



Newsletter Update

[January 8 - 14, 2021]

New Year Stars

Let your light shine before other people

The Festival of the Epiphany is the annual Christian occasion which celebrates the Light of God coming into the world. It happens January 6, twelve days after Christmas. Its title is a word which means “showing forth” or “making manifest.” Christ’s incarnation brings in an obvious way the light of God’s presence into the creation.

The visit of the Magi, who followed the light of Christ’s natal star, can be a focus of the observance. The week of Epiphany is also an opportunity to remember that, as the Lord’s people, we are to reflect Christ’s light into the world around us. One method of seeking to grow in our discipleship is our distribution of New Year Stars. These small cards have a star shape, a Biblical word or phrase and one of the Bible passages



where the words are found. People are invited to choose a card (without seeing it first) and use their star words for devotional reflection and a motivation for faithful actions in the year ahead. Often, the word you have will be a helpful word for you. The cards are prayed over, shuffled and shared. *We also provide a version to discover a word for you. See the suggested 2021 process on a separate page in this newsletter.*

Perhaps your word isn’t particularly helpful. Give it a try though, and stay with it for at least the next month. Talk it over with other people, who may see where that attribute IS true about you in ways

you don’t yet perceive. You can also

to pray that you will discover something about your Star Card AND about yourself as the year moves along. (Pastor Greg suggests that, after a diligent effort, you can replace your January card with a new one after Groundhog Day, if you need to.) Be sure that each person in your household has a card, and opportunities discuss what they are learning about the Lord, the Bible, themselves and other people.

Some people have found this devotional exercise enlightening and helpful for them. They place the card in a prominent place, so they see it regularly and are reminded to ponder it, meditate on it, or commit to actions to develop it further. This could be under a refrigerator magnet, on a mirror at home, on the dashboard of your vehicle, or on a pillbox or daily vitamin jar.

Pastor Greg first learned this process from a Christian Educator at a committee meeting in Charlotte years ago. He has brought it to congregations he has served over the past two decades. Edinboro Presbyterian isn’t alone in using New Year Stars. Use [this link](#) to read a story about its growing influence, as reported in [Presbyterian Today](#) magazine. (Contact the church office if you would like to receive a printed copy of the PT article.) Greg really enjoys conversations throughout the year about how you are interacting with your star word.

Photo: Marci Auld Glass, Presbyterians Today magazine

ask your family or friends

Commentary from Pastor Greg

Here's to a HAPPY and NEW year

Happy New Year! Those three little words. So full of honest good wishes. So poignant with future promise.

I'll admit, it is possible for this greeting to be trite or rote or pro forma. As I said in my first sermon – sermons in person and on video – in 58 years I have not seen a new year with such universal response from so many people. The “person on the street” interviews on the December 31 broadcasts always asked how much revelers were looking forward to the new year ahead. Whether discussed in the Dick Clark era or the Ryan Seacrest hosted shows (and those on dozens of other networks and cable channels), the flip to a new calendar had people ready to turn the pages to something new and better. The consensus on TV and here at home is even bigger.

In my memory, there has not been such a unanimous sentiment that the next year really needs to be better than the previous one. It certainly does not take perfect “20/20” hindsight to see that 2020 had widespread misery and disruption and disappointment. The disasters and absurdities of the past twelve months have made it so that nearly everyone – certainly everyone I have personally spoken with – has eager anticipation of 2021.

Just in the last two days though, I see that the flip of the calendar page is not as clean and fresh of a start as we had hoped for in those first few dawning days of 2021. And why wouldn't there be room for renewed hope?! Covid vaccines are being distributed and administered. Pro and college leagues had (albeit with fits and starts) worked through their sports seasons, and many high schools and middle schools are following suit. Education is properly moving back into classrooms and science labs in more and more regions. Lots of positive signs.

Then, this week, you and I wonder if anything has changed at all. We see video and hear news reports of anarchy in our nation's capital. The anger and distrust over ‘stolen’ elections has not abated. Then the moving targets about when the Corona virus will ‘end’ slide again, at least according to *some* of the scientists.

Wasn't it unanimous that 2021 would be better???

I am convinced that it can be. The truth will come out, for those open to seeking it. **Come along with me for a little exercise:** Did President Trump try to steal the election, or had some Democrats already done that? Will people stop attacking federal facilities, be that the halls of Congress or the Federal building in Portland, Oregon? Have mask mandates actually helped or not had all that much impact, or will real research help us know what protocols are truly the ‘best practices’? Can businesses open safely, and if so, which ones and to what extent? Will shutdowns and reopenings be fairly and unselfishly handled? Is Herd Immunity a ‘thing’, and how can I get in on that? What parts of ‘systemic racism’ are harming people, and who is taking unfair advantage of social justice movements? Will the news media ever stop shouting, start listening, and get back to “that's the way it is”?

