

**New Castle United Methodist Church  
510 Delaware Street  
New Castle, DE 19720**

**The Message for January 3, 2021  
“One Starry Night”  
Pastor Ray Eck**

Epiphany, January 6, is a Christian celebration of the day which celebrates the revelation of God, incarnate as Jesus Christ. In Western Christianity, the feast commemorates the visit of the Magi to the Christ Child, and thus Jesus' physical manifestation to the Gentiles. I wonder what they saw in the sky that first night? What was it that got them thinking? What was it that motivated them to pack and begin a journey to who knew where? Something had been revealed to them, but what was it? Was it in the sky, in their mind, in their heart?

We don't have much historical information about these magi or wise men and their journey. Matthew says they came from the East. Some have speculated they were from Persia in present day Iran. We like to think that there were three of them, but Matthew does not say that, and the number has varied throughout the history of Christianity. We call them Caspar, Melchior, traditionally called the oldest of the wisemen, and Balthazar but those names were not mentioned until the seventh century. And what about “the star”? It has been viewed as a supernatural phenomenon, just a regular star, a comet, or sometimes a conjunction or grouping of planets. In fact, on December 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> of 2020, the star that shown over Bethlehem appeared once again. It had not been seen since it last appeared in 1200 A.D. The star, some say, is a grouping of two planets, Saturn and Neptune, that align themselves in the sky every 800 years or so. Did you see it on December 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>? I did! This Epiphany journey is not just the wise men's journey; it's our journey too. The truth of scripture is never limited to the past but is lived out in our lives every day.

I don't know what was in the sky that they saw that first night. I don't know what was in their minds, what they thought, or what they talked about, but these were learned men who studied the stars and their meaning, and they must have known that “this star” was important. So important that they spent, some say, 2 years following it until they reached the end of their journey.

I don't know what was in their hearts, what they felt, dreamed, or longed for. But I do know that there have been times when each one of us have experienced an Epiphany. Times when our night's star has been lit brightly and our hearts have been strangely warmed. Those times have revealed to us a life and world larger than before. They have been moments that gave us courage to travel outside our comfort box, and beyond the borders and boundaries that usually define our lives. Epiphanies are those times when someone calls us or moves us to a new place, and we see the face of God in a new way; so human, so beautiful.

I think that's what happened to the wise men. They began to see and hear the stories of their own lives. Something stirred within them and they began to wonder and imagine that their lives were part of a much bigger story. Could it be that the one who created life and hung the stars in the sky noticed them, and was he calling them to come to Bethlehem and see him for themselves? Could it be that the light they saw in the sky was a reflection of the divine light that burned within them? Perhaps it was the same light that started to burn within you and within me the moment that we first believed.

We are all on the same journey, the journey to see the Christ Child. But when we find him, each Christmas night, we cannot leave him in the manger, for he is not there any longer. The Christ child lives within us today as a light of hope in this troubled world. A light we are asked to carry to others so that they can find their way too. Each of us may travel a different route to find God's Son, but when we find him the answer is always the same. It is a journey of Love. He loves each of us more than he loved himself, and he died so that we might live. Yes, God notices us, he knows us, and he lives within us, and he calls us to live for him caring for those who need a helping hand; those who may have lost their way and need to come home. That's why he left us his love letter; we call it the Bible.

When did he first reveal himself to you? Maybe when you saw your first baby and counted his fingers and toes and said... wow! Maybe it was when you saw the beauty of God's creation and the love of God in all things. Or was it the day you said, "I love you" to that certain someone and knew that it was more than a physical attraction. It was meant to be. Maybe it was the time you sat at the bed of someone who was dying and you experienced the joy in knowing that death is not the end. These are indeed the days of our lives. The Epiphanies we have change our lives forever, and change how we live and the road we travel. They are moments of everyday life in which the glory of God is revealed in humanity, and we look into the face of God.

Jeremiah 29:11 tells us this:

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord,  
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you hope and a future."

Thanks be to God.

So Be it...  
Amen.



## Music for January 3

-- Bill Mathews, Director of Music Ministries

With this week's music, we celebrate the visit by the Magi. As Pastor Ray has told us, there is no mention of "three" visitors in the scriptures, but there is the description of "three gifts." The tradition of three magi and their names, Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar, originated in the eighth century; the "Adoration of the Magi" is one of the of most popular themes in Christian art, dating from the second century; and in our hymnal, references can be found in:

- ♪ #219, *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."
- ♪ #237, *Sing We Now of Christmas* – "From the eastern country came the kings afar, bearing gifts to Bethlehem, guided by a star."
- ♪ #245, *The First Noel* – "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... Then entered in those Wise Men three, full reverently upon the knee, and offered there, in his presence, gold and myrrh and frankincense."
- ♪ #248, *On This Day Earth Shall Ring* – God's bright star, o'er his head, Wise Men three to him led; kneel they low by his bed, lay their gifts before him, praise him and adore him."
- ♪ And, of course, #254, *We Three Kings* – with its trio of singers on verses 1 and 5, and the individual soloists singing the verses that refer to the gifts.

- ***We Three Kings, Robert Shaw Chorale***

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=j1ZOGTPsxng>

Or for those of you looking for a "slightly different" version...

