

*Virtual Worship Service*  
*First Sunday of the Christmas Season*  
*Crossnore Presbyterian Church*  
*Sunday, December 27, 2020*



**Prelude: *Westford Carol***

Performed by Yo-Yo Ma and Alison Krauss: [https://youtu.be/yxDZjg\\_Igoc](https://youtu.be/yxDZjg_Igoc)

**Call to Worship:**

Guided by the Star we come

**To pay homage to the Shepherd of Israel**

Guided by the Star we come

**To kneel before to the Light of the world.**

Guided by the star we come

**And we are overwhelmed with joy**

Guided by the star we come to Worship

**We come to celebrate the Christ, our Savior.**

**\*Hymn of Praise # 132 *Good Christian Friends, Rejoice***

Text: Medieval Latin; Music: German folk melody

Sing along with Geneva Presbyterian Church, Laguna Hills, CA:

<https://youtu.be/P4MXQngN5vQ>

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ was born today.  
Ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!  
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.  
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!**

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;  
now ye need not fear the grave: Jesus Christ was born to save!  
Calls you one and calls you all to gain his everlasting hall.  
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!**

**Call to Confession:**

The coming of Christ was not, and is not, widely welcomed.

Wherever there is epiphany there will also be darkness:

the darkness of old superstitions and dogmas which refuse to fade away easily;

the darkness of pride in the half truths that have masqueraded as wisdom;

the darkness of entrenched evil that hates the light and tries to dispose of it;

the darkness of apathy that cannot be bothered to open the shutters;

Let us make our confession together:

**Unison Prayer of Confession:**

**Most holy and most loving God, we admit to you and to each other,  
that we are creatures who either through foolishness or wilfulness  
often choose darkness instead of light.**

Here and now we surrender to you our fears and proud opinions,  
our short-sighted folly and our pompous wisdom,  
our deep-seated sins and our apathy towards change and renewal.

Please forgive the darkness and pain we have inflicted on others,  
and restore the light-starved hopes and ideals within our own souls.  
Trusting your grace, we earnestly pray: "Create in us a clean heart, O God,  
and renew a right spirit within us" (moment of silent confession).  
Through Christ Jesus our Savior. Amen!

#### **Assurance of Pardon:**

My friends, Epiphany is good news!  
The Light comes not to sear and blind us but to save us.  
Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners.  
In his name, our sins are forgiven!

#### **Thanks be to God!**

Let us receive God's forgiveness with thanksgiving,  
and live without shame or anxiety.

**The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ enables us. Amen!**



#### **First Lesson: Exodus 3:1-5**

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."

#### **Special Music: *In the Bleak Midwinter***

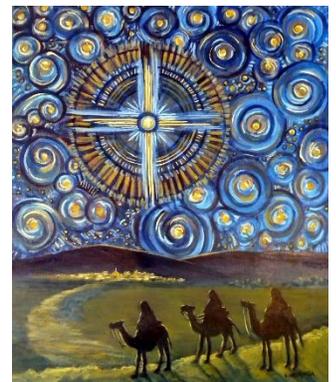
**Text:** Christina Georgina Rossetti, **Music:** Gustav Holst

**Sung by Dan Fogelberg:** <https://youtu.be/xKlHh7MGnfw>

#### **Second Lesson: Matthew 2:1-6, 9-12**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.





**Epiphany Prayer:**

O Star-flinging God,  
whose light dances across eternity,  
dazzle us into your presence this new year.  
Open our hearts to the mystery of your love.

Awaken us to your presence,  
knit to the ordinary.  
Reveal to us what is possible, but not yet present.  
Heal us, that we might be healers.

Reconcile us to you and to ourselves,  
that our living might be reconciling.

Stop us often, we pray  
with news that is good  
with hope that holds  
with truth that transforms with a Word  
tailored to this trail we're on.

May the word of your grace guide our steps  
like the sun by day  
and the north star by night,  
as we travel into the gift of a new year. Amen.

