



Kensington Presbyterian Church

Shocks and surprises

January 8, 2023

WELCOME, to worship. We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship in person (with singing), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF.¹ If this is how you are worshipping, know that you are not alone... and if you like, you can invite those who live with you to join you, or connect with others through the phone or outside.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca)

Announcements

Clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site

Choir: would like you to join them. We practice Sunday at 9:15.

Jesus & Java: Join us as we share the joys and questions of faith.

Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton

Thursday, 7 pm at 2nd Cup on Monkland

Ottawa School of Theology & Spirituality: has online opportunities for people looking for more in-depth Christian studies. They offer two sets with three options, from Jan 9 to Feb 6, and Feb 13 to Mar 20. Topics include: Judaism (from a Rabbi), evangelicalism, Jesus, gnostic gospels, ethics, and Bible & archaeology. <https://osts.ca/courses.htm>

Drop Box: We are now accepting food donations to help the St. Monica's Food Pantry, AND items to help the young parents program at Head & Hands (ex. clothing, diapers, toys).

¹ note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.



Contacts

Church Office: 514-486-4559info@Kensingtonchurch.ca
Rev. Peter Rombeek (pastor).....Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca
514-773-4620
Antoinette (families).....Antoinette@Kensingtonchurch.ca
Zoé Dupont-Foisy (music director).....zoedupontfoisy@hotmail.com



Approaching God



Lighting of the Christ Candle

Jésus Christ est la lumière du monde.
Jesus Christ is the light of the world.



Call to worship (based on Isaiah 60)

Arise, shine, for your light has come!

The glory of the Lord has risen upon us.

Let us praise the Lord together.

**The sun shall no longer be our light by day,
nor will the brightness of the moon shine on us,**

for the Lord will be our light,
and our God will be our glory.

**The Lord will be our everlasting light,
and our days of sorrow will end.**

Come, let us sing to our light and salvation!

♪ Hymn: Song of Thankfulness & Praise.....pg 9 (176)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=21IXdrzOq-8



Prayer of Confession

God of starlight,

Today we remember the Wise Men. We remember them choosing
to leave home for a long and uncertain trip. We remember
their dedication to seek you out.

We remember that while we try,
we find ourselves following the wrong star,
or just looking at our feet.

We find our dreams focusing on our comforts,
instead of trusting your dreams to deliver us
and show us The Way.

Please forgive us

May we realize that you do forgive us,
and accept your Spirit as you reach out to take us by the hand
and guide us back to your way.

In doing so, we sing the prayer you teach your followers:



The Lord's Prayer (please use a version you are comfortable with)

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours

Amen.





Listening to God

✧ Children's story

Do anyone go anywhere different for the holidays?

What do you do if you don't know the way? Ask someone?
Look at a map? or your phone?

We went and saw dinosaurs. It was the first time since the move, so I looked it up on the STM website. It was neat, though the regular parts are more fun.

Today's Bible story is about people trying to follow the way to where the world will be better. There's the Wise Men, or Magi, trying to find baby Jesus, and there's Jesus family trying to find a safe place to live. What interesting is that they way they all figure how to get where they need to is by letting God show them The Way.

...which is actually another name for people who follow God (like Christians). We are Followers of The Way.

In the Bible story it worked,
and it can for us too if we work at it.

Dear Jesus,

Help us to look for you to show us The Way to live.

Amen.

♪ Hymn: The wise may bring their learning.....pg 10 (344)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZxqLqKVI08



Prayer for Illumination

God of starlight,
our hearts whisper, "There is more than just this"
as we seek you.
And you seek us,

inviting us along The Way.

Help us to see you in the words we hear
so that we might walk with you
and live your dreams.

Amen.

✧ Intro to the readings

- So far in Matthew we've heard that Jesus is the Messiah; that his ancestors (through adoption by Joseph) include quite the variety of people; and about dream given to Joseph that the baby created in Mary will become 'God with us' or Emmanuel. Oh, and there's a reference to Mary giving birth.
- The psalm reminds us of some of the scope of all this.



Reading: Please look up the passages in your own Bible,² or click on the name to be taken to an online version.

[Matthew 2: 1-23](#)

[Psalm 148](#)



Sermon: Room for every story

*Dear Lord, please bless these words
and the meditations of our hearts. Amen.*

Did you watch any TV shows or movies over the holidays, or perhaps even read a book? I managed a little. One of the story-telling techniques I saw was starting the story with a segment set back in time. Why not start with the main story? Because it introduces characters, context, & themes important for what's to come.

