

ARISE! SHINE! Feast of the Epiphany January 2, 2022

“I’m Sorry, Please forgive me, Thank you, I Love You”...

“Arise, shine; for your light has come!

“And having been warned in a dream... they left...by another road.”

On the First Sunday of Advent, our prayer as the candle was lit invoked the star of wonder, the star of divine wisdom, and we have followed that wisdom together as we journeyed through Advent, into Christmas, and into our New Year’s Eve Burning Bowl service on Friday night. And now today, that wisdom asks us to Arise and shine our light. That wisdom calls us into our own epiphany moments of clarity and illumination, of listening.

That wisdom helps us recognize the need for forgiveness, and self-forgiveness. For reconciliation, gratefulness and compassion as we step into a new year. That wisdom helps us rest in the truth that all of life, love, spirit, and being are made of Joy AND Sorrow. Promise AND pain. As we joyfully discover the Christ everywhere, we can rest in this moment. This present. This path. Just as it is. Even when the path is another road altogether than what we expected when we set out.

There is something about that clean new calendar that invites us to consider the possibilities of renewal. The power of setting *intentions* vs New Year’s resolutions is the underpinning of next week’s white stone service. This morning, as we turn the page on all that we’ve released, and recognize all the wisdom-- some of it hard earned-- that we’ve gained from this past year, may the journey of the Magi offer us a map for our own journey.

So let’s come into a centering breath practice and I invite us to set a shared intention... to remain open to the path before us... to remain open to the call to lay our gifts at the manger... to Arise and shine our light...

and then as you wish, notice if a personal intention arises for you...

Taking a deep breath in...and out... come into this moment, into this presence...into this wisdom...

Breathe in...all this joy, just as it is... breathe out... all this sorrow...just as it is...

Breathe in, all this promise... just as it is... breathe out... all this pain, just as it is...

I'm sorry...please forgive me...

Breathe in... arrive at this very life, just as it is... breathe out... come into this being, just as it is...

Breathing in... come into the fullness of Spirit ... breathing out...come into the fullness of Love...

I'm grateful...I love you...

On Christmas eve we heard in the gospel of Matthew, the story of the magi following the star:

2:9 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.

2:10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

2:11 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.

2:12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Like the wise ones...we journey into the unknown.... at times overwhelmed with joy...other times overwhelmed.... and stunned as the road we're on becomes another road...

into the stillness now, bring to your mind and heart... a recognition, a knowing of where you are on your journey, at this very moment... or perhaps recall a time of overwhelming joy... or a time when the road before you felt blocked and full of warning...

From the Daily Word: *I joyfully discover the Christ everywhere.*

“Epiphany celebrates the day wise seekers... arrived at Bethlehem and offered their gifts to the newborn Jesus. Today I receive these gifts anew when I center my heart... on the presence and power of God... I rest in the awareness of the Christ within... and feel God's light upon me... I affirm: *I arise, shine and know all is truly well.*

Breathing in... and out...center your heart...come into the awareness of the Christ within...breathe in awareness...breathe out light...witness your own seeking...see how you have followed the star of Divine wisdom...

Breathing in...and out... know that YOU are the precious gift of gold and frankincense and myrrh...witness the gift that you are...not despite your weaknesses, and wanderings... but arising from those tender places that feel like failure...but are sweet with the honey of Oneness, of forgiveness...witness the fullness of your being...and lay your gift at the feet of the indwelling Christ...

Arise, shine *from* these tender places...

Last night I dreamt
that I had a beehive
here inside my heart
and the golden bees
 were making white combs
and sweet honey
from all my old failures... Antonio Machado, translated by Robert Bly

And, from the poem **December 31** by Rosemerry Wathola Trommer

I know it's just another square
on the calendar,...
but[it] feels like a good time
to forgive myself—for thinking

I know anything. For wishing for life
to be any different than it is. For
blaming anyone or anything.
For every time I have turned away
from helping someone else...
the right time to touch the darkness
... to nourish... the one great heart
that beats in us all and trust
that our kindness matters always—

I'm sorry...please forgive me...thank you...I love you

I'm sorry for when the log in my own eye made me see only the splinter in yours...
I'm sorry for the times I forgot the call to Arise and BE Light and Love...I'm sorry for the
moments I failed to hold your heart gently...the moments I failed to hold MY heart
gently

Please forgive me... for building a case against you instead of listening deeply... forgive
me for turning away... forgive me and reconcile our hearts...please forgive me, my own
heart...

