

Epiphany ★ January 2021

STAR-GIVING

by Ann Weems

What I'd really like to give you for Christmas
is a star...
Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket of your jeans
or in the pocket of your being.
Something to take out in times of darkness,
something that would never snuff out or tarnish,
something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas has always meant:
God's Advent Light into the darkness of this world.
But stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you words
and wishes and packages without stars.
But I can wish you life
as radiant as the Star
that announced the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe as the shepherds who stood
beneath its light.
And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given me,
ignited countless times by others
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.
Perhaps, if you ask, God will give you a star.



During my years in seminary, I worked nights and weekends at a group home for developmentally disabled adults. One night, as the house was settling down and I was completing the nightly notes, one of the residents poked her head in the office and asked, "Where did you notice God today?" She didn't wait for an answer, she just scooted off to bed! I was glad she left because I was too stunned by her question to answer. Here I was, deeply immersed in theological study, ministerial training, systems theory and spiritual practice, yet I found myself utterly stymied by her question, "Where did you notice God today?" Driving home that night I realized she herself was where God showed up for me today. What a surprise!

In my experience, God shows up in the most unlikely ways, through the most unlikely people. At the heart of the Christmas narrative, we find God is revealed in the ordinary, out of the spotlight, subtle places. It's so easy to miss it. Even the Magi, those mysterious, learned foreigners, who followed an anomaly they noticed in the night sky, took a wrong turn into Jerusalem. I suppose they naturally assumed "the King of the Jews" would be born into royalty, nestled comfortably in a majestic mansion in the capital city. Despite all their wisdom and scholarly achievements, they came so close but missed the mark at first. They stopped looking at the guiding star that pointed them 9 miles to the south. It seemed inconceivable that the king they sought would be born in the tiny, irrelevant village of Bethlehem.

I can easily relate to them. It is so easy for us to miss the signposts God plants for us. We get so wrapped up in our own fixed understanding and narrow focus that the unexpected beauty revealing God-with-us goes completely unnoticed.



A Blessing For The New Year

May you set out on the road
that begins in your heart,
your soul.

May the path
that starts as a dream
become real beneath your feet.

May you walk
in the way of blessing
and stand in the spaces
where earth and heaven meet.



It's fitting that we start a new year remembering the story of the Magi's visit. The Church calls it Epiphany, which means "showing forth". Eventually, the Magi find the newborn king, not in a grand palace of power but rather a makeshift shelter in the back field of a tiny town. Epiphany reminds us that God is revealed in all kinds of surprising ways, not always astounding us with double rainbows or shooting stars, or timely coincidences. More often God shows forth in smaller, every day, ordinary ways. Noticing the ways God is with us will strengthen our faith, ignite our joy and keep hope alive even in times of trial.

Epiphany invites us all to follow a star that leads to Christ. It's that special, glimmering light that somehow pulls us forward into our divine destiny. And very often, this "guiding star" leads us into unexpected places, only to find God revealed in astonishingly surprising people, unlikely situations, and frequently, in the most ordinary things.

To help mold this metaphorical guiding star into something tangible, **we have printed a word on a star for you to use throughout the year.** I hope it will help you see how God is manifested in your life. We have printed 10 separate "guiding" words and randomly printed them here on the front page. I invite you to cut it out of the newsletter and put it somewhere that will remind you that God is being revealed today in unexpected ways for those who have eyes to see it and hearts to receive it.

Where are God's fingerprints appearing in your life today? In what ways is God revealed in the subtle, hidden corners that often go easily unnoticed?

I hope you will keep your guiding star word as a compass, pointing you to how God is shining forth all around us in the most unconventional ways. May we begin this new year awakened to God's holy presence in the ordinary, humble, surprising way of Jesus. Shine on!

