GRACE COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Service of Worship January 4, 2026 9:30am
Epiphany Sunday

Gathering

The prelude, the first act of worship, sets the tone for what is to follow.
So, we invite you as worshipers to gather, to transition from your busy lives
into a sacred place of communion with God and with each other. – Dr. Kimo Smith, adapted

PRELUDE "The Three Kings" arr. John Henry Hopkins, Jr.
Linda Dover, organist

In worship following reflective music, we are requesting a response of quiet or a contemplative "amen." Any music that elicits a response of applause is to the glory of God.

WELCOME/ANNOUNCMENTS Rev. Karen Wright

*CALL TO WORSHIP

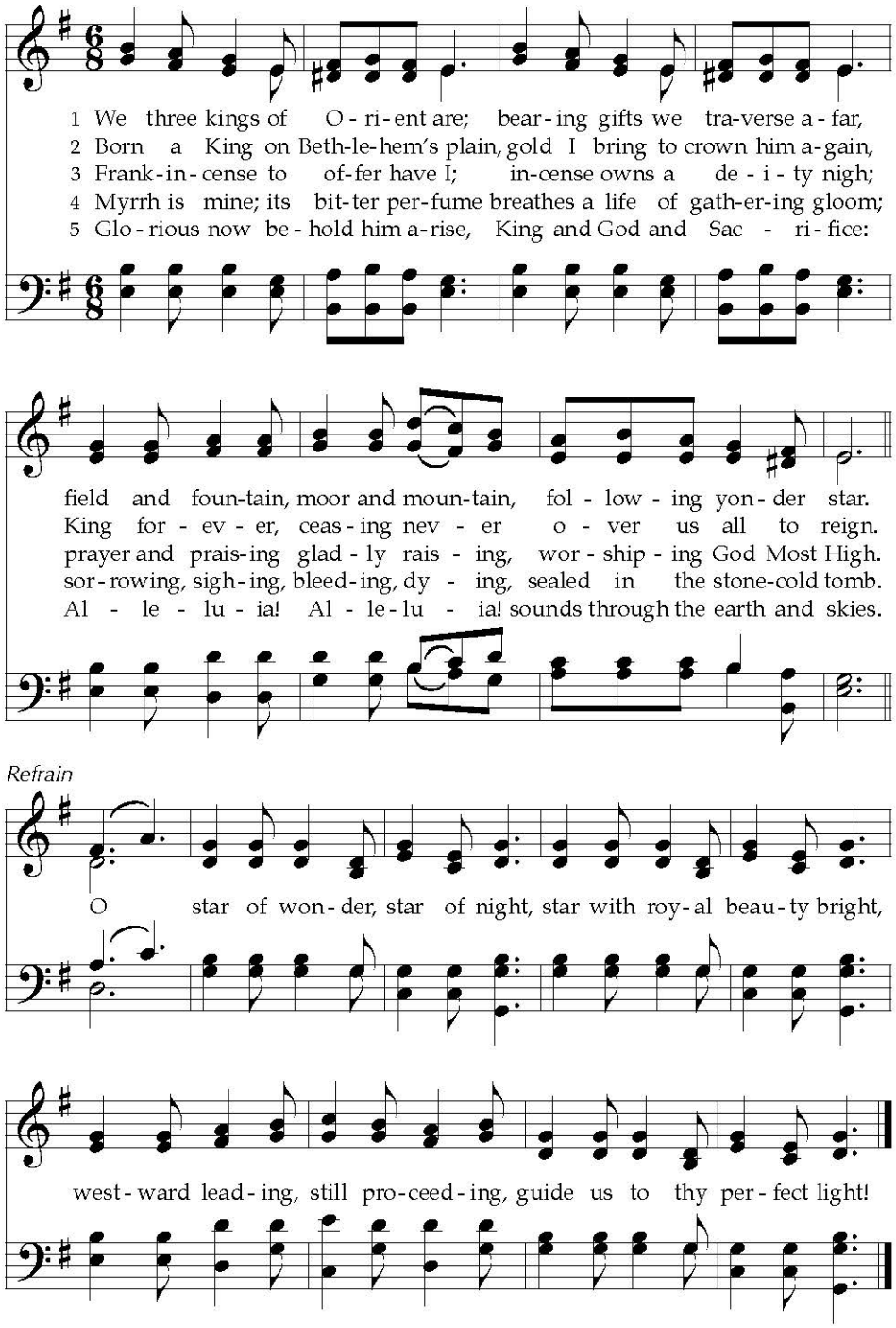
ONE: Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

ALL: Though darkness covers the earth and thick darkness the peoples, the Lord rises upon us, and God's glory appears among us. Nations shall come to the light, and kings to the brightness of God's dawn.

