

Sunday January 6, 2019 - 10:00 a.m.

*Please stand if you are able

Prelude

Welcome and January Birthdays

We Gather Around God's Word

Bells and Chimes Call To Worship:

Introit: Hymn #9 v. v. 1 & 3 "Joy to the World"

*Prayer of Invocation: 🙏

L: God of wonder and mystery,
today we remember how you surprise us in every age.

P: Into the gloom of fear and want, you bring light;

L: into emptiness, you bring abundance;

P: into the cold, you bring warmth.

L: Into the hardness of the world,
you bring the greatest power we have known,
in the seemingly powerless form of an infant.

**All: Enter now, Holy One, among us and within us,
and move us to joyful adoration of your mystery and wonder.**

*Hymn of Praise: #1 v.v. 1, 3 & 4 "O Come All Ye Faithful"

Sharing Joys, Concerns, and Prayers for the World

We Engage God's Word

Scripture Readings: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

¹ Endow the king with your justice, O God,
the royal son with your righteousness.

² May he judge your people in righteousness,
your afflicted ones with justice.

³ May the mountains bring prosperity to the people,
the hills the fruit of righteousness.

⁴ May he defend the afflicted among the people
and save the children of the needy;
may he crush the oppressor.

⁵ May he endure as long as the sun,
as long as the moon, through all generations.

⁶ May he be like rain falling on a mown field,
like showers watering the earth.

⁷In his days may the righteous flourish
and prosperity abound till the moon is no more.
¹⁰May the kings of Tarshish and of distant shores
bring tribute to him.
May the kings of Sheba and Seba
present him gifts.
¹¹May all kings bow down to him
and all nations serve him.
¹²For he will deliver the needy who cry out,
the afflicted who have no one to help.
¹³He will take pity on the weak and the needy
and save the needy from death.
¹⁴He will rescue them from oppression and violence,
for precious is their blood in his sight.

Matthew 2:1-12

The Magi Visit the Messiah

²After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ²and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵"In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶"But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared.⁸He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Youth Moment

Maps

A Time of Reflection:

As Sages from the East Continued
Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 Matthew 2:1-12

One of the ways to help scripture come to life and speak to us today is to find ourselves in the story. Who are the characters and with whom do we find ourselves associating? If truth be told most of us, if not all of us, would want to place ourselves in the lives of the Magi, the ones who eagerly seek Christ and bow down and worship the child without fear of Christ's reign, but embrace it wholeheartedly. The act of bowing before the child is an act of submission which they freely give not only gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh but their very lives. They came not seeking what they could get from the Christ child, but came to offer the best of what they have. Yes we are all gathered for worship this day, but do we, like the Magi, come to give God homage and our best or do we come seeking what we will get out of the act of worship?

Most, if not all of us, would not want to think of ourselves as being Herod in this story. Yet, truth be told, we all have a little bit of Herod in us. We like Herod fear what surrendering to Christ and the will of God will mean for us. We fear what we might be asked to do or what we might be asked to give up. We live in the number 1 nation in the world yet God challenges us, like the Magi, to seek God first diligently. Matthew 6: 33 says this, “³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” These scriptures beg us to answer what is the guiding force in our discernment and decision making and ultimately what guides our actions and our lives. Scriptures are not always meant to make us feel warm and fuzzy. Often times they hold a mirror up to us and make us face something we don't want to see, but need to see in order to be given a chance at a new and better life, not just for self but for all. Herod acted out of fear that this child born might threaten his power. Truth be told, we too, like Herod, are often times governed by fear for various reasons.

Fear is a powerful thing so we are challenged to answer the questions

What does fear do to us? Do we install more security systems in our homes and cars? Do we build more gates or buy more guns? Do we save even more for retirement, pulling back from charitable contributions to make sure we have enough? Do we close our hearts – and minds – to those who are different? What?” I would add to that do we shut out those seeking refuge from harm for fear of those who might enter this country to do harm?

Remember Jesus and his family were asked to flee to another country to seek safe refuge until it was safe to return home. Do we worry first and foremost about what is best for this country or do we allow God to help us see the bigger picture? I am not saying that we are completely self-centered nor that I have the answers, because I don't. However, I do think these are questions the scriptures are challenging us to deal with and discern God's will. The mirror is being held up and asking us what is it that we seek first? Who is it that we serve? What ultimately is the guiding force in our lives?

As Denise Levertov writes in her poem

[“On the Mystery of the Incarnation”](#):

*It's when we face for a moment
the worst our kind can do, and shudder to know
the taint in our own selves, that awe
cracks the mind's shell and enters the heart.*

That is what a mirror does. Are we willing to hold it up and take a look at it?

David Lose says, “*The adult version of Matthew's nativity moves quickly from the glad moment of the adoration and gifts of the magi to a darker, more ambivalent world of political intrigue, deception, and fear-induced violence. (There's a reason we read Luke on Christmas Eve!) But if Matthew's account is more sober, it is also realistic. We live in a world riddled by fear, a world of devastating super-storms, fires and public massacres, a world where innocents die every day to*

preventable illness and hunger. In Matthew's story of the visit of the magi – and the subsequent slaughter of the innocents in the verses to come – Matthew renders an accurate if also difficult picture of the world.

And that is what is at the heart of Matthew's darker, more adult-oriented story of Jesus' birth: the promise that is precisely this world that God came to, this people so mastered by fear that we often do the unthinkable to each other and ourselves that God loves, this gaping need that we have and bear that God remedies. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us, the living, breathing, and vulnerable promise that God chose to come live and die for us, as we are, so that in Christ's resurrection we, too might experience newness of life."

As we face the darkness that is within us and worship God, not just admire God, in mind, body and spirit; when we kneel down before God and submit our stubborn wills to that of God's, God will then lead us in paths of righteousness and justice for all.