The Bible does this too - such as the beginning of Matthew.

² If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963
or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV

Today we heard a large chunk of the prologue. In the next chapter Jesus is all grown up, but this is the birth. We heard a good chunk of it. Usually we just read small parts of the Bible; this helps us focus as there can be so much in the text. However, it is also nice to hear more of the story. Sometimes we forget that the passages are part of books. Perhaps someday we'll hear the whole thing?

There's a lot going on here that makes a great story: hopes & dreams, different responses to the same situation, tension (even betrayal), and so many surprises.

You might wonder if it's been made up to be a good story. We don't know for sure. There's no other record of the events. Countries would send envoys to neighbouring kingdoms to congratulate them on the birth of a new king. Perhaps that's who the Magi were. As for the massacre of the innocent? When historians consider what we do know of King Herod... they say it's entirely possible. As for people running away from their home to keep their families safe... we hear about that all the time. We call them refugees. Is this prologue real or fiction? We can't say for sure, but it is Truth.

One of the things that makes a good story is when the characters dream for something better, taking us along with them. Which one of these dreams do you relate to?

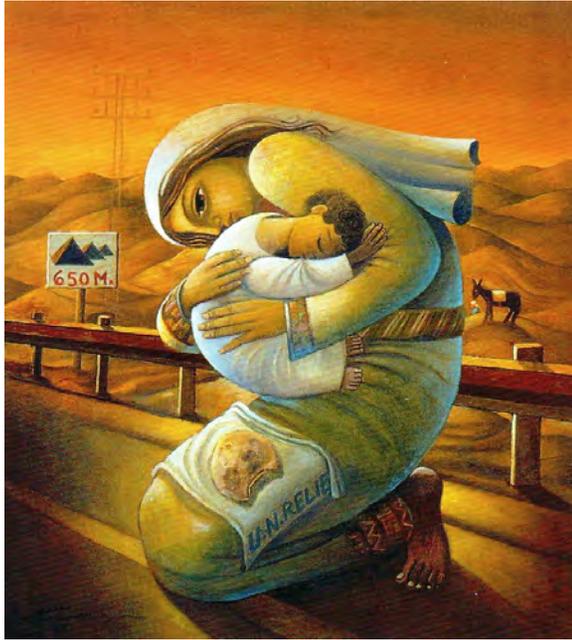
- We have the Magi fascinated by the heavens, and looking for signs that God will come and make the world better. What do you feel when you see a sky of stars? Do you dream as big as the Magi? That God will come into the world (As the angel/dream told Joseph in chapter one - "*He will be called Emmanuel - God with us*")?

- King Herod dreams of continued power. Do you find having control of your situation to be comforting? Do you dream of making your own choices?
- Joseph dreams of following The Way of God. This makes him open/flexible to not follow his dreams, but God's dreams - or to put it more accurately, his dreams are God's dreams. This led him to take Mary as his wife, and now to follow the way to Egypt and back to a different home. Whose dreams do you have?

One of the things about dreams is that there's always tension between them and reality. That's part of what makes a story interesting. This story has tension. Why are their foreigners contaminating the story? Will the Magi find The Way? What will King Herod do? He has a reputation for killing anyone, even those closest to him. Why the secrecy? Will our family get away? Will they find safety in Egypt? After all, that is where Israelites were slaves until Moses saved them.

Why does tension work in a story? Because we care about the characters, and because we can relate to the tension. Have you ever wondered if you will find the way? either physically which road, or more broadly as the way to a better life? Have you been involved in secrets? Have you had somebody with power over you and wondered if they will reward or hurt you? Have you had to leave something to be safe?

That need to find safety is related to another element that can make a story captivating (as an observer): betrayal. King Herod, the government, is supposed to protect the people (in exchange for them supporting the kingdom). However, the people are betrayed by his killing the vulnerable children in his own kingdom.



flight to egypt - Sliman Mansour

It's horrific, and it's not the first time. As I mentioned, Herod had people killed before. It's also not the first time that innocent children have been murdered by the leader out of fear. Back when Moses was a baby, the Pharaoh was concerned that the Israelites might be a threat to life his way, so he ordered all the male babies killed.