In faith and hope,

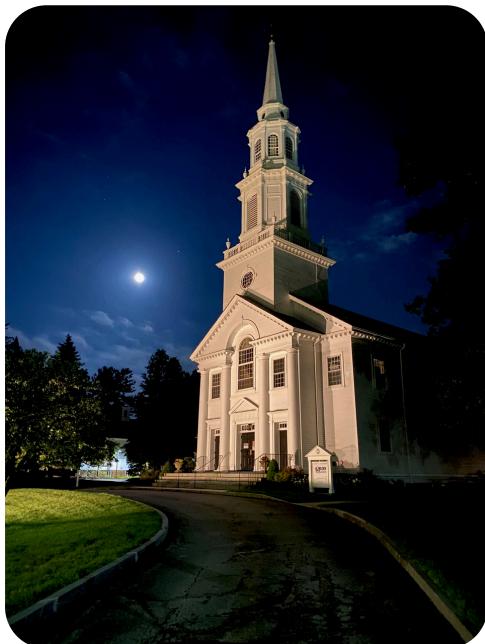
Bob

Rev. Robert Brown – Senior Minister



Preaching Schedule:

January 3rd	10 AM	Rev. Gail Miller, Minister of Congregational Life
January 10th	10 AM	Guest Preacher, Rev. Mariama White-Hammond
January 17th & 24th	10 AM	Rev. Bob Brown, Senior Minister
January 31st	10 AM	Rev. Gail Miller, Minister of Congregational Life



The church building remains closed.

Our worship services, and committee work continue through ZOOM. We are all encouraged by the vaccine news and look forward to a time in 2021 when we can safely gather together again.

Until then....

Office staff are working at the church building and can be reached M-F, between 9-4. Call the church office at 978-369-4837. If you leave a voice mail, we will get back to you.

Be well and wear your masks! *Thank you!*

online worship services

The ZOOM links are emailed every week on the Friday eblast, and again on Sunday morning. The ZOOM worship link is the SAME EVERY WEEK ... 'bookmark' the page on your browser bar to find it quickly.

Remember the website has everything you need! www.triconchurch.org

SUNDAY, JANUARY 10th ~ TWO opportunities to engage in Racial Justice

10:00 AM ~ Guest Preacher

Rev. Mariama White-Hammond to speak on climate and racial justice.



On Sunday, January 10, Rev. Mariama White-Hammond, founding pastor of the New Roots African Methodist Episcopal Church in Dorchester, will speak at TriCon's 10am Sunday service on the topics of climate justice, racial justice, and health inequities in our country. Rev. Mariama is a tireless advocate for recognizing and minimizing the impact of climate and health inequities on minority and low-income communities.

She is a dynamic and engaging speaker who will inspire insight and action. Be sure to attend this high-impact service!

4:00 PM ~ Voter Suppression: An interview with Ray Arsenault

Over the course of our history many millions of Americans have been deprived of their right to vote. Race is deeply entwined in our story of disenfranchisement and it did not end with the Civil War or the passage of the Voting Rights Act and other civil rights legislation in the 1960. In the decades after the Civil War, Blacks overwhelmingly favored Republicans and Democrats led successful efforts to keep them from voting. In more recent decades, Blacks have become the most Democratic voters and Republicans have led efforts to suppress their votes.

How has the right to vote been historically threatened? How is it threatened today? To answer such questions we will have the opportunity to hear [Dr. Ray Arsenault](#), an award-winning historian whose book [Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice](#), was the basis for an [Emmy-award winning “American Experience” documentary on PBS](#). Arsenault, who is on the faculty at the University of South Florida will be in conversation with [Dr. Stephen Whitfield](#), the Max Richter Professor of American Civilization, Emeritus at Brandeis University.

Hosted by Kerem Shalom, Concord, and co-sponsored by TriCon Church.

Visit

<https://keremshalom.org/current-events/ks-racial-justice-initiatives/>
to REGISTER for the online event.



YOUR GIVING MATTERS!

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

We are very, very close! We have received 97% of the pledges and gifts needed to meet the goal for the 2021 budget! If you have not yet made a pledge, you can help to reach and even exceed the goal! The church exists through the contributions of parishioners.

Please fill out a pledge card, pledge on-line through the website or email Judy (jwalpole@triconchurch.org) or Amy (abruning@triconchurch.org) with your confidential pledge.

