

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday @ 9:45 AM
Study Group

Sunday @ 11:00 AM
Morning Worship



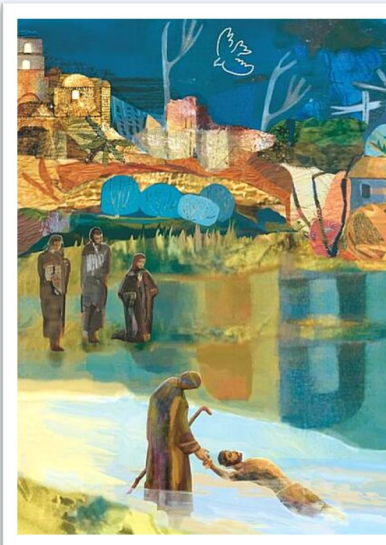
FROM THE MANGER TO THE JORDAN

In the span of less than one week, our liturgical calendar takes us from the birth of Jesus in a manger in Bethlehem, to the River Jordan for his baptism and the beginning of his ministry. This month, we recognize these two important dates: Epiphany on January 6th and Baptism of the Lord on January 12th.

Epiphany is the twelfth day of the liturgical Christmas season. It commemorates the metaphorical story where the wisest people of the land were divinely inspired to recognize the incarnation of God in Jesus. Although Christmas symbolizes the day of His birth, it is Epiphany that symbolizes God's revelation to the entire world. As the story goes, the light shone forth at Christmas, but only to the few around the manger. On Epiphany, the light shines to all nations, fulfilling the prophesy of old. Epiphany brings completion to the waiting of the Advent season —

God's hope, peace, joy, and love are offered to all. Marilyn McEntyre says, "Epiphany is divine disclosure — an 'aha!' moment when the whole frame of reference shifts and we see something we couldn't see before that changes the terms of everything else. It's the moment of 'getting it', when the joke makes sense, or the math problem, or the key to a nagging problem. This moment of recognition changes our behavior, our attitude, mood, our plans." This Epiphany, may we all follow the wise and be divinely inspired to recognize the incarnation as we work to gift God's hope, peace, joy, and love to all nations.

We recognize Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday following Epiphany. Liturgically, it's when we transition from celebrating the birth of Jesus to celebrating his ministry. Jesus was baptized by his cousin, John the Baptist, who was a revolutionary, clear in his conviction that the Roman Empire was leading people astray. John was calling them to turn away from the evil ways of the Empire and follow another path. The choice Jesus made to join John at the River Jordan and submit to baptism was a choice to identify himself with a political revolutionary — as one who would challenge the religious and political rulers. His baptism marked the beginning of his ministry — a ministry of love and compassion, one that contradicted the power dynamics and oppressive rule of the Roman government. As we celebrate Baptism of the Lord, may we be reminded of our own commitment, as followers of Jesus, to a ministry of love and compassion. —Rev. Kathryn Kreutzer



SPIRITUAL STORIES OF SARDIS

January Sardis Academy Series

January 15th & January 29th
Fellowship Dinner at 5:45 PM
Programming at 6:30 PM

As we begin a new calendar year, we also look ahead to the events of our community which meets at Sardis. In an upcoming series of the Sardis Academy, we will be inviting some of our own to share moments of significance within their individual spiritual journey. This could be an individual's Baptism, a spiritual retreat, a "mountain top experience," a spiritual "valley," or some other instance which shaped or otherwise informed the individual along their spiritual journey.

One of my favorite aspects of working as a hospice chaplain is getting to hear the stories of the folks with whom I minister.

We all have our individual stories and experiences which have shaped us into the persons we are today. So, come out on Wednesdays, January 15th and 29th in January to hear some of the spiritual stories of our friends at Sardis.

