

# Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church-E.L.C.A.



The feast of Epiphany ("manifestation") concludes the Christmas season with a celebration of God's glory revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. In Isaiah and Ephesians, that glory is proclaimed for all nations and people. Like the light of the star that guided the magi to Jesus, the light of Christ reveals who we are: children of God who are claimed and washed in the waters of baptism. We are sent out to be beacons of the light of Christ, sharing the good news of God's love to all people.

**Epiphany Sunday**  
**Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

## Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church—E.L.C.A.

Ministers:

*You, All Members of G.A.*

Pastor:

**Jaime Decker**

Prelude Music

Welcome/Announcements

### Gathering

#### Call to Worship

L: God of the weary traveler,

**ALL: our feet are dusty from the roads we've traveled this past week, this past year,  
every day of our lives.**

L: We've followed your star here, looking for a glimmer of hope.

**ALL: And now, after a long journey, we set our baggage down. We have arrived.  
We're here, and we're on holy ground.**

L: You may not show up where we expect you,

**ALL: but we trust that you are here nevertheless. Be known to us in the hope of the star, the peace of a  
baby snuggled in the manger, the joy of arrival, and Love that could not stay away. We are here. You  
are here. And we are so very grateful. Amen.**

#### Call to Confession

L: One of my favorite things about the Magi is that they go looking for God. Actively and consistently, day by day, they follow the star until it guides them to Jesus. I wish I was more like that, but I admit, I tend to follow God with part of my heart. I tend to get distracted and lost, taking exit ramps off the road, following whatever new shiny sign is present. It's part of being human. In the prayer of confession, we acknowledge that more often than we'd like to admit, we find ourselves following the wrong star. Fortunately for us, God is the map maker, and God's map is measured in grace, so we have nothing to fear. Let us pray together. Let us seek God together. Join me in the prayer of confession:

#### Prayer of Confession

L: God of starlight,

**ALL: we know that faith isn't a vending machine. Good news can't be bought or manufactured. It does not  
arrive with a push of a button. Instead, in this noisy world, we have to look for you in our midst. We have to  
walk toward you, just as the Magi did. We have to believe that love really can change the world. We have to  
seek the stars beyond the city lights. Forgive us for forgetting that. Forgive us for seeking you with only part  
of our hearts. We long to be more like the Magi; may we walk your way every single day. Amen.**

#### Words of Forgiveness

L: Friends, I have nothing but good news. Since the very first day, God has taken the pieces of our hearts that we have offered up and has said, "I can work with that." Even in our failings, God has washed us with words of grace, belonging, and love. No matter what star you've followed, no matter how far you've walked, no matter how lost you got—you belong to God. God loves you. God forgives you. God claims you. End of story. Thanks be to God! Amen.

#### \*Gathering Hymn

*The First Noel*

ELW #300 (Verse 1)

### \*Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C: And also with you.**

### \*Prayer For Illumination

L: God of starlight,

**ALL: every part of us is trying to seek you: our bodies that carried us into this space, our heads bowed in prayer, our hearts that keep whispering, "There is more than just this." We are seeking you. Like a dog looking for its owner, who will search the whole house—under beds, behind doors, in every corner of every room until their person is found—we are turning over every rock and leaf looking for fingerprints that belong to you. So meet us halfway. Find us in the maze. Quiet the rest of the world. Open the door to us with rich laughter and say, "Come on in!" We know you're near, so know that it's you we seek. Find us in these words. Gratefully we pray, amen.**

## Word

### Reading

**Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14**

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the king's son;

**that he may rule your people righteously and the poor with justice;**

that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

**Let him defend the needy among the people, rescue the poor, and crush the oppressor.**

May he live as long as the sun and moon endure, from one generation to another.

**Let him come down like rain upon the mown field, like showers that water the earth.**

In his time may the righteous flourish; and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

**May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles pay tribute, and the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts.**

May all kings bow down before him, and all the nations do him service.

**For the king delivers the poor who cry out in distress, the oppressed, and those who have no helper.**

He has compassion on the lowly and poor, and preserves the lives of the needy.

**From oppression and violence he redeems their lives, and precious is their blood in his sight.**

R: The Word of the Lord    **C: Thanks be to God**

### Gospel Acclamation

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### Gospel Reading

**Matthew 2:1-12**

P: The Holy Gospel according to \_\_\_\_\_    **C: Glory to you, O Lord.**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup>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." <sup>3</sup>When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup>They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup>'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.'" <sup>7</sup>Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>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." <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup>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. <sup>12</sup>And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

P: The Gospel of our Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.**

### Message

### Hymn of the Day

*The First Noel*

ELW #300 (Verse 2&3)

### Affirmation of Faith

**ALL: We believe that faith is active, found on long walks, and in long talks, in future days, and down memory lane. We believe that those who seek will find, although it may not be what they expected. We believe that God finds us first. We believe that God drops breadcrumbs along our way in the shape of people, invitations, and even starlight. We believe that being a seeker— of God, of justice, of community— is a holy thing. So we strive to live with an open spirit, with soft hearts, and with room to grow. May it be so. This we believe. Amen.**

### Prayer of the People

### Offering

### Offering Hymn

*What Child Is This*

ELW #296

### Offering Prayer

L: Holy God, **ALL: We bring our gifts before you this morning. We have no gold, no frankincense, no myrrh—but what we have we give to you.**

L: Like foreign dignitaries paying homage to a king, **ALL: we place these offerings before you to benefit your kingdom because we know your reign is not contained to the heavens. You broke into our weary world and there is still so much joy to bring.**

L: Use our gifts of money to meet the needs of our community both inside and beyond these walls.

