



*Every* GOOD  
AND  
perfect  
GIFT *is*  
FROM  
*above.*

— JAMES 1:17 —  
(NIV)

January 5, 2020



## We Gather for Worship

### Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

#### Gratitude Moments

##### \*Call to Worship

L: Arise; shine, for your light has come!

**P: We are called out of our darkness into light.**

L: Lift up your eyes and look around.

**P: We rejoice in the gift of light.**

L: Come let us worship the God of light and joy and peace.

**P: We come to kneel before the Christ Child, the light incarnate.**

**\*Hymn** "We Three Kings"

UMH #254

### A Time for the Child in all of Us

#### Ministry of Music

**Prayer** (unison)

**Loving God, we confess our sins against you and one another, and pray that you will fill us with your light. May live our lives as true disciples in your name, without counting the cost. In the name of Christ, the one who showed us the way, we pray. Amen.**

### Assurance of Pardon

L: God's light is present in this world: present in the Christ child, born to lead us out of darkness; present in the star, in all that guides us to love.

**ALL: God's light is in the world, and the darkness did not overcome it. God's grace is in the world, and our mis-steps will not overcome it. We are loved, we are forgiven. Alleluia! Amen.**

**Sung Response** "Come and Fill Our Hearts"

TFWS #2157

### We Proclaim the Word

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

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

**Message** "What Gift Can We Bring?"

Hanson

Rev. Dr. Deb

**\*Hymn** "What Gift Can We Bring?"

UMH #87

## We Respond to God's Word

### Prayers of the People

#### Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

**The Lord's Prayer** (unison)

**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.**

#### Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

**\*Doxology** (Please join in singing the following)

UMH #94

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!*

**\*Prayer of Dedication** (unison)

**Thank you, God of Love, for the promise of this season. We are grateful for the generosity aroused in us by Christ's coming into the world. May these gifts represent a new spirit of joyous sharing among us, for the sake of all your children everywhere. Amen.**

#### A Service of Holy Communion - insert

### We Go Forth to Serve

**\*Hymn** "The First Noel," vs 1,2,5

UMH #245

**\*Choral Benediction** (Congregation encircles the Sanctuary)

**May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek His face, and His grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.**

**\*Pastor's Charge**

*\*Please stand as you are comfortable*

### Postlude

*TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal  
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters*



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**TODAY** - Is a special date in the Christmas story as it's when people celebrate how a star led the Magi - also known as the Three kings or the Wise Men - to visit the baby Jesus after he had been born. 'Epiphany' comes from the Greek word meaning 'to reveal', as it is when the baby Jesus was 'revealed' to the world.

1/7 - Finance Trustee meeting at 6 pm, at the parsonage

1/10 - Superintendency Dinner has been cancelled.

1/14 - The Church Council meeting will be held at at 6:00 pm

1/18 - Visioning committee meeting at 11:30 am to be held at Kevin Fickenscher's home

**Sundays** - Church Service starts at 10 a.m. Sunday School is right after the children's sermon and we look forward to catching up with you during coffee hour after the worship service...see you there

**Everyday** - Be a Prayer Warrior and lift up the world and it's people in prayer

**Sometime this week** - write a note, card or visit one of our family members who are either living in assisted living, nursing care or homebound

**2020 Flower chart** - is posted in the Narthex. You can bring your own arrangement or have the church order them at a cost of \$25 to you. This is a great way to honor, remember, thank or let someone know they are appreciated.



## PRAYER LIST

Dan Strange  
Bobbie Noble  
The Westcott Family

Judy Doyon  
Rev. Charles Hartman  
Our Denomination  
Our Church Family

All those living in assisted living, nursing care or homebound



## WORSHIP TEAM

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson  
Pastor's Assistant - David Richards  
Liturgist - Sue Richards  
Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek  
Acolyte - Sue Richards  
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Greeters - Jane Richards  
Ushers - Art & Nancy Munson  
Sound Tech - Dave Richards  
Worship Service Tech - Steve Scott  
Photographer - Dave Atkinson  
Sunday School - Rosie Buswell and  
Aerial Sillanpaa

### COMMUNION SUNDAY PRAYER MINISTRY

The Prayer Team is made up of individuals who know the power of prayer and will be stationed near the communion rail to offer prayers of healing for yourself or someone you know needing to be lifted up in prayer after you have received the elements. January's Prayer Team is Sue Richards.





