

We have seen his star in the east,  
and come to worship...



*Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church  
Epiphany Sunday*

**Lake Toxaway United Methodist Church  
Community Worship and Communion Service  
January 4, 2026**



*We have the closed hearing loop system.  
You may be able to turn your hearing device to the "T" setting.*

***To allow all worshippers to reflect and prepare for the service, please observe silence during the prelude.***

***Epiphany Sunday***

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**RINGING OF THE BELL**

**PRELUDE**      Fugue in G Minor      J. S. Bach

**CALL TO WORSHIP** (*Please respond with words in bold*)

We gather wondering, 'Where will we find the Babe born in Bethlehem?'

**We will find the Babe in the innocence of children,  
in the wisdom of grandparents, in all those struggling to  
live with grace and faithfulness in trying circumstances.**  
We gather asking, 'where will we find the Child of Christmas?'  
**We will find the Child where the needy are gifted with  
hope, where the oppressed are set free.**

We gather wanting to know, 'where will we find the Christ who has come for us?'

**We will find Christ where fear is overwhelmed by grace,  
where hatred is overwhelmed by love,  
where all people are overwhelmed by joy.  
Let us come and worship Christ, the newborn king.**

**HYMN #254      We Three Kings**

## **A PRAYER FOR EPIPHANY**

**God of wonder, God of light, we praise and adore you for breaking into the darkness of this world with the glorious light of your presence, a light which made your love for the world visible in the form of a babe born in Bethlehem; a light which guided those gift-bearing travelers from afar to find and worship the Christ-child; a light which leads us to you, now revealed in Jesus Christ.**

**We pray that you will accept our worship for it arises from hearts and minds in awe over the enormity of your gift to us of pure love.**

**In Jesus' name we pray. Amen**

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS**

### **Isaiah 60:1-6 *Light has come to the darkness***

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. <sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. <sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn. <sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together; they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried in their nurses' arms. <sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you; the wealth of the nations shall come to you. <sup>6</sup> A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

### **Psalm 72:1-14 UMH 795 *A Prayer for Leadership***

*(Please respond with the words in bold.)*

### **Ephesians 3:1-12 *A gospel for all people***

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 in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

**Matthew 2:1-12 *The sign of the star***  
(Please stand as you are able.)

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 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, 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.

<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 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."

**L:** This is the word of the Lord for the people of Christ.

**P: Thanks be to God.**

### **PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*(Let us offer our silent confessions.)*

**Gracious God, we would like to see ourselves as those who saw the coming of the Christ Child, those who dropped all that they were doing and traveled to worship the coming of God's love into this world. We would like to be those who cared for God in infant vulnerability; who tickled and cuddled and comforted the growing child, that he might know love and safety. And yet, merciful God, we must recognize all the times we are more like Herod—when we, in our actions or in our inactions, find our own need for control more compelling than the needs of others for health and safety; when we cling to the security of our privilege, rather than standing up for the rights of the oppressed; when we are complicit in the harming of innocents for the sake of profit, or power, or because we fear to know, and to change, the injustices of this world. Loving God, we confess our sins against you and one another, and pray that you will fill us with your light, that we may live our lives as true disciples in your name, without counting the cost. In the name of Christ, the one who showed us the way, we pray. Amen.**

### **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

God's light is present in this world-- present in the star, and all that guides us to love. Present in the Christ child, born to lead us out of darkness. God's light is in the world, and the darkness did not overcome it. God's grace is in the world, and our missteps will not overcome it.

**We are loved; we are forgiven. Alleluia! Amen.**

## **HOMILY**

### **STATEMENT OF FAITH United Church of Canada UMH 883** *(Please stand as you are able)*

### **GLORIA PATRI #70**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**OFFERTORY**      Prelude in G Minor      J. S. Bach

### **OFFERING**

<https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches>

### **DOXOLOGY #95**

*(Please stand as you are able)*

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow.  
Praise Him, all creatures here below.  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host.  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

### **PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Radiant God, the light of your wisdom and love shines for all who seek you, guiding us not with force, but with grace. Like the magi, we come bearing gifts, not to earn your favor, but in response to the gift of Christ you've given us. Use these offerings to reflect your light into dark places, so that others might be drawn to your love, your justice, and your joy. Keep us faithful in our seeking, generous in our sharing, and willing to be led wherever your star shines next. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **HYMN # 221 In the Bleak Midwinter**

# THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

*(Please respond with words in bold)*

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

*The pastor gives thanks and remembers God's acts of salvation, concluding:*

"...and so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn":

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

*The pastor continues the thanksgiving. The institution of the Lord's Supper is recalled. The pastor concludes: "...and so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith":*

**Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

*The pastor invokes the present work of the Holy Spirit and then praises the Trinity, concluding: "...all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever." Amen.*

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

## **BREAKING THE BREAD GIVING THE BREAD AND CUP**

## COMMUNION PRAYER

**Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves to others, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **CLOSING HYMN #251 Go Tell It on the Mountain**

*(Please stand as you are able)*

# BENEDICTION

# POSTLUDE

## Improvisation

*(Please be seated)*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Sunday Morning Bible Study returns next Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup>.**

All are invited to join as the new year begins.

**The Prayer Ministry** meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month at 9:30 AM. Prayer requests may be mailed to [LTUMCPrayerRequests@gmail.com](mailto:LTUMCPrayerRequests@gmail.com).

**AA Meets Every Thursday Night** at 4:45 PM in the Dice Hall. To honor anonymity, please do not go to the Parish building from 4:00-6:00 PM.

### **Invitation to Become a Scripture Reader for Worship in 2026**

We are inviting anyone interested to become a scripture reader for worship in the new year. Contact Kim at [mldkjd@comporium.net](mailto:mldkjd@comporium.net) or text 828-553-0283 to express your interest. She will work with Marcus to plan a schedule that works for you. Thank you for sharing your gifts in this way.

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### **PRAYER CONCERNS OF THE COMMUNITY**

Katie Monkus, daughter of Stan & Bobbie Moore, as she continues treatment for inoperable tumors on her liver; Charlotte Gilmore

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### **STAFF & LAY VOLUNTEERS**

Pastor: Marcus Dodson: 828-553-0282, [marcus61dodson@gmail.com](mailto:marcus61dodson@gmail.com)

Organist: Bob Kintner: 828-329-2457

Lay Leaders: Paula Markert: 828-553-9434, Maria Buehler: 828-553-2128

Audio/Visual & Livestream: Joe Haraschak: 813-918-1916

Ushers: Mike Taylor, Maria Buehler

Liturgist: Amanda Stahl

Coffee Hour\*: Kim Dodson

\*Volunteers needed in 2026—see new chart in FH

*Liturgical selections adapted from umcdiscipleship.org resources and re-worship.com.*