OK, that was my little exercise. Are you stressed from reading the preceding paragraph? Do these issues – and dozens more like them – make you more anxious and less hopeful? If so, you have diagnosed some of the problem, and are ready for ways to make 2021 NEWER and HAPPIER. If we define our years or our moments by external, worldly matters, we will miss out on opportunities for optimism. God is the same: yesterday, today, and forever. “The poor you will always have with you,” so said our Lord Jesus. “You will hear of wars and rumors of war.” “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's [the same applies to any and all governments] and give to God what is God's.” If you are tired of what you see, give a new vantage point a try.

If you are frazzled, and if you have friends or family members who are overly stressed, get your focus off of the stressors and on to someone who is certain. This does not ignore or downplay the world, nor our God-given role in addressing the injustices and human needs. Stand for freedom and truth. Shine the light of Christ into a weary world. Yet, do not be overcome by the world, because Jesus has overcome the world!

Borrowing an idea from one I found elsewhere, future Sunday bulletins and church newsletter a fill-in-the-blank for you. “On what will I focus this week?” Answer that question with Biblical wisdom, spiritual truth, and trust in a Lord who gives peace amid adversity. Even if 2021 has its challenges and disasters – and it will! – you and I can achieve HAPPINESS (from a source that brings blessedness no matter what else is going on) and NEWNESS (which actually will give other people and institutions reason to do better and to hope.)

Happy New 2021 ! To you, for you, and for us all. Other things may not be good, but God is good. All the time.

Info meeting: Wednesday evening, January 27

Let's try again, with a new Confirmation Journey

This past autumn would have been the time we ordinarily would start a new Confirmation Journey, a months-long exploration by and with adolescents as they move from childhood faith to grown-up faith. We typically offer it in alternating years, starting in the falls of even-numbered years. Obviously that process was interrupted by Covid-related disruptions to church and family life, even though several people have expressed interest for this time through. Now though, as it appears some of the restrictions and discomforts around Corona virus are easing, it is time to invite teens, preteens and their families to get together to talk about what the Confirmation Journey is all about.

There are typically three types of activities which happen during our process. The group meets with the pastor and other congregational leaders for discussion, fun events or mission activities. There are a few home-based activities where the young person works with their parents or other family members, recognizing that the home is the most important context for Christian teaching and faith development. The youth are also invited to meet with mentors, to learn from the life experiences and perspectives of Christians who are not their relatives.

Pastor Greg invites anyone who might be interested to take part in a new orientation meeting, Wednesday, January 27, at 6:45 p.m. For your convenience, this will be a Zoom videoconference (814 734 3511 # 814). Attending this information session does not commit the young person to joining the Journey this year. It simply will be to explain the purpose of this process, answer questions, and seek consensus on schedules and timetables. If you want to find out more but are not available that night, please contact Mary Beth Honeycutt or Pastor Greg, and we will get you up to speed.

Our Confirmation Journey generally centers around middle school ages, but often we have had participants ranging from fifth graders through high schoolers. There is not one “set” age to do Confirmation, because each individual is ready for this process on their own personal sense of faith development.

January Mission of the Month & Per Capita Gifts

Edinboro Presbyterian sets a “Mission of the Month” for most months each year. For January, we are focusing on the ministry and mission which we carry out through our network of 57 Presbyterian congregations in Lake Erie Presbytery.

The regional church helps us to reach out in ways which would be a challenge for individual congregations to do. This includes activities such as supporting mission projects throughout our eight counties, assisting with pastoral searches, and providing educational and practical resources to foster ministry. Some of our gifts to Presbytery underwrite the Ghana Mission Project and other worldwide ministry (like support of our health care missionary Ruth Brown).

Lake Erie Presbytery also benefits us in our local churches. We receive blessings back. Our networking brings us leadership development opportunities, support of local pastors and sessions, and matching grants for big Bold New Initiatives. (Edinboro’s “Garden of Edin” has benefited from *three* of those!)

In addition to “Second Giving” gifts for the January mission, each member of the church (teen, adult, whomever) is encouraged to add to our Presbytery’s per-capita fund. The suggested \$32 per person, payable anytime through the year, pays for these inward benefits and tangible outreach through our regional connections.

Praying into 2021

The Christianity.com website has provided a collection of prayers which individuals, households and congregations can use to ask for God's blessings as we – and the world – start a new year. We can ask God to accomplish what people cannot. We can pray for courage and perspective and peace. Our prayers also should expand beyond our own "wish lists" and seek the good of our neighbors, communities and nations. The launch of a new year is an ideal time to add intentionality and frequency to our prayers.

