

NEW MARYLAND UNITED CHURCH

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA

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December 31st, 2023 11 am
CELEBRATING THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

Welcome and thank you for joining in our worship this holy morning! We hope you feel at home in our midst. Let us pause to remember that in this region we live and work and worship on lands that are, by law, the unceded territories of the Wabanaki peoples—predominantly the lands of the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik and Passamaquoddy. May we live with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with its people. If you are visiting or new to the congregation please introduce yourself to Rev. Dr. Burke. Grace and peace to you all!

Thought for Meditation:

**Still, what I want in my life
is to be willing to be dazzled—
to cast aside the weight of facts....
I want to believe I am looking
into the white fire of a great mystery.**

Mary Oliver

T H E G A T H E R I N G

WELCOME & LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

***INTROIT: O Come All Ye Faithful, #60 VU, v.1**

**O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come, ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem:
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come let us adore him,
O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord!**

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: The Light of Christ be with you!

People: And also with you!

Leader: Let us worship the Lord together!

***HYMN # 35 VU Good Christian Friends Rejoice**

OPENING PRAYER ENDING WITH THE LORD'S PRAYER

**O God of new beginnings, instigator of Christmas and New Year,
start something new in me today. Reopen my soul to hope, and give
my will a new direction. Set before me today the ways of Jesus, that
I might have new life. And set within me your Holy Spirit, that I
might walk a new path with you. This we ask in the name of the
Prince of Peace, who taught his friends to pray together, saying:
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, the power and the glory,
For ever and ever. Amen.**

***HYMN#91 VU The First Nowell, verses 4, 5 and 6**

T H E W O R D O F G O D

THE GOSPEL LESSON: Matthew 2:1-12

SERMON: *An Epiphany Tale*

HYMN: *Beautiful Star Of Bethlehem

**1. O beautiful star of Bethlehem,
Shining afar through shadows dim,
Giving a light for those who long have gone,
Guiding the wise men on their way,
Unto the place where Jesus lay,
Beautiful star of Bethlehem shine on.**

Refrain:

O beautiful star ---- of Bethlehem,

**Shine upon us until the glory dawn;
Give us Thy light to light the way
Into the land of perfect day,
Beautiful star of Bethlehem, shine on.**

**2. O beautiful star, the hope of light,
Guiding the pilgrim through the night,
Over the mountain till the break of dawn,
Into the light of perfect day it will give out a lovely ray,
Beautiful star of Bethlehem, shine on.**

**3. O beautiful star, the hope of rest
For the redeemed, the good and blessed,
Yonder in glory when the crown is won,
Jesus is now that Star divine,
Brighter and brighter he will shine.
Beautiful star of Bethlehem, shine on.**

T H E R E S P O N S E

THE ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERING & OFFERTORY: (#81 VU As With Gladness Men of Old, v.3)

**As they offered gifts most rare, at that manger crude and bare,
so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,
all our costliest treasures bring, Christ to you, our heavenly king!**

PRAYERS & A LITANY FOR EPIPHANY & THE NEW YEAR:

**Holy God, Light of Light, our Alpha and Omega, our beginning and
our end:**

We stand at this moment, having ended a hard year.

**And in the midst of an unknown future. We balance on the cusp of
these days,**

**Teetering between old, and new, between coming and going,
between sojourning and homecoming.**

To you, O God, we entrust all our yesterdays: yours to hallow and to hold; yours to forgive and to cherish.

To you, O God, we dedicate all our tomorrows: strengthen and challenge us; and guide us to your light!

And hold us – and surprise us! - O God, in the holy now. And blessed be all those we encounter.

Blessed be our humility, blessed be our care, blessed be our blunders.

Blessed be this family of faith in this time and place!

AMEN!

***HYMN # 87 VU I Am The Light Of The World**

***BENEDICTION**

***CHORAL BLESSING: Auld Lang Syne**

**Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?**

**Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
For days of auld lang syne!**

**For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne.**

**We'll drink a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne.**