

**ST. ANDREW'S UNITED CHURCH**  
**January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
**Epiphany Sunday, Sacrament of Communion**  
Welcome to Worship  
Join us for a Zoom Virtual Coffee Time at 7:00 p.m.  
Email [smiletoday9@proton.me](mailto:smiletoday9@proton.me) to get the Zoom link.

**Prelude**

**Opening Hymn: VU 74 *What Child is This***

1. What child is this, who laid to rest,  
on Mary's lap is sleeping?  
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet  
while shepherds watch are keeping?

This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

2. Why lies he in such mean estate  
where ox and ass are feeding?  
Good Christian, fear; for sinners here  
the silent Word is pleading.

This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

3. So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
come, one and all, to own him.  
The King of Kings salvation brings;  
let loving hearts enthrone him.

This, this is Christ the King,  
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;  
haste, haste to bring him laud,  
the Babe, the Son of Mary!

**Inviting Holy Light**

Have you ever experienced a quiet, night, with the freshness of winter cold? You can see your breath, and the light cast by the moon's glow and the beaming stars seem to altogether light the path. It is a marvellous thing, the twinkling starlight in contrast with the quiet dark of night. Celts call it the thin place, where we feel close to the holy, the sacred. Let us hold this moment, as we breathe, our hearts beat at the Creator's tempo. Sit, and breathe in this moment.

We light the Christ candle remembering the star that led the magi to the Christ child. Light our path into this new year, that we might share light and love for all to see.

*[lights candle]*

**Sung Response: MV 137 *Welcome, Jesus, You Are Welcome, vs. 4***

4. Welcome, Jesus, you are welcome;  
let your loving light appear.  
In our seeing, in our being,  
Jesus, you are welcome here.

## **Nurturing Safe Space**

We are all children of God. Each one of us here, or at home, have answered the call of God inviting us to worship together. All are welcome, regardless of race, age, gender identity, ability. We celebrate our differences and rejoice that we are all welcomed in this space.

## **Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

Long ago, all of this land was covered by ice,  
**clothed in a winter without end.**

But God our Creator brought back the warmth,  
**pulling back the ice and revealing this land.**

Plants and animals returned to the land;  
**and it was good.**

Then God gave to the land many peoples,  
**and many peoples to the land;**

to care for one another,  
**to live together.**

And in this time, we celebrate the gifts of the Robinson Huron Treaty and the Wahnapiatae First Nation and the Atikameksheng Anishnawbek who call this land Home.

**We celebrate all who make this place a home today.**

We celebrate together with the God of justice,  
**as a people called to love and serve others, called to seek justice.**

We eagerly await the day where the heavens are glad and the earth rejoices,  
**where all will share our abundance together.**

We work and wait for that day, when all will live together  
**in hope, peace, joy and love. Amen.**

## **Welcome and Announcements**

Welcome to everyone, in person and online. Together in Spirit. Today we will celebrate Communion in this worship to mark Epiphany. All are welcome at God's Table, here we will be using the communion cups as has been our custom, at home, I invite you to find yourself a bread or rice cake and a cup of something to become your elements to take with us.

Those at home, if you are new here, note that our contact information is at the end of the video, and you might want to visit our Facebook page, YouTube channel, or website, or email our office manager so you can receive our weekly e-newsletter. We also have a Social Hour on Zoom, every Sunday night at 7. As always, you can get your Zoom link to join that time of connecting by sending an email to Diane. That email address is above.

## **Call to Worship**

Calling all seekers, all dreamers, all believers...  
**We are called.**

Calling all glass-half-full optimists and lighthouse keepers...  
Calling all star-chasers and bedtime prayer speakers...  
**We are called.**

Bring your questions, your hope, your faith, and your fear into this space.  
**God is here, and we are all called.**

## **Opening Prayer**

God of starlight, every part of us is trying to seek you: our bodies that carried us into this space, our heads bowed in prayer, our hearts that keep whispering, "There is more than just this."

