

Rev. Penny Nelson

Gathering Song: Beautiful Star of Bethlehem

Announcements

Welcome

One: Welcome to this time of worship, dear ones! Whatever brings you to this time of prayer and community, may you know that when your light grows dim, the light of Christ can rekindle your heart so that you might step into the world with hope renewed. And so, we light our Christ candle in gratitude (*Elder lights Christ candle*).

And may you know that when you feel disconnected from that which is sacred, the light of Christ still shines to illuminate your way along the path of peace. And so, we light the Peace candle as we pause to acknowledge and give thanks for the lands, waters, the plants and animals and all of the people of Mi'kmak'i, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. (*Elder lights Peace Candle*)

One: And may you know that from your very beginning, you have been a part of God's sacred creation! And so, we light the Affirmation candle to celebrate all the wonderful diversity in which God has created us, and calls us good! (*Elder lights Affirmation candle*)

In this community of faith, we celebrate that all are welcome in this place.

All: All are welcome by God's grace.

Call to Worship

One: Look up: look way up. See the brilliant stars overhead.

All: We know that God offers us guidance for the journey.

One: Look ahead; look a long way ahead. See the path that leads to the future.

All: We know that God has a dream for that future.

One: Look within; look deeply within yourself. See the gift of God's Spirit shared for us all.

All: We know that God is working within us and among us.

One: Today, we begin a journey in a new year. Today, we are open to being inspired by an old story with a treasured message.

All: Thanks be to God!

Opening Prayer

All: 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. 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 82 A Light is Gleaming

Birthday Church

Time for All Ages

Hymn: VU 298 When You Walk from Here

Prayer of Illumination

Reader: Open our hearts and minds, Loving God, so that these ancient words and stories may come to life and provide illumination for us in our time and place. Amen.

Scripture Reading

Matthew 2: 1-1 - offered by Pat Nursey

Words of God that are still speaking.

Thanks be to God!

Reflection

Prayers of the People and The Lord's Prayer

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 to us.

Reach into our spirits and give us a boost of confidence that love is real
and we are not alone.

We bring ourselves to this worship service in hopes of catching a glimpse
of you.

And we bring with us the concerns of our church and community... *(Add specific prayer concerns here)*.

As you hold the concerns of our community, we look for the ways you guide us forward.

We pray that you would speak to us through these star words that we are about to receive, just as you have spoken to your people before.

Let these words be an invitation and challenge for the year ahead; let them be light in the sky that guides us home.

Holy God, you were the God of yesterday,
and we know you'll be the God of tomorrow,
for you have loved us from generation to generation.

So with grateful hearts, we pray together the words your son taught us to pray to you as though you are Our Mother and Our Father...

Star Words

Offering Hymn: VU 68 All Poor Ones and Humble

Offertory Response: This Little of Light of Mine

Offering Dedication

All: Loving God, we open our hearts wide to share the Good News in action and commitment. May these gifts be transformed into caring visits to those who are celebrating, hurting, or in need, learning times with young and old, and faith-filled worship for all seekers. May outreach be possible and love be imaginable. Let these offerings be for feeding body and soul. All praise and glory be yours. Amen.

Hymn VU 87 I Am the Light of the World

Blessing:

One: Blessed are you who turn your face up to the sky,
who open your arms to feel the wind, who notice all the things that we should notice.

Blessed are you who are fluent in wonder and familiar with awe.

Blessed are you who, even now, dream dreams,
who have not lost hope, who swear the glass is still half-full.

Blessed are you who plant trees and sing the harmony,
who tell the children how this world is overflowing with the sacred.

Blessed are you who walk and seek and turn over every stone,

pointing out all the corners and colors that God lives in.
And blessed are you who long for all of this but may not always live it—
You who are still seeking, still searching,
For God goes with you every step of the way.
Blessed are you. Now go into the world to share this blessing with all you
meet, saying
Thanks be to God! Amen.

Parting Song: Go Now in Peace

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