



Edinboro Presbyterian Church

Newsletter Update

January 6-20, 2022

Epiphany: A Festival of the Lord's Light being shown

Like the wise searches of old, we seek Jesus

Near January 6, the Day of Epiphany, many Christian churches throughout the centuries have used as their worship theme the manifestation of Christ's presence in the world. In many traditions, Epiphany is celebrated with the story of the Magi who traveled from afar seeking the new and promised king. They studied the signs and the prophecies and eventually were guided on their journey by a bright star. Read the Biblical story in Matthew's gospel, chapter 2. These wise ones had their *epiphany* moment when they found the child on his mother's lap. They laid down rich gifts (each with significant symbolic meaning) and went home by a different route.

Even in secular usage, the word "epiphany" has powerful meaning. When some has an *epiphany*, something that wasn't evident because noticeable – true – obvious. An epiphany is, literally, a real "a-ha moment". At Jesus' birth, the Messiah became evident to all who saw him, all who searched for him.

For us at this Epiphany 2022, we can remember the light of God shining forth in the Christ child's presence. An annual commemoration offers us a dual focus: of how Jesus' very self is the Light coming into the world, plus how we are to reflect that light in our daily lives. Jesus became noticeable, true and obvious – and the Lord still is. The shepherds, the Magi, the innkeeper's family, and everyone who met Jesus during the following three decades saw evidence of the Lord's light.

The light is evident, even for us now. Having encountered this Messiah, we too go home a different way.

FUPC will use January 9 (in the sanctuary) and January 16 (online) as our celebration of the Epiphany this year. You are encouraged to use this prayer for your meditation this week as your preparation for worship at Epiphany and throughout the year.

Great and majestic God, you have given us Jesus the Messiah, the Light of the world. We see your glory shining in the face of the Christ. Just as your star led travelers from far away to see the promised Messiah, draw us to find Jesus, so that we can meet you face to face. May others then see the radiance which glows around us, because we have learned how to bask in your presence. Amen.



Observe Epiphany and launch
your 2022 with FUPC's
New Year Stars

Find details in this newsletter

From the Pastor:

Our Christmas celebration brought me *peace and joy*

From the early days of my ordained pastoral ministry, I have signed my personal letters and published columns with a version of “Wishing you Peace and Joy” more often than any other closing phrase. Those two words – peace and joy – come to me as I reflect on how marvelous and meaningful our Christmas Eve worship was this year. Especially this year.

In multiple conversations since then, I’ve been hearing that reaction from quite a few others among us – from our members and from those who were guests with us that night.

Part of the reason, I am convinced, is that the message of the Messiah’s arrival is both timely and timeless. When God-With-Us comes to be with us, we can gain hope and perspective and reassurance. Christmas brings us, literally, comfort and joy. Every Christmas is special.

Another part of the reason that this year’s December 24 at 4281 Route 6N moved us so much, I am convinced, is unique to Christmas 2021. We were so ready for some new hope. We were so ready for the sights and sounds and flavors of something familiar, after nearly two years of Covid-triggered disruptions and limitations. We had a full sanctuary, something we had not experienced like this since 2019. Enough of us felt comfortable being together that we sang and prayed and smiled and caught the wonder and magic of



those special moments. It felt like time to get back together, to reclaim traditions, and to move forward with life.

We can talk further about best practices for dealing with Covid and masking and vaccinations-or-not and boosters-or-not on another occasion, but I honestly observed among our Christmas Eve worshipers what seems to be a mile marker, a sign of transition that is ready to show forth. I do hope that will be true for all of us.

Mindful that some people could not (and should not) be with us for our Christmas Eve worship, I am thankful that we have some technology options to

share that special hour with anyone who wants to see our video. Among the reasonable and valid explanations: Covid concerns, illness that week, travel, or personal stresses because Christmas was different this year for however many other reasons.