[christianity.com/wiki/prayer/prayers-for-new-year-pray-to-renew-heart-and-mind](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/prayer/prayers-for-new-year-pray-to-renew-heart-and-mind)

You may wish to look up these prayers, and use one a day as 2021 launches. It can help to deepen our own prayers when we use prayers created by others. Here are a few samples:

Dear God, thank you that you make all things new. Thank you for all that you've allowed into our lives this past year, the good along with the hard things, which have reminded us how much we need you and rely on your presence filling us every single day. We pray for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you will guide our decisions and turn our hearts to deeply desire you above all else.

We ask for your wisdom, strength, and power to be constantly present within us. Make us strong and courageous for the road ahead. Give us ability beyond what we feel able, let your gifts flow freely through us, so that you would be honored by our lives, and others would be drawn to you. Whisper in our ears when we need to run, and whisper in our heart when we need to stand our ground. We ask for discernment and insight beyond our years, so that we understand your will, hear your voice, and know your ways. Amen.

— Debbie McDaniel

Lord Jesus, I thank You that You are with me, that You are in me. Resolutions might come in one year and go out the other. Open my ears this year, so that I can hear You and enjoy You at every junction, when You tell me to turn right or left.

Moving in a new direction, opposite my comfort, is hard. I need Your strength, Your wisdom, Your confidence. I believe You will empower me as I step out in faith. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

— Pete Briscoe & Lynn Cowell

WORSHIP at FUPC

... and wherever you are

11 a.m. Sundays

Our sanctuary is open on Sundays! We offer gathered, in-person worship each weekend, with all appropriate adaptations and health/safety protocols.

For those who attend and feel comfortable doing so, we offer child-friendly activities. As we are able, there is a version of our usual "Sunday's Cool" for children in the Fellowship Hall, right after the Time With Younger Worshipers in the sanctuary. Some weeks, we instead offer activity sheets which children can do while they stay in the larger worship service. Families are also welcomed to move into the youth room, where they can have children sit with them and do activities there while the parents can still see or hear the worship service. Choose whichever option fits your family needs and preferences.

Anytime, any day

Web videos are posted each Sunday morning with at-home worship experiences. Some of these are uniquely produced for our "virtual" worshipers, although we intend to add more video recorded directly from our sanctuary services as we move into the new year. These are pre-recorded, so you do not need to go online at a specific time to watch and to worship. It is like "on demand" TV – you can call it up anytime convenient for you. This not only the current week; a large collection of music and messages and prayers from past months are also available to you.

Find these on the "Worship & Videos" page of [Edinboro Presby.org](https://www.edinboro.org). We also have expanded our capacity to make DVDs of sanctuary services and our online worship presentations. Simply ask through Sue Johnson at the church office if you would like to receive these, occasionally or on an ongoing basis, for yourself or for someone you know.

THANK YOU !

- A note of appreciation from our pastor:

My friends,

I am so grateful for your support, participation and encouragement during this strange year. I remain awed at the kindnesses you shared with me at Christmastime. I thank you for your generous blessings, financially and in so many just-as-valuable ways. The ways you have shared yourselves with me, my family and my ministry is greatly appreciated.

Jesus' Peace and Joy!

Greg

- We are grateful for the volunteers who helped us make Advent and Christmas meaningful. Those who assisted as readers and candle lighters at December worship, in the sanctuary or through online videos include: Darryl and Leslie Lawton, Cam and Sylvia Lawton, Hilary and Michael Hobbs, Kaydan and Olivia Pavolko, Joanne Pavolko, Marilee Wnek, Rick and Sue Walker, Art and Harriet Smaltz, Debbie and Randy Mehlenbacher, Shari Gould and Lorraine Hayes
- Music is such an important part of the holidays. We are grateful for what Gena Shirley and Mark Brice do to enhance our worship. Thank you to those who have been in our in-person ensembles to add to our Advent and Christmas worship in person, as well as our vocal and handbell choir members over the past few years whose musical talents we could revisit via videos.
- Thank you as well everyone who did set up, take down, and decorating of our sanctuary.
- Everyone who has been financial supporters of Edinboro Presbyterian during 2020 should also know how vital you have been to our ministry, mission and care. Thank you for your faithfulness, to the extent you could in all these extenuating circumstances.