Why is this in the story? Is it just for the historical comparison? We know that God knows about it. In today's example God obviously knew as the angel warned Joseph. Why not save everyone else? Why does God allow it?

This week, when I asked that question a new wonder came into my head. I wondered if God asks the same thing. Why did the people allow it? Herod was good at politics, and willing to kill people. There were those who benefited from his building projects and other initiatives. However, if they didn't turn a blind eye to his murderous ways; if people refused to go along with it,

then he wouldn't be able to do very much. To use a present day example: if nobody was willing to fight for Putin, there wouldn't be a war.

You and I aren't in the positions of leaders or soldiers who can decide about killing people, but we do have a say in what happens. Like the people who supported Herod, our decisions are influenced by a desire to preserve our way of life - or you could say the fear of losing the way we live. In our case we're supporting governments and companies. I'm sure you wouldn't kill babies, but it does relate to issues like: immigration, access to health care, funding of schools (and private schools), import duties, how taxes work, the cost of gas. There's the use of conflict minerals in phones and computers. Child labour in chocolate harvesting. How do we respond to governments and companies? What and who will you sacrifice to keep your standard of living?

Is there hope?

Well, our story has something in it that makes every story more interesting - surprises. In the case of King Herod, there's the surprise that with a supportive army Joseph and family escape (offering hope). There's the surprise of where they escape to. Egypt goes from being the place of slavery to one of sanctuary - you could say it's saved (offering hope to places of brokenness). Related to this is the surprise that the Son of God becomes a refugee (offering hope to those in desperate situations).

What other surprises are in it?

- Today's section starts with foreigners, quite likely priests in another religion. Definitely not the chosen people. Yet God offers them hope too.
- They manage to follow The Way to God - hope
- It surprising Herod, the king of the Jews, doesn't know

what's going on, but doesn't understand The Way of things.

comfort for those who don't understand, which starts the hope of understanding (with the Magi).

- While not a stable, there's still the surprise that the Son of God is not in the capital but in an insignificant town - hope because all are included.
- Some may find it surprising that people have messages from God through dreams... and that they follow this way. Hope that we can too.
- Along those lines, it could be surprising (& offer hope) that God has finally followed through on the promises in the prophets

Even with the horror in this Christmas story, there is hope - which can often be surprising to observers.

All of this makes for a good story. It's also a good prologue. Why? Because these themes come back as the story continues. There's many more surprises: such as 'blessed are poor', and 'the first shall be last', and the Saviour (the Son of God) being killed on a cross. This is the result of tension that builds through the story - especially with those who are the experts, or think they are. Jesus presents a new way of being a leader. One that's the opposite of Herod; one that challenges the priestly leadership and super keen students. And there are dreams. Dreams of various people as they encounter God through Jesus. Some of their dreams are realized, and some are challenged to accept new dreams. And the story ends with salvation. It's not a place being saved, but people.

It could also be a prologue to our lives. While our issues are not the same, the themes are. How do we deal with tension or

challenges? How open are we to surprises? Where do we look for God? What are our dreams? How do we respond to them?

and may you, like the Magi & Joseph, see that God is with us, Emmanuel, showing us The Way.

*In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Holy and One.
Amen.*



Responding to God

♪ Hymn: What child is this.....pg 11 (161)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfORpRy7N_M
www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTPQrrWcj4Y

🗨️ FaithTalk: These are some questions for you to discuss with somebody... or many somebodies. Do what you feel safe (and practice stretching a little).

Memories: What is something that you find surprising or ridiculous from the Jesus part of the Bible?

Etching: Share a story from your life in which you were surprised by God.

Values: What are your dreams? How can you tell if they are your dreams or God's?

Wonder: What creates a sense of awe in you? How could you follow this?

Prayer: ...that you both may have dreams, experience something awesome, and encounter God

✨ Spirit Sightings

This week I came across an discussion hosted by Columbia Theological Seminary on the James Webb Telescope Images. The idea started when with the wonder and awe at seeing them. You

can watch it here:

ctsnet.zoom.us/rec/play/beZuF_ZRofLggCvIUt5wqBPVlc_oVueqAJPjKB_KFIGKWlfeZMTwFcnxDycQ4kgBzxDZP_30wotTMUmi.s6DQncg9jtE8niln?bblinkid=262489991&bbemailid=41686551&bbejrid=-1874996299



New Stars - James Webb Space Telescope (NASA)



Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our **website**. Just click the '**Donate Now**' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy to follow.