~Rev. Dr. Chris Hensley~

CHRIS' CORNER



BAPTIST TRADITION: THE ORDINANCE OF BAPTISM

I thought it appropriate that I tackle the two ordinances of the Baptist tradition early on in my signpost writings. Baptism and communion are the two Baptist ordinances or rites or sacraments, though we Baptists have historically avoided the “High Church’ language of rite and sacrament. In the tradition of being unique and independent, I will remind you that I will never tell you what you ought to believe or hold as true or why, including regarding our Baptist ordinances or sacraments.

I was only nine years old when I was baptized in the Baptist tradition of a church my father was serving in the northwestern portion of Georgia. I had gone forward at an earlier service, gone through the classes, Baptist version of confirmation I suppose, and then made my way into the water to be immersed.

Baptism is a sacramental ordinance which runs the gamut of being the key turning point of an individual Christian’s spiritual journey, being one of several key moments within the individual’s spiritual journey, or even becoming a distant memory of an event which held significance for a season of an individual’s spiritual journey and has faded into the background amidst more recent milestones along that same journey.

For me, Baptism is an outward expression of an individual’s inward spiritual journey. A public declaration of a private wrestling with the Divine as understood within the larger Christian context and faith community. For Jesus, the act of Baptism obviously held some significance as all four of the Gospel accounts within the Christian Testament record the event. I invite you to wrestle with the significance of Baptism – whether your own or the concept as a whole. You need not come to any conclusion as you do wrestle, simply reflect on what this ordinance means for you. Take it a step further and reflect on what each sacrament or rite or ordinance means to you. What is the significance of these special services, both individually and collectively?

~ Rev. Dr. Chris Hensley

Sardis People: EVE HENSLEY

Reading is at the top of the list when Eve talks about the things that she likes to do. From visiting the library at school to reading to her parents at home, Eve takes pleasure in reading all kinds of stories and learning from them. A sampling of the stories that she enjoys include the *Piggy* and *Gerald* books by Mo Willems. Written in a comic book style, these books are for early readers. *Gerald is an elephant; he and Piggy learn to get along in spite of their differences.* *Narwhal and Jelly* is another series in which unlike creatures become good friends. Other favorites are *The Princess in Black* and *The Legend of Rock, Paper, Scissors*.

For TV time, Eve’s favorite views are “Doc McStuffins,” in which Dottie McStuffins fixes stuffed animals in her playhouse clinic. The whole Hensley family (father Chris, mother Amanda, brother Daniel) likes to sing along with the theme song for this show. Daniel Tiger invites Eve and other preschoolers into his neighborhood just as Mr. Rogers did. *Bluey, the Australian puppy, is another enjoyed animated series.*

At school Eve and her friends are encouraged to take brain breaks as they engage in short spurts of physical activity. Outside school Eve’s activities include basketball and dance lessons (ballet and jazz). December was a busy time for the dancers. They danced in the Belmont Christmas parade early in the month and later performed in a recital as they moved to Justin Bieber’s song, “Mistletoe.”

Art (drawing pictures) and building with Lego blocks showcase Eve’s creative skills. Like her brother Daniel’s preferences, Eve’s

favorite meals include cheeseburgers, hot dogs or macaroni and cheese. She also is fond of spending time with Poppy and Nana, maternal grandparents and with Saba and Gia Gia (pronounced YaYa), paternal grandparents.



~Rev. Tillie Duncan

We Three Kings of Orient Are

One of the most popular Carols of the Christmas season is “We Three Kings of Orient Are,” and it is actually one of the first to have been written in the US, but what is the story behind this hymn?

“We Three Kings,” or “Three Kings of Orient” as it was originally titled, was composed in 1857 by John Henry Hopkins, Jr., a rector at Christ Episcopal Church in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. He wrote it for a Christmas Pageant held at the General Theological Seminary in New York City, his alma mater and employer at the time. The song centers on the story of the Magi who visited Jesus sometime after the Nativity. Although names and numbers are never given in the Bible, Western Christian tradition holds that there were three Wise Men, Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar – each bringing one of the named gifts, each representing a different region. Melchior is said to have come from Persia, bringing the gift of gold; Caspar, sometimes Gaspard, comes from Asia, or sometimes more specifically India, bringing frankincense; and Balthazar is from Arabia/North Africa and he brings myrrh.

