

ORDER OF VIRTUAL WORSHIP

January 3, 2021

10:00 A.M.

*Welcome to Worship at the virtual Ellington Congregational Church,
United Church of Christ. We're happy to have you with us this morning.*

Our Church Mission Statement

*To be a dynamic and nurturing community
called by God's grace
to know Christ and make Him known
through worship, love, and service.*

Adopted September 15, 2019

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS COMMUNION, EPIPHANY & RELEASE OF SERVICE



GATHERING FOR THE WORD

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Where is that Baby? There are folks here who want to know!

All: Yes, where is the Holy Infant? There are some Magi who say they are following a glorious star to find where the Baby is.

One: Where is that Baby? There are some of us who also want to encounter the presence of God in the Child.

All: That Baby was born long ago, but we are still seeking to love him and worship him.

One: Let us follow those wise ones from long ago. Let us celebrate the coming of Jesus to the world and into our lives!

HYMN

Chalice Hymnal #172

We Three Kings

*1 We three kings of Orient are,
bearing gifts we traverse afar
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star. [Refrain]*

*[Refrain] O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

*5 Glorious now behold him arise,
Christ and God and sacrifice:
alleluia, alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies. [Refrain]*

John H. Hopkins, Jr., 1857 // CCLI #1326969

UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**All: We gather wondering,
'Where will we find the Babe
born in Bethlehem?' And we affirm that
we will find the Babe
 in the laughter of children,
 in the wisdom of grandparents.
We gather asking,
'where will we find
the Child of Christmas?' And we understand that
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?' And we intuit that
we will find our Hope
 where fear is overwhelmed by grace,
 where hatred is overwhelmed by love,
 where all people are overwhelmed by joy.
Forgive us God when we make these affirmations mere
words instead of the ways we try to live each day. Amen.**

(written by Rev. Thom Shuman)

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE

Pastor: As we start a new year leaving the old one behind, God reminds us that we can always start over, begin again, receive God's gift of grace and love and therefore, be changed! Let us sing – thanks to God!

ENGAGING THE WORD

UNISON SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 2:1-12

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

**⁶ ‘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.’”**

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ 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.” 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. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. 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. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE

MESSAGE

Dr. Jay M. Terbush

“Into the Unknown!”

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

*Our church welcomes to communion people of all ages
who desire to follow Jesus Christ and grow in faith.*

All are invited to prepare communion elements in their home (loaf of bread, dinner roll, croissant, slice of bread, etc., and glass of orange or grape juice, wine or water, etc.).

INVITATION to the TABLE of OUR LORD

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Pastor: God has come to us in Jesus Christ, but we often live as if it made no difference in our lives and in our world. Let us confess our need to God.

All: Loving God, we give you thanks and praise that you have come to us in the Baby of Bethlehem, whose birth we continue to celebrate. We thank you for the witnesses of faith and obedience:

- ❖ **Mary and Joseph who trusted your message to them;**
- ❖ **shepherds who listened with amazement to an angelic host and went to see the Miracle born in a stable;**
- ❖ **wise astrologers who were led by a light in the heavens to reverence your Chosen One.**

We would wish, like them, to be people of faith. Yet we often live as if we have not received you in Jesus Christ, have not known you, and have not become your children. Though your love is as wide as the world, we have often placed limits on it. Though your forgiveness is freely extended to all, we often place conditions on it. Though your joy is intended to sustain us every day, we too often quench the fruit of your Spirit.

Through your Word and through our participation in this sacred meal, may we be refreshed. By our friendship with you and our communion with each other, help us to remember again the wondrous gifts of your presence in and through this church family. Remind us that we are, indeed, at home here, so that Jesus Christ may be manifest in us and among us. Amen.

RESPONSIVE PRAYER OF CONSECRATION

Pastor: Therefore we proclaim the mystery of our faith.

ALL: Christ's death, O God, we proclaim. Christ's resurrection we declare. Christ's coming, we await. Glory be to You, O God.

Pastor: We ask you, Eternal God, to send your Holy Spirit on this loaf and this cup, on our gifts, and on us.

ALL: Be present with us as we share this meal, and throughout all our lives. Amen.

Words of Institution

SHARING OF THE SACRED MEAL

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Incarnate God, in the harmony and tranquility of these beautiful moments, we thank you for your gifts, which we have experienced together:

- ❖ your abundant grace;**
- ❖ your promise of life with meaning and purpose;**
- ❖ your joy unending;**
- ❖ your peace that sustains us;**
- ❖ your Spirit that empowers us to live as sisters and brothers in this family.**

Send us forth rejoicing that your Son has, indeed, come into our lives and been born again in us. Help us share the meaning of his coming with all the world. Amen!

