

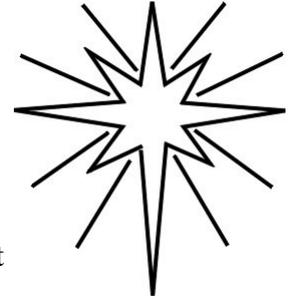


The First United
Presbyterian Church
of Crafton Heights

The Runner

David B. Carver, Pastor
www.chup.org
January 2021

“Epiphany” can refer to a particular day in the liturgical year (January 6), an entire liturgical season (between Christmas and Ash Wednesday), or serve as a common noun (meaning “an experience of a sudden and striking realization”). The word itself comes from an ancient Greek root meaning “appearance” or “manifestation”, and it has at its core an appreciation for the sunrise or the dawn – the time of day when things that have been shrouded in darkness and shadows become more fully realized and appreciated.



We celebrate the day of Epiphany as we remember the visit of the Wise Men to the Christ Child. Having followed the star for some undetermined period of weeks, months, or years, these scholar/seekers arrive at the home where the Holy Family is staying and come to understand that Jesus is worthy of worship. The glory of the Divine had in fact been made manifest – it was shown – in the person of Jesus. The Magi were attentive to a gift that they had already received (the light from the star), even if it was something that they didn’t fully understand, and that led them to a new ability to offer their gifts to God.

As we enter Epiphany 2021, the First U.P. Church of Crafton Heights will engage in a new tradition: that of Star Gifts. This devotional exercise has been used by a number of congregations around the world for at least a decade. Here’s how it will work: During the first week of January, we will mail a small paper star to every covenant member of the congregation (and anyone else who asks). On the star will be printed a single word: it may be “wonder”, “grace”, “boldness”, “focus” or one of a hundred other words. Recipients will be encouraged to think of that word as a gift to them for the year, and to place the star in a location that is visible each day (bathroom mirror, or refrigerator, or next to the television, for instance). Then, we’ll be asked to allow these words to speak to us. Start with the dictionary, of course, but then follow the example of Mary in Luke 2 and “ponder these words in your heart”.

Our goal in this project is to trust the whimsy of the Holy Spirit as we randomly select stars to place into envelopes and then see how and when that concept comes to be visible in our lives (both personal and corporate) throughout 2021. One participant in another church was given the word JOY. It turned out that her middle name was JOY – and yet she admitted to her friends that she felt as though she had lost her JOY, or forgotten how to live with JOY. The star word allowed her to think about the gift of JOY in all the circumstances of her life – the JOY that comes from knowing we belong to God.

Another person reports, “[One year] my word was RESTRAINT. I wanted to throw it back. What was that supposed to mean? RESTRAINT made me think about being held back or being bound. These words were supposed to be a gift, but this did not feel like one to me. And yet, over time the word continued to work on my heart and mind. I started practicing RESTRAINT at church coffee hours and forgoing doughnuts... RESTRAINT gave me permission to look at how unhealthy I had become and do something about it... I’m not one for New Years’ resolutions because – let’s be honest – they always seem to fail. Instead, these star words have become my practice for the New Year. Instead of making a resolution that I’ll feel guilty about a week later, I take a star word as a gift and keep my eyes open. The stars have allowed me to see God in unexpected ways and places.”

An added benefit in this season of physical distancing is that you may find your “star word” to be the occasion to reach out to a friend and share your words – “what did you get? What do you think that could mean?” – in a way that might enhance our community as we enter 2021.

20th century poet Robert Frost invited his readers to “choose something like a star/to stay our minds on and be staid”. Our deep hope is that this exercise will bring you closer to God and your neighbor throughout the year – that you might find a new anchor point for your faith! As we grow, please know that I’ll look for you in online worship!

Pastor Dave



Thanksgiving Generosity

We would like to extend a thank you to Dennis Piper and our friends at the Crafton Ingram Rotary. They provided 10 boxes of food to assist our neighbors during the Thanksgiving holiday. We are blessed to be a part of such a rich and full chain of caring!



