

January 9, 2022 + 10:30 A.M.  
First Sunday after the Epiphany

We Join in Worship
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**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME**

**CHORAL INTROIT**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**\*THE PEACE OF CHRIST**

Christ's peace is with us always, no matter where we may be. And so, Christ's peace is with each and every one of us in this moment. Let us take it in. Let us really feel it. If able, please stand where you are, look around, and make signs of Christ's peace to each other. If you are at home, give somebody a call after the service to share Christ's peace!

**\* CALL TO WORSHIP** (Adapted from *Psalms* 72)

Leader: May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

**ALL: May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service. For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.**

Leader: He has pity on the weak and the needy, and he saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

**ALL: Long may he live! May gold of Sheba be given to him. May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all day long.**

Leader: May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun. May all nations be blessed in him; may they pronounce him happy.

**ALL: Come, let us follow the star! Let us go to honor the newborn king!**

**\*OPENING HYMN (Gentle singing):** "As with Gladness Men of Old" (63)

**INVITATION TO CONFESSION:**

Leader: Isaiah proclaims, "Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn."  
Together let us confess how we have failed to follow the light.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION** (unison)

God who guides us, we lift up our prayer of confession and commit to repentance for our failure to follow your light and pay homage. We choose not to pay attention when you beckon us. We no longer look for miracles. We don't seek your presence in the grand majesty of the heavens or in the faces of small infants. Instead, we follow others' stars. We look for help and guidance from those who would mislead us. We bow down to kings who despise your will and your way. Forgive us for ignoring your signs and wonders, your help and guidance. Inspire us to look up once more, to see and be radiant. In the name of Jesus Christ, child of Mary, we pray. Amen.

### **KYRIE (Gentle singing)**

Lord, have mercy upon us.  
Christ, have mercy upon us.  
Lord, have mercy upon us.

### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Leader: Arise, shine; for our light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon us! We are forgiven by the light of the world, born of Mary!  
ALL: Hallelujah! Thanks be to God!

### **GLORIA PATRI (Gentle Singing)**

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.

### **STATEMENT OF FAITH: *The Apostles' Creed***

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

<h2><b>We Hear God's Word</b></h2>
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### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION: (Unison)**

Illumine your word by your Holy Spirit, O God. Let your good news radiate from these pages. May we experience epiphanies in the reading of these words. In the name of Jesus Christ, child of Mary, we pray. Amen.

**HEBREW BIBLE LESSON:** *Isaiah 60:1-6*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *Ephesians 3:1-12*

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *Matthew 2:1-12*

**SERMON:** Stargazing

**CHORAL ANTHEM:** *I've Got Peace Like a River*

## We Respond in Faith

### THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

#### INVITATION TO THE LORD'S TABLE

This is the table of our Lord Jesus Christ, born of Mary in Bethlehem. With the Incarnation, God was finally fully at home with us, the people. And with the Incarnation, we, the people, are finally fully at home with God. Just as Simeon and Anna experienced the presence of God in the Christ child at the margins of the temple, we are all welcome to experience the presence of God in Christ here at this table. God wanted to be with us always. God *is* with us always.

So come, let us partake of the feast of the one who came to be with us, to be one of us, and so to save us. As we feast, let us receive grace for all that occurred over the past year. As we feast, let us feel hope for the year that is to come. As we feast, let us be filled with God's life-sustaining love. All are welcome at this table!

#### GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:

Leader: The Lord be with you.

**ALL: And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

**ALL: We lift them to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**ALL: It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Let us pray. Oh God, by your power you created all that is, making a universe out of chaos, and ruling over all things in love. Throughout the ages you called your people to love and serve you, and to be your light among the nations. When we failed you, you did not fail us and sent prophets to call us back to your ways. We praise you that in the fullness of time, you revealed your love by sending your Son Jesus to be the Light of the world. He came to heal our brokenness and to set before us the ways of justice and peace. Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with angels and archangels and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest**

