



Central Congregational United Church of Christ

EPIPHANY

January 4, 2026

Ministers / All of us

Pastor / **Rev. Gage Church**

Worship Leader / **Melanie Ralston**

Music Director and Accompanist / **Linda Smith**

Instrumentalist / **Tim Sharp**

Song Leaders / **Gayle Hassler and Janice Ayers**

Music for Gathering

*Prayer of Affirmation

We believe God's revelation comes to us in the quiet and the subtle,
from the margins and in the cries of nature.

God's revelation comes through dreams, the light of stars,
and the voices of those fearing for their lives.

We believe the message of God's revelation is always an urgent one,
calling for immediate trust and radical care.

It continually points toward justice,
asking us to defy and resist the harmful forces around us.

We believe, like Joseph, who protected his family,
that God's revelation shines on the path of protection,
asking us to be sheltering arms for the vulnerable.

We believe, like the magi, who listened to the voice of the Spirit rather than empire,
God's revelation calls us to courageous faith and embodied resistance.

We believe, like a single star shining in the sky,
God's revelation empowers us to a purity of heart,
where we have clarity on what we are to do.

So we commit ourselves to small acts of courage as holy epiphanies,
trusting that with each one, God's revelation will spread and shine. Amen.

** indicates to rise in body or spirit.*

***Bold** indicates to speak or sing in unison.*

*Congregational Hymn

“Arise, Your Light Is Come”

Arise, your light is come!

The Spirit’s call obey.

Show forth the glory of your God,
which shines on you today!

Arise, your light is come!

Fling wide the prison door.

Proclaim the captive’s liberty,
good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come!

All you in sorrow born,
bind up the broken-hearted ones
and comfort those who mourn.

Greetings & Announcements

Call to Worship

We gather together in this place:
we who dare to dream God’s dream.

We listen with Joseph,
guided by faith and dreams.

In fear or in flight,

God is our refuge.

By the light of a star,
God guides us on the way.

Prayer of Unburdening

God of refuge, we are captive to the political and economic realities
that cause neighbors to live in uncertainty and fear.

We are slow to show hospitality to the immigrant
and reluctant to risk our privilege for the sake of advocacy and generosity.
Grant us humility and courage. Amen.

Assurance of God's Love

Passing the Peace

The Reading

Matthew 2:1-15

After Jesus' birth — which happened in Bethlehem of Judea, during the reign of Herod — astrologers from the East arrived in Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the newborn ruler of the Jews? We observed his star at its rising and have come to pay homage.” At this news, Herod became greatly disturbed, as did all of Jerusalem. Summoning all the chief priests and religious scholars of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born.

“In Bethlehem of Judea,” they informed him. “Here is what the prophet has written:

‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,
are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,
since from you will come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star's appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them, “Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have found him, report back to me — so that I may go and offer homage, too.”

After their audience with the ruler, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at seeing the star and, upon entering the house, found the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and paid homage. Then they opened their coffers and presented the child with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

They were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they went back to their own country by another route.

After the astrologers had left, the angel of God suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph with the command, “Get up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you otherwise. Herod is searching for the child to destroy him.”

Special Music

“Brethren, We Have Met to Worship”

Tim Sharp

Message

“Going Home Another Way”

Rev. Gage Church

*Congregational Hymn

“What Child Is This”

What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary’s lap is sleeping,
whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste your praise to bring, the babe, the son of Mary!

Why lies he in such mean estate, where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here the silent word is pleading.
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste your praise to bring, the babe, the son of Mary!

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh, come, peasant, king to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.
This, this is Christ the King, whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste your praise to bring, the babe, the son of Mary!

Joys and Concerns

We respond with “Lord, hear our prayer.”

Time of Silence

Pastoral Prayer

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The Prayer of Jesus

Please pray any version you wish. Here is one version:

Our Creator, who is in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your Kin-dom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil,
for yours is the Kin-dom, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Offering

God is good! All the time!
All the time! God is good!
Let us share the goodness of our God.

*Doxology

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ and Spirit, One. Amen.

*Prayer of Dedication

Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you
because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger,
something greater than any system this world offers us.
Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and joy. Amen.

Holy Communion

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Creator of all good things,
you have fed us with the bread of life and cup of blessing,
small in their presentation, yet magnificent in our holy imagination.
May the hope, peace, joy and love of your table
accompany us on our journeys from here. Amen.

***Closing Hymn**

“Go Tell It on the Mountain”

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

While shepherds kept their watching o’er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light.
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior’s birth.
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

Down in a lowly manger the humble Christ was born,
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn.
Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills, and everywhere;
go, tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.

***Benediction**

Music for Sending

“Amen”

SAVE THE DATES

Spirited Adult Discussion @ 9 a.m. every Sunday
Meditation @ 5 p.m. every Monday

Game Night / Jan. 9 @ 6 p.m.
Church Council / Jan. 11 after worship
Annual Financial Meeting / Jan. 25 after worship
Celebration Service with First Congregational / Feb. 1 @ 10:30 a.m.
Annual Soup Lunch / Feb. 8 after worship
Chocolate Sale / Feb. 14 @ tbd

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