ONE: Lift up your eyes and look around — God is gathering the scattered, bringing hope from afar, and joy in abundance.

ALL: Come, let us worship the Lord, the light of the world.

JESUS CHRIST: BIRTH

151 We Three Kings of Orient Are

Although Christians had begun by the 2nd century to speak of these visitors from eastern countries (Matthew 2:1–12) as "kings," perhaps because of passages like Psalm 72:10 and Isaiah 60:3, it is more accurate to think of them as magi or astrologers, the scholars of their day.

TEXT and MUSIC: John Henry Hopkins Jr., 1857, alt.

KINGS OF ORIENT
8.8.8.6 with refrain

CALL TO CONFESSION Emily Nelson Dixon

The light of God has come into the world, but too often we prefer the familiarity of shadows. The Christ child is revealed, yet we resist the journey that leads to him. The Magi followed the star with courage and trust. Herod clung to fear and power. We know both of these paths within our own hearts. Trusting in God's mercy, let us confess our sin together.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION *(Unison)*

Holy and gracious God, you have set your light before us, yet we confess that we do not always follow. We are distracted by lesser lights, guided by fear instead of faith, and tempted to protect what we have rather than seek the new thing you are doing. Like Herod, we cling to control. Like the weary traveler, we grow tired of the journey.

We fail to recognize Christ when he appears in unexpected places and people. Forgive us, O God. Turn us again toward your light. Give us the courage to follow where you lead, the humility to kneel in worship, and the generosity to offer our lives in response. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Arise and shine, for the light has come. In Jesus Christ, God's grace has appeared, not to condemn the world, but to redeem it. The same light that led the Magi leads us home — out of fear, out of sin, and into new life.In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.

ALL: Thanks be to God.

A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN Star Sunday

(Children ages 4 through 1st grade may go to Awakening to Worship, our child-friendly worship time. Greeters at the back of the Sanctuary will go with children to Room 12 downstairs where parents may pick up their children following worship. Our Nursery welcomes young children and our ushers can assist families to the nursery located in the children's wing. Worship bags are available for children who stay in worship.)

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

ONE: May the peace of Christ be with you.

ALL: And also with you and all others!

*RESPONSE 583 "Gloria"

Equipping

SCRIPTURE LESSON Isaiah 60:1–6 (NRSVue) Keith Langabee

Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
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.
Nations shall come to your light
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
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.
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.
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.

SUNG PRAYER "In the Bleak Midwinter" Eric H. Thiman

Beth Lillian, soprano & Linda Dover, accompanist

SCRIPTURE LESSON Matthew 2:1–12 (NRSVue)

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem, 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.

"When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: "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.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 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."

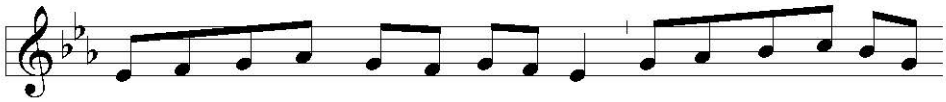
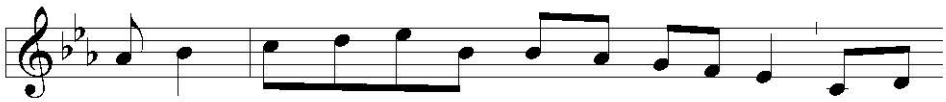
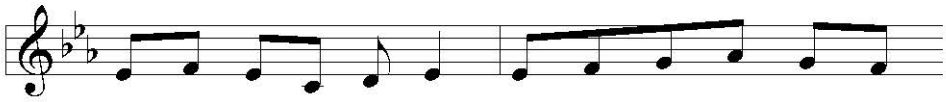
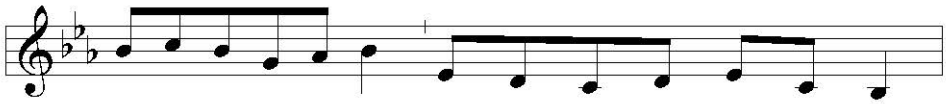
When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

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

Holy Wisdom, Holy Words

Thanks be to God!

