



*The First Congregational Church  
of the United Church of Christ  
Stockbridge, Massachusetts*  
**EPIPHANY SUNDAY**  
*January 7, 2024 – 10:00 a.m.*

Note: If you would like a prayer lifted today, please make sure to write it on a prayer slip and place it in the Offering Plate.

For those worshipping at home: you are invited to text the names of those attending to 413-644-6435 that we might welcome you. Please also include prayers of joys and concerns as we will name them in worship.

### **PREPARING FOR WORSHIP**

GATHERING MUSIC

Peter Frost

PRELUDE

*What Star is This?*, Robert Graham

FRAMING WORDS

Pastor Brent Damrow

### **GATHERING FOR WORSHIP**

INTROIT

*O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright*, Nicolai/Bach

\*CALL TO WORSHIP

written by Bruce Prewer and based on Matthew 2:1-12

One: Light! Light, light and more light! Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of God has risen upon you.

**All: Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.**

One: When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, magi came from the East, saying: Where is he who is born king of the Jews?

**All: For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.**

continued

One: The wonderful light of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

**All: And also with you.**

\*HYMN

*We Three Kings of Orient Are*

Pew Hymnal #66

CONTEMPORARY READING Madeleine L'Engle, *Instruments* (1978)

WELCOME

Pastor Brent

\*PASSING OF THE PEACE

## THE GIFT OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 2:1-12

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." '

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' 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.

SERMON

*Until the Joy-Filled Song is One*

Pastor Brent

\*HYMN

*As With Gladness Men of Old*

Pew Hymnal #63

## OFFERING OURSELVES AND OUR GIFTS

### CALL TO THE OFFERING

Note: If you would like a prayer lifted today, please make sure to write it on a prayer slip and place it in the Offering Plate.

OFFERTORY ANTHEM *The Star Carol*, by Alfred S. Burt

Carolyn Mielke, mezzo-soprano soloist

\*DOXOLOGY

Lasst Uns Erfreuen

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;**

**Praise Christ the Word in flesh born low; Alleluia, Alleluia.**

**Praise Holy Spirit evermore; One God, Triune, whom we adore.**

**Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.**

\*BLESSING OF THE GIFTS

BRINGING OUR PRAYERS

PRAYER RESPONSE

## THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

All are welcome to participate fully as we observe an open table.

## GOING FORTH INTO THE WORLD

\*INVITATIONS

Pastor Brent

\*SENDING CHARGE by Jan L. Richardson

May the path that Christ walks to bring justice upon the earth, to bring light to those who sit in darkness, to bring out those who live in bondage, to bring new things to all creation: may this path run through our life.

May we be the road Christ takes.

\*HYMN

*What Star Is This; with Beams so Bright*

Pew Hymnal #68

\*BENEDICTION

Pastor Brent



POSTLUDE

*Joy, Joy, Joy*, by Bill Cain

## Winter Book Discussion

In *Rough Sleepers*, Tracy Kidder tells the story of Dr. Jim O'Connell, a gifted man who invented a community of care for Boston's unhoused population, including those who sleep on the streets – the “rough sleepers.” This book is a modern-day example of someone who lives a life of compassion and gentleness. Christian Education and Mission & Action invite you to read this book this winter.

Vicky Cooper and Kim Ruffing will lead two discussion groups, one in person and one online: Thursday sessions, Jan 18, Jan 25, Feb 1, Feb 8, 5:45-6:45pm – in person • Tuesday, February 6, 5:00-7:00pm – online To sign up please contact the church office. Readers are encouraged to acquire a copy on their own. Please reach out if you need assistance, we'd be glad to get a copy.

## Music Notes

Meet our new Alto Soloist/Section Leader

Carolyn Mielke is a mezzo-soprano and currently works in community branch management for M&T Bank. She recently graduated from Williams College where she studied music and history and sang in both the Concert and Chamber Choirs under the direction of Dr. Anna Lenti. While at Williams, she was a featured soloist with the Williams Choirs, Schola Cantorum of Oxford, and the University of Oxford's Exeter College Choir (where she studied for one year). Carolyn was the music director of Good Question (GQ) a cappella at Williams and was a winner of the 2023 Berkshire Symphony Soloist Competition for her performance of "Una Voce Poco Fa" from *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Originally from Phoenix, Arizona, Carolyn is thrilled to be joining the community at First Congregational Church, and looks forward to meeting the choir and members of the congregation.

*Welcome! We are an Open and Affirming Church which means that we invite persons of every sexual orientation, gender identification and expression, racial and cultural identity, age, physical ability, economic circumstance, faith background and family structure to share fully in the ministry, leadership and fellowship of this congregation's life in Christ.*

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