You can now donate through **interac e-transfer**. Our name is Kensington Presbyterian Church and the e-mail address is info@kensingtonchurch.ca.

Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (**PAR**) are also good options.

Prayers of the people

Holy God,
we find you in the most surprising places—
in frost on the windows,
in the smell of fresh baking,
in handwritten letters,
and long-winding phone calls,
in crowded tables,
and a quiet cuppa.
You are all over the place!
Some days it's easy to find you;
like Joseph following the cry of a baby.
Sometimes we start in the wrong place,
like the Magi expecting The Messiah at the palace.
Regardless,
we want to be a people who seek you.

So when The Way is clear,
when your fingerprints are all over the place,
help us to give thanks:
for seasons that force us to change
and appreciate the world in new ways,
for roofs over our heads,
for food on the table,
for community,
for healthy bodies that can dance and move,
and music that moves our souls,
for science that shows the glory of your universe,
and for dreams
...
help our seeker hearts give thanks.

And when we lose your way,
 when your star is out of sight and we feel far from your reach,
 remind us that you are near:
 in lonely apartments,
 in empty refrigerators,
 in hospital rooms,
 in the bottom of a empty bottle,
 in bad dreams,
 and in the bottom of our faith
 . . .
 remind us that you are near.

May your Spirit help us raise our eyes to the stars,
 and to see your glory
 so that day after day
 we might have the strength to always be looking for you.

With hope in our hearts,
 we offer these prayers to you
 Amen.³

♪ Hymn: As with gladness men of old.....pg 11 (172)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=sp52sx2_GYs

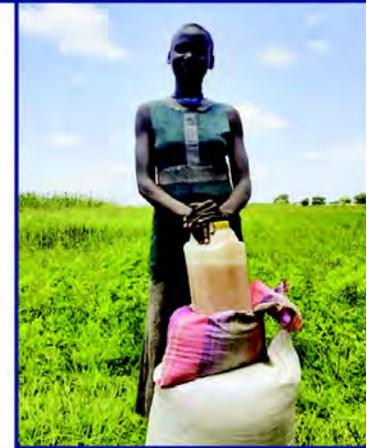
✦ Sending & Benediction

May Christ, the Son of God,
 become real in you,
 so that your lives may be a light to the world;
 and the blessing of God Almighty,
 the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
 be among you and remain with you always.
 Amen.⁴



3 adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.
 4 modified from *Worship Sourcebook* F.9.2.3

Adau Maduok Dut lives in South Sudan with her four children. Struggling to make ends meet after her husband left the family, **Adau's life improved after receiving assistance through a project, supported by Presbyterian World Service & Development and Canadian Foodgrains Bank, that provides food packages to struggling families in South Sudan.** "I knew immediately that my children would not have to suffer again since we had food and were equipped with the seeds and tools to start a fresh life," Adau said.



DAILY PRAYERS

Sunday, January 8 (Baptism of the Lord) Let us remember our baptism and pray that we will live in ways that fulfil the promises made on our behalf, and may we boldly confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

Monday, January 9 We give thanks and pray for Presbyterian World Service & Development programs that are responding to poverty, hunger and other emergency situations around the world.

Tuesday, January 10 We pray for the people who gather and serve at Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church in Northern Saskatchewan, and we give thanks for their ministry.

Wednesday, January 11 We pray for the Rev. Jeffrey Murray, serving as clerk for the Synod of the Atlantic Provinces.

Thursday, January 12 We pray for people, businesses and communities in Atlantic Canada who have suffered as a result of the damage caused by Hurricane Fiona.

Friday, January 13 We pray for the P.E.I. Presbyterial of the Atlantic Mission Society as members plan for their upcoming Presbyterial Service. May this be a time to meet and grow in relationship with God.

Saturday, January 14 We pray for people living in refugee camps and those whose homelands have been afflicted by violence and war. We pray for peace, understanding and safety.