Learning Hub

The Open Door has been participating in Pittsburgh Public Schools' Learning Hub program. While schools are operating under remote learning situations, we are providing a safe and caring place for kids to use internet, have lunch, and get help with schoolwork.



Advent Kits

2020 called us to creativity when it came to celebrating the season. One way we stayed connected with each other was through home Advent Kits. These kits contained communion elements, an Advent wreath craft, candles, and kids' activities to help our families participate in the life of the Church, even at a distance.

Farewell

We are saddened to say "farewell" to Mike Ball, who is leaving his position as Executive Director of The Open Door. 2020 was a year that was filled with many challenges, and we are grateful to Mike for his work in setting up the Cross Trainers summer camp and the Learning Hub that continues to serve families during these difficult times. We wish him well as he seeks other opportunities and especially as he seeks to be present to his father during a time of illness.



Zoom Meeting

The Congregation will have a very brief meeting after worship on **Sunday, January 3**, for the purpose of electing an elder for the class of 2023. This meeting will be held electronically. Check your weekly email for the link to join.

January Meetings



Prayer Concerns

Members: John Fullwood, Erlina Mae & Matt Adler, Marge Freeman, Janet Sbraccia, Eleanor Arlet, Ciechanowski Family, Peter Veltman, Cheryl Shaw, Kitty Kistler, Maryanne Richardson.

Friends & Relatives: Tom Musko, Jim Weaver, Rich Boyle, Steven Ball, Teresa Stacy, Peter Ostrowsky, Judy & Ed Moskovitz, Debbie Beatty, Patricia Sullivan, Dwayne Orris, Joe Petagno, Dawn Sedlock, Tim Murray, Ellie Musolino, Lorraine Barth, Lisa & Nicholas Daugherty, Eadie Children, Krieger Family, Mark Mattern.

January Birthdays

2nd	Daniel Miller Kathy Speirs
3rd	Mary Stacy
4th	Kate Lyden
6th	Terri Dorman Megan Veltman
8th	Cathy Hartzell
10th	Lauren Pearson
11th	Zachariah Lucas
12th	Janet Sbraccia
14th	David Barnes
16th	Matt Markus
17th	Marshall Dix
18th	Mary Beth Barnes
21st	Arya Jane Connor
23rd	Amy Durkin
26th	Isabella Lane
29th	Liam Klein Aubrey Slotten Toni Lynn Russell
30th	William Schneider Jr.
31st	Ron Gielarowski Ruth Price

Need Help?

Do you need help of one kind or another? If you are in need of food, or someone to run an errand for you, or a friendly voice with whom to speak, or prayer... please let us know! Email dave@chup.org and we will marshal the resources to help you face the challenges of your day. You are not alone!

Thank You

Thanks to everyone who donated at our blood drive in December. We appreciated your efforts during this very challenging time and holiday season! Please mark your calendar for our next drive, Sunday, February 28, 2021. Hope to see you there.

Giving Envelopes

As of January 2021, CHUP will no longer provide personal giving envelopes for tithes and offerings. However, blank offering envelopes in small quantities will be made available to those who find them helpful. Please email chup@chup.org or leave a message on the church voicemail at 412-921-6153 if you would like us to send you a few blank offering envelopes.

Electronic Giving

Online giving: Go to www.chup.org and click "Donate."

App Giving: Go to the App store or Google Play and search for "Give Plus Church" to download for FREE.

Mobile Giving: Text \$amount to 412-888-0842.

CHUP Online

Did you know that you can view the Runner in full color on our website? Back issues, too! Our website is mobile friendly and easier to navigate than ever.

Please visit www.chup.org to find online newsletters, sermons, prayer concerns, giving opportunities, announcements, online worship links, and clickable information on how you can become involved in our many ministries.

Runner Articles

Information or articles for the February Runner are due to the church office no later than Sunday, January 17. You may email them to chup@chup.org or leave a message on the office phone 412-921-6153.

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