You are holy, O God of majesty, and blessed is Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. He was born to dwell among us, full of grace and truth; in him we have seen your glory. Baptized by John in the Jordan, he lived for you, spoke your truth, showed your love, and gave himself for others. In his death on the cross, he overcame death. Rising from the tomb, he raised us to eternal life, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as we proclaim the mystery of faith. **Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet. Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **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 debts,  
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power,  
and the glory, forever. Amen.**

## **WORDS OF INSTITUTION**

Our Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me. Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

## **BREAKING THE BREAD AND POURING THE CUP**

**Leader:** The bread of heaven. The cup of the new covenant. The gifts of God for the people of God.

**ALL:** Let us keep the feast!

## **COMMUNION OF THE PEOPLE**

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

O God, we have tasted and seen the goodness of your love. Thank you for being present with us always and thus always giving us a home. As we go about the days and weeks ahead, illumine our hearts with the radiance of Christ's presence, that our lives may show forth his love in this weary world. Teach us to befriend the lost, to serve the poor, to reconcile our enemies, and to love our neighbors. Keep us faithful in your service until Christ comes in final victory and we shall feast with all your saints in the joy of your eternal realm. Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

## **OFFERING INVITATION:**

**Leader:** The magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the newborn king. Let us also bring our gifts to pay homage and continue the work of that king. If you did not do so as you entered, please place your offering in the plate as you leave. If you are worshipping from home, please mail in your checks or use our online giving option on the website.

## **OFFERTORY**

**\* DOXOLOGY (Gentle Singing):**

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

## **PRAYER OF DEDICATION: (Unison)**

**God who guides us, like the magi of old we bring our gifts to you. Guide us in our stewardship. Guide us in our use of these resources. Guide us in the work of your kingdom. In the name of Jesus Christ, child of Mary, we pray. Amen.**

## We Go Into the World

\* **CLOSING HYMN (Gentle Singing):** “We Three Kings of Orient Are” (66)

### BENEDICTION

### CHORAL BENEDICTION

### POSTLUDE

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## Life of the Church

### Announcements

- **ADULT CONNECTIONS CLASS SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 9AM.** We are starting a new study, “Animate: Faith.” This study will help us imaginatively explore central topics of Christianity through short videos and group discussion. All are welcome regardless of whether or not you’ve joined before!
- **BRING YOUR OWN BIBLE** Our weekly virtual Bible study takes place on Zoom each Wednesday at 7:00 PM. Keep an eye out for an email with the link to join. It is a fresh topic each week, so you’re more than welcome to join if you haven’t been with us before.
- **CONFIRMATION CLASS** starts today, January 9, after worship. If you are a youth and have not yet been through a Confirmation class, please let Pastor Tyler know if you would like to join.
- **YOUTH CONNECTIONS** meets today, January 9, after worship. Join us for fellowship and fun! We’ll start out by helping with the taking down of Christmas decorations.
- **READ THROUGH THE BIBLE IN A YEAR – TOGETHER!** For 2022, the Faith Development ministry is offering a challenge of Biblical proportions – namely, to read the entire Bible in one year! Sounds daunting? Don’t worry, we’ve found a reading plan that breaks up our Scriptures into smaller pieces to be very manageable no matter what your schedule looks like. This reading plan does not go straight through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation; rather it mixes up readings from the Old and New Testaments each day, and some days also include a Psalm. You can read along at your own pace, and if you don’t keep up with what the reading plan says, that’s ok. There are no prizes nor penalties, so you choose when and how much reading you can do. We want to encourage everyone to make the Bible a regular part of your daily life no matter when or how much reading you do. Each month in the Larger View newsletter and on our church’s website ([www.fpchighland.org](http://www.fpchighland.org)), we will publish the current month’s reading plan. Look in this issue for the January 2022 Reading Plan. If you would like the reading plan emailed to you as a separate document, contact Heather at [hcasiano@fpchighland.org](mailto:hcasiano@fpchighland.org). May this year in the Bible be a blessing to you!
- **FPCH’s ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING 1/30 AFTER WORSHIP** Mark your calendars for this important event in the life of our congregation! We’ll be reviewing the annual report, taking a look at the budget for 2022, and voting on the pastor’s terms of call.
- **PRAYGROUND** If you need extra space for a wheelchair or walker or if you have young children with you, please feel free to make use of the extra space we have across the aisle from the sound booth.