I can't think of a better week to be commissioning our church leadership where the focus is on how do we best serve God and submit our wills to God's will, not only for the leadership, but for us all as we pledge our support for those who have accepted the call to serve in their respective ministries.

Prayer: (PowerPoint)

L: As sages from the East offered you their best,

P: So may we honor you, O Christ, with our highest visions and finest energies.

L: As you turned the water into wine at Cana,

P: So come to your church now, and teach us to change human tears to joyful song.

L: As you were baptized into full righteousness,

P: So may your church humbly do your will.

L: As you gave light to those who followed you on earth,

P: So be our light as we follow you on city streets or country roads.

All: Be revealed among us in power, in word, in sacrament, and in places where we live, work, and play. Glory be to you, O Christ, now and forever. Amen.

We Respond to God's Word

Prayer of Confession

One: We remember the Magi,

who set out with singular focus on the promise of the heavens.

All: And we remember the ways that we have lost sight of you, God,
as the bright guide for our lives.

L: We remember that they stayed determined on their journey,
not even swayed by Herod's power and promises.

All: And we remember that often we have started out well,
but strayed from your path, detoured by our fleeting fears and desires.

L: We remember the wise ones who adored the child:
wisdom and wealth falling to their knees before a poor infant.

All: And we remember that too often we have given our adoration
to wealth or wisdom, not seeing the Christ in our midst.

& Assurance of God's Grace 🙏 (See PowerPoint)

One: To each of us who knows that
we have lost sight of the promise,
or lost the way of our God,
or lost hope,
God has a promise: "I am with you."
God gives a holy presence, and forgiveness,
and new hope, in the Christ.

All: Thanks be to God! Amen.

Call to Offering/ Offertory

Singing the Faith: "Make Me a Servant"

Commissioning of Lay Leadership: (See PowerPoint)

Introduction:

L: Affirmation of ministry is the act
whereby a local church of the United Church of Christ
recognizes the diverse gifts of its members
and celebrates the particular ministry
of each person in the life of the church
or in various settings in the life of the world.

There are different kinds of spiritual gift,
but the same Spirit gives them.

***P: There are different ways of serving,
but the same God is served.***

L: There are different abilities to perform service,
but the same God gives ability to each of us
for particular service.

***P: The Spirit's presence is shown in some way
in each person for the good of all.***

L: Christ is like a single body
which has many parts.

***P: It is still one body,
even though it has many parts.***

L: If one part of the body suffers, all other parts suffer with it;
if one part is praised, all the other parts share its happiness.

P: All of us are Christ's body, and each one a part of it.

Presentation:

(Call all who are serving forward)

L: These people have been called by God,
in accordance with the faith and order of this church,
to serve among us.

They have accepted their call
and are before us in witness to their willingness to serve.

Covenant:

L: Sisters and brothers in Christ,
it is an honor to be entrusted
with the responsibility for particular service
in the ministry of the church,
whether gathered or scattered.

L: Having prayerfully considered
the duties and responsibilities of your ministry,
are you prepared to serve with the help of God
in Christ's name for the glory of God?

Individuals: I am

L: Do you promise
to exercise your ministry diligently and faithfully,
showing forth the love of Christ?

Individuals: I do, relying on God's grace.

L: Members of this household of faith,
you have heard the promises
of our brothers and sisters in Christ
who have answered God's call to service.
Let us affirm our intention
to live in covenant with them.
Will those who are able rise and witness
to the commitment we now make?

***P: We gather in celebration of the joy
that is ours to be in partners with you
in the service of Jesus Christ.
We promise to love you,
honor your leadership,
and assist you
that together we may be a faithful church
of Jesus Christ***

Prayer of Commissioning:

L: Eternal God, you have called these people to serve you in this household of faith and in the world, which you have entrusted to our care and keeping. Send your Holy Spirit on them that they may serve among us with honor and faithfulness. Help them to be diligent in their duties that your church may prosper in the mission you place before it. May their example prove worthy for all of us to follow, as we are united in Christ's ministry, to the glory of Your name. Amen.

Declaration:

L: In the name of Jesus Christ, and on behalf of the people of Summit Cong. UCC of the United Church of Christ, I rejoice to announce: You are installed and commissioned in your respective positions for your respective ministries.

Let us all now join in a round of applause as a symbol of extending our hands to one another in Christian love.

Offering of Treasure:

Hymn: #495 v.v. 1 & 2 "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"

***Epiphany Doxology:** (See PowerPoint)

**Praise God the source of life and breath;
Praise Christ, now born to conquer death;
Praise Holy Spirit's mystery:
One God, pure grace, who sets us free. Amen**

***Prayer of Dedication:** 🙏

God of every good gift, here we present our offerings. There is money here, fulfilling our pledges to support the ministries we do in your name. There are gifts that we give in response to your Spirit, which we remember in joyful song and holy story, in prayer and silence. And there are other gifts, not physically on this table but held in the altar of our hearts. God, we offer them all to you. We ask your blessing on all that we give, so that your loving care reaches into us and out to all the world, ever more deeply and gracefully. We ask it in Jesus' name; Amen.

Communion Hymn: #347 v.v. 1-2 “Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ”

Sacrament of Holy Communion (See PowerPoint)

Bread in Dish– Gluten Free: Bread on Plate – Regular

Dark Glass – Grape Juice: Light Glass – Wine

We Are Sent Into the World

Church News

***Sending Hymn: #584 “I Am the Light of the World”**

*** Benediction and Response:**

GO NOW IN PEACE

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 indicates these prayers have been taken from or adapted from a service written by Rev. John A. Nelson, Connecticut Conference.

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