

*O star of wonder,  
star of night...*

*Guide us to thy  
perfect light.*



**January 3, 2021  
Epiphany Sunday**



FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
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REV. DR. DEBRA J. HANSON

## **Introduction**

## **Invitation**

## **Prelude**

### **Call to Worship:**

We gather today to worship Jesus, the Light of the world, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Following his Light leads us to a life of love and grace. Let us give thanks to God as we pray, hear the Word, and worship together!

### **Hymn: “We Three Kings”**

### **Reading the Word: Matthew 2:1-12**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

## **Ministry of Music**

## **Message:** “Those Wise Guys”

(Inspired by “Promises, Promises” by Joanne Miller, additions and editing by Deb Hanson)

### **Summary**

A couple is writing their resolutions for the coming year. He reads hers first and discovers she has made hers a bit more realistic this year. She reads his to discover that his resolutions are all things he enjoys doing anyway. He figures why not make resolutions you know you can keep.

### **Characters**

Deb

Dave

### **Script**

*Deb: Happy Epiphany!*

Dave: Happy what?

*Deb: Happy EPIPHANY!*

Dave: I thought it was supposed to be Happy New Year.

*Deb: Well...that, too.*

Dave: So what's the deal with Epiphany?

*Deb: It's the time when we celebrate God's entrance into our world.*

Dave: I thought that was Christmas.

*Deb: That's when we celebrate Jesus' birth.*

Dave: So what's the difference?

*Deb: At Epiphany, we also remember the Wise Men - or the Magi - who went to offer the child gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh.*

Dave: We see that at Christmas, too.

*Deb: Ah . . . I know, but that is a common merging together of the two birth stories from Matthew and Luke. In Luke, we have the story of the Mary's call to be Jesus' mother, the journey to Bethlehem, and the shepherd's going to see the baby.*

Dave: So the Wise Men weren't in that one?

*Deb: No, they appeared in Matthew's story.*

Dave: Why?

*Deb: Well, I think the gospel writers were trying to impress on the readers that God welcomes everyone. Luke chose to do it through the shepherds, and Matthew decided to show it through the Wise Men, who were considered to be gentile scholars who read the stars.*

Dave: But we always see them together.

*Deb: Right, but they were traditionally separated. In the Matthew passage, you may have noticed that verse 11 says that they entered the house and saw the child. They were living in a house, and Jesus was a baby, but not a new born, some would put him at two years old.*

Dave: Huh! So, because the Wise Men were foreigners, Matthew was trying to say that Jesus was the Savior of everyone.

*Deb: Right!*

Dave: Hey, that reminds me, did you hear the one about the little boy who came home from Sunday School? His mother asked him what they learned, and he said that they had learned about Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, the shepherds, and the Wise Guys?

*Deb: Ooo. Say, speaking of Wise Guys . . .*

Dave: Yes?

*Deb: You were supposed to be working on your New Year's resolutions.*

Dave: I HAVE been working on them.

*Deb: Are you finished?*

Dave: Just about. How about you?

*Deb: I'm done. Let me read yours first.*

Dave: No way. You read mine first last year. It's my turn this year.

*Deb: Yeah, right. Like you **really** remember who read first last year.*

Dave: I do! Come on; give me your list of New Year's Resolutions.

*Deb: OK, but no laughing.*

Dave: #1: "I resolve to lose 5 lbs." Wait a minute, didn't you resolve to lose 10 pounds last year?

*Deb: Yeah. So?*

Dave: Did you lose 10 pounds last year?

*Deb: (Slowly, defensively) No. That's why I put down 5 pounds this year. I'm trying to give myself a realistic goal.*

Dave: I see. Hmm.

Deb: Well, you know how stressful this year has been with the move and all the changes. I just didn't have the energy to stick to my food plan.

Dave: I know; I know. But five pounds?

*Deb: As I said, I want to be realistic about this!*

Dave: Okay. Okay. Let's see what you have written for #2. "I resolve to be more organized this year." (long pause) How can you be more organized than you already are? You have things scheduled on your calendar for two years in advance already!

*Deb: Well I'm not talking about the calendar. I think I'm pretty good at long term planning, but it's the weekly tasks and household things I'm talking about.*

Dave: I can't believe it.

*Deb: Well, you have to admit that being organized and planning helped the Magi to reach their goal of seeing the Messiah.*

Dave: That's true, but I think you are more organized and planned ahead than they ever could have been.

*Deb: I doubt that. Besides, they worked on their goal for years, reading the stars and watching for the big star that was their sign. I'm just taking it one year at a time.*

Dave: That's true. I guess we may as well move on. #3: "I resolve to walk for at least 15 minutes twice a week." That's not really enough to do you much good, you know.