**Opportunities to serve as the HEART, HANDS, and FEET of Jesus Christ:**

- **BLESSING BOX** Our Blessing Box has gained even more importance in this pandemic. Economic impacts are dire, and the most vulnerable in our midst are the most harmed. Please continue to place items in the Blessing Box and take items if you are a person in need! Items most commonly donated: Canned goods with pull tabs, socks, toilet paper, non-perishable foods, small snacks, toiletries, baby wipes and diapers. Please check expiration dates on food items before donating them.
- **GOT SNEAKERS FUNDRAISER** We are collecting pairs of gently worn, used and new sneakers to help earn money for our projects and programs here at FPCH and help the environment at the same time! Can we count on you? Blue bins for the shoes will be located in the sanctuary narthex, inside door D by the office, and outside the church building by door D. Please note that we can only use sneakers/tennis shoes!

**Prayer List**

Anthony	Matt Hanft
Avery	U. Chong
Mike Bennett	Rodney
George Nelson	Calvin Scott
Brady Vanes	Steve & Melinda
Sonny Buono	Gary Studer
Danielle	Richard Terpstra
Dave	Laura Buono Domsic
George Griner	Kevin Windstrup
Guy Hendricks	Ruth Dekker
Bill and Anettia Holmes	Rick Parker
Daniel Litwicki	Barbara Morton
Frank	Elwyn Studer
David Markley	Jackie (Casianos' Neighbor)
Pat and David Kingen	Linda Kubiak
Garry Sknerski	Robert Lestina
Carmelo	Laura Wisner
Diana and Ray Mendoza	Cary Pearson
Jamie and Janet Orem	Bob Dignam
Linda	Carol Finley
Claudia Szymaszczak	Huilin
John Mullen	Holly Letnich
Jeanne Nestor	Jan Oprea
Lester Schmock	Lily Renfro
Cindy Waltz and Sister	Marla and Jerry Renfro
Andrew Bobalik	Mary Ellen Edeus
Paige Szulewski	Shirley McKnight
Gale Snyder	Jaden Mendez
Yvonne Suroviak	Loved ones of Beth Werkheiser

### **Isaiah 60:1-6**

**60** Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the LORD will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.

<sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

<sup>6</sup> A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

### **Ephesians 3:1-12**

**3** This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— <sup>2</sup> for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, <sup>3</sup> and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, <sup>4</sup> a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup> In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: <sup>6</sup> that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.



<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

## **Matthew 2:1-12**

<sup>2</sup> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi came from the east to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup> They asked, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We've seen his star in the east, and we've come to honor him."

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was troubled, and everyone in Jerusalem was troubled with him. <sup>4</sup> He gathered all the chief priests and the legal experts and asked them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They said, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for this is what the prophet wrote:

<sup>6</sup> *You, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
by no means are you least among the rulers of Judah,  
because from you will come one who governs,  
who will shepherd my people Israel.*"

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the magi and found out from them the time when the star had first appeared. <sup>8</sup> He sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search carefully for the child. When you've found him, report to me so that I too may go and honor him." <sup>9</sup> When they heard the king, they went; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. <sup>11</sup> They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> Because they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by another route.



## Stargazing

*Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12*

I love stargazing. I always have, and I always will. Many of my fondest memories from childhood and adolescence involve marveling up at the vast expanse of the night sky. On nice summer nights my whole family would drag out these giant body pillows that we had and every blanket we could find and lay them out on the basketball court for some of the best seats in God's good Creation for the show of lights that surrounded us. For meteor showers we would even have friends come over. I'm sure we goofed around some and had fun with it, but inevitably we would quiet down as the gravity of the majesty of outer space overtook our awareness. You see, I had the great joy of growing up out in the country, and until the neighbors catty-corner from us across the street put a security floodlight up on the telephone pole in front of their house (alright, I'm just a little bitter about it still!), I had the great joy of growing up without light pollution.

