



# THE VISITOR

JANUARY 2025

The newsletter of the Presbyterian Church of Kane

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Written by Walter Brueggemann

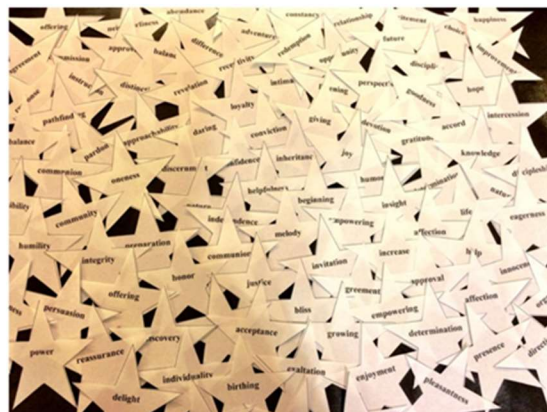
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## Epiphany and Star Words

On Sunday, January 5<sup>th</sup>, we will celebrate Epiphany and you will have the opportunity to pick up a new star word for the new year.

For any who might be new to the practice, paper stars are created – blank on one side and on the other side is a single word. The stars are placed in a basket, and everyone is invited to pick a star from the basket. The star word is a guiding word the year. Praying over this word is a spiritual practice to help listen more intently for the whisper of the Holy Spirit.



*Presbyterians have found that compiling the words to write on the Epiphany stars can be just as spiritual and profound as receiving a star. Marci Auld Glass*

The tradition of using star words makes several theological statements. First, we observe the magi, using resources available to them, followed a star which ultimately led them to Jesus. So, we too, use the resources we have which includes creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year to move closer to Jesus.

We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. We also realize that in our business it is often easy to overlook God’s presence. Star words are one way, a tool we can use, to actively seek and reflect on God’s presence among us both in the moment and during reflection time. For example, the Rev. Lynn Dunn, minister of Christian education and spiritual formation at White Plains Presbyterian Church, found it puzzling when, in January 2020, she picked a star with the word “show” on it. It was only a matter of a few months before the connection became apparent with the outbreak of the COVID pandemic and the need to provide digital ministry to her congregation.<sup>1</sup>

For many, the most common prayer practice is to speak to God. Star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect to God. When we pick a star word from the basket, without knowing the word we are picking, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. We trust that God is present in this moment.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/pt-0121-epiphany/>

# Baptism of the Lord

At the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus presents himself to John to be baptized in the Jordan. The heavens open, the Holy Spirit descends as a dove and we hear the voice of God: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" (see Psalm 2:7).

The Baptism of the Lord is closely related to Epiphany and should be considered in relation to that feast. Jesus' ministry to bring in God's rule was inaugurated in his baptism. As he came out of the water, the Spirit rested on Jesus and a sign of God's approval was heard. On this day, we celebrate not only Jesus' baptism but our own as well, for our baptism is rooted in Christ. Baptism joins us to Christ and his church, and with all of the baptized we are called to share in Jesus' ministry. In the waters of baptism we are buried with Christ, cleansed of our sins, and raised to share in his resurrection.

The work of the Holy Spirit is gentle and subtle. Like the stars that guided the magi thousands of years ago, the practice of using Epiphany stars can lead to some meaningful insights in our spiritual life. The Holy Spirit does work in amazing ways.

## Annual Congregational Meeting

*The annual meeting of the congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Kane will be held on Sunday, January 19, 2025, immediately following the 11:00 am worship service. The agenda for the meeting includes a review of the annual report, a report of the 2025 budget as adopted by Session and a congregational vote on the terms of call for the pastor for 2025. Copies of the annual report will be available one week before the meeting. A light luncheon will be served. (As ordered by Session at their meeting on Monday, December 16, 2024.)*

Please stay after worship on Sunday, January 19<sup>th</sup> for the annual meeting. While the annual meeting of the congregation is required both by the PCUSA Book of Order and our by-laws, the meeting is more than just a fulfillment of requirements. It is an opportunity to ask questions about the information presented and to engage in conversation and the sharing of ideas of how we gather and live together as a community of faith.

## Have You Seen....the new PCUSA website?

In early December the PCUSA released a new website. This is a major redesign and integration of seven separate PCUSA websites into a single platform. Formerly, the PCUSA, Presbyterian Mission, Office of General Assembly (OGA), Presbyterian Disaster (PDA), New Church New Way and History websites were independent of one another which made finding information more difficult and updates to the website required significant technology changes.

From a technology perspective, the redesign provides for more flexibility, more frequent updates and changes with a reduced amount of technical effort. For users, the new website is designed to be more topic driven, easier to navigate and with an improved search feature. Check out the new website; the design team welcomes your feedback!



The new PCUSA home page ([pcusa.org](http://pcusa.org)).

## Epiphany

On Epiphany day,  
we are still the people walking.  
We are still people in the dark,  
and the darkness looms large around us,  
beset as we are by fear,  
anxiety,  
brutality,  
violence,  
loss —  
a dozen alienations that we cannot manage.

We are — we could be — people of your light.  
So we pray for the light of your glorious  
presence  
as we wait for your appearing;  
we pray for the light of your wondrous grace  
as we exhaust our coping capacity;  
we pray for your gift of newness that  
will override our weariness;  
we pray that we may see and know and hear  
and trust  
in your good rule.

That we may have energy, courage, and freedom to  
enact  
your rule through the demands of this day.  
We submit our day to you and to your rule,  
with deep joy and high hope.

*Written by Walter Brueggemann and published in Prayers for a Privileged People (Nashville: Abingdon, 2008). Brueggemann is professor emeritus of Old Testament studies at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, GA.*

## News Briefs....

**Thank you** to the Bell Choir and Chancel choirs for the wonderful music as part of our worship services during Advent and Christmas Eve.

**Thank you** to the volunteers who supported the Salvation Army Red Kettle Drive on Friday, Dec 13<sup>th</sup> and Saturday, Dec 14<sup>th</sup>. Eighty-five percent of all funds raised during the Red Kettle fund drive remain in our community to provide assistance to those in need.

**New Officer Installation** is scheduled for Sunday, January 19, 2025.

**The Annual Unity Service** sponsored by the Kane Area Ministerial Association will be held on Sunday, February 2, 2025. The guest preacher for the day will be the Rev. Anita Bernhardt, Executive Presbyter of the Lake Erie Presbytery.

**Mountain Laurel Presbytery** will be the new name of the merger of the Lackawanna and Lehigh Presbyteries.

The 2024 Leadership Team of the Presbyterian Church of Kane

Session  
John Cleland Marie Larson  
Lori Fiscus Peggy Luck  
Curt Hartman Kal Lyons  
Lynda Karger Dale McLaughlin

Clerk of Session: Matt Gayley

Mutual Ministry  
John Cleland  
Jim Coppersmith  
Jody Larson  
Sue Zook-Wilson

Pastor: Rev. Carol Sharp

**THE VISITOR** is the newsletter of the Presbyterian Church of Kane.

Coordinating Editor: Julie Cleland

Contributors: John Cleland, Julie Cleland, Betsey Davis, Lori Fiscus, Lynda Karger, Marie Larson, Dale McLaughlin, Carol Sharp, Sue Zook-Wilson