

Star Gifts, words to ponder all year long.

Today, as we celebrate Epiphany, we will each receive a Star Gift, a star-shaped piece of brightly colored paper with a word printed on it.

The deacons will pass out the star words. Just reach in and take a Star.

Take your star home and hang it up where you are sure to see it every day. Allow your word to speak to you.

Maybe start by looking the word up in the dictionary so you are clear on its meaning. You are invited to ponder what significance this word might have in your life, and how God might be speaking to you through this special message.

A word that seemed unclear at the beginning may gain new meaning as the year goes on.



Worship Notes.

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CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ
5 Summer St. Lynnfield MA 01940
781-334-3050 www.Centre-Church.org
We Welcome Everyone: An Open and Affirming Church

Rev Thomas Bentley, Pastor
Douglas W. Hodgkins, Organist/Choir Director
Leah O'Brien, Director of Tower Day School
Bella Travaglini, Administrative Assistant



**“Standing on the Same Ground
Before the Divine”**

Rev. Thomas Bentley

CENTRE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

United Church of Christ

5 Summer Street, Lynnfield, Massachusetts

January 5, 2025

10:00 am

Prelude

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

Randy Russell

Leader: Darkness is not limited to night skies; darkness invades our spirits and our souls.

People: In darkness of doubt and despair we have lived, until we witnessed the birth of the Savior.

Leader: Now the light has truly come to us!

People: Darkness has been banished away!

Leader: Arise! Shine! For the Light of God’s love has come!

Leader & People: And we shall be led to that Light in joy and celebration. AMEN.

Opening Prayer *(in unison)*

Randy Russell

Loving God, who breaks through the darkness of doubt and despair, be with us his day as we hear of the visit of the Wise Ones, who risked everything to follow a Star. Let us open our hearts and be willing to risk receiving the gift of gracious Love that you have to offer us in the form of our Savior, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

The Lord’s Prayer *(in unison)*

Randy Russell

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, AMEN.

*Opening Hymn

“The First Nowell”

#25 *(booklet)*

New Testament Reading

Ephesians 3:1-6

The Message

This is why I, Paul, am in jail for Christ, having taken up the cause of you outsiders, so-called. I take it that you’re familiar with the part I was given in

“What Star is This, With Beams So Bright” #28

1 What star is this, with beams so bright, More lovely than the noon day light? ‘Tis sent to announce a newborn king, Glad tidings of our God to bring.

2 ‘Tis now fulfilled what God decreed, “From Jacob shall a star proceed”: And lo! the eastern sages stand, To read in heaven the Lord’s command.

3 O Jesus, while the star of grace Impels us on to seek they face, Let not our slothful hearts re-fuse The guidance of thy light to use.

4 To God the Father, heavenly Light, To Christ, re-vealed in earthly night, To God the Holy Ghost we raise An endless song of thankful praise! A - men.

1 The first Nowell, the angel did say, was to certain poor
shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep, On a cold winter’s
night that was so deep.

Refrain:
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Born is the King of Israel.

2 They looked up and saw a star Shining in the east, beyond
them far, And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.

Refrain
3 And by the light of that same star, Three wise men came
from country far; To seek for a king was their intent, And to
follow the star wherever it went.

Refrain
This star drew nigh to the northwest, O’er Bethlehem
it took its rest, And there it did both stop and stay,
Right to over the place where Jesus lay.

Refrain
5 Then entered in those wise men three, Full
reverently upon their knee, And offered there, in his presence,
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense.

Refrain

God’s plan for including everybody. I got the inside story on this from God
himself, as I just wrote you in brief.

As you read over what I have written to you, you’ll be able to see for
yourselves into the mystery of Christ. None of our ancestors understood
this. Only in our time has it been made clear by God’s Spirit through his
holy apostles and prophets of this new order. The mystery is that people
who have never heard of God and those who have heard of him all their
lives (what I’ve been calling outsiders and insiders) stand on the same
ground before God. They get the same offer, same help, same promises in
Christ Jesus. The Message is accessible and welcoming to everyone,
across the board.

Children’s Time and Star Gifts

*Following Children’s Time, Children ages 4 and up are invited to join us for
Kid’s Classroom in Room 10 with Christina Joly and Christine Marshall.
The children will return to sit with their families for Communion.*

Call to Offering

Offertory “Savior God Above” #602

*Hymn of Praise (*in unison*)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Christ, all creatures here below;
Praise Holy Spirit evermore;
Praise Living God, whom we adore.

Prayer of Dedication

Joys and Concerns

Pastoral Prayer

Anthem

Gospel Reading

Matthew 2: 1-2

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod’s kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, “Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We’re on pilgrimage to worship him.”

When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, “Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?” They told him, “Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly:

It’s you, Bethlehem, in Judah’s land,
no longer bringing up the rear.
From you will come the leader
who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel.”

Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth- announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, “Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I’ll join you at once in your worship.”

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it

hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh. In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So, they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country.

Message: “Standing on the Same Ground Before the Divine”

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION *(see insert)*

*Closing Hymn “What Star is This, With Beams So Bright” #28 *(booklet)*

Benediction

Postlude

Our ushers today are
Bill Seelig, Scott Barke, David Bjorkman and Phil Fisher.

Please join us for Coffee Hour hosted by Annmarie Pendola.

We welcome Christina Joly who has joined our Faith Formation team. Christina will be leading the children in the classroom each Sunday.