# THINGS TO KNOW

## **Welcome from Rev. Deb -**

Welcome! Whether you are joining us for worship for the first time or after many years of attending here at First UMC, we want you to know that you are welcome!

We are an inclusive community that invites everyone to be part of our church fellowship. Thank you for being here, and we hope that you have had a meaningful experience of worshiping our God so you leave this place feeling that you have been blessed to be a blessing. Please join us again!

## **New Address -**

Congratulations to Rev. Deb and Dave who moved into their new home at Wesley by the Sea after Christmas. Their new address is: Deb Hanson & Dave Atkinson, 47 Dorfield Lane - PO Box 1363, Wells, ME 04090. Their home phone is available in the church office. Please use that if you have a need to reach Rev. Deb when she isn't in the office.

## **Blessings Bank -**

The donations collected from the Blessings Bank at the beginning of each church service is going toward helping a school in Cameroon. Our Sunday school kids have a connection with the school and our donations provide them with supplies and the ability to keep educating the children. Thank you for sharing your blessings!

## **Coffee Hour -**

Come join us for coffee, snacks and fellowship directly after the church service in Sanborn Hall. We'd love to catch up.



# WITH THANKS

## **Thank you from Rev. Deb -**

Thank you for your generous gifts at Christmas. Your encouragement, trust, and support are also gifts that I cherish. It is my privilege to be your Pastor. May God continue to bless our work together.

## **Thank you from Bevan -**

Making a joyful noise at FUMC gives me such joy. The opportunity to be a storyteller through music is a gift that I am grateful you allow me to share each Sunday. Your generosity through spoken words, thumbs up, hugs and winks are all incredibly appreciated. Thank you once again for your generous Christmas gift. Love, Bevan

## **Thank you from Maureen -**

I wanted to thank everyone for their generous Christmas gift. Since I've started here at FUMC I am amazed and grateful for all that the congregation has done to make me feel welcome and a part of FUMC. I hope the new year will allow me to meet those I haven't yet met and for the ones I have, to know you better. Let me know if I can in some way make your time with FUMC better and I will try my very best to help. Thank you

## **To our Sunday School Teachers -**

Thank you to the following people who served as Sunday school teachers this year: Dave Atkinson, Rosie Buswell, Dave Richards, Sue Richards, Kaya Sarosiek, Airial Sillanpaa, and all those who pitched in to help on short term projects. We appreciate your gifts and faith you have shared to teach our children the wonderful stories of the Bible.

## **To our Committees -**

As we begin a new year, we are grateful for all who have served and continue to serve on all our committees. Their work helps us to keep the mission and ministry of the church on track as well as keeping us faithful in our stewardship of time, talent, and treasure. Welcome to those who are coming onto committees and assuming new roles. For a complete list, please see your Church Conference annual report.

## A Service of Holy Communion for Epiphany

L: Almighty, God, we have come asking for the child – wondering where that love might be born, seeking that joy that might satisfy our thirst, wandering through the darkness of so many mistakes.

We have come to this place where wise people and shepherds and a young woman met. We have come to this place called Bethlehem. To this place where our hearts rise like yeast. To this place where we meet our newborn hope. To this place where we taste our deepest joy and need to praise you.

God, it is in Bethlehem, where we assumed the worst, imagining that no good can come, we somehow missed its name.

*Bethlehem. Lehem* meaning bread. *Bethel* meaning house.

There is something here that will satisfy our hunger.

No matter how long we have wandered, here our hearts arise. Your Son, Jesus, our light has come.

In this bread and in this cup, we celebrate something we can't quite understand. Because you have made a house at this table. Because you satisfy our hunger in the most unlikely places. Because you came to be with us. Now and always. It is with this expectation that we come to the table to taste and see that you are here.