We are seeking you. Like a dog looking for its owner, who will search the whole house—under beds, behind doors, in every corner of every room until their person is found— we are turning over every rock and leaf looking for fingerprints that belong to you.

So meet us halfway. Find us in the maze. Quiet the rest of the world. Open the door to us with rich laughter and say, “Come on in!”

We know you’re near, so know that it’s you we seek. Find us in these words. Gratefully we pray. Amen.

**Hymn: VU 585 *Jesus Bids Us Shine, vs. 1***

1. Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light,  
like a little candle burning in the night.  
In this world is darkness, so let us shine,  
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

**Time Up Front – Following the Star**

*Dave, with a basic star in his hand, talks about the Magi following the Star to Bethlehem, that they have been guided to see the Christ child. A very strange sight for them, they were from a different country and faith tradition. But they followed in faith, and were amazed.*

Finding Jesus. That’s what the star shows us. Ok, how about we follow the star.

**Dave to Pulpit** – This is where people speak, stories are shared at these microphones, Jesus is found in Scriptures, in preaching in praying.

**Dave to Communion Table** – This is a Table set for Communion, that joins us and all followers of Jesus. We are connected by Christ.

**Dave to front of Tech Booth** – this is how we share this worship with many people in their homes, at work. We are connected by Christ, we find Christ through the ministry of Roger and Mallon and all our volunteers.

**Dave to the Piano/Choir** – This is where beautiful music is played and sung. We find Christ in the sacred music, as we hum and dance and sing.

**Dave to the centre aisle** – This is where we really find Jesus, in our midst. I find Jesus in (name & name & name). Jesus is found in each of us, in the things we say and do.

Cool huh!

This is a repeat-after-me-prayer:

Dear God,

we thank you for all that you have given us,

for light and stars that help us in all we do.

For night and darkness that quiet us.

Guide us and help us to follow you,

so that all we do will be guided by your love.

May these little lights of ours – shine, shine shine.

Amen.

**Hymn: VU 585 *Jesus Bids Us Shine, vs. 2***

2. Jesus bids us shine first of all for him;  
well he sees and knows it if our light grows dim:  
Jesus walks beside us to help us shine,  
you in your small corner, and I in mine.

## Scripture Reading (Freda Wilson)

### “Gifts for Jesus” – A Paraphrase based Matthew 2:1-12

The magi, the wise people of their lands, saw the star in the night sky. They knew it was an important sign that the child of God had been born and that they needed to go and visit and worship the child.

But they wondered exactly where the child was. They went to the ruler of the land, Herod by name, and asked him where they could find the child. Herod sent for all his advisers, the priests, and the scribes who wrote down all the important things about the rules of the land. They told Herod that the prophets from long ago mentioned that the new ruler sent from God would be born in the little town of Bethlehem in a part of the country called Judea.

They also said that the child would become like a shepherd and take care of God’s people. Herod wanted to know exactly when the star had shown up in the sky and brought in the magi and asked them. Herod told the magi to go to Bethlehem and look everywhere for the child. Herod also told them to send a message when they found the child. Herod explained that he wanted to go and worship the child, too. Herod was jealous though, and might have been planning to hurt the child to prevent it from becoming the land’s new ruler. After Herod talked to the magi, they left and saw the star moving in the night sky. They followed it until it stopped. They saw a small house there and were very happy to have finally found the right place. They went in and saw Mary and the child; they bowed down and worshipped and gave the child special gifts. The gifts were gold and expensive oils and perfumes.

That night a dream warned that they shouldn’t go back to Herod, but they should return home a different way. That way, Herod wouldn’t know exactly where the child was.

Let us pray, God of starlight, every part of us is trying to seek you: our bodies that carried us into this space, our heads bowed in prayer, our hearts that keep whispering, “There is more than just this.” We are seeking you.