Well, at least I thought we didn't have light pollution until we went on a high school mission trip to New Mexico and pulled over on the side of the road in White Sands National Park at night. If I were not wearing this mask, you might see my jaw hit the floor even in remembering that sky! Now THAT was the absence of light pollution! We could see the stars beyond the stars, more than any of us ever could have imagined. I remember wondering how it could still be so dark outside with so much light in the sky. I was having one of those moments when the magnificence of Creation leaves you gobsmacked and transforms the horizon of perspective. Look at how big the universe is, and that's just what we can see from the naked eye! And there are other universes and planes of existence beyond human conception. How small are we in the midst of all that?! That telescoping of perspective then makes one ask, "Who are we and what have we done to deserve something so miraculously beautiful, the gift of this life, the gift of this creation?" Now, those awe and wonder questions often turn to questions of the mechanics of things. How does it all work? What is it all made of? That, my friends, makes me think of one of the most insightful philosophical and scientific conversations on record.

From the authoritative collection of Wisdom known as *The Lion King*:

*Pumbaa: Hey, Timon, ever wonder what those sparkly dots are up there?*

*Timon: Pumbaa, I don't wonder, I know.*

*Pumbaa: Oh. What are they?*

*Timon: They're fireflies. Fireflies that, uh... got stuck up on that big bluish-black thing.*

*Pumbaa: Oh, gee. I always thought they were balls of gas burning billions of miles away.*

*Timon: Pumbaa, with you, everything's gas.*

The truth is, I've always been drawn to the responses of both Timon and Pumbaa. An important part of my childhood stargazing and universe wondering took place at Loper Elementary School, where once a year they would bring in this glorious thing called Starlab. It was an inflatable dome that we would crawl inside of, and lo and behold stars would be projected all around us. We would learn a bit about the science of things—the gas burning billions of miles away—and we would learn a bit about how we humans have always tried to make sense of the stars and planets and to find meaning in them through stories—perhaps more like the fireflies stuck up in the big bluish-black thing. I'm fascinated by both—the way things actually work, and the way that we make meaning regardless of how they actually work. Now, I have it on good authority that some of the teachers who led those Starlab lessons made up some of the stories about constellations and planet alignments, but that investigation is outside of my jurisdiction!

The truth is that we humans have found meaning in these most magnificent phenomena of Creation throughout history. In every context in every time, people have looked up, had their perspective transformed, asked the big questions, come up with scientific theories, and developed meaning-making stories. And that, loved ones, is what gets me the most when I gaze up at the heavens. We are all connected to the night sky through time and space. Thousands of years ago, people looked up and had the same awe and wonder and asked the same questions. And people everywhere on God's good earth—on every continent, in every type of landscape, within every type of setting, speaking every language, practicing every religion, representing every

ethnicity—look up and have the same awe and wonder and ask the same questions. We may exist at different times and in different places. We may have different ways of understanding God and Creation. But we share the experience of being gobsmacked by the stars.

Some of the best stargazing scientists and meaning makers in history were known as the magi. “Magi” was the term used to describe devotees of Zoroastrianism, one of the world’s other ancient monotheistic religions, which, by the way, is still a living religion. Around two thousand years ago the magi were famous throughout the world for their sophisticated astrology. They were masters of observing the sky and charting the patterns and movements of the stars, planets, and moons. And they tied their scientific mapping to theological belief. One of those beliefs was that the alignment of the planets in Aries portended the birth of a powerful leader. Further, the presence of Saturn spoke to a superlative, most powerful leader, one like a messiah. Even further, the specific formation would have been thought to indicate that the powerful leader would die at a specific time. Hmmm....so an exceedingly important and powerful messiah whose mission would include his death.

And it just so happened...well perhaps it was made to happen!...that a child was born to Mary at the auspicious time of the planetary and star alignment sought after by the magi. After all, as we discussed on Christmas Eve, it was the creator of all the heavenly bodies who was being born as a human child. It makes sense that all creation would thus be involved in the process. So, the celestial bodies moved and aligned at the time of the indwelling of God, and they did so for a very specific reason—to call out to the Zoroastrian devotee astrologers of the Persian empire—the magi.

