

# The Eighth Day of Christmastide

## January 1, 2023



*Star Words from Sanctified Art*

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*January 1, 2023 at 11:00 A.M.*

## The Thematic Interpretation

The Twelve Days of Christmas mark the days from December 25 (the First Day of Christmastide) to January 5 (the Twelfth Day of Christmas) before the Epiphany on January 6. During this brief season of Christmastide, the Star that burned bright in the sky still beckons the Magi on their journey from far East of Bethlehem. Oftentimes, we depict the Nativity as a crowded affair, like a big family reunion where generation after generation piles around to see the new baby. The biblical story (just like our family stories) is a little more complicated. After Christ's birth, Mary and Joseph do meet many marvelous strangers—this much is true. First, there were shepherds who arrived as filthy as the fields where their flocks fed by night. However, before the arrival of the Magi bearing gifts fit for a Prophet, Priest, and King, Mary and Joseph took their baby boy to Jerusalem. During this journey to the Temple, they met two prophets: Simeon and Anna. Both in their twilight years, Simeon and Anna waited, wondered, and hoped against hope that they might see the Messiah, the salvation of the people, before they died. This hope was the star towards which Simeon and Anna oriented their lives. Today, we hear their story, a story of blessing from generation to generation.

## The Greeting

Rev. Dr. Kevin Gardner-Sinclair

The hope, peace, joy, and love of the Christ Child be with you. **And also with you!**

## The Prelude

Jennifer Harberson

*Il Est Ne (He Is Born)*, arr. Samuel Wellman

## The Call to Worship

Rev. Susan Reed

God of Abraham and Isaac, God of Tamar and Ruth, God of Mary and Joseph,

**We bow our heads today hoping to catch a glimpse or a shimmer of you.**

We know that you are here with us, just as you walked with every generation before,

Thank you for creating space for us, and still illuminating the night with stars.

**Thank you for seeing our scattered thoughts, our imposter syndrome,**

**our fragments of doubt, and still saying, "Come on in. There is room for you, too."**

**As we begin again this year, may the starlight of your love lift our eyes to the heavens**

**and guide our feet back home to you, Lord Jesus.**

## \*The Carol

Congregation

*Once in Royal David's City*, No. 161

**The Old Testament Lesson**

Rev. Susan Reed

*Isaiah 60:1-3, 17-20*

**\*The Carol**

Congregation

*What Child is This?*, No. 150

**The New Testament Lesson**

Rev. Dr. Kevin Gardner-Sinclair

*Luke 2:22-38*

**The Harp Meditation**

Nora Gardner-Sinclair

*Fantasy on Greensleeves*, arr. Josh Layne

**The Sermon**

Rev. Dr. Kevin Gardner-Sinclair

*Nunc Dimittis: A Star is Born*

**The Celebration Of Communion**

Rev. Dr. Kevin Gardner-Sinclair

Passing of the Bread

Passing of the Cup

**\*The Hymn of Commitment**

Congregation

*Brightest and Best of the Stars*, No. 182

**The Offertory Prayer**

Amanda Storment

**The Offertory**

Jennifer Harberson

*For Unto Us a Child Is Born*, arr. Bill Wolaver

**The Offertory Response**

Congregation

**\*The Benediction**

Rev. Dr. Kevin Gardner-Sinclair

**\*The Postlude**

Jennifer Harberson

*Coventry Carol*, arr. John Purifoy

## Prayer Concerns

Sympathy to Farra Mae Shipp, in the loss of her sister Dorris Scates  
Wanda, Johnson, recent surgery  
Jean Henry, recent surgery  
Dick and Lucille Brown, health concerns  
Ben Thomas, health concerns  
David McMullin, brother of Jean Henry, health concerns

## On Star Words

The use of “star words” is a prayer practice connected to Epiphany and the new year that has been growing in popularity in Protestant churches for nearly a decade now. The idea is that a list of intention words, or guiding words, are written or printed on paper stars. There are several theological statements being made in this practice:

1. The Magi followed a star, which ultimately led them to Jesus. Therefore, we too use all the resources we have available to us—including creative prayer practices and intention words for the new year—to move closer to Jesus. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.
2. We trust that it is often easy to miss God in our daily midst. Having an intention word to consider both in present days, as well as to reflect on at the end of the year, allows for us to see God in ways we may not have seen God before. This is the greatest gift.
3. By not looking or sorting through the star words at their selection, we practice the spiritual task of receiving. It is not we who are in control in this moment. Instead, we trust that God is present, and we let go of our desire to cultivate or control.

Our promise to each other:

**We pledge ourselves to be the family of God for you in this place. We offer you our love, our care, our kinship, and our hopes. We hope to learn from you, give to you, and receive from you by God’s grace.**

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