Welcome to the season of Epiphany! On Sunday we heard the story of the wise ones from the East in Matthew 2:1-12. Take a moment to read this passage. Then reflect on this poem prayer.

Prayer written by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Imagine

I imagine they packed bags—
Water and food, blankets and clothes.

I imagine they packed tools—
Maps and telescopes that could bring the stars closer,
As if the sky was a comforter they could pull near.

I imagine they hugged loved ones and said,
"We'll be back soon."
And when loved ones said,
"Don't leave,"
"It's risky,"
"You don't even know what you're chasing,"
I imagine they put lips to foreheads and said,
"There is a light in the darkness. I must chase that."

And then I imagine they walked.
I imagine they walked until legs were tired and knees gave out.
Maybe they told stories on the road and laughed into open sky,
Or maybe they sat in silence and prayed for more light.
However the road unfolded, I imagine it was not easy.

I imagine all of this, not because I've chased stars,
But because I have dreamed.
And these dreams for justice make the Magi's story my own.
For every time we fight for justice,
We start in the dark.
We hug loved ones and say,
"There's a light in the darkness, I must chase that."
We walk until we're tired,
And then we keep walking.
We laugh at the open sky as a form of resistance.
We pray in the night for signs of more light.
And no matter how important the journey is,
And no matter how much progress we make,
The journey to justice is never easy.

And so I pray,
That maybe one day,
We will be like the Magi,
And will walk ourselves into the light.
Until then, don't forget—
There's a light in the darkness.
We must chase that.

This Week at HOPE January 6, 2021

HOPE LUTHERAN
Hope Journeys Forward

What Are Star Words?

The use of star words, also called “star gifts,” is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year that has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade now. Typically, at some point during a normal Epiphany service, individuals are invited to draw a word from a basket or off the Table, and to use that word as a guiding word throughout the year. This year, Pastor Annie has drawn them for you and has sent them your way either via email or USPS! Participants are encouraged to trust the word they have drawn, and not to replace the word. You are encouraged to place your star word somewhere you will see it regularly throughout the year to allow consistent reflection on how God has moved through, around, or in connection to this word. It serves as your centering word for the year. We’ll check in throughout the year on what your word is revealing to you, and a year from now we’ll discover all the ways God revealed Godself to you through this word!

If you did not receive a STAR WORD and would like one, email Pastor Annie and she’ll get you one! hopelutheranpastor.rf@gmail.com

There Are Several Theological Statements Being Made in this Tradition:

1. 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.

2. We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.

3. We trust that it is often easy to miss God in our daily midst. Having an intention word to consider both in present days, as well as to reflect on at the end of the year, allows for us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before. This is the greatest gift.

4. We know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. We believe that star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.

5. By not looking or sorting through the star words at their selection, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control.

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CONFIRMATION SEEDS OF FAITH ZOOM CLASS: BAPTISM!

WEDNESDAY, JAN 13, 6:30-7:15PM

All youth currently engaged in our Seeds of Faith Confirmation ministry are invited to attend this 45 minute Zoom Class on Wednesday, Jan. 13 at 6:30PM. This class will help meet 1 of 2 required experiences for “Baptism Connection” (see page 15 in your notebook). **It is a NEW offering!** We’ll spend some time learning and some time just checking in with one another!

FAITH ADVENTURE ZOOM ACTIVITY!
SUNDAY, JAN. 31 10:45AM

All pre-k through 5th grade children (& families) are invited to a day of winter Faith Adventure fun Sunday, Jan. 31 @ 10:45! Camryn Shea and Pastor Annie will lead a short devo and craft activity as well as a chance to just see each other's smiling faces!!! Be on the look-out the week prior for a FA Bag delivery of supplies you’ll need!

Coffee & Faithful Conversation

Join Pastor Annie and others every Tuesday morning at 11AM for “Coffee & Faithful Conversation.” This time has proved to be incredibly fruitful as many of us remain socially distanced from others. We spend time each week checking in on one another and engaging a series of faith-based questions/topics as we grow in faith together!

So brew your own cup and join us via Zoom meeting:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/424556345?pwd=TllRQTlKY1dDdkkvK3RHdnl6a0Jjdz09

Meeting ID: 884 1915 5061

Passcode:593674

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HOPE LUTHERAN
Hope Journeys Forward

Asylum Family Sunday-Sunday, January 17th

Hope Mission Ministry Team is inviting Hope members to give generously in support of our Asylum Family from Guatemala, Heidi and her four children, and other future refugee needs the third Sunday of each month. Hope members have this opportunity and invitation to join with other River Falls congregations in this special offering. Your gift can be given directly to Hope Lutheran, designated for the Ecumenical Asylum Committee, which will then be forwarded to the families through the committee. Thank you for your support!

WORSHIP VOLUNTEERS!

If you are interested in helping to make our Sunday LIVESTREAM worship possible, we'd love to incorporate your gifts! Pastor Annie is still looking for readers/prayer leaders for the next 4 weeks and we are always open to others willing to learn the A/V technology! Check out THIS GOOGLE DOC to sign-up to help!

Wrap Up of HOPE @ Home Ornament Exchange!

Thank you to everyone who brought in their beautiful ornaments from home for us to share with our larger faith community. It was such a blessing to have a piece of your home in our church home and to hear the wonderful stories connected to these bits of your holiday tradition.