Like a person searches the whole house to find their furry friend — under beds, behind doors, in every corner of every room until their person is found— we are turning over every rock and leaf searching for you.

Find us in the maze.

Open the door to us with laughter and say, “Come on in!”

Find us in these words. Gratefully we pray, amen.

### **Message: *Dare to Follow the Star***

*The message will be posted on the website when it is available.*

### **Star Word Time for Reflection**

In a moment we will invite you to choose your STAR WORD, that will find you and invite you to prayerfully reflect on its meaning for you.

#### **If you are in the Sanctuary:**

Come to the table at the front and pick one star, take to it your seat and ponder what significance that word has for you. What might the Spirit be telling you?

#### **If you are joining at home, during the Live Stream:**

We invite you to type into the comment box a number between 1 & 50, and we will post for you that number and your corresponding STAR WORD.

Take 5 minutes to reflect on the journey of the Magi, and what gift this Star Word might offer you on your journey of faith.

### **Prayer after Receiving our STAR WORDS**

I invite you to join me in offering this prayer together, or just sit and listen to it as you hold your STAR WORD.

**God of open horizons and open roads, like the Magi so many years ago, we are here, seeking you. Step by step, we have wandered into this time and space with the hope of feeling you in our midst.**

**Gently, you have claimed us, loved us, and fed us. Today we have drawn star words.**

**For some, these words are full of meaning, challenge, and invitation already. For others, these words are baffling, a blank canvas.**

**As a new year dawns, we pray that just as you have spoken to the generations before us, you will speak to us again. Allow us to use these star words as tools to help us hear your voice, guide us like the star beckoned the Magi.**

**Together we pray, with the saints before us. Amen.**

**Choir Anthem: VU 92 *In the Darkness Shines the Splendour***

### **Offering Moment**

Thank you for sharing both your talents and treasures. Your donations will help St. Andrew's to partner with people who help the most vulnerable downtown. Giving to the United Church of Canada's Mission and Service allows us collectively to reach out to Ukraine and other places needing love and community. Thank you for all you do!!

### **Dedication Hymn: VU 81 *As with Gladness, vv. 1, 2, 3***

1. As with gladness men of old  
did the guiding star behold,  
as with joy they hailed its light,  
leading onward, beaming bright,  
so, most gracious Lord, may we  
evermore your splendour see.

2. As with joyful steps they sped,  
to that lowly manger bed,  
there to bend the knee before  
Christ, whom heaven and earth adore;  
so may we with eager pace  
ever seek your throne of grace.

3. As they offered gifts most rare  
at that manger crude and bare,  
so may we with holy joy,  
pure and free from sin's alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

### **Dedication Prayer**

**God of Light, these gifts are not gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These are the gifts of our labours and our hearts. We ask that you use them to shine your light of love to the world, like the light that shone, marking the place of the Saviour's birth. Amen.**

### **Sacrament of Communion**

#### **Great Prayer of Thanksgiving**

People of Advent, God be with you!

**And also with you!**

People of Christmas, lift up your hearts.

**We lift our hearts, awash in grace, to the One who was born for us.**

People of the Star, will you offer your songs of joyful thanksgiving to God?  
**Let us sing our praises to the Creator, revealed in the Babe of Bethlehem.**

In that first moment, you spoke, Radiant God, and the light of creation dispelled the thick darkness of chaos.

You whispered, and your glory filled the skies.

You sang, and the dust of the earth was shaped into your image.

We could have lived in grace and peace with you,  
but we were tempted by the sweet taste that indulgence offers;  
Humans then, and we now can be overwhelmed  
by temptation's wealth of cheap gifts and thrills.

The prophets were sent to tell of your gifts of joy and peace,  
but we listened to the world's news of success, power, achievement.  
Finally, in that dark time of despair, you sent Jesus,  
your messenger with good news of salvation.