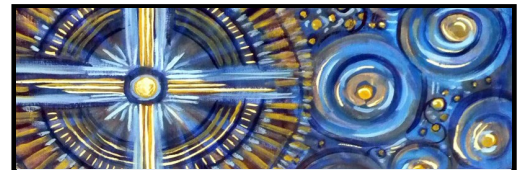
Since it was written for a Nativity play, the carol includes three verses originally sung as solos by each King, describing their gift and its significance to the story of Christ’s life. The song was immediately popular with Hopkins’ family and friends, so he included it in his book Carols, Hymns, and Songs published in 1863. It has remained a mainstay ever since. But how, in a country where our Christmas festivities tend to end on either Christmas Day or New Years Day at the latest, has a hymn about Epiphany taken hold so deeply?

Around the world, Christians celebrate the Holiday season in a variety of ways, but one thing that was surprising for me to learn is that many countries from Latin America to the Mediterranean, Africa to the far-East hold the climax to their Christmas celebrations on the Feast of Epiphany, January 6th. Many cultures make varieties of King Cakes, something we associate in America with New Orleans Mardi Gras festivities. They wait to exchange gifts until this day since that’s when Jesus received his gifts in the Bible, and some cultures even have their own gift-bringing characters that arrive specifically on January 6th – La Befana of Italy and Babushka of Russia are both old women who were met by the Magi while they were on the road to see the infant Jesus and though these women never made it Bethlehem, they travel their native lands delivering gifts to children.

It seems we have secularized our Christmas celebrations to the point where Epiphany is more of a fringe observance, but in 1951 NBC tried to change that by commissioning and producing the first ever made-for-TV opera, Amahl and the Night Visitors. If you’ve never seen or heard of this opera, it is a charming one-act written in English by composer Gian Carlo Menotti. Menotti was an Italian-born, American composer who found himself missing the Christmases of his youth, so he wrote an opera specifically for children that echoed the Epiphany tales of his homeland, where Christmas gifts were brought by the Three Kings rather than Santa Claus. In the opera, Amahl, a young boy who walks with a crutch, and his mother are visited by Kings Kaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, each of whom show off the gifts they are bringing to the newborn King who is not far from this house, which is located somewhere near Bethlehem. The Kings stay the night at Amahl’s home, and while they are sleeping his mother attempts to steal some of the gold but is caught by the Kings’ page. Amahl, waking to find his mother being grabbed, attacks the page. The Kings, seeing this boy defending his mother, tell them to keep the gold. Of course, when she hears that the Christ child is such a magnificent King that he won’t even need gold or jewels she decides to give it back since she has nothing else to offer this Messiah. As the Kings make to leave, Amahl calls them back, offering his crutch as his only thing of value and his leg is miraculously healed. He then joins the Kings on their journey in order to thank the Christ child for his miracle. It is a fun, cute watch if you can find it.

So, all of this to say, although we don’t hold Epiphany to the same level as other cultures might, we can still enjoy the celebration and perhaps delve a little deeper into the lore this year.

~ Rev. Hilary McIntyre



January Prayer List

CONDOLENCES

Our condolences are with Sardis friends who have recently lost loved ones:

- Betty Bowlin, aunt of Melissa Bowlin
- Nela Demme, Ron’s Animal Companion
- Mildred Gragg, mother of Billie Hutchison
- Caroline Hamrick, cousin of Tillie Duncan
- Edlyn Washburn, cousin of Tillie Duncan

TRAVELING MERCIES

- Askins Family (Rebecca, Jourdan, Joey, Brady, Samuel, Reece, Keely) • Leon Fisher
- Karen, friend of Amanda Lewis