As we enter a new year, we have much to thank God for. In particular, we thank God for sustaining our church through the changes this year has brought us. We have had to let go of a lot – our usual way of doing things, beloved who have died – and through it all, God has been right close. The fellowship we share is as crucial as ever. Remember, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever* (Hebrews 13:8); and our church is not going anywhere.

Stock Donation Instruction Change

TriCon has recently changed Investment Managers and instructions for donating stock have changed. If you are planning to make a stock gift in the coming year, please contact Judy or Amy for the new transfer information.

Making a gift, or fulfilling a pledge, through the donation of appreciated securities can be a win-win for you and the church. You can avoid capital gains tax and the church receives the appreciated value of the holdings.

Mystery Donors:

We recently received a generous donation thru Fidelity from the Elm Tree Fund and three shares of Facebook stock came into our account - both with no name attached. We hope the mystery donors will reveal themselves for we can acknowledge your gifts.

2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES are available at the church. We will put some outside on the milk box by the Walden Street entrance for you to pick up. If you'd like some mailed to your home, call Judy or Amy at 978-369-4837.



Sign up for our

e-NEWSLETTER

WANT THE NEWSLETTER ELECTRONICALLY ONLY??

Contact the church office via phone or email and we will update you to **electronic communication ONLY** of the monthly newsletter. Thank you!

Men's Anchor Group

For meeting dates and times, please email Greg Howes: ggreg@howesinsurance.com

Women of Spirit

Wed. @ 7:00AM; Jan. 6th & 20th
cheryl.shea@verizon.net

Thurs. @ 7:30PM; Jan 7th & 21st
lbencma@gmail.com



We are saddened by the death of TriCon member Marty Nestor in November.

Our sympathies are with Bill Ackles and his family following the death of his brother, Richard Ackles, in December.

We extend our sympathies to Fred Williams and his family as they mourn the death of Fred's sister, Margaret Smith.

And we offer sympathies to Thad Jackson and his family following the death of his brother, George Jackson.



New Babies

It is a joy to announce two new grandbabies!

Olivia June

Wayland, born on December 15th, to Bobby and Rebecca Wayland. Olivia is the granddaughter of Carole and Bob Wayland.

Eleanor Wolf Mascia was born on December 20th to Dr. Molly Wolf and Patrick Mascia. Eleanor is the granddaughter of Marty Gilpatrick and Russ Wolf.

**NEW ONLINE
PHOTO
DIRECTORY
COMING IN 2021**

... stay tuned for exciting details from the TriCon Welcoming Committee (formerly Membership)!



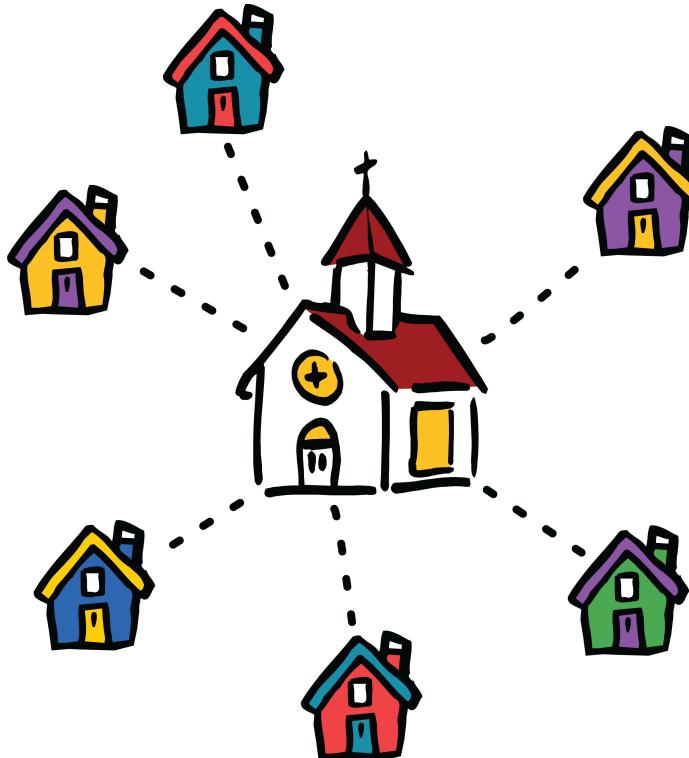
PHOTO DIRECTORY



Do NOT fall for an email request from a friend for help, typically with gift card purchases. Read for tone and check the email address if at all suspicious!