Therefore, we will join our voices with the wise ones, as well as the foolish,  
of every time and place who forever sing of your grace:

**Holy, holy, holy, God of bright dawns!**  
**All creation renders tributes of praise to you.**  
**Hosanna in the highest!**  
**Blessed is the One who saves the lives of the needy.**  
**Hosanna in the highest!**

Holy are you, God of redemption, and blessed are you Jesus.

Born among us, teacher, healer, and hope in death and life beyond death. We celebrate our faith,  
Jesus, grounded in compassion, gave up the safety and glory of heaven to be vulnerable, to love  
and die that we might be free. Our vision of hope, Christ entered death's house and destroyed the  
fear and bondage of death forever.

He travelled a road that we are now invited to follow, in compassion and power in vulnerability,  
that we might journey to you, Creator, welcoming us with open arms, unconditionally loving.

So, as we remember his birth, as we prepare to journey with him this year,  
we speak of that mystery called faith, which is revealed to us through Christ:

**Christ came, the morning star of love;**  
**Christ died, the night star of salvation;**  
**Christ was raised, the radiant star of resurrection;**  
**Christ will come again, the constellation of hope.**

Let us remember together that vision of God's reign shown to us in Jesus at table:  
**he shared food with followers and friends,**

with saints and sinners,

**with crowds of thousands on the hillside,**

and a few friends in an upper room.

**On the night before he died, he had supper with his companions.**

He took a loaf of bread, and after giving thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them, saying:  
**"Take, eat. Do this in remembrance of me."**

Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he passed it among them, saying:  
**"Drink this. Do this in remembrance of me."**

Through this loaf and cup, Jesus lives within us.

**In word and deed, Jesus lives among us.**

### **Prayers of Community**

God of today, tomorrow, and yesterday, like the Magi, we are seeking you. Like the Magi, we are bringing ourselves closer to you, step by step, and word by word. So today we ask that you would make yourself known among us, and in us. Reach into our spirits and give us a boost of confidence that love is real and that we are not alone.

We find you in the most surprising places—in freshly baked bread, in the smell of evergreen, in handwritten letters, and long phone calls, at crowded tables, during a warm cup of coffee.

Other days, the clouds cover the stars and we lose our way. Regardless of the weather, we want to be seekers.

So, when the way is clear, when your fingerprints are all over the place, help us to give thanks: for healthy bodies that can dance and move, for food on the table, for roofs over our heads, for the dreams of this community we call St. Andrew's.

In silence I invite you to offer quietly your joys and gratitude, but personal and for this community... (silence) ....

When the clouds roll in, and we lose our way, and we cannot catch a glimpse of the star, remind us that you are there: in the local Elgin Street Mission, on street corners, in lonely apartments where dinner is for one, in hospital rooms, in the bottom of our faith. We offer now in silence our concerns to you, both for ourselves and our prayers for those we know who need Holy Love and Spirit's Company today... (silence)...

Call forth our seeker hearts so that day after day we might summon the strength to always be looking for you.

God, you are all over the place. Keep our hearts brave, and keep them curious, so that like the Magi, we might be on the lookout for you.

So, with grateful hearts, we pray together a newer version of the ancient prayer that Jesus taught...

### **The Prayer that Jesus Taught**

**Heavenly Father, heavenly Mother, Holy and blessed is your true name. We pray for your reign of peace to come, We pray that your good will be done, Let heaven and earth become one.**

**Give us this day the bread we need, Give it to those who have none. Let forgiveness flow like a river between us From each one to each one. Lead us to holy innocence Beyond the evil of our days — Come swiftly Mother, Father, come.**

**For yours is the power and the glory and the mercy: Forever your name is All in One. Amen.**

Holy One of stars and sinners, send down your Spirit of hope upon those gathered around this Table, and on the gifts of the bread and the cup, that they might make us your faithful and loving children.

Feed us with the bread of hope, so when we leave, we will travel another road, to defend the weak, to speak for the voiceless, to assist those cast aside.