### Words of Institution

On the night when he was betrayed, Jesus took bread; gave thanks, broke the bread and gave it to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: do this in remembrance of me." *[The minister shall break the bread.]*

After supper, he took the cup, blessed it and gave it to them, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." *[The minister shall lift the cup.]*

The bread which we break and the cup that we share bring us together in the communion of the body of Christ.

### **Let us pray together:**

**Holy Spirit, come into this bread and this cup.**

**Transform these ordinary objects**

**As you change our hearts**

**To shape and form your world**

**With the joy you promise.**

**Pour your grace upon us,  
so we overflow with your love.**

**Help us to remember how**

**An newborn baby might grow**

**Into a little child that would one day**

**Turn to his hope-filled friends**

**In an upper room.**

### Sharing the Bread and Cup

### **Unison Prayer of Thanksgiving**

**Holy Jesus, no words can express our gratitude and amazement that you should die for us. How amazing is it that each of our lives is so valuable to you that you would lay yours down to reach us. May the bread and cup remain with us as we seek to take your message of love and grace into the world. Amen.**



## **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.



**New England Annual Conference Tri-State District**  
The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop  
The Rev. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
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Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm  
[call to ensure availability]  
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at [www.fumcportsmouth.com](http://www.fumcportsmouth.com)

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SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY  
REV. DR. DEB HANSON



“What Gift Can We Bring?” – 1/5/2020  
First UMC, Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 2:1-12

THEME: Following Jesus brings us home to God.

An old pioneer traveled westward across the great plains until he came to an abrupt halt at the edge of the Grand Canyon. He gawked at the sight before him: a vast chasm one mile down, eighteen miles across, and more than a hundred miles long! He gasped, “Something musta happened here!” A visitor to our world at Christmas time, seeing the lights, the decorations, the trees, the parades, the festivities, and the religious services, would also probably say, “Something must have happened here!” Indeed, something did happen. God came to our world. (*Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 86, #26).

Today’s scripture passage tells us that there were foreigners to Israel who believed that something must have happened there. In this passage we remember the Magi – sometimes called “Wise Men” and often called “kings” although that would not be the case. They traveled from the East – we aren’t sure where since the gospel of Matthew doesn’t identify which country or countries. Some commentaries have Persia, Babylon, and Arabia. They came from a long distance.

It’s also interesting to note that somehow the Western world has given them a number – three – even though Matthew’s gospel doesn’t tell how many. Some scholars suggest that the number three came from the three gifts of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh, and others suggest that there were far more than three Magi. Ultimately, though, that isn’t the point of this story anyway.

The point here is about Jesus, born to a poor peasant couple from Nazareth but born to be a King, not of this world but of the kingdom of God. Jesus was a different kind of king, and in essence by the world standards, not a king at all. But the whole idea of a king being born sent Herod into panic mode. It’s sometimes hard to understand his frantic paranoia when he learned about the reason for the Magi’s trip. The king knew that the Magi sought a baby, so there really wasn’t really much of a threat, and certainly this king was not born into wealth or a palace, but in humble surroundings without benefit of nurses and doctors to attend to him and his mother. The paranoia was unreasonable.

But then, Paranoia doesn’t need a reason anyway. Herod responded with fear and anxiety about losing his comfy job as king of Israel, even though it meant that he had to be a “yes” man to Pontius Pilate and Caesar in order to stay there. He did everything he could to keep his job, even denying, killing, and imprisoning his own people when they questioned or challenged him – it was all about him. So when the Magi opened up their gifts to the infant Jesus, they also opened the frenzy of fear that resulted in murder and mayhem in Bethlehem after the Holy Family had left.

The Magi could not have known that they started a chain reaction of such heinous actions from Herod because they were smart men who were in tune with signs and wonders, including the star that led them to Bethlehem, and then believing a dream that warned them to return home a different way than they had arrived. Jesus was born into a world much like ours, one that is



full of anger, hatred, fear, paranoia, selfishness, power struggles, and hypocrisy. Jesus was born into a world with the same issues we have – just expressed in different ways.

The gifts of the Magi were the kinds of gifts given to a king: gold – a common gift to a king as a sign of peace and good wishes; frankincense – an expensive perfume used for incense to indicate the presence of a deity; and myrrh – an embalming oil, often explained as an indication of what was to come for Jesus later in life. All these gifts would have helped the Holy Family on their journey to Egypt and provided for their expenses while living there in exile.