SERMON	"The Other Way"	Rev. Karen Wright
*HYMN 108	"Of the Father's Love Begotten"	DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

Of the Father's Love Begotten 108

1 Of the Fa-ther's love be-got-ten, ere the worlds be-gan
2 By his Word was all cre-at-ed; he com-mand-ed; it
3 O, that birth for-ev-er bless-ed when the Vir-gin, full
4 This is he whom seers in old time chant-ed of with one
5 O ye heights of heaven, a-dore him. An-gel hosts, his prais-
6 Christ, to thee with God the Fa-ther, and, O Ho-ly Ghost,

to be, he is Al-pha and O-me-ga; he the
was done: heaven and earth and depths of o-cean, u-ni-
of grace, by the Ho-ly Ghost con-ceiv-ing, bore the
ac-cord, whom the voic-es of the proph-ets prom-ised
es sing. Powers, do-min-ions, bow be-fore him, and ex-
to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks-giv-ing and un-

source, the end-ing he, of the things that are, that
verse of three in one, all that sees the moon's soft
Sav-ior of our race, and the babe, the world's Re-
in their faith-ful word. Now he shines, the long-ex-
tol our God and King. Let no tongue on earth be
wea-ried prais-es be. Hon-or, glo-ry, and do-

have been, and that fu-ture years shall see,
shin-ing, all that breathes be-neath the sun,
deem-er, first re-vealed his sa-cred face,
pect-ed. Let cre-a-tion praise its Lord,
si-lent; ev-ery voice in con-cert ring,
min-ion, and e-ter-nal vic-to-ry,

(after stanza 6)

ev-er-more and ev-er-more! A-men.

Seldom has the wonder of the Incarnation been expressed so beautifully as in this text, created in the era when the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds were being codified and mindful of similar theological affirmations. It is set here to a plainchant melody from the late Middle Ages.

TEXT: Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 5th cent.; trans. John Mason Neale, 1854, alt., and Henry Williams Baker, 1859, alt.
MUSIC: Plainsong, Mode V; harm. C. Winfred Douglas, 1940
Music Harm. © 1943, 1961, 1985 Church Pension Fund

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM
8.7.8.7.8.7.7

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH from A Brief Statement of Faith

In life and in death we belong to God. Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, we trust in the one triune God, the Holy One of Israel, whom alone we worship and serve. With believers in every time and place, we rejoice that nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

A CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

OFFERING OF GIFTS AND MUSIC "Pastorale" Ignace Leybach (1817–1891)
Linda Dover, organist

THE SACRAMENT OF COMMUNION

Invitation to the Table

The Great Thanksgiving and The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy 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 thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Words of Institution