Refresh us with the sweet nectar of grace, so we, overwhelmed with joy, would go forth to enter the houses of the strangers in our midst; to enter the despair of the lonely and forgotten; to enter the hearts of everyone we meet, and, by that action, we might enter your Heart.

And when eternity's time begins and we are gathered around your Table, all your Creation as one community, may we lift our songs of glad joy to you, God in Community, Holy in One.

And God's people say together: **Amen.**

### **We Share in Communion**

Bread of generosity, for all of our journeys. (*Breaks Bread*)

The Cup of Blessing, the vine of God's covenant with all God's Children. (*Pours Juice*)

These are the Gifts of God, for God's Children. All are welcome. Come for all is made ready.

### **Prayer after Communion**

**Life-giving God, may we, who share Christ's body, live his risen life; we, who drink his cup, bring new life to others; we, whom the Spirit lights, give light to the world.**

**Keep us firm in the hope you have set before us, so that we and all your children shall be free, and all creation will live to praise your name. Amen.**

### **Closing Hymn: VU 82 *A Light Is Gleaming*, vv. 1, 3, 4**

A light is gleaming, spreading its arms throughout the night,  
living in the light.

Come, share its gladness, God's radiant love is burning bright,  
living in the light.

1. When light comes pouring into the darkest place,  
it hurts our eyes to see the glow.  
Sometimes a word of hope reminds us of our fears,  
our memories and tears.

A light is gleaming, spreading its arms throughout the night,  
living in the light.

Come, share its gladness, God's radiant love is burning bright,  
living in the light.

3. And Jesus showed us a brighter path to walk.  
He showed us things we hadn't seen.  
Now we, like Jesus, can help creation shine,  
and this will be a sign:

A light is gleaming, spreading its arms throughout the night,  
living in the light.

Come, share its gladness, God's radiant love is burning bright,  
living in the light.

4. So let us live in the brightness God has giv'n,  
and let us rise to see the dawn.  
We trust that God is here a-sparkle and ablaze,  
warming all our days.

A light is gleaming, spreading its arms throughout the night,  
living in the light.

Come, share its gladness, God's radiant love is burning bright,  
living in the light.



## **Blessing**

Go now, beloved, to follow the love of God, to be surprised by the Creator's wonder, to lift your voice for love and compassion. Feel the encouragement of Christ, to be a blessing as you offer blessings with your heart and your hands. Go knowing that the Spirit journeys with you – know that you never, ever, go alone. Amen.

## **Blessing Hymn: VU 59 *Joy to the World*, vv. 1, 2, 4**

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come:  
let earth receive her King!  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven and nature sing,  
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns:  
let all their songs employ,  
while fields and floods,  
rocks, hills and plains  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat the sounding joy,  
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
4. He rules the earth with truth and grace,  
and makes the nations prove  
the glories of his righteousness  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders of his love,  
and wonders, wonders of his love.

## **Postlude**

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**Inviting Holy Light** adapted from a prayer written by Mary Parsons. Gathering Advent, Christmas, Epiphany 2023. Used with permission.

**Acknowledging Traditional Territory** from Advent 2019 at Lanigan-Nokomis Pastoral Charge, Treaty 4 Territory, and the Homeland of the Métis Nation.

**Call to Worship, Opening Prayer, and Prayers of Community** adapted from prayers written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | sanctifiedart.org. © A Sanctified Art.

**Time Up Front** by Rev. John Stevens, Dollar Store Sermons, online, January 8, 2023. dskidsermons.com.

**“Gifts for Jesus”** – A paraphrase based on Matthew 2:1-12 from *Seasons of the Spirit, Fusion*. January 1, 2023. © 2022 Wood Lake Books Inc.

**Prayer after Scripture and Prayer after Receiving Our Star Words** written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | sanctifiedart.org. © A Sanctified Art.

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