

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2023 01 01

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on the 1st of January.

Announcements

The people of Knox Bayfield acknowledge with gratitude the territory upon which we live, work, play and worship. Knox is on the traditional lands of the Anishinabewaki, Attiwonderonk (Neutral), and Mississauga peoples within Treaty 29, of 1827. We are all treaty people. We acknowledge that The Presbyterian Church in Canada was a part of the residential school system. There is much for us to learn as we seek a new relationship with the First Nations of this land, one based in truth, respect, and reconciliation.

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: Praise God in heaven; praise God in the heights!

All: Praise the Lord, sun and moon; give praise, all shining stars!

One: All people, let us declare God's glory in heaven and on earth.

All: Let us worship God!

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON¹

God of majesty and mystery, like the magi following the star, we come to you in wonder. Your purposes are beyond our comprehension, your majesty incomparable and your love beyond imagination. We praise you for your steadfast love, and offer you our trust for the days ahead. We seek to follow faithfully in the footsteps of Christ.

God of light and life, you come to us in Jesus to open a path to new life, but we fall back on what is familiar. We confess that we are comfortable with our old ways and we have little tolerance for change. Forgive us when our resolve wavers and shine your light on the way we can follow into your future.

Assurance of Pardon

If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Be assured of God's forgiveness. Make a new start this year, be at peace with God, secure in the knowledge of God's love. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

¹ PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

Hymn Oh come all ye faithful #159
To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination

O holy One, in the law and the prophets, you give us your will and in Jesus Christ you revealed your love. Open our minds by the power of your Spirit so that we might understand what you are saying to the church. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Tanakh*	Isaiah 60:1-6	[B#690/W#766]
Tanakh	Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14	[B#533/W#589]
Epistle	Ephesians 3:1-12	[B#193/W#205]
Gospel	Matthew 2:1-12	[B#2/W#2]

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

The bridge

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you. Amen.

Today we celebrate Epiphany a few days early. Actually, epiphany has two meanings. Have you experienced an epiphany? An insightful moment when an important truth becomes clear. Such moments provide clarity with spiritual insight, vision, or perspective. It is possible to better understand an issue or situation in a new way. Epiphany, with the uppercase E, is reference to the revelation of Christ. It commemorates the Magi, or the three kings or wise men, following the star to Jesus. The feast of the Epiphany is one of the seven principal feast days on the Christian calendar. It is on January 6th, the twelfth day after Christmas. Similar to Christmas and New Years it migrates through the calendar week.

Rituals and tradition help us to experience the stories of the bible. It can deepen our understanding and bring the wisdom of our ancestors into our current context. One season of the church year gives way to the next. Gift giving is linked with wise men distributing gifts. In some places, children leave shoes filled with hay outside their homes. The hay is food for the camels that were used by the wise men. In turn, gifts are left to

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thank the children. This tradition reminds me of leaving carrots out for the reindeer. In the Orthodox rituals, people will plunge into the frigid lake waters on Epiphany. In our reading from the letter to the Ephesians, Paul has written from jail to the church of Ephesus. In his letter, Paul referred to his calling as being bound to Christ and described the hardships of prison as part of the divine call. He saw the connection between what he was doing and what he was called to do. In many ways Paul's letter continues to speak to us today. I look around this sanctuary and consider the many ways in which people live out their faith in this congregation. The sense of caring community and the care of the church itself. Your participation in missions from the local foodbank to the work of PWS&D and Presbyterians Sharing. The countless hours of committee work to ensure people have access to this faith community. Yesterday, in a special emergent Zoom meeting of the Presbytery, over 20 people joined together to consider a current issue within the church. During the worship portion of our meeting, our Presbytery Moderator the Rev. Gwen Ament shared, "As we move through these 12 days of Christmas the question can be asked, "Have we been affected by or come away changed in some way by this year's celebration of Christmas?" This question carried some weight with me because I found this Christmas season to be particularly challenging. Some of you may be aware that earlier in December my Aunt was quite ill and, after some time in the hospital, she died. It was a difficult funeral to lead for many reasons. Perhaps, in part, it was challenging because her death marks the end of a generation within my Mother's family. Yet, I felt very fortunate, and found strength emotionally in our longest night service led by the Solace Bedside Singers. Then, our Christmas eve service was cancelled due to the snow storm. The cancellation had a significant impact on me. It seemed that during the pandemic we were able to continue the meaningful rituals of the Christmas eve service even when we could not gather as a community. We were able to continue the ritual of Christmas eve by sharing the scripture story and listening to the hymns played by Jean. Somehow the cancelled service this year was different. There wasn't time to prepare a separate worship service. This has touched me in ways I could not have predicted. The impact reinforced the significance of gathering in community for our worship celebrations. As I listened to The Rev. Ament yesterday, she went on to share, "Timothy Keller, a notable preacher, reminds us that *the bridge between Christian belief and Christian*