News about our Presbytery people

ANITA BERNHARDT WILL BE OUR NEXT GENERAL PRESBYTER

At a special meeting January 5 with 50 in attendance, Lake Erie Presbytery elected our next General Presbyter. The **Rev. Anita Bernhardt** will take this leadership/transformational role for our 57 churches starting February 1. Prior to her current work as temporary pastor at Eastminster Presbyterian Church in Erie, she carried out extensive work and multi-denominational ministry in local congregations and regional networks, including Western North Carolina Presbytery.

The nominating committee commended her to us, bring "compassion and caring. She nurtures relationships, has a collaborative work style, and will foster hope and respect. Anita has a particular gift of nudging congregations toward the future."

Anita will start her service in this role February 1.

DAVID OYLER'S RETIREMENT FULLY BEGINS, FINALLY

The Rev. Dr. David Oyler, who retired in July as Lake Erie Presbytery's General Presbyter, entered his retirement as of the end of the year. Even as he served Lake Erie three-quarters time, he also was filling in while Beaver-Butler worked to fill its General Presbyter vacancy. The leadership position for our churches in counties north of Pittsburgh was initially planned for a six-month interim, but it stretched across 29 months. Now David has concluded his work at Beaver-Butler as well. He and his wife Becky moved to the Pittsburgh area last summer, after his 17 years of service to us in northwest Pennsylvania.

New Year Stars: Get a Bible Word for 2021

We at FUPC hand out a New Year Star to people at worship early each January, and we send randomly-selected Star cards to those who receive our newsletter and Prayer/Calendar by postal mail. For those of you who get our publications electronically (website or e-mail), here is a way for you to get a word which might be your word for 2021. All the words this year are from the Psalms.

Remember, there are various ways you can explore the personal significance of the trait or blessing. You might meditate on it as an attribute of God. It might be something to celebrate and utilize, if it is already strong among your talents or describes your faith personality. It might be something to pray about and work on, if it might be a growth area in the year ahead. Search for your word or phrase (now and all year) in Bible verses.



For this year, in order to randomly/prayerfully/providentially provide a Star card to each person, try this process:

- ★ Take the **THIRD** letter of your **MIDDLE** name. (If you have no middle name, or it has 1 or 2 letters, use the next-to-last letter of your first name.)
- ★ **ADD** the number of letters in your **FIRST** name to the number in your **MIDDLE** name. That **TOTAL** is what you will use for the chart below. (If it is 6 or less, add 10. If the total is 17 or more, subtract 10.)
- ★ Use that combination of a letter and a number to find your word below. Cut out the star on this page and write your word on it.

- ★ Put your Star Card in a prominent place in your home, car or workplace where you will see it regularly.

A or K or U	7= SALVATION 12= PRAISING	8= COUNSEL 13= ENTHRONED	9= STRENGTH 14= REDEEM	10= YEARNS 15= MERCY	11= DWELL 16= SHIELD
B or L or V	7= INVITE 12= DELIVERER	8= MIGHTY 13= RESCUED	9= TRUST 14= ANSWER	10= UPRIGHT 15= PROCLAIM	11= NOT BE AFRAID 16= ABUNDANT
C or M or W	7= KNOCK 12= WORTHY	8= DOMINION 13= DELIGHTS	9= GLORIOUS 14= EXTOL	10= UPHOLDS 15= STRENGTHENS	11= EXALT 16= BLESSES
D or N or X	7= SEEK 12= AWESOME	8= REJOICE! 13= LOVING	9= SPLENDOR 14= SHEPHERD	10= FAITHFUL 15= LIFTS UP	11= MEDITATE 16= SING
E or O or Y	7= GENEROUS 12= JOYFULLY	8= HOPE 13= JUSTICE	9= ZEAL 14= TRUSTS	10= STRIVE 15= ACTION	11= COMFORT 16= BRIGHT STAR
F or P or Z	7= SEARCH 12= THE LORD RESTORES	8= DILIGENCE 13 or 14= LOOK TO HIM	9= CONFIDENT 15= REIGNS	10= CALL ON HIM 16= GIVE US LIFE	11= GOODNESS
G or H or R	7= CERTAINTY 12= OUR HELP	8= TRANSFORMED 13= LIGHT	9= REFUGE 14= BE NEAR	10= FLOURISH 15= HOLY	11= SAVED BY FAITH 16= THE LORD LEADS
I or J or S	7= TEACHING 12= CONQUEROR	8= AUTHORITY 13= ALLELUIA!	9= DEFENDER 14= A NEW DAY	10= CELEBRATE 15= REDEMPTION	11= UNFAILING LOVE 16= RAISED US UP
Q or T	7= GREATNESS 12= PEACE	8= SENT 13= BEHOLD	9= PERSISTENCE 14= FORGIVEN	10= TEACH ME 15= FORTRESS	11= THE LORD GUIDES 16= FAITHFULNESS LASTS