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Clemmer Allison, friend of Alcie Kreutzer
- Melissa Bowlin, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Richard Bowlin, uncle of Melissa
 - Maria Byrd, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Dee Christman, sister of Shannon Duncan
 - Murphy Clark, relative of Robin Rowland
 - Tyler Criss, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Tracey Danley, friend of Sarah Criss
 - Betsy Cadle DePaul, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Rachael Duvall, friend of Susan & Tillie
 - Amelia Eidson, Jonathan’s mother
 - Larry Gragg, cousin of Tillie Duncan
 - Bill Guerrant, uncle of Kathryn Kreutzer
 - Mary Moon Guerrant, mother of Kathryn K.
 - Jenna Hardister, friend of Hilary McIntyre
 - Andy Kirk, friend of Ed Gash
 - Robert Marshall, grandson of Janette Grassi
 - Barbara Mosley, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Barbara Newman, mother of Kris Hawkins
 - Rex Nordeen, cousin of Tillie Duncan
 - Pamela Duncan Owens, widow of Eric Duncan
 - Vadim Pateshkin and Family, relatives of Billie H.
 - Rachel Phipps and Family, friends of Betty Gunz
 - Pam Poston, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Bob Rowland, Robin Rowland’s father
 - John Simpson, Sardis Baptist Church
 - Lindsay Stewart, daughter of Kristin Jackson
 - Amy Stirens, friend of Hilary McIntyre
 - Wanda Stitt, Sardis friend from Hope Chapel
 - Vanessa Wieland, cousin of Jonathan Eidson
 - Katie Wiebke, daughter of Mark and Amy
 - Hannah Willard, cousin of Hilary McIntyre
 - Kelly Wise, friend of Melissa Bowlin



UBA - BYLAW AMENDMENTS

Sardis Baptist Church is a member of the United Baptist Association (UBA), which is a fellowship of churches formed for nurturing churches and church leaders, sharing educational and program resources, cooperating in missions and ministry, and engaging in dialogue concerning issues relevant to the integrity of member churches. Current members of the UBA include Greater Mt. Sinai, Park Road, and St. John's Baptist Churches. In recent years, another Christian denomination has been involved with the missions and ministry of the UBA, and the Executive Board would like to allow ecumenical partners that are not Baptist to become members.

To allow for this change, as well as others discussed for management efficiency, the leadership recommends the following amendments to the association bylaws:

1. **Membership Expansion:** Allowing ecumenical partners that are not Baptist to join the association. The change aims to foster collaboration among Christian organizations.
2. **Shorter Timeframe for Bylaws Amendments:** Reducing the required period from the introduction of proposed bylaw amendments to a vote from three months to one month, to expedite decision making.
3. **Shorter Timeframe for Dissolution Notification:** Reducing the required notification for a vote on the proposed dissolution of the association from three months to one month, to streamline processes in critical situations.

As members of Sardis Baptist Church, your awareness and input regarding our ministry partners is important. We encourage you to review details of the amendments proposed to the UBA bylaws at <https://conta.cc/3DidELq>. Please ask questions and share comments or concerns with our ministry team by Sunday, February 16th.



MLK JR. DAY OF SERVICE 2025

Sardis Baptist and Temple Beth El

This Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Sardis Baptist Church and Temple Beth El are coming together in the spirit of love, justice, and community. Inspired by Dr. King's vision of equality and service to others, we invite you to participate in one of two projects to make a positive impact. Mark your calendars — MLK Jr. Day falls on Monday, January 20th this year.

One group will spend the day in Asheville, NC working on a team to help the continued recovery from Hurricane Helene. The work of this group will be organized by Nechama, an organization whose mission is rooted in the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam, or repairing the world. Learn more at nechama.org. Space in this group is limited, so please let a member of our ministry team know if you are interested in participating.

Another group will work on a local service project, of which the details are being determined. Stay tuned to weekly Sardis Happenings emails where more information will be shared as it becomes available.

The only qualification to participate is a dream of building a better world. We encourage you to join us as we honor Dr. King's legacy by living out his call to love, serve, and act for justice.

I have a dream...

January 20th