Songs of thankfulness and praise

SALZBURG (HINTZE) 7777 D

D Bm D/F# G Asus4-3 7 D Em6 D/F# G6 A D

1. Songs of thank-ful - ness and praise Je - sus, Lord, to you we raise,
 2. God re-vealed at Jor - dan's stream God's be - lov - ed Son su - preme,
 3. God re-vealed in mak - ing whole weak-enedlimbs and faint - ing soul,
 4. Man - i - fest on moun - tain height, shin - ing in re - splen - dent light,
 5. Grant us grace to see you, Lord, mir - rored in your ho - ly word;

Bm D/F# G Asus4-3 7 D Em6 D/F# G6 A 7 D

God re-vealed by guid - ing star to the sag - es from a - far,
 and at Ca - na, wed - ding-guest, in your pow - er man - i - fest,
 God re-vealed in val - iant fight quell - ing all the dev - il's might,
 where dis - ci - ples filled with awe your trans - fig - ured glo - ry saw;
 may we im - i - tate you still and o - bey your per - fect will,

A D F#m(E) D6 E 7 A Em Bm /D Bm F#sus4-3 Bm

branch of roy - al Da - vid's stem, in your birth at Beth - le - hem:
 God re-vealed in works di - vine, chang - ing wa - ter in - to wine:
 God re-vealed in gra - cious will, ev - er bring - ing good from ill:
 from that place you went with them stead - fast to Je - ru - sa - lem;
 that we like to you may be, at your great E - pi - pha - ny:

D G A Bm7 E7/B A G D Em6 D/F# G6 A D

(1-3) an - thems be to you ad - dressed,
 (4) cross and East - er day at - test God in Christ made man - i - fest.
 (5) may your glo - ry be con - fessed,

Words: Christopher Wordsworth (1807-1885), alt Music: Jakob Hintze (1622-1702), alt; harmony, J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

Words: public domain Music: public domain

444 The Wise May Bring Their Learning

The Book of Primes for Children

Traditional English Melody

Arr. by Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872-1958

1. The wise may bring their learn - ing, The
2. We'll bring Him hearts that love Him; We'll
3. We'll come and show the Sav - ior The

rich may bring their wealth, And some may bring their
bring Him thank - ful praise, And young souls hum - bly
things we do each day; We'll try our best to

bril - liance, And some bring strength and health;
striv - ing To walk in ho - ly ways;
please Him At home, at school or play;

We too, would bring our treas - ures To
And these shall be our treas - ures We
And bet - ter are these treas - ures To

of - fer to the King; We have no gifts de -
of - fer to the King, And these are gifts that
of - fer to our King Than rich - est gifts with -

serv - ing: What shall we chil - dren bring?
e - ven The young - est child may bring.
out them: Yet these a child may bring.

FOREST GREEN
7 6 7 6 D

What Child Is This

1. What child is this who, laid to rest, on Mar-y's lap is sleep - ing?
 2. Why lies he in such mean es - tate, where ox and ass are feed - ing?
 3. So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas - ant, king, to own him;

Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet, while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?
 Good Chris - tians, fear; for sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing,
 the King of kings sal - va - tion brings, let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.

This, this is Christ the King, whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing:
 Nails, spear, shall pierce him through; the cross be borne for me, for you:
 Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by:

haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y.
 hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y.
 joy, joy for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y.

Traditional English carol
 Adapted by William C. Dix, ca. 1865

GREENSLEEVES 8.7.8.7.6.8.6.7.
 English melody, 16th cent.

172

As with gladness men of old

DIX 77777

1. As with glad - ness men of old did the guid - ing star be - hold;
 2. As with joy - ful steps they sped, Sav - iour, to thy low - ly bed,
 3. As they of - fered gifts most rare at thy cra - dle rude and bare,
 4. Ho - ly Je - sus, eve - ry day keep us in the nar - row way,
 5. In that heav - en - ly coun - try bright need they no cre - a - ted light:

as with joy they hailed its light, lead - ing on - ward, beam - ing bright:
 there to bend the knee be - fore thee, whom heaven and earth a - dore,
 so may we with ho - ly joy, pure and free from sin's al - loy,
 and when earth - ly things are past, bring our ran - somed souls at last
 thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;

so, most gra - cious Lord, may we ev - er - more be led to thee.
 so may we with will - ing feet ev - er seek thy mer - cy seat.
 all our cost - liest treas - ures bring, Christ, to thee, our heav - en - ly King.
 where they need no star to guide, where no clouds of glo - ry hide.
 there for - ev - er may we sing hal - le - lu - jahs to our King.

Words: William Chatterton Dix (1837–1898) Music: Conrad Kocher (1786–1872);
 harmony, William H. Monk (1823–1889); descant, Sydney H. Nicholson (1875–1947)

Words: public domain Music: descant, copyright © The Royal School of Church Music