ANTHEM

solo ~ Patti Hany

For Good

Hal Leonard Publishing allows us to stream this under CCLI #1326969

LITURGY OF LEAVETAKING - *Words for Ending a Pastorate*

Cathy Leonard, Church Moderator: Our church family is constantly changing. Babies are born and baptized. Friends are celebrated in marriage and celebrated in their passing also. Individuals come to be part of our faith community. People join with us in Christian faith and others leave us, moving away to new places, new experiences, and new opportunities. It is important and right that we recognize these times of passage, of endings and new beginnings. We are here in this new reality to share a ritual of farewell with Dr. Jay as he leaves his ministry at ECC.

Dawn Stone, Chairperson, Diaconate: Dr. Jay, will you stand before God and us?

In October of 2017 you came to us as our designated pastor, then as our senior pastor. It is time now for our paths to go in separate directions.

PEOPLE: We are grateful to God for your dedicated service in the name of Jesus Christ. We have grown spiritually because of your spiritual gifts and leadership in our midst.

Dr. Jay: I, too, am grateful to God and to you, the members and friends of the Ellington Congregational Church, for the opportunities we have had to be together in shared ministry for Jesus Christ. I thank you for the love, kindness and support shown to me during our time together. I am grateful for the ways in which I have been accepted and for all that God has accomplished in our lives and through us to the benefit of other

people. As I leave, I carry with me all that I have learned during our time together.

PEOPLE: We accept the fact that you now leave to see whatever else God might have in store for your future. Your influence on our faith and lives will not leave us at your departure. We trust that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

Dr. Jay: I too, trust that our time together and our parting are pleasing to God.

VOWS OF RELEASE

Rev. Chuck Ericson, Regional Minister, Southern New England Conference UCC: Do you, the members and friends of Ellington Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, release Jay Terbush from the duties of Senior Pastor?

PEOPLE: We do, with the help of God.

Chuck: Do you offer your prayers and encouragement for Dr. Jay's ministry soon to unfold with our sisters and brothers of the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ of Lee, Massachusetts?

PEOPLE: We do, with the help of God.

Chuck: Do you, Jay Terbush, release this local church from turning to you and depending on you?

Dr. Jay: I do, with the help of God.

Chuck: Do you offer your encouragement for continued ministry here and on the relationship with another who will come to serve?

Dr. Jay: I do, with the help of God.

PEOPLE: We give thanks to God for the ways in which you have shared your ministry with us, and in the presence of God we respectfully affirm the ending of this relationship.

Chuck: On behalf of the Southern New England Conference and the United Church of Christ, we witness to the words of thankfulness and release spoken here. The member churches of our conference hold you in prayer. We pledge our support in the transitions signified in this service.

PEOPLE: Thanks be to God.

Chuck: Let us pray.

PEOPLE: Gracious God, whose everlasting love for us all is trustworthy, help each of us to trust the future which rests in your care. We thank you for the time we have had sharing the life of faith in worship, growth and service. The time we were together in your name saw our laughter and tears, our hopes and joys, our successes and our disappointments. Guide us as we hold these cherished memories but move in new directions. We know that you go with us as we separate from one another and that our hearts are united in Spirit, even as we are physically absent from one another. We know that your presence will be with us until that time when we are completely one with you and each other, through Jesus Christ, in whose Spirit we pray. Amen.

GOING WITH THE WORD

HYMN OF DEDICATION

Chalice Hymnal #458

Ours the Journey

*In the midst of new dimensions, in the face of changing ways,
who will lead the pilgrim peoples wandering their sep'rate
ways? [Refrain]*

[Refrain] *God of rainbow, fiery pillar, leading where the eagles
soar, we your people, ours the journey now and evermore.*

*Should the threats of dire predictions cause us to withdraw in
pain, may your blazing phoenix spirit resurrect the church
again. [Refrain]*

Julian B. Rush, 1979 © 1979 Julian B. Rush // CCLI #1326969

BENEDICTION

Our gathering continues in this virtual setting as a time of saying “Good bye!” and “God’s blessings!” Directly after the service with no break in the ZOOM feed, we will begin a virtual fellowship with Dr. Jay. Everyone will be unmuted so conversations may flow. We do ask that everyone try to speak one at a time to keep the cacophony to a minimum! This is your opportunity to thank Dr. Jay for his time at ECC. He has worshiped, taught, broken bread, laughed and cried with us.

As a further part of Dr. Jay’s fellowship “reception”, there will be a drive up/drive by visitation (with masks and physical distancing) in the church parking lot at 1 p.m. weather permitting. If the weather is inclement, another date will be rescheduled at a date and time to be determined.

This morning’s Lay Reader is: Chas Gross