We Christians often get hung up on thinking that God was exclusively the God of the Jews and that God is now exclusively the God of the Judeo-Christian world after our adoption into the chosenness of the Jewish people. We go back to the covenant with Abraham, which was decidedly a covenant for a certain lineage (and how could I not point out that within that covenant, God had Abraham look at the stars to understand how numerous his descendants would be?!). When stop our historical exploration at Abraham’s covenant, though, we forget the covenant with Noah, which was undeniably a covenant with all of the peoples on the planet. I never want us to limit our imagination of the possibilities of God and God’s reach. I think that God speaks to all the people of the earth in ways that they can understand—through their languages, through their cultures and rituals, and yes even through religions. I believe that God speaks to everybody out of the fullness of God’s love.

And in this greatest of events in the history of creation—the incarnation—God wanted those outside of the Jewish world to know. Even further, God wanted them to be part of the story! So, in the most spectacular of ways, God spoke to the magi, aligning the very sun, moon, and planets to say, “Behold! I am here! Come!”

And so the magi came. We know very little about them. We make the assumption that they were three because there were three gifts, but it could have been more. To this day some orthodox traditions still claim that they were twelve, matching the tribes of Israel and the disciples of Christ. We often call them kings because our readings from Isaiah and Psalms prophecy about kings coming to the foretold child bearing gifts and paying homage, but Matthew doesn’t name them as such. And in the wonderful way of legends, whole mythologies and hagiographies have been developed around them. The most popular legends name them Melchior, Gaspar, and Balthazar, or some variation thereof. One is often depicted as Central Asian, one as South Asian, and one as African. One is sometimes older, one middle aged, and one younger. Similar legends exist across contexts in Latin America, Africa, Europe, and Asia. And it truly is a remarkable thing that this legend of multi-racial, multicultural, multigenerational journeying-together made its way into so many ancient traditions across the world.

As with all legends, there was certainly a kernel of truth in the possibilities. Persia, known as the Parthian Empire at the time, was an eastern counterweight to the Roman Empire. It would have included modern day Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, and parts of Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Yemen. The Silk Road went right through it, so it would have had people passing through and joining it from China, India, Europe and parts of Africa. And it operated as a vassalage system, so there could have been many different kings under the emperor. So, who knows? There very well could have been magi kings of different races, cultures, and ages

who looked up into the sky, saw a sign in the alignment of the celestial bodies, and followed the prophecy of Zoroaster that an exceedingly powerful messiah had been born and would have a world-changing death.

In the fullness of their belief in God's way of speaking to them, they journeyed to Jerusalem and unwittingly asked a Roman client king where to find the newborn King of the Jews. They were directed to Bethlehem. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold a gift for a king. Frankincense an offering to a God. Myrrh an oil for the embalming of the dead. Oh yes, these multi-racial, multicultural, multigenerational Zoroastrian magi from the East got it.

Why do we need to go so in depth with this lovely story that is only mentioned in one gospel account? Why can't we just take it at face value and let it grace our nativity scenes with its innocuousness? Why go into all of this science and history? Because it truly matters that God speaks to all people in ways that they can understand, and it truly matters that God called people from across the world, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to be part of the greatest event that ever happened—the incarnation.

In our reading from *Ephesians* today, Paul speaks of gentiles, meaning people who are not Jewish, as also being included in God's promise, in God's family. Paul wasn't the first one to speak to the gentiles, though. Paul was just carrying the torch set alight by the life of Jesus Christ. You see, God had always been speaking to the gentiles. God had always done so. God continues to do so. God will always do so. Because all the people who ever were and ever will be are the children of God, made in God's own image. And God decisively made people both within and outside of the Jewish lineage part of the incarnation, part of this story of this Palestinian Jewish mother and her Palestinian Jewish son.

I think we all have a bit of astrology in our innate belief systems. And that's not a bad thing. Who can help but look at the stars, ponder the magnitude of the universe, and search for signs from God? As we look to the heavens, to the celestial bodies, may we remember that so, too, do people across the world, from every race, culture, and generation. May we approach each other with grace and humility, acknowledging that we have our truth and we live by our truth and that others have their truth and are living by their truth. And may we understand that God is speaking to all of us. Imagine how the world would change if this were the starting point of all our interactions!

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice.

Amen.