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HOPE LUTHERAN
Hope Journeys Forward

Please lift up the following people in prayer

Roger Hammer (Friend of Bill Montgomery)
James Glaubitz
Candy Simpson (Cameron Shea's aunt)
Julie Brill (Ryan's mother)
Barb Grubba (friend of Naomi & Jerry Brandt)
Lee Hill (friend of Naomi & Jerry Brandt)
Tim Brill (Ryan's Father)
Duane Hall (friend of the Brohaughs)
Harold Anderson (Karen Brohaugh's uncle)
Judy Karshbaum
Becky Anderson (Jan Malaney's sister)
Barbara McIntosh (Joe McIntosh's mother)
Susan Traynor (Friend of Kathy Scott)
Carol Moenke
Gary Siebold
Oak Reile (Nancy Sailer's Cousin)
David Hendrickson
Kelly Brenna Luckey (friend of Lisa Ziebarth)
Jim and Ila June Pratt
Bud Ziebarth (Mark's father)
Jerry Brandt
Lisa Sigfrids (relative of the Boocks)
Jon Boyce
Jay and Jeri Jorgenson (friends of the Bohnerts)
Marilyn & Fred Schmidt (Darcy Boock's sister-in-law)
Nichole Bates (friend of Lizzy Rodewald)
Steve & Beth Pugh (friends of Karen & Jeff Rodewald)
Rod Cina (son of Mary Solum)

This Week at HOPE January 6, 2021

HOPE LUTHERAN
Hope Journeys Forward

Gorden Hedahl	2-Jan
Kenna Frisch	6-Jan
Katherine (Klacan) Schilling	11-Jan
Camryn Shea	11-Jan
Kaye Anderson	12-Jan
Mary Thompson	13-Jan
Jan Malaney	15-Jan
Connie Juaire	16-Jan
Samantha Brill	18-Jan
Owen Bailey	18-Jan
Sydney Wolfe	19-Jan
Sarah Parks	20-Jan
Lexy Getschel	21-Jan
Mason Shea	21-Jan
Makayla Ziebarth	23-Jan
Andrew Parks	24-Jan
Amanda Ziebarth	28-Jan
Jeremy Wolfe	31-Jan

Gregg Heinselman
Mark Bondhus
Wendy Tokheim
Lisa Ryland
Karen Rodewald
Greta Wunrow

This Week at HOPE January 6, 2021

HOPE LUTHERAN
Hope Journeys Forward

Holy Communion in the Time of Pandemic

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes…
For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body
eats and drinks judgment on himself…
So then, my brothers when you come together to eat, wait for one another"
1 Corinthians 11:26, 29,33

As we make the difficult, but faithful choice to worship from home in care of our neighbor at this time, we acknowledge that this time is mostly unprecedented. There is no scripture that specifically guides us on how to celebrate the Eucharist during a pandemic! So we lean on a few things to faithfully guide us: what scripture *does* say, how Christian history, our theology, and those who have navigated similar situations in the past can inform us, and where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

For the last few months I have spent time in prayerful consideration and study about how best to move forward with our celebration of Eucharist in the midst of a pandemic. I have listened to the guidance of our synodical and national leadership and wrestled with my own theology of the sacraments. As Lutherans, we confess that it is necessary to be gathered together as the body of Christ to celebrate this Holy Meal. In my ordination vows as a minister of word and sacrament, I promised to nourish God's people with the word and sacraments and to hold the celebration of our sacraments "in good order." In the Lutheran church we have two sacraments: Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. These are always celebrated in the context of our Christian community, except for in the case of an extraordinary circumstance, such as a hospitalization or other crisis. **It is within *this* framework of understanding that I feel we can faithfully move to the celebration of in-home communion while we gather for worship until further notice. This means there will no longer be drive-thru communion during cold months.**

This is absolutely an extraordinary circumstance, and as we enter our ninth month of pandemic living, we are called to make some extraordinary adaptations. As we do so, we trust that Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, is faithfully present with us across time and space to unite us from our many tables into one body with Him. We trust that God welcomes and affirms any attempt of ours to gather in Christ's name to worship and glorify our creator and redeemer. We trust that God IS present, through the work of the Holy Spirit, in our online spaces. Christ *does* join us as we livestream on YouTube or share in holy conversation via Zoom, or learn together via webinars. That is just as equally holy space, as our physical sanctuary. And we also acknowledge this is an extraordinary way to celebrate the Eucharist in an extraordinary time, **so in faithful hope, we commit to our return to one table together when it is safe to do so, marking that we are *not* normally called to celebrate communion, apart.**

PASTOR ANNIE INVITES YOU TO:

1. Make preparations for the celebration of Holy Communion from your at-home worship space. *This means, not waiting until Sunday morning, but engaging in a spiritual practice of giving this thought ahead of time*. If you need to purchase something, please do.
2. Please have *actual* bread or crackers ready.
3. Please have *actual* wine or fruit juice ready.
4. Please remember this is a holy meal, so we eat of the bread and drink of the cup in reverence, remembering the night in which he was betrayed…
5. At the appropriate time in the livestreamed worship, lift up the elements with Pastor Annie during the celebration of the Lord's Supper. If gathered with others, serve one another the bread and wine. If gathered solo, know that your Christian community celebrates this meal with you in Spirit.
6. If you still prefer an in-home communion visit from your pastor, I am happy to do so (distanced and masked). Do not hesitate to make this request!

Now, come to the banquet, for all is now ready!