Thank you...I am grateful for all of it... the joy and sorrow, the promise and pain... thank
you wound for being the place where the light enters...thank you sweet spirit for using
all of me...thank you Beloved for this very life, just as it is...

I love you...I love you in friendship...I love you in compassion...I love you in justice and
mercy...I love you in the one great heart that beats in all of us...hear the voice of the
Beloved whispering within...I love you...

The Wise Ones answered the call-- to follow the star into the unknown, into the
unexpected, to the God of surprises. With them, we journey into the blessing of meeting
the God-within who receives our gifts with unending love. Our journey into the Season
of Light, brought us into the Advent gifts of Hope and Faith, Peace, Love and Joy.

We journeyed to Bethlehem with Joseph and Mary, only to remember that Bethlehem is
right here, right now. We've heard the call to say YES, like Mary, Yes, Here I am, though

I don't yet know the way. We heard the call to love, like Joseph, beyond what our hearts understand, beyond what is easy.

We rejoiced with angels and shepherds and magi, and knelt in love, offering ourselves at the manger. We have released the gripping weight of our burdens-- rejoicing in the gift of walking together in the flow of Christ-love in us. And now, as Howard Thurman reminds us, the *work* of Christmas begins anew:

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

Our Epiphany moments call us to the work, to the promise, to the mystery of the Christmas story-- and into the vision, mission and Oneness we stated earlier, and that we state each Sunday. A world transformed by awakening, a world in which we recognize there is no separation from Spirit, or each other, no separation from the power and presence of the all loving Goodness of God. And we say yes to embracing the divine in ALL through our sacred service.

It is so simple! What a simple, clear message unites us! But it isn't easy...and so once again, I come to these twin paths: I MUST heed the inner call to find and follow MY sacred purpose. I must listen, in the stillness to hear the voice of God-within whispering, shouting, singing, aching with love, compassion, forgiveness. And I MUST journey with

other wise ones-- YOU-- or I will lose my way. So in the fullness of all we've met on the journey so far, here is one final poem on this new January morning.

The Call by Richard Wehrman

It's not the day on the
calendar that makes the
New Year new, it's when
the old year dies that the new
year gets born. It's when the
ache in your heart breaks
open, when new love makes
every cell in your body
align. It's when your baby
is born, it's when your
father and mother die. It's
when the new Earth is
discovered and it's the
ground you're standing on.
The old year is all that is
broken, the ash left from all
those other fires you made;
the new year kindles from
your own spark, catches flame
and consumes all within

that is old, withered and dry.

The New Year breaks out

when the eye sees anew,

when the heart breathes open

locked rooms, when your

dead branches burst into

blossom, when the Call comes

with no doubt that it's

calling to you.

...when the// ache in your heart breaks// open,

when new love makes// every cell in your body//align...

when flame kindles from your own spark...when the eye sees anew...

when the heart *breathes* open...

when the Call comes//with no doubt that it's//calling to you.

Let us open our hearts-- in forgiveness, in gratitude, in compassion-- to hear the call, to see the path, to welcome in once more the Christ at home in us, at home in all of creation. May our time together bless us with renewed commitment to our own sense of sacred purpose. May we strengthen and support each other as we journey into the hope of a new year. May we feel our grief cushioned by the loving compassion of being together in community. Open us to the gift of sweet honey to be found in every wound, in every loss, in every joy and promise. May our lives bear witness to Your love at work in us, and in the world, always and in all ways.
May it be so. And so it is. Amen."