



ST. JOHN'S
United Methodist Church

Glorifying God. Feeding People. Making Disciples.

January 5, 2021

Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and Happy Epiphany!

On Sunday, January 3, 2021, we celebrated Epiphany and those in attendance were given a “star word,” for the new year. This is a relatively new prayer practice in churches all over the world to give people a “star word” on Epiphany Sunday and this letter will give you some context and tips for getting started.

We know that the Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus. We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that can provide us with a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight. Finally, we know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God rather than silence or contemplation. This prayer practice of contemplation invites a new prayer rhythm that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.

During worship on Sunday, January 3, we read the story of the Magi from Matthew 1:1-12, and reflected on our star words, and we prayed this prayer together:

God of starlight,

There has always been something holy about stars for us.

We wish on them. We look for them.

We celebrate when we see them streaking across the sky on summer nights.

There has always been something holy about stars.

We know that. You know that.

The Magi must have known that.

So today we come to You in prayer, trusting that if You can paint the stars in the sky, then surely You can hear us over the noise.

So first we pray for people wishing on stars:

We pray for those for whom 2020 was a year full of hospital rooms and isolation.

We pray for those who lost love in 2020.

We pray for those who lost life in 2020.

We pray for those who lost a job, a home, or a sense of hope in 2020.

We pray for parents working to homeschool children in 2020,
and for children who missed their friends.

We pray for the milestones canceled in 2020,
and for the breath that was stolen in 2020.

However, at the same time,

we also say a prayer of gratitude for all the stars You have left for us this last year—

The signs and mile markers of hope on the horizon.

We could not have survived without the birthday parades and the sidewalk chalk.

And oh, how we needed the slower schedule.

We thank You for the gifts of technology, backyard gardening, and sourdough bread.

We thank You for every variety of essential workers, from grocery store clerks and teachers, to internet technicians and post workers, to scientists and medical professionals.

We thank You for the quiet that came with less cars on the road and less planes in the sky.

In so many ways, 2020 was a turbulent year, and in so many ways, You were there, leaving stars in the sky, painting hope on the horizon.

So today, in this new year, we ask that once more You would give us a sign.

Pour out a double portion of Your Spirit on these star words,

so that these ordinary slips of paper might provide us a glimpse of something more.

For like the Magi, we are seeking You.

Like the Magi, we are looking up.

Like the Magi, we just need a sign.

Guide our feet. Show up in the mundane and the extraordinary.

Be in the stars in the sky and in our everyday lives.

Hear our prayers.

We are hopeful, O God. We place our hope in you.

And so with the confidence of children wishing on stars, we lift our hearts to you. Amen.

As you start to live with your star word for this new year, you might want to think about these questions. Maybe you just ponder it, maybe you're a journaler, or maybe you want to talk about it with someone. (You can always schedule a time to chat with us if you'd like to.)

1. What is your initial reaction or response to this word? What meaning comes to mind immediately? Then spend some time with a dictionary and explore the various meanings of this word.
2. Reflect on how you think - right now - this word might play out.
3. What excites you about this word? What scares you about this word? What's unexpected about this word?
4. Write or speak aloud a prayer using your word.

Keep your star word in a place where you can see it every day. Hold space for new thoughts about it to pop up as you live your daily life. We look forward to worshipping with you from the sanctuary and online, and we can't wait to hear about how God works in your life in this new year!

Grace and peace,



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