character is Christian practice. This includes the practice of sharing scripture, of singing hymns and praise, of breaking bread with one another and yes, dialoguing and discerning with one another. Also the practice of praying together." This Christmas, even after all we learned during the disruption of the pandemic, highlighted this need for community and shared worship as a bridge between our belief and our actions. We are called to be attentive to the ways in which our Christian practices provide a bridge between our beliefs and our actions.

The mystery of the Epiphany is rooted in the message of inclusive community and celebration. Paul reminds the reader that all people, whether Jewish or Gentile, are members of the same body. That "In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north." The term Gentile in scripture can be a little confusing. When scripture is read remember it was written in the context of Judaism. In that perspective, there was either Jew or gentile. So, simply put, the term Gentile refers to all people who are not Jewish. The magi may represent the diversity of Gentiles. For some time, the magi were given characteristics to emphasize a universal outreach. Early commentators were imaginative with skin colour, race, and the symbolic meaning of the gifts. Desmond Tutu, the former Anglican archbishop of Cape Town, noted that humans are caught up in "delicate networks of interdependence." The inter-dependence includes the responsibility to be good stewards and the grace we receive of God. It is in our relationships with the triune God and with those around us. When grace is understood only as a personal experience ... it becomes distorted into a privilege or right, rather than a gift.

But who were the Magi? Some refer to magos as an Asian astrologer or a magician, a sorcerer. Others refer to "the Magoi, a Median tribe; of a sacred caste, originally Median, who seem to have conformed to the Persian religion, while retaining some of their old beliefs. Those of Persian origin, the magus, were Babylonians, Chaldaeans, Medes. They were the wise men, teachers, priests, physicians, astrologers, seers, interpreters of dreams, and sorcerers.

The prophecies foretold by Micah and Isaiah are fulfilled within this gospel account. Micah prophesied that the Messiah would hold open the doors of the kingdom for all of God's righteous ones, Jew and Gentile alike. The magi are the first Gentiles to recognize the coming of the Messiah. Their arrival in Jerusalem fulfilled the prophecy. In the time of

Isaiah, the Judaeans are living in exile in Babylon in the middle of the sixth century before Christ. The kingdom of David had come to a disastrous end and their temple destroyed. In the midst of their exile, the prophet Isaiah described the deep joy that will be experienced when they return to their homeland. Isaiah spoke of young camels from the Far East that would bring gold and frankincense to proclaim the Messiah. Isaiah challenged the people to move out of the darkness and march into God's new day. The prophet's message has been heard throughout the centuries.

When we gather to sing praise, hear the good news of the gospel, and share our gifts with the world, we are re-enacting the drama that Isaiah describes. When we gather to worship, we join together in a diverse community. Isaiah's vision reminds us that we join in community with the deep hope of being able to shift to make room for others to join us. The magi reached out to meet with a young family. Sacrificing time and comfort, they brought gifts to a baby with no assurances of how the story would end. The magi knew of the prophecy of the star and the promise of a Messiah. They yearned to honour and revere him while King Herod sought to destroy him. The gifts of the magi are symbolic offerings. They signal that disciples of Jesus are called to participate in this infinite generosity by giving themselves to God and others freely. Traditionally, the gold represents Christ's majesty, the frankincense signifies worship of his divinity, and the myrrh foreshadows the preparation of his body for burial.

