

SAN MARINO CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
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“Never place a period  
Where God has placed a comma”  
[Gracie Allen]  
**God is still speaking,**

January 6, 2007 – 10:00 a.m.

EPIPHANY

### *For Reflection*

*Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.  
Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.  
A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.  
They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.  
(Isaiah 60:4-6)*

*Please stop by the Sound Booth if you wish to use a sound receiver today.  
\*The asterisk indicates the times when you are invited to stand if the Spirit so moves you.  
You are invited to watch the screen up front to increase your participation in worship today.*

**PRELUDE & LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES**  
“*My God is my Light*”

Congregation  
Acolyte: Allen King

**\*OPENING PRAYER**

Liz Cameron

**Great God, you are here with us. Thank you for this day when we witness the fulfillment of Good News. Sages and wise people have gathered around Christ and proclaimed the birth of the One who has come to save us. Sometimes we don't know what to do. Can we be saved? Do we want to be saved? Yet, you are here as one of us and you offer yourself as the Source of Salvation. Have mercy on us. Help us to believe your Truth and Goodness. Help us, O God, to be your people. Open our hearts and minds to receive your gift of new life, new hope, and peace in Christ. Hallelujah. Shalom. Salaam, RIGHT ON! Amen.**

**\*A SONG FOR THE SPIRIT**

Congregation

“*Here I Am*”

*The congregation may be seated.*

**A SONG FROM THE HEART**

Congregation

“*Keep Me Safe, O God*”

**OUR COMMON LIFE**

A Time to Give

Liz Cameron

A Time to Act

Pastor Cribbs

A Time to Dedicate Ourselves and Our Gifts

Liz Cameron

**Receive these gifts that we bring to your altar, O God. Bless this offering that it may be used in your ministries through this church. Bless each one who has given and those who did not have it to give. Bless people throughout the world. And allow your blessings to flow through us as we dedicate ourselves and our gifts to you. Amen.**

## TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN

Story "Where is East?" Pastor Cribbs

Our Common Prayer

*Children are invited to stay in the sanctuary today so that they may participate in Communion.  
Miss Barbara is available to care for the youngest children.*

Music to Bless the Children

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 2:1-12 Liz Cameron  
New Revised Standard Version

REFLECTIONS "Where is the Child?" Pastor Art Cribbs

COMMUNION HYMN "Jesus Took the Bread" NCH # 344  
Verses 1 through 3 Duck, arr. Sensmeier

WORDS OF INSTITUTION Pastor Cribbs

## SHARING OF THE BREAD AND CUP

*All are invited to the communion table.  
If it is best that you be served in your seat,  
please let an usher know, and a Deacon will serve you.*

MUSIC FOR COMMUNION Chip Colvin and The Band

UNISON PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING Pastor Cribbs

We affirm the goodness of life and the openness of the future because our God is a God of life and love. As God comes to us in this act of communion, so let us go out to others in acts which bring healing, reconciliation and hope to our world. Amen.

## A TIME OF PRAYER

Preparation for Prayer "God, Fill Me Now" Congregation  
Prayers of the People Pastor Cribbs

\*SENDING HYMN "Angels from the Realms of Glory" NCH #126  
Congregation Smart/Montgomery

\*BENEDICTION Pastor Cribbs

\*POSTLUDE/CHANGING OF THE LIGHT The Band/Scott Cameron



## Welcome Visitors!

*Everyone is welcome to have some coffee and conversation next door after the service. Thanks to Cathy Burkdoll for treating us today!*

*We express a warm welcome to all who have joined us this morning.*

*This Church is affiliated with the United Church of Christ, a denomination dedicated to spiritual growth, faith with action and social transformation.*

*If you're visiting today, please stop by our Visitor's Center in the Entryway to sign our Guest Book, fill out a visitor card (with nametag so we can greet you by name) and receive information about everything happening here!*

**Next Sunday † January 13, 2007**

**10:00 a.m. Morning Worship**

**The Baptism of Christ**  
**“Accompanying Spirit” by Pastor Art Cribbs**  
**Text: Matthew 3:13-17      Liturgist: TBA**

**TODAY:** The Church Council will meet immediately after the service in the Green Room downstairs.

At the close of the Church Council meeting, the Deacons will meet at 11:30am in the Green Room.

**Monday:** The preschool resumes Blessings on our teachers and all of our children!

**Thursday:** Choir Rehearsal at 7pm.

**Saturday:** “Every Food Has a Story” cooking class begins at 10am in the Crist Hall kitchen. You must sign up with Kana Cribbs or Jacqueline Benton to attend this class.

*Soul Food will not meet this week, but will resume next Tuesday at 7pm.*

**NEXT SUNDAY:** Board of Christian Ed. will meet at 11:30 a.m.



The Magi who traveled a great distance in search of Jesus turn our attention to their purpose and the place whence they came.