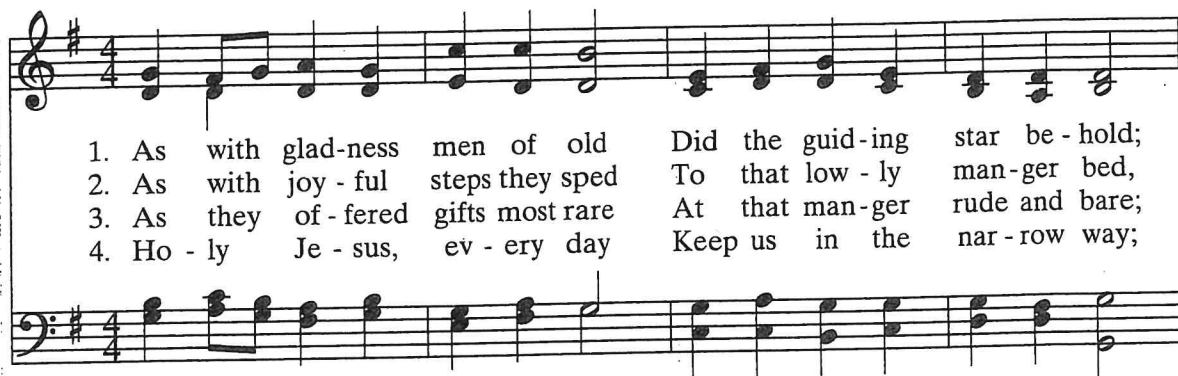
# As with Gladness Men of Old

63

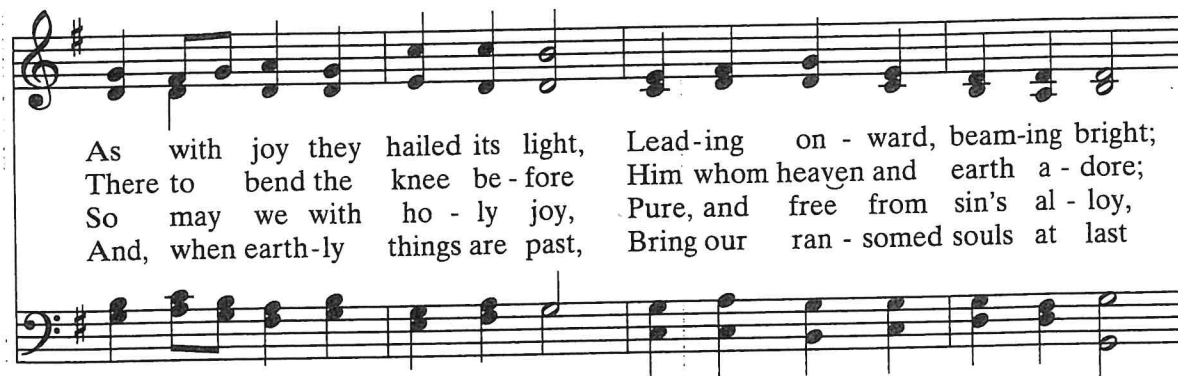
DIX 7.7.7.7.7

William Chatterton Dix, c. 1858

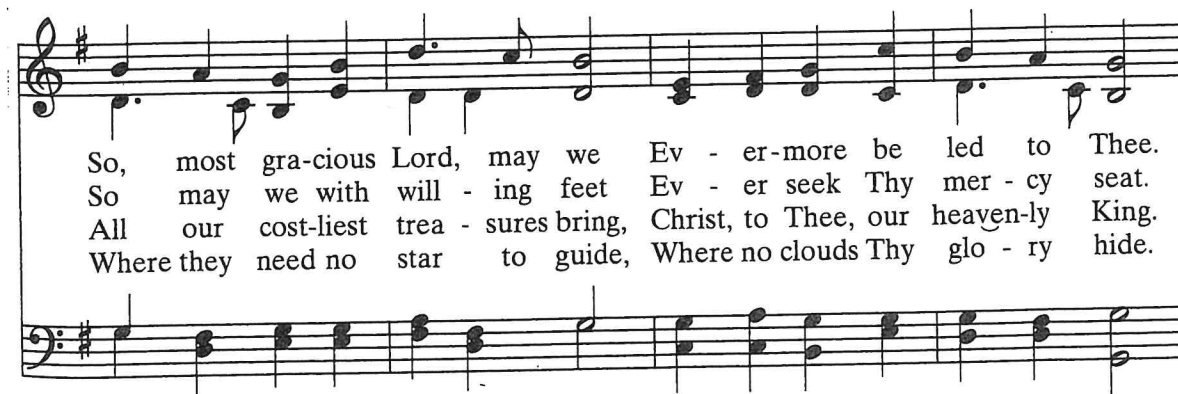
Conrad Kocher, 1838  
Abr. William Henry Monk, 1861  
Harm. *The English Hymnal*, 1906