We posted the 12/24/2021 worship service as our **Worship Online** for the week of January 2. If you were not with us, I hope you will look it up at www.EdinboroPresby.org/videos. If you *were* in attendance that night, I trust that you found the spiritual encouragement which met your hopes and fears of this strange year. I also encourage you to re-worship by watching that video from our website.

Thank you to everyone who helped enhance our worship that powerful night. A list of the people who made it special – plus those of you who added to our worship experiences throughout Advent too – is elsewhere in this edition of our newsletter. Not included in that list are the other primary people who made FUPC’s Christmas Eve so special for me and for so many others: each one of you who came out to worship our Lord and joined with our congregation of local angels.

Our gratitude primarily is directed toward the Lord who came to meet us 20 centuries ago. This same Lord comes to meet us now.

Wishing you Peace and Joy throughout 2022,

Get your “New Year Star” at Edinboro Presby (or online)

Stars are often used as symbolism connected with the Twelve Days of Christmas and the celebration of Epiphany. Jesus himself is spoken of as the Light sent from God. The Magi who searched for Jesus followed a special star. In “light” of this symbolism, we can use a star to remind us of God’s presence with us and the Lord’s guidance for us.

Again for 2022, as we have been doing when each new year begins, worshipers and members and friends of this church are invited to get a “New Year Star”. These small cards each have a Biblical word or phrase which may (perhaps) be a trait or focus for your spiritual life in the 12 months ahead. As a devotional exercise which might extend all the way through the year, ponder the word on your card.

- * Perhaps the word or trait is a faith characteristic which is already strong within you --- Give thanks to God for that, and keep looking for everyday opportunities to share that “light” of Jesus Christ.
- * This theme *might* be something which could be an important growth area for you in the upcoming months. See if you can increase its present in your daily life. Ask a friend or two to help you discover it more, to hold you to seeking it, or to affirm that it is present in your life more than you realize. Others may be able to point out ways in which you already have that facet as a part of you, reflecting the Lord’s light.
- * Rather than focusing on how that aspect or gift is with *you*, perhaps your explorations will be better served as you frequently ponder how that word describes *the Lord*. When we contemplate the person and work of God Almighty, we honor our Creator and we can discover (rediscover?) peace and promise with us and around us.

Ask for others to help you explore the implications of your Star Word...spiritual growth is best as a Group Project! Stay with it, don't give up too early or too easily. *(If your 2022 Word doesn't seem to fit with where you currently are in your soul and in your life, look for ways you can affirm that trait in the people around you. If the word absolutely doesn't fit you, please keep trying at least until Ground Hog Day, a secular occasion which also focuses on the arrival of new light. Then, draw out a different word once you get past February 2, so you can keep deepening your own faith, maybe with a Word which better suits you.)*



Whether your word is already an obvious spiritual strength of yours or a challenge for you --- about ways to grow, even if it feels a little different (somewhat like left-handed vs. right-handed) for your typical way of going through each day.

You can look up your passage, or search other places in Scripture where your word appears, by going to a site like <https://bible.oremus.org/> or www.BibleGateway.com. Don't stay limited to the one Bible verse listed. Your word likely will appear elsewhere throughout the Bible. Put it in a place where you will see it nearly every day, as a reminder. Some people choose a mirror at home, car dashboard, under a refrigerator magnet, or prominently at a work desk.

Please contact Pastor Greg or our other leaders if you have questions about this process – or if you would like to talk about how this process brings you encouragement, challenge, clarity or assurance.



For those who are connected to us from a distance, online or in social media – or cannot be here in person for another reason – there is another method for getting your New Year Star and your Word for 2022. While there is some “randomness”, we have people praying specifically that everyone will have a word which can become a meaningful way to develop an aspect of your faith this year.

Go to www.EdinboroPresby.org/news or ask for a printed card



Gratitude to God ... and to you ... for the multitude of ways through which our worship, mission and ministry was enhanced throughout the month of December

So many people did so many things to enhance our Advent and Christmas celebrations. We all are grateful for your participation in the work and life of this church throughout December. It was a special season. So many people (inside FUPC and beyond the congregation) were touched by our mission, our outreach and ministry, and our worship and music to celebrate the Good News of the season and to share kindness and hope into the community.