Who were they? Where was their home? What did they do? Why did they go to Herod? How did they find their way to Christ?

The Epiphany was an incredible experience of overwhelming joy. Imagine that split second when the Three Wise Men realized they had arrived at the site of the ‘new born child’ who was destined to become the ‘King of kings.’ After making their way across deserts, through foreign territories, they came face to face with the child of their dreams. But who were they and why did they put themselves through all that?

We have some clues about what manner of men they were. The fact that they came bearing gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (expensive oil and lotion) indicate they were wealthy. They observed the stars for guidance shows they had studied astronomy and understood how to navigate their way around the world. When they went to Herod, King of Judea, for directions suggests they were accustomed to being in the presence of royalty.

We are told they came from the East. What does that mean? Most commentators agree the Magi probably came from what we now call Iraq or Iran. They were informed about the ancient prophesy pertaining to the birth of Messiah. No doubt they learned about the promise from their contact with Jews who had remained in Babylon and did not return to Jerusalem after the Exile. When they put together all the details and timing of events, they felt compelled to leave everything and go in search of the long-awaited Christ-child. Most amazing is that they found him.

Men who were powerful, wise, and exuberant in their display of praise availed themselves to the mystery of God’s grace and gift to all humanity. A bright star in a sky filled with stars stood out to point the way. Yet, they were off just enough from their destination that they felt it was necessary to inquire about directions. That took them to Herod, the evil and insecure king of Judea, who encouraged them to continue their search and bring him news as soon as they found the baby.

Here, God intervenes again and warns the Magi not to return to Herod but to go back home another way. The Epiphany is filled with the hand of God actively engaged in human affairs. The Magi were foreigners who experienced the awesome presence of holiness. The Epiphany was an ‘Aha moment.’ They were forever changed.

Given the current conflict in Iraq, how do you think we would respond to political leaders and religious leaders from that nation who come to us with their wisdom? How would we receive them? Would we listen? Would we reject them and turn them away?

God’s love is given to everyone. The Magi demonstrated how God is present to all people in all places. There is no such thing as people on the inside with a privilege relationship with God and others on the outside who are beyond the reach of God’s grace. Although the Magi came from a place

far from the birthplace of Jesus, they became one with Christ when they encountered him. God is in all of us. We have received the Holy Spirit as a source of comfort and peace.

How far will we go to find Christ?

-Pastor Art Cribbs

UCC 2007 Calendar of Prayer:

## Where is the Child?

Have you ever laughed so hard that your side hurt? Have you ever seen someone auction off a spaghetti dinner? Have you ever climbed a magical mountain that can melt away all your worries? Can you imagine doing any or all of these things in a place of worship? Well, the youth at First Parish UCC in East Derry New Hampshire have, and they can't think of any other church they'd rather attend.



One aspect of a successful church youth program is activities. All those involved enjoy the experience thoroughly. When asked why, one youth explained that it is mostly the people, both adults and youth, who make her feel she is with family. "I would rather go to youth group than go to the movies with my friends," said another member of the group.

The adults at First Parish take youth ministry very seriously, and the church prides itself on the exceptional programs for its newest generations. The purpose of the youth ministry committee, which consists of both youth and adults, is to plan the religious education of the students and to make the experience enjoyable for them and the teachers. One aspect of a successful church is youth activities. At First Parish, it is both the youth and the adults who make us feel we are with family.

First Parish Church is a perfect place for youth to grow up.

### Centering Prayer:

*Radiant Morning Star, you are both guidance and mystery. Visit our rest with disturbing dreams, and our journeys with strange companions. Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts and homes to visitors filled with unfamiliar wisdom bearing profound and unusual gifts. Amen.*



## Coming Up...

- Sat., Jan. 12 -----** The Spirit & The Screen Film Club presents, "HIGH NOON" at 7:00 p.m. in The Stillspeaking Theatre. Don't miss this classic western starring Gary Cooper and Grace Kelly. There will be plenty to talk about!
- Sun. Jan. 13 -----** Board of Christian Ed meets at 11:30 a.m.
- Fri. Jan. 18 -----** Individual Annual Reports due. If you are a board chair or activities director, please submit a report to Donald Sherk in the church office by this date.
- Sat. Jan. 19 -----** "An Extravagant Welcome – Radical Hospitality: But, What if...?" A conversation with Rev. Madison Shockley from 2:30 to 4:30 in Crist Hall. Come explore what it really means when we say, "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here." Does that apply to sex offenders? Are we prepared to receive anybody who responds to our invitation? Join the discussion! This event is Open, Affirming and FREE!
- Weds., Jan. 23 -----** Stillspeaking Theatre Advisory Board meets at 6:45
- Sun., Jan. 27 -----** Our ANNUAL MEETING. All are encouraged to attend and bring a delicious dish to share.