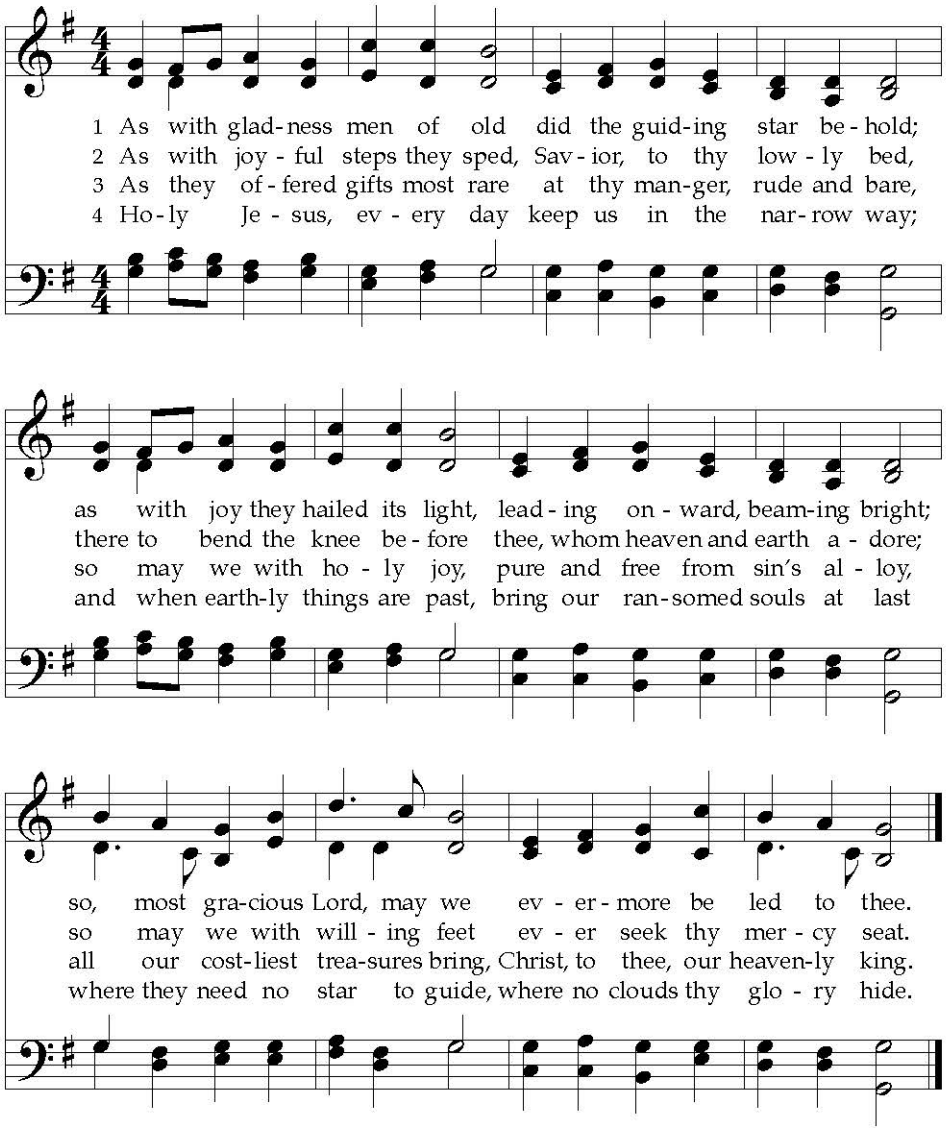
The Sharing of the Bread and Cup – *partake of the bread first and then drink as instructed.*

Music During Communion arr. Brian Büda
"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"
Bob Dover, clarinet

Prayer After Communion

Sending

*HYMN 150 "As with Gladness Men of Old" DIX

As with Gladness Men of Old 150

The first three stanzas here use an as/so structure to draw parallels between the coming of the Magi and the spiritual lives of the singers, summed up in the prayer of the fourth stanza. Even though this adapted German tune was named for him, the author did not care for it.

TEXT: William Chatterton Dix, c. 1858
MUSIC: Conrad Kocher, 1838; abr. William Henry Monk, 1861; harm. *The English Hymnal*, 1906

DIX
7.7.7.7.7.7

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

CHARGE AND BENEDICTION — Rev. Karen Wright

POSTLUDE — "How Brightly Shines the Morning Star" — J.S. Bach
Linda Dover, organist

**Stand in body or spirit*

GOD'S PEACE TO YOU

Music and/or lyrics are reprinted by permission of CCLI 1154643 and OneLicense A-705105.
Our Church Streaming & Podcast Licenses are CSPL 048834 through CCLI & included in OneLicense A-705105.
Any videos are shown by permission of CVLI #504397326.

RECORD YOUR ATTENDANCE AT TODAY'S WORSHIP SERVICE WITH OUR VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE PAD:
Click this link: https://bit.ly/GCPCattendance, or scan the QR Code below, and it will take you to the link.

GRACE COVENANT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

11100 College Boulevard ♦ Overland Park, KS 66210
Phone (913) 345-1256 ♦ www.gcpc.org