

# The First Congregational Church in Worcester

January 5, 2024

10:00A.M.

## Epiphany Sunday

*The service of worship begins with the music of the prelude. Through its power and brilliance, may you feel the majesty and glory of God; in its quietness, God's peace.*

### Prelude

Three Kings March ~ Barker

### Ringing of the Chimes

#### \*Call to Worship

Arise, shine; for your light has come. The glory of God has risen among us.

**We are awake; we are alive!**

**Praise God for deliverance and blessings.**

Lift up your eyes to see all around you.

Let your hearts rejoice, and be radiant with hope.

**May justice water the earth like a shower;**

**let righteousness and peace abound.**

Receive again the promises of the gospel. Participate in the mystery of Jesus Christ.

**God's ways are being revealed to us today.**

**Our church proclaims the unsearchable riches of Christ.**

#### \*Opening Hymn #143

We Three Kings of Orient Are  
Refrain after verses 1 & 5 only

We three kings of Orient are; bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain, moor and mountain, following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain, gold I bring to crown him again,  
King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign.

Frankincense to offer have I; incense owns a Deity nigh;  
prayer and praising, voices raising, worshiping God on high.

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying, sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Glorious now behold him arise; King and God and sacrifice:  
Alleluia, Alleluia, sounds through the earth and skies.  
O star of wonder, star of light, star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading, still proceeding, guide us to thy perfect light.

#### \*Invocation

Eternal God, because your purposes become clear to us in Jesus Christ, we come with boldness to claim our relationship with you. We are grateful for pioneers in the faith whose stewardship has

salvaged for us a way of life rooted in the gospel. The flames you ignited in them have not gone out, in spite of our faithlessness. Your wisdom is still proclaimed in the church, challenging centers of earthly power with the claims of heaven. Today our search for meaning has led us to this place of worship. You are here; we rejoice! Amen.

### Call to Transformation

The Epiphany season celebrates God's inclusiveness. The mystery of Jesus Christ is revealed, not to an elite few, but to the whole world. Yet we continue to build barriers to protect our own interests and keep others at a distance. If loyalty to God calls for accepting and embracing all God's children in love, we have much to confess.

### Prayer of Transformation

God of light, we admit our retreat into the shadows of pretension and exclusion. How often we choose to associate with people who are like us and then look down on others who differ from us. It is easier to discover their sins than to admit our own. We judge the poor and join their oppressors, while you call us to identify with those in need, that all may prosper together. We imagine that we alone are faithful stewards of your grace, while you welcome, as fellow saints with us, many whom we ignore. Save us from our earthbound judgments, that we may look up and be guided by the star that draws all people to yourself. Awed by your forgiving presence, we fall down to worship you. Amen.

### Prayer of Grace

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can come to Almighty God in boldness and confidence, assured of the gift of grace and empowerment of the Spirit. Lift up your eyes to see the glory of God. Receive light and healing, for God has come to dwell in us and among us. Let your hearts rejoice and your faces be radiant as we share the abundance of God's love.

### Sharing of Announcements, Celebrations and Concerns

### Prayer of the Day

### The Lord's Prayer

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. Amen.

### Prayer Response

Sursum Corda

Come, pray in me the prayer I need this day;  
help me to see your purpose and your will  
where I have failed, what I have done amiss;  
held in forgiving love, let me be still.

### Hebrew Scripture Reading

Isaiah 60:1-6

### New Testament Reading

Ephesians 3:1-12

### Gospel Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

## Meditation

“Learning From the Magi”

### \*Hymn #119

As With Gladness Men of Old

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 ever more be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped, Savior, to thy lowly bed,  
There to bend the knee before thee whom Heav'n and Earth adore,  
So may we with willing feet ever seek thy mercy seat.

As they offered gifts most rare at thy cradle rude and bare,  
So may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,  
All our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav'nly King.

Holy Jesus, ev'ry day keep us in the narrow way,  
And when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last  
Where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glory hide.

### Invitation to Generosity

We are stewards of God's grace, entrusted with the unsearchable riches of Christ, channels through which the wisdom of God is offered to the world. Our prosperity gives us the marvelous opportunity to share. What treasures will we offer today to honor Christ? What costly offerings will be given with joy and worshipful devotion?

### Offertory

A Christmas Lullaby ~ Bye

### \*Doxology

Old 100<sup>th</sup>

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen

### \*Prayer of Dedication

**For the joy of giving, we offer the products of our labor for the ministry of this church, in outreach to the world. With concern for those who are poor, oppressed, and needy, we rededicate ourselves as helpers and advocates. Out of devotion to Christ, we commit our best, that the church may bear witness among the principalities and powers of this world. Help us all, O God, to be faithful stewards. Amen.**

### Celebrating the Lord's Supper

### \*Sending Hymn #141

The First Nowell

The first Nowell 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.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, 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.

Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, 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.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

This star drew nigh 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.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

Then entered in those wise men three, full reverently upon their knee,  
and offered there in his presence their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.

**\*Commission & Blessing**

God sends us on our way, a bold and confident people.  
Look up, and be guided by the star of joy.

**We will open our eyes to the presence of God.**

**We will look for God's activity all around us.**

God's purposes in Christ are to be lived out by us.

We are called to invite others to share in God's grace.

**We will witness to all we have seen and heard.**

**By God's power, we will minister to others.**

The glory of God has risen among us.

We are blessed beyond all deserving.

**What we have received, we pass on with joy.**

**We offer to all the unsearchable riches of Christ.**

Amen. Amen.

**\*Benediction Response**

Sicilian Mariners

Lord, dismiss us with your blessing; fill our hearts with joy and peace;  
let us each your love possessing, triumph in redeeming grace.  
O direct us and protect us, traveling through this wilderness.

**Ring of the Chimes**

**\*Postlude**

Christmas Joy ~ Ritter

\* - Please stand in body or spirit

*All are welcome to join us at Coffee Hour in the parlor immediately following the service.*