**ALL: May the gold we bring make a tangible difference in the lives of your people.**

L: Bless our gifts of worship. **ALL: May our offerings of incense transform our hearts and stoke righteous fire within us, spurring us to action.**

L: Multiply our gifts of care for one another **ALL: as we anoint the sick, sit with the lonely, and listen to voices that are silenced.**

L: Incarnate God, you broke into our weary world and there is still so much joy to bring.

**ALL: May it be so, amen.**

## **Meal**

### GREAT PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING – EPIPHANY

L: God of today, tomorrow, and yesterday, As we begin this new year, we once again find ourselves looking for you. We long for the clarity of a star in the sky, or a voice in the clouds declaring your

presence in our lives.

**ALL: So today we ask that you would make yourself known to us. Do what only you can do. Reach into our spirits to give us a boost of confidence that love is real and we are not alone. Remind us that we are beloved in your eyes.**

L: We know we're asking a lot for a group that brings very little.

**ALL: We don't have gold or Frankincense or Myrrh. We haven't thrown off our shoes to honor your holy ground. We haven't been baptized in the Jordan river. We haven't spent the last several days traveling here by camel. We're no Magi, Moses, or Messiah, but we're yours.**

L: Instead, we bring ourselves to this Table—to your Table—in hopes of catching a glimpse of you.

**ALL: Speak to us in this bread. Speak to us in the cup. Speak to us through these star words. Speak to us as you spoke through the clouds at Jesus's baptism, so that these star words may be a tool that helps us look for you in the coming year. Holy God, you call us beloved. You are with us in our joy. You are with us in our sorrow. Surely, even as we pray, you are with us here as well.**

L: So with grateful hearts, we remember the promise of our Lord Jesus, who, in the night in which he was betrayed, took bread and gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying

**ALL: "Take and eat, this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."**

L: And again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying,

**ALL: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you, and for all people, for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."**

L: As we tell your story of good news, let us once again speak the prayer your son taught us to pray, saying:

**\*Lord's Prayer**

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**\*Invitation to Communion**

P: Glory to God in the highest! Come to the table of peace.

**\*Lamb of God**

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Communion Distribution (All Are Welcome to Receive Communion Here at GA Church)

**\*Post Communion Blessing**

**\* Post Communion Prayer**

P: God of open horizons and open roads, like the Magi so many years ago, we are here, seeking you. Step by step, we have wandered into this space with the hope of feeling you in our midst. Step by step, you have seen us, claimed us, and called us beloved. Today we have drawn star words. For some, these words are full of meaning, challenge, and invitation already. For others, these words are a blank canvas—inviting you into our lives. So as a new year dawns, we pray that just as you have spoken to the generations before us, you would speak to us again. Allow us to use these star words as a tool that might help us hear you more clearly. May they guide us, as the star guided the Magi. And in a year, may we find

ourselves here, together again, with mouths full of praise for the ways in which you have been present with us. Together we pray, with joy in our hearts.

**C: Amen.**

## Sending

### \*Benediction

Family of faith, as you leave this place, you go into a weary world— so speak tenderly. Do the good that is yours to do. Choose connection. Hold onto hope. And remember that Christ took on flesh for you. You are God’s beloved. So go rejoicing. The world needs it. Amen.

### \*Sending Hymn

*The First Noel*

ELW #300 (Verse 4&5)

### \*Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Keep awake.

**C: Share the Good News of God’s Word and serve the community and the world. Thanks be to God.**

\*Postlude

Bulletin Donated:

Mission Statement of Gustaf Lutheran Church (Adopted in 2022)

**To share the Good News of God’s Word and to serve the community and the world.**

*Matthew 22:39* ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

*Matthew 28:19* Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

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We celebrate weekly Holy Communion. We welcome all who believe in the Risen Christ and who find in the sacrament our Lord’s real presence for the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life. If you receive communion in your home congregation, you are invited to receive it here at G.A. Red wine and white grape juice will be offered to you in Christ’s name. You may choose your preference. If you are unable to receive wheat bread, or wine, be sure that in a single element you receive the Presence and all the gifts of the sacrament.

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*Words for Worship for Advent—Baptism of the Lord Sunday Written by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed*

*Liturgy adapted from a prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org*

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