Joseph, the faithful earthly father also paid attention to the dreams and signs that God sent to direct him. The star shone brightly in the sky to point to the newborn king, but it would have left the sky and the light of God would guide them out of Israel and again on their return. The star represents the Light of Christ in the world, a reminder that God has entered the world in human flesh and come to live among us. Why? Why would God choose to do such a thing?

One comment I read was this: “If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator; If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us an economist; If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer; but our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior. (*Sermon Illustrations.com, Source Unknown.*)

So, what does this story tell us? Father Rick Morley writes: “. . . We’re to make our pilgrimage to the Christ. And we’re to give him our gifts. And our lives.” (*Text This Week under the commentaries for today’s gospel lesson.*)

The journey of faith isn’t just a one-time accomplishment, but a life-long journey. It isn’t taken alone but with the presence of the Spirit with us along the way, as well as dozens, hundreds, and thousands of companions along the way. We are being led by the Star of Bethlehem who now is the Light of the world: Jesus the Savior. Following that Light leads us home to God. On the way, we learn about him, we learn about ourselves, we learn about others, and we learn how to live in a world that is often torn apart and in pain. We might ask ourselves why it’s so hard to see Jesus, but it’s important to remember that he is everywhere.

Professor Sharron Blezard writes: “Where’s Jesus? He’s everywhere. He’s as near as your neighbor and as far as the deepest darkest recesses of the cosmos. He’s holding the hurting, helping the hungry, comforting the afflicted, and afflicting the comfortable. He’s as near as the hand and eyes and heart with which we minister. Where’s Jesus? Look around you. If you really look, you will see an experience him, and that’s what the epiphany is all about.” (*Text This Week, commentary section for the gospel lesson.*)

This is why we can celebrate Christmas all year – it is solidly bound to Easter. Without Christmas there is no Easter, and without Easter, there is no Christmas. The Savior of the world is born from both. Our salvation lies in both. We follow the Star so we can find our home – our home with God both here on earth and in heaven.

What gifts can we bring? The answer is throughout the scriptures, but we can start with the fruits of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23: “. . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,

patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control . . .” These are the gifts that lead us to be faithful followers of Jesus, nurturers of others, the helping hands, the caring hearts that so many need to experience.

This past Christmas, our Giving Tree helped so many people, and I heard from one woman who was overwhelmed by the help we gave her. I would like to share just a short part of what she wrote:

*I wanted to take a few moments to recognize yourself and the people of your congregation who came together to help our family this holiday season. This truly was a wonderful gift!*

*Backstory: I'm a single mother to a very rambunctious 5 year old boy and I have taken in my two nephews whom are 11 and 12 years old through DCYF placement. I've been their sole supporter since last January, and I agreed to take them in not knowing what obstacles I might face. These boys have definitely seen their share of challenges in the past several years. They have been in the foster care system for over 3.5 years and have been moved 8 different times. I was so tired of seeing them being moved by the last time I just agreed that I would take them and try to figure it out myself.*

*This has been anything but easy, and I've had to face not only learning different emotional & psychological struggles, but also be actively involved with three different schools, multiple teachers, counselors, after-school programs, camp leaders, sports, etc... I work 40-50 hours a week to support my little family here so bringing on two additional kiddos has been extremely difficult in itself - even just with my time.*

*[Airial has helped to direct us to places where we can find help such as] backpacks with school supplies, bikes for the boys and make a Christmas miracle happen all with the help of the people at your congregation! I honestly cannot thank [you all] enough! . . . I want to thank you once more, and thank your congregation for all the wonderful gifts. The smiles on their faces was everything I needed and more.*

Let us continue to live, grow and be who God has called us to be in the light of the Star and BY the light of the Star, and let us continue to share the gifts of God that we have been given through the greatest Gift of all.

Let us pray:

*Extravagant God, you sent Magi with generous gifts to visit the baby Jesus and proclaim his reign to all the world. Make our voices heard when we proclaim God's love to all. We pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.*

*(Shelly Matthews, Text This Week in the commentary section for the gospel.)*