(written by Glenn Mitchell)

**Hymn of Meditation # 150 *As with Gladness Men of Old***

Text: William Chatterton Dix, 1858; Music: Conrad Kocher, 1838

Sing along with the Hymn Channel: [https://youtu.be/sp52sx2\\_GYs](https://youtu.be/sp52sx2_GYs)

**As with gladness men of old did the guiding star behold,  
as with joy they hailed its light, leading onward, beaming bright;  
so, most gracious God, may we evermore be led to thee.**

**As with joyful steps they sped, Savior, to thy lowly bed,  
there to bend the knee before thee whom heav'n and earth adore;  
so may we with willing feet ever seek thy mercy seat.**

**As they offered gifts most rare at thy cradle rude and bare,  
so may we with holy joy, pure and free from sin's alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav'nly king.**

**Holy Jesus, every day keep us in the narrow way,  
and, when earthly things are past, bring our ransomed souls at last  
where they need no star to guide, where no clouds thy glory hide.**

**Prayers of the People:**

God of wonder and mystery, God of the stars and the universe, God of winding ways and straight paths, we gather today with gratitude for the gift of your constant presence, your trustworthy guidance, and your daring risk-taking with us.

You dare to love us despite our inability to respond fully. You dare to care for us, despite our challenge in caring for others. You dare to walk with us, despite our fickleness.

On our own journeys toward the stars and guiding points you put before us, you continue to lead us forward, guiding us by the teachings of Jesus to seek justice, love kindness, and walk humbly in your loving shadow. As we struggle with the political wrangling of this world, the wars waged for both justice and greed, the violence committed daily against the innocent, let alone the pain of broken relationships and loss, you remain steadfast in your care and devotion for your entire creation throughout the universe.

It is almost too much to take in sometimes. And even in our doubts and disbelief, our struggle to understand and our constant misunderstanding, and our flat-out ignorance about your ways, you remain constantly present to us.

We pray for peace in this world, Lord, the kind of peace in which we celebrate diversity, are joyfully challenged by adversity, and share in the joy that is to be found everywhere. We pray for those who are lonely, that you might lead us to reach out and be friends. We pray for those who are hungry, that you might lead us to offer sustenance. We pray for those who are lost, that you might lead us to give hope and direction. We pray for the countries of the world, that we might find a way to work together to lift one another up.

We pray for our leaders in Washington, that your Spirit might guide them set an example for our country and the world to work together rather than against one another. We pray for your Church, that we may seek to build up this body and seek to repair the theological divisions that are tearing us apart. We pray for church leaders, that they may continually seek your Spirit in their lives and their daily decisions as they lead their congregation.

And we pray for ourselves, that we might continue on this journey, learning the lessons you offer, seeking the fullness of your perfection, and live as you would have us live.

These prayers and hopes we offer in confidence and gratitude of your love and presence as we pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray, Our Father... Amen.

#### **Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings:**

This Christmas Season, God has blessed us with the greatest gift of all, Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior. May we share our gratitude for this life, for daily blessings, and for eternal life that has begun and is yet to be fulfilled in God's time. Let us receive our offerings that will be used to feed people spiritually and physically in our local and global community.

#### **Unison Prayer of Dedication and Thanksgiving:**

**Holy One, your Light has come. Your Light shines brightly in our humble lives. We offer you our gifts as an outpouring of your light within us. Glory halleluiah! Amen.**

#### **Closing Hymn # 137 *He Came Down***

Text: Cameroon Song; Music: Cameroon melody, arranged by John L. Bell, 1986

[https://youtu.be/3PKMuSs\\_OEs](https://youtu.be/3PKMuSs_OEs)

**He came down that we may have love;  
He came down that we may have love;  
He came down that we may have love,  
Hallelujah forevermore.**



He came down that we may have joy;  
He came down that we may have joy;  
He came down that we may have joy,  
Hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have peace;  
He came down that we may have peace;  
He came down that we may have peace,  
Hallelujah forevermore.

**Charge and Benediction:**

The Light of the Star, the light of God's love, shines before you. Go in peace, go in joy, go in love to meet God's people in the world and greet them with the good news of salvation. AMEN.

**Postlude: *What Star is This, with Beams So Bright***

Sung by Caritas Chamber Chorale at St. Joseph Church, North Plainfield, NJ: <https://youtu.be/ILmzvfOYtzz>