This is an extensive list, but anyone else whose name isn't included here, please know that your time and effort and contributions brightened the Advent and Christmas seasons around here.

Gena Shirley, who wonderfully played piano and organ for worship and recruited guest musicians this month

Shari Gould and Angela Steadman who sang "O Holy Night" and guest violinist Phyllis Steadman

Our great choir, including our talented director Mark Brice, all those who sing with us on an ongoing basis and the singers who joined with the choir for special songs in December

Our wonderful Christmas caroling teams who serenaded 11 homes and the Edinboro Manor

Audio, camera, and website video production: Greg Gillispie, Richard Walker, Mark Brice, Buzz Walker, Todd Jay, Brian Johnson, Pete Kraus, Ryan Kraus, Adam Kraus

The great crew that helped us decorate the sanctuary during Thanksgiving Week, and those who provided food for the lunch on that work day

Those who did additional work to put up the tree and complete the decorating process: Walker Farms, Art Crawford, Sue Johnson, Lianne Walker, Cheryl Collopy

The generosity which provided Christmas gifts in partnership with the Kiwanis Club Christmas Project and our presents for the young people at the Hermitage House

Contributors to our "Christmas Joy" Offering in December to support retired church workers and those in crisis, plus scholarships for the next generation of leaders through PCUSA schools = **\$825**.

The compassion we were able to share with our county-wide neighbors who are served by the Erie City Mission. Our annual Christmas Eve offering totaled **\$1,120!**

Everyone who contributed so that the session and congregation could provide gifts for our church staff

Our Advent Wreath readers and candlelighters: Mary Beth Honeycutt; Leslie, Sylvia and Cam Lawton; The Mascharka Family; The Berger Family; and Zach Gillispie

John Dietz who guest-preached December 26, and Fran Dietz who played piano December 19 & 26

Those who soon will de-decorate for us. 😊

Thanks be to God always for you because of the grace of God which was given you in Jesus Christ ... so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you await the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:4,7)

New officer ordinations and installation are upcoming

The members which the congregation elected to be our next group of deacons and elders are going through a required time of orientation and conversation during January with our current Session. The formal ceremonies of ordination and installation will be scheduled soon, and these will take place during late January or early February.

Around that time, we will also celebrate the ministry and leadership of the elders and deacons who served us well in the Class of 2021, a time of leading the church and the people through the uncertainties and challenges of the Covid-19 era.

“Per capita” offering request for 2022 will be \$33 per member

One of the ways that the Presbyterian Church (USA) seeks to live out the benefits of its interconnected partnerships is to request a “per capita” gift from each member. Contributions through “per capita” fund some of the administrative services and mission outreach of the various levels of the church – regional presbyteries, multi-state synods, and the national denomination.

The request per member for 2022 will be \$33 in Lake Erie Presbytery. About two-thirds of that amount stays in our presbytery, with the rest designated for the regional, national and international work of the PC(USA). If you would like to give toward this amount, your gift can be payable to FUPC and marked with “per capita”. Those who use our preprinted offering envelopes will find one envelope marked for this purpose. These contributions can be made in a single gift or spread across multiple payments any time during the year.



Ask for a new building key if you need one

Remember: the outside doors of the FUPC building has new doors and repaired latches. Old keys to the *outside doors* can be discarded. Request a new key if you need one through the church office or a Property Team member.

Keep your inside keys. Offices and classrooms were *not* rekeyed in December.

First United Presbyterian Church

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Our “Newsletter Updates” of FUPC’s **Presby Press** are currently being published twice a month, on the first and third Fridays. These are shared by mail and e-mail with our members and guests and friends, as well as linked online for the general public to see via our website. If you have questions, suggestions or responses to what you find here, please be in contact with us. We also welcome submissions of photos and articles to be considered for future publication.

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