

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



We Keep Seeking: The Magi were seekers. They sought wisdom, they sought the divine, they sought fortunes to tell the future. Their seeking leads them to Jesus, the newborn king of another culture and religion. And yet, their seeking is also what protects them from Herod's deception and harm. After the Magi go home by another way, Joseph is visited again by an angel in his dream. This time, the angel brings a warning, and like before, Joseph heeds the message. Fleeing from Herod's massacre, Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus seek refuge in Egypt; they remain there, living as immigrants, until Herod dies. Like the Magi, may we seek the divine and be willing to journey closer to God. Like the Holy Family, may we seek safety for all families who are under threat. This new year and every year to come, let us keep seeking – wisdom, justice, and a better world.

## Epiphany Sunday Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church—E.L.C.A.

Ministers:  
Pastor:

*You, All Members of G.A.*  
Jaime Decker

## Gathering

### Call to Worship

L: Calling all seekers, all dreamers, all believers...Calling all glass-half-full optimists and lighthouse keepers...Calling all star-chasers and bedtime prayer speakers...Bring your questions, your hope, your faith and your fear into this space. **C: God is here.**

### Call to Confession

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

**C: God of starlight, 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

*Always Seeking*

*(Verse 1) – Blue Sheet*

### \*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, every part of us is trying to seek you:

**C: 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

### First Reading

**Ephesians 3:1-12**

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—<sup>2</sup>for surely you have already heard of the commission of God’s grace that was given me for you, <sup>3</sup>and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, <sup>4</sup>a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. <sup>5</sup>In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: <sup>6</sup>that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>7</sup>Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup>Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup>and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup>so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup>This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup>in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

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

Gospel Acclamation

pg. 205

### Gospel Reading

**Matthew 2:1-15**

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, magi 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 in the east 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 magi<sup>[e]</sup> 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 in the east,<sup>[f]</sup> until it stopped over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup>When they saw that the star had stopped,<sup>[g]</sup> 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. <sup>13</sup>Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” <sup>14</sup>Then Joseph<sup>[h]</sup> got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt <sup>15</sup>and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

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

### Message

#### Hymn of the Day

*Always Seeking*

*(Verse 2&3) - Blue Sheet*

#### Affirmation of Faith

**C: 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.

### Prayers of the People

L: Holy God, we find you in the most surprising places—

**ALL: in summer thunderstorms, in freshly baked bread, in the smell of evergreen, in handwritten letters, and long-winding phone calls, in crowded tables, and a warm cup of coffee.**

L: You are all over the place. What good news! Some days it's easy to find you;

**ALL: like the Magi, we have a clear direction, so step by step we move closer to you. Other days, the clouds cover the stars and we lose our way. Regardless of the weather, we want to be a people who seek you.**

L: So when the way is clear, when your fingerprints are all over the place,

**ALL: help us to give thanks: for healthy bodies that can dance and move, for food on the table, for roofs over our heads, for the dreams of this community. Help our seeker hearts give thanks.**

L: And when the clouds roll in, and we lose our way, when the star is out of sight and we feel far from your reach,

**ALL: remind us that you are near: In food pantries and on street corners, in lonely apartments with dinner for one, in empty refrigerators, in bad dreams, in hospital rooms, in the bottom of an empty bottle, and in the bottom of our faith...**

**Remind us that you are near to Coleen, Roger, Lydia, Kim, Steve, and all who are sick and grieving.**

L: Remind us that you are near.

**ALL: Push the clouds back to reveal the stars. Call forth our seeker hearts so that day after day we might summon the strength to always be looking for you.**

L: God, you are all over the place.

**ALL: Keep our hearts brave, and keep them curious, so that like the Magi, we might be on the lookout for you. With hope in our hearts, we pray. Amen.**

### Offering

#### Offering Hymn

*Christ, Be Our Light (Vs 1,2,5)*

*ELW# 715*

#### Offering Prayer

L: God of abundance, receive and bless these gifts we have offered. Join our hearts with the song of the angels, and gather us at your table of celebration. Strengthen us to share with all the world the abundance of your grace upon grace, poured out in Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. **C: Amen.**

## **Meal**

### Holy Communion

\*Great Thanksgiving

Pg. 206

\*Holy, Holy, Holy

Pg. 207

\*Words of Institution Pg. 207

\*Lord's Prayer Pg. 208

**\*Invitation to Communion**

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

\*Lamb of God Pg. 208

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

\*Post Communion Blessing

**\* Post Communion Prayer**

P: God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **C: Amen.**

**Sending**

**\*Benediction**

As you leave this place, may you go knowing that from generation to generation, we have been claimed and loved. From generation to generation, God has been by our side. From generation to generation, we are not alone. The God of yesterday and the God of tomorrow knows you by name, loves you, and calls you forth, saying, "Go be the person you are called to be, love wildly, do justice, and come back soon." May it be so. Amen.

**\*Sending Hymn**

*Always Seeking*

*(Verse 4) - Blue Sheet*

**\*Dismissal**

P: Go in peace, with Christ beside you.

**C: To share the Good News of God's Word and to 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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