*Deb: I know, but I figured I might be able to do that. If nothing else I could always walk on the weekends if I don't make it during the week. It gets dark so early this time of the year.*

Dave: Last year you were going to walk · an hour every day.

*Deb: I know. That's why I changed it; so this year maybe I can actually accomplish what I write down, not only that but maybe I'll even exceed my goals.*

Dave: That would be good. And last but not least we have resolution #4: "I resolve to read at least 30 of the books on my bookshelves that I still haven't read." How are you going to accomplish that with your busy schedule? At that rate, you'll be reading 24 hours a day.

*Deb: Very funny. If you remember, I have always said I was going to read all of them. I decided on the number 30 because I think I can do that many this year, and it's a reasonable number so I won't fail at it again. Besides, all those books will help me grow in my spirituality as well as in my profession. Now let's see your list.*

Dave: Before I let you see it I want you to know that I was thinking along the same lines as you. I really want to be able to keep my resolutions this year so I've made a few adjustments too.

Deb: Come on. *Let's see it.*

Dave: *All right, but no laughing!*

Deb: #1: *"I resolve to read my Bible five minutes a day." Well, that's certainly a worthwhile resolution. I know you read the Bible, but you haven't been doing it every day.*

Dave: That's what I thought. Five minutes will be a good goal for me, and I'm pretty sure I can do that.

Deb: *Good for you! It's realistic and achievable, and it will help you grow in your faith life. Okay, let's see what you have for #2: "I resolve to watch at least one football game per weekend during the season." What kind of a resolution is that?*

Dave: I told you; it's one I can keep. Hey, this past football season I had a hard time getting in all the games I wanted to watch.

Deb: *Oh really? You could have fooled me. You didn't even miss the game on our anniversary!*

Dave: You know very well that was an extremely important game or I wouldn't have watched it that day.

Deb: *Sure! Resolution #3: "I resolve to take a nap every Sunday afternoon." You've got to be kidding.*

Dave: They say naps are good for you, and since my boss gets a bit testy when I take one at work I figured Sunday was my best bet.

Deb: *You're making a resolution to take a nap? (Incredulously)*

Dave: That's right. You're resolving to walk because somebody says that's good for your health. Well, I'm going to take a nap for the same reason. What's the difference?

Deb: *(Shaking her head) Okay . . . And #4: "I resolve to eat a strawberry or cherry cheesecake every week!"*

Dave: Yeah, well that one may not be good for me, but I'm pretty sure I can keep that resolution.

Deb: *Dave, a resolution is supposed to be something that's good for you and makes you a better person.*

Dave: Well, a cheesecake every week will make me a better person.

Deb: *How do you figure?*

Dave: I'll be so happy that I'll be nicer to everybody else.

*Deb: You can't be serious about these as your resolutions. Come on now, tell me what you really are going to do this coming year.*

Dave: Look, Deb, for the past 10 years I've made resolutions I haven't even come close to keeping. This year I'm going to succeed - NO MATTER WHAT! I think that's pretty wise, don't you?

*Deb: Wise Guy. . . (shaking her head and addressing the congregation.)*

*How about all of you? How will you choose wise resolutions that will improve your life and help you grow in faith?*

### **Prayer:**

Gracious God, so many times we fail to see the Light of Christ leading us on our paths. We look other directions and think we have all the answers. Yet, time and time again, we stumble and realize that we have not followed Jesus' teachings, and we have ignored your commissioning to care for those who most need to feel your grace and love. Forgive us for our neglect and self-serving ways. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Words of Assurance:**

Jesus came into the world to save us from our sins. We have assurance that God forgives us when we truly repent. Our sins are forgiven; thanks be to God!

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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.

### **A Service of Holy Communion**

**Hymn:** "A Star Shone Bright"

### **Blessing**



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# PRAYER LIST

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Jeanne Westcott, Bill and Gayle Gardei, Erin, Erika, Earl, Amy, Jim,  
Juliann, Dennis Hoskins, Robert (Babe) Williams and Family,  
Charles Gilman, Barbara Clement, Christine, Barbara Glidden,  
Gil & Marilyn Stebbins, Danny Westbrook, Dan Strange, Bobbie Noble,  
Durgin Pines Residents & Workers,  
Riverside Rest Home Residents & Workers,  
Kittery Estates Residents and Workers  
Those who have lost loved ones to COVID-19  
Those in nursing and assisted living care,  
Our Denomination – Our Church Family





# WHO WE ARE

## FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



One way to make a donation to FUMC is to point your phone camera on QR code and it will guide you through the process... thanks for making a difference.



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