In closing, the magi came from afar to offer reverence, tribute, and respect. Their first action upon seeing Mary and the child was to kneel down to worship and pay him respect. They took great risk in seeking him out and would continue to take risk in protecting him from King Herod. Epiphany is a season to celebrate God's revealing presence and power in the person of Jesus. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Hark the herald angels sing (v 1, 3) #139

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

QUOTE Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

The Magi offered rare and expensive gifts to honour the new-born Christ child. We do not bring gold, frankincense and myrrh, yet all our gifts are well used for God's purpose in creation.

PRAYERS OF PEOPLE, BLESSING OF GIFTS

God of all time and space, you guided the magi on their ancient journey; you watched over Jesus, Mary and Joseph when they fled as refugees; and you walk with us into a year filled with the unknown. We thank you for walking through the good days and the hard days with us. We give thanks for new possibilities emerging in ministry and mission; give us courage to take them up with confidence.

Thank you for friendships within our congregation which help us cope in ever changing times. Open our eyes to what we have to share with others as your Spirit guides us into the future.

God of neighbourhoods and nations, we bring our gifts to you, grateful that you are with us in good times and hard times. We do not know what the year will hold and know that your love will continue to shine like a star to guide us. Bless the gifts we offer in the service of your mission in the world.

God of community and commitment, we pray for wisdom and courage in the year ahead. Guide those for whom new opportunities appear and choices must be made. Strengthen our congregation as we seek to witness to your love. Make us faithful citizens who work together for the good of your whole creation. Guide leaders in communities and countries around the world so that justice and peace may prevail in troubled places and generous giving will bring hope to vulnerable lives.

The year just ending has held sorrows and challenges for us. We remember love ones who have died and pray for those who look ahead in loneliness or sadness.....We pray for those who have faced challenges in health, in their families or at work.....God of light and love, as we face the year ahead, we are aware that much around us remains uncertain. We seek your strength and guidance in each challenge we will face. Draw near to those who must confront illness, loss or changing circumstances. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. Equip us to offer support for those who are near to us. God of hope, we ask you to linger with Lyle, Deb and family; Stephani, Judith

& Gerry; Rob; Stephanie and family; and, Grace & Rudy. We lift up all those who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Let there be joy in Jerusalem and peace among all nations. Let sounds of weeping and cries of distress turn to shouts of joy and laughter. Let infants grow and thrive; let the old dance like children. Let every person find a home and enjoy the fruit of their labor.

With voices united in love and loyalty, we offer the prayer taught by Christ ... Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed 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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

HYMN Joy to the world (v 1, 2) #153

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Go in courage and confidence to face the year ahead, sure that the light of Christ will guide you. And may God bless you and keep you; may God's face shine upon you; and may God be gracious to you and give you joy and peace this day and every day, now and evermore. Amen.

Postlude Amen

64 Be still and know

Be still and that I am God x3

I am the Lord that health thee x3

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust x 3

306 Praise God

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures high and low;

Praise God in Jesus fully known; Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

159 Oh come all ye faithful

Oh come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant; Oh come ye, oh come ye to Bethlehem. Come and behold him, born the King of angels:

Refrain Oh come let us adore him; Oh come let us adore him;
Oh come let us adore him: Christ the Lord.

God of God, Light of light, Born unto Mary, the virgin blest, Very God, begotten, not created: **Refrain**

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle, Leaving their flocks draw nigh with holy fear; We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps: **Refrain**

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above: "Glory to God in the Highest!" **Refrain**

Yea, Lord we greet thee, born this happy morning; Jesus, to thee be glory given; Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: **Refrain**

139 Hark the herald angels sing (v 1, 3)

Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King, Peace on earth and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled. Joyful. All ye nations, rise; Join the triumph of the skies; With the angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem."

Refrain Hark! The herald angels sing Glory to the newborn King,

Christ, by highest heaven adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord, Late in time behold him come, Offspring of a virgin's womb. Veiled in flesh the God-head see! Hail the Incarnate deity! Pleased on earth with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel. **Refrain**

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the sun of righteousness! Light and life to all he brings, Risen with healing in his wings. Mild, he lays his glory by, Born that we no more may die, Born to raise the lost of earth, Born to give us second birth. **Refrain**

153 Joy to the world (v 1, 2)

Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth receive its King; let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! the Saviour reigns: let us our songs employ, while fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground; he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

He rules the world 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, and wonders of his love.