
 what we cannot always see:
 a path home by another way.**

**Therefore, trusting in this ever-present and guiding God,
 we lace up our shoes.
 We look for God's fingerprints in the world.
 We trust that there are paths still unexplored,
 paths that God has only begun to invite us down.**

And like the Magi, we dare to follow.

May it be so, Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

OFFERING

MUSICAL OFFERING Ding Dong Merrily on High – Jeff Perks

OFFERTORY ELW 296 What Child Is This?

So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!

OFFERING PRAYER

God of heaven and earth, from the beginning, you have called forth life, in which you take delight. The trees, the fields, and the seas sing for joy. Bless now these gifts, received from your bounty, that we may join the chorus of creation to tell of your salvation from day to day.

Amen.

COMMUNION DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

LORD'S PRAYER

As Jesus taught us, we are bold 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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

These are the gifts of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION

MUSIC DURING COMMUNION ELW 301 Bright and Glorious Is the Sky

TABLE BLESSING

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God who lights our way... With hope we pray. **Amen**

+ SENDING +

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BENEDICTION

The God of love,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
lavish you with grace,
illumine your path,
and increase your joy,
today and always.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN ELW 300 The First Noel

This star drew near to the northwest,
o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;
and there it did both stop and stay
right over the place where Jesus lay.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

Then entered in those wise men three,
full rev'rently upon their knee,
and offered there in his presence
their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!
Born is the King of Israel.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. The Word of God dwells in you richly.
Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE The Holly and the Ivy – Gordon Phillips

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PRAYER LIST

Please continue to keep the following people connected to our congregation in your prayers: Bob Moran, Leonard & Martha Gibeon, David Mounts, Ruthie Jadick, Jill Iris, Ed Schanely, Steve Keyser, Andrew Breuninger, Marie Wolfe, Joe Tursi, Brooks Maurer, the Stauffer family, Diane Quinn, Tiffany Reber, Bill Hutt, Renee Fells and Rebecca Jellen.

Mark Your Calendar

Monday, January 6 3-7:30pm Community Meal at Pennsburg UCC

Sunday, January 5 8AM Worship
 10:15AM Worship

TODAY, January 5th from 12-2 PM—Confirmation & Mentors Bowling
at Earl Bowling

Community Meal is on Monday, January 6th from 3-7:30pm at Pennsburg UCC. The menu will include Pork, Sauerkraut, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Dinner Roll, Pumpkin Pie, Iced Tea, Lemonade and Water. Donations of ingredients or help serving will be greatly appreciated.

Sign up at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0F4EAEAC23A1F9C16-54060874-community?useFullSite=true#/>

It's Care Package Time! If you have a college student or young adult serving in the military who would love to receive a care package this winter, please submit mailing addresses to Pastor Becky at pastorbecky74@gmail.com by January 19!

New Member Small Group Forming Have you been visiting at St. John's for a while? Ready to become a member of this faith community? Anyone interested in being part of the New Member Small Group this winter should email Pastor Becky at pastorbecky74@gmail.com by Sun. January 26.

Winter Book Breakfast Saturday, January 25th at 9:30am at Freidens UCC Fellowship Hall. This month's pick is "The Book of Longing" by Sue Monk Kidd. The snow date for this event is Saturday, February 1st - same time, same location.