1. As with glad-ness men of old Did the guid-ing star be-hold;  
2. As with joy-ful steps they sped To that low-ly man-ger bed,  
3. As they of-fered gifts most rare At that man-ger rude and bare;  
4. Ho-ly Je-sus, ev-ery day Keep us in the nar-row way;



As with joy they hailed its light, Lead-ing on-ward, beam-ing bright;  
There to bend the knee be-fore Him whom heaven and earth a-dore;  
So may we with ho-ly joy, Pure, and free from sin's al-loy,  
And, when earth-ly things are past, Bring our ran-somed souls at last



So, most gra-cious Lord, may we Ev-er-more be led to Thee.  
So may we with will-ing feet Ev-er seek Thy mer-cy seat.  
All our cost-liest trea-sures bring, Christ, to Thee, our heaven-ly King.  
Where they need no star to guide, Where no clouds Thy glo-ry hide.

## We Three Kings of Orient Are

THREE KINGS OF ORIENT 8.8.44.6 with refrain

John Henry Hopkins, Jr., 1857; alt.

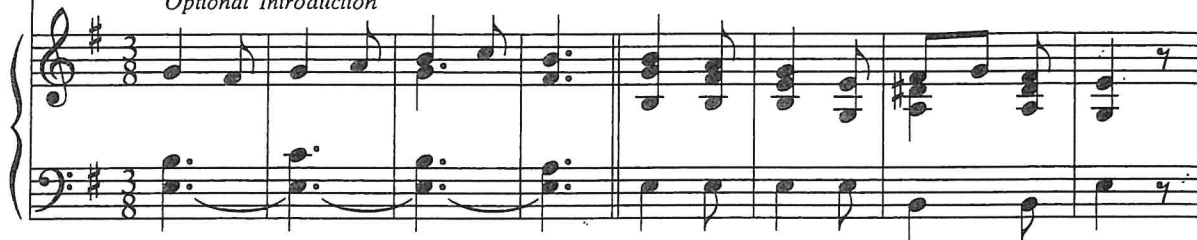
John Henry Hopkins, Jr., 1857; alt.

Intro. Robert Stigall, 1988



All: 1. We three kings of O - ri - ent are,  
 Opt. solo: 2. Born a King on Beth - le - hem's plain,  
 Opt. solo: 3. Frank - in - cense to of - fer have I:  
 Opt. solo: 4. Myrrh is mine; its bit - ter per - fume  
 All: 5. Glo - rious now be - hold Him a - rise,

Optional Introduction



Bear - ing gifts we tra - verse a - far,	Field and foun - tain,
Gold I bring to crown Him a - gain,	King for ev - er,
In - cense owns a De - i - ty nigh;	Prayer and prais - ing
Breathes a life of gath - er - ing gloom;	Sor - rowing, sigh - ing,
King and God and Sac - ri - fice;	Al - le - lu - ia,



moor and moun - tain,	Fol - low - ing	yon - der star.
ceas - ing nev - er	O - ver us	all to reign.
we are rais - ing,	Wor - ship - ing	God Most High.
bleed - ing, dy - ing,	Sealed in the	stone - cold tomb.
Al - le - lu - ia	Sounds through the	earth and skies.





*Refrain*

O star of won - der, star of night,

Star with roy - al beau - ty bright; West - ward lead - ing,

still pro - ceed - ing, Guide us to thy per - fect light!