NOTE: TriCon Church will never solicit money through an email!

UPPER ROOM available outside on milk box by Walden St. door.



TOGETHER IN *Spirit*

STAYING CONNECTED

Two upcoming opportunities to get together virtually with church friends:

Wednesday, January 13th at 4 PM

Join Ginger Miller-Smith, newly adopted puppy of Gail Miller and Sophia and Mike Smith for an informal meet and greet.

Bring your dogs, cats, gerbils, stuffed animals, etc. or come pet-less just for fellowship and fun!

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83916394178>

Meeting ID: 839 1639 4178

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,83916394178# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 839 1639 4178

Thursday, January 21st at 1 PM

Join members of the church staff to chat informally about the past year, the new year, or anything else that is on our minds.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88305030083>

Meeting ID: 883 0503 0083

One tap mobile

+16465588656,,88305030083# US (New York)

Dial by your location

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 883 0503 0083



Calling all Committee Chairs! ANNUAL REPORTS!

You should have received an email in December from Amy Bruning with a link to last year's committee reports for inspiration and help to get you started on your 2020 report. The annual reports are also on the triconchurch.org website.

Please email Amy Bruning (abruning@triconchurch.org)
with your report by JANUARY 4TH.



The UCC at Work

Our denomination, The United Church of Christ (UCC), through a collaboration of associations, churches, individuals and conferences, including our own Southern New England Conference, is working with RIP Medical Debt, a non-profit organization that purchases medical debt from third party holders for cents on the dollar and forgives the debt benefiting families crippled by and facing bankruptcy due to this burden.

A statement from the Conference states,

"In the midst of a pandemic that is disproportionately impacting communities of color and with widespread unemployment causing people to lose their insurance just when they may need it most, eliminating medical debt for vulnerable individuals and families is a tangible way in which we are responding to our call to make God's love and justice real."

Climate Change Action—Becoming a Zero Carbon Home

Tuesday, January 19th, 2021, beginning at 7PM

Join our friends at First Parish in an informative talk by David Green, climate activist and expert on creating a Zero Carbon home. All attendees will receive a free e-book copy of his book, Zero Carbon Home. This is an ONLINE event, taking place from 7:00 - 8:00 PM on Jan. 19th. For more information and to register, visit:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zero-carbon-zero-bills-for-concord-tickets-132483819671>



YOUTH GROUP

Sunday Youth Group and Wednesday Discussion Group dates and times, TBD. Christine Kelley, Youth Leader, will be in touch with you through the Group Chat! Email: ckelley@triconchurch.org with any questions.



While our children's education year may look different this school year, one thing hasn't changed - our mission to continue to find safe, meaningful and fun ways to minister to you and your family.

See below for our January 2021 Children's Ministry line-up. There is something for kids of all ages. Please note that there may be update, or programming additions, so please check Carrie's weekly family emails.

Sunday, January 3rd

Faith at Home Focus – Boy Jesus in the Temple

Sunday, January 10th

Faith at Home Focus – Jesus and John the Baptist

SEEKERs and Voyagers Event – Stay tuned for more information.

Sunday, January 17th

Faith at Home Focus – Jesus Brings Good News

Sunday, January 24th

Faith at Home Focus – The Lord of the Sabbath

Sunday, January 31st

Faith at Home Focus – Jesus Fishes for People

Each week Children's Ministry Director, Carrie O'Brien, emails families Faith at Home practices, details about upcoming Voyager and SEEKER events, news and other programming opportunities. If you are not receiving Carrie's emails, or would like to begin receiving her emails, please shoot her an email at cobrien@triconchurch.org.

Did you miss the Christmas Eve services? Wish to revisit them? TriCon Church's YouTube channel offers you the opportunity to watch all of our services. **We especially encourage you to enjoy the 12/24 5PM service, with the special Pageant; and the 12/24 8PM service, with carols and lessons.**

<https://www.youtube.com/c/TriConChurch>