- ***God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen/We Three Kings, Barenaked Ladies, a Canadian rock group, featuring Sarah McLachlan***

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=HGVNzgUxE-g>

### Verse 1:

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

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

### Verse 2:

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

(Refrain)

- *music continues on the next page*





### ✓ Food Closet Needs

- ✓ Peanut Butter & Jelly
- ✓ Pasta & Spaghetti Sauce
- ✓ Ramon Noodles
- ✓ Canned Soup... Progresso or Chunky
- ✓ Canned Fruit
- ✓ Canned Tuna
- ✓ 1 lb Bag of Rice or Rice a Roni

*And remember, store brands are always acceptable.*



Tristan Beeson, Pam Whary's nephew, and the Fire Company he's associated with, affected by COVID

Bonnie Bennett, friend of Dolores and Reese Foster

Hoover & Anita Counterman

Joanne Davis

Richard Hastings

Jerry and Sally Knotts

Tammy McAleese

Carol & Ron Pochvatilla

Joan Skilton's daughter, Sue, and her family

Margaret Weyl

Greyson, a 3-year-old boy diagnosed with neuroblastoma.

Those diagnosed with the coronavirus and the families of those who have lost loved ones

The staff and the patients of our nursing homes

The homeless

Those who struggle with addiction

***At the beginning of the month, we try to bring our prayer list up to date.***

- If you have requested prayers for someone on today's list and would like the congregation to continue keeping them in prayer, or...
- if you have someone new that you'd like included...

please let us know by contacting either Doris Poultney, Prayer Chain Coordinator, @ 302-378-1184, or Pastor Ray @ 302-740-3932 or [snowman3girls@gmail.com](mailto:snowman3girls@gmail.com)

*New Castle United Methodist Church*  
 "Zoom" Worship Service  
 January 3, 2021 at 11am – The Epiphany of Our Lord

If you have a computer, smartphone, or tablet...

**NEW SIGN-IN LINK BEGINNIG JANUARY 3, 2021**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85010951342?pwd=NldWQnlQUmRlRmRlRVN3VitLdz09>

**For those using a regular phone...** the number for our Zoom Worship is (301) 715-8592.  
 Remember... the phone number is long-distance and you should be sure your phone plan covers it.

**Meeting ID: 850 1095 1342**

**Passcode: 12345. On a computer, then hit "Enter." On a phone, then hit "#".**

## *Order of Worship*

### The Greeting

Pastor Ray Eck

"I am no longer my own, but thine. Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt. Put me to doing, put me to suffering. Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal. And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven."  
 Amen. ...John Wesley's "Covenant Prayer" for the New Year

### Introit: *As with Gladness Men of Old*

Bill Mathews

#### Verse 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 be led to Thee.

#### Verse 2

As with joyful steps they sped to that  
 lowly manger-bed;  
 There to bend the knee before Him  
 whom heaven and earth adore;  
 So, may we with willing feet ever seek  
 the mercy-seat.

#### Verse 3

As they offered gifts most rare  
 at that manger 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 heavenly King.

#### Verse 4

Holy Jesus, every 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.

- ...our service continues on the next page

**Call to Worship**

Pastor Ray and Kimberlyn Beltz, Liturgist

Pastor: On the Eve of His birth, shepherds were led to a stable, to see the Child in a manger, the child who would be the hope for all those who were oppressed and hopeless.

**Liturgist: The night sky, dark and foreboding, was filled with angelic light, and the voices of the heavenly host brought the good news to those who least expected it.**

Pastor: Others were drawn to the Christ child, from distant lands, seeking to find a king who would change the world, who would bring good news.

**Liturgist: They came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, costly and precious, for the most precious Gift of God.**

Pastor: Let us come this day, bearing our burdens and our joys. Let us come before the manger of the King.

**Liturgist: We come, bringing what we have, to pay homage to the one who will change the world.**

**Opening Prayer**

Kimberlyn Beltz

Loving God, who breaks through the darkness of doubt and despair, be with us this day as we hear of the visit of the Wise Men, who risked everything to follow a Star. Let us open our hearts and receive the gift of gracious Love, that you have to offer us. The gift of our Savior, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

*Please "unmute" your device as we enter our time of prayer.*

**Our Joys and Concerns**

Pastor Ray

**Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer**

*Please place your device back on "mute after the Lord's Prayer."*

**Scripture Lesson: Matthew 2: 1-12**

Kimberlyn Beltz

Liturgist: This is the Word of God for the people of God.

**People: Thanks Be to God, Amen!**

**The Message: "Wise Men Still Seek Him"**

Pastor Ray

**The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper**

Today we share in the Lord's Supper. Each time we share this meal together, we are reminded of His great love for us, as we await His return.  
...and when he had given thanks, He broke the bread and said,  
"This is my body, which is given for you. Take and eat, in remembrance of me."  
I Corinthians 11:24

- ...our service continues on the next page

**Benediction**

Pastor Ray

May the Light of the Star and the light of God's love  
 shine before you as you journey through this New Year.  
 Go in peace, go in joy, and go in love to meet God's people in the world,  
 and greet them with the good news of Salvation.  
 And all God's people said... **Amen!**

**Closing Hymn: *The First Noel***

Bill Mathews

Verse 1

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, born is the King of Israel.*

Verse 2

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, born is the King of Israel.*

Verse 3

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, born is the King of Israel.*

Verse 4

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.

*Noel, born is the King of Israel.*

Verse 5

Then entered in those Wise Men three,  
 full reverently upon the knee, and  
 offered there, in his presence,  
 gold and myrrh and frankincense.

*Noel, born is the King of Israel.*

Verse 6 (not in our hymnal)

Then let us all with one accord sing  
 praises to our heavenly Lord, that  
 hath made heaven and earth of  
 naught, and with his blood our life  
 hath bought.

*Noel, born is the King of Israel.*

...UMC Hymnal no. 245