

Go And... Start Anew

January 16, Minutes

Number of Participants: 16 at 7:11

Opening Entertainment: What is your favorite or least favorite thing about snow?

Favorite

- When it goes away
- When it makes things look pretty but doesn't mess up the roads
- Excuse to stay inside
- Looking at it from the comfort of a warm and cozy home
- Build a snowperson
- A good book and a hot cup of tea
- Ice Skating

Least:

- Shoveling
- The Cold - especially the wind
- Unsafe travel conditions

Welcome and Prayer: Rev. Joe Graumann

- Prayer for Epiphany from the [New Zealand Prayer Book](#)

Dwelling in the Word: Lynn Perry and Rev. Judy Anderson

Lynn gave a "somewhat dramatic" retelling of the story of Jonah and led us in discussion

- What catches your attention?
 - Jonah was such a whiner!
 - Jonah forgot so quickly - he was right in the middle of it, but when things didn't go his way, he forgot again and again (hello hubris)
 - "You're doing some really bad stuff and I'm noticing" - God
 - "The Lord knew exactly what he was up to"
 - God sees
 - "Isn't that such a human reaction"
 - Sometimes we go willingly, sometimes we go kicking and screaming
- Where is the Spirit nudging you or what might God be inviting us to?
 - Trust in God: Jonah wants to give up, yet regardless of how everything goes, God is still in control, even if Jonah thinks it's the opposite
 - We create our own mess and we need to see the mess we make in order to figure out the right path for ourselves.
 - There will always be obstacles, because we are human, but God will never abandon us
 - Be open to what God might be inviting you to, you never know where the epiphany might be

Star Words: Rev. Daniell McCleary

- Star Words are a relatively new tradition that is often done around Epiphany
- Theological Statements about the tradition ([courtesy of A Sanctified Art](#))

- 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.
- We trust that God uses multiple ways to guide us and speak to us. Star words are one such lens that might provide us a way to look for God in our midst, both actively and in hindsight.
- 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.
- We know that the most common prayer practice for many involves speaking to God as opposed to silence or contemplation. We believe that star words invite a new prayer rhythm of reflection and review that can be a powerful new way to connect with God.
- Pick a number between 1 and 149, whatever the word is assigned with your number will be your star word for the year
 - If you would like to be assigned a star word, please email Rev. Danielle McCleary at
 - Examples of the Star Words handed out: seek, generosity, journey, mercy, forgive, release, welcome, health, invite, empathy, play, abundance, renew, return, comfort, pray
- Participants spent time reflecting on their star words, listening to music, and answering the following questions in whatever way felt appropriate for them (writing, doodling, pondering, conversation with others)
 - How do you feel about your word?
 - How does the word connect to your life?
 - What scripture, phrase, or song can you carry with you to help you focus on your word?
 - In what ways do you think this word can help you live out your faith or share your faith with others?
 - Why do you think the Holy Spirit gave you this word? Is it an invitation that comes with a challenge?
 - What is one way you could live into your word this year? How might this word work through you?

Large Group Reflection:

- Individuals took opportunities to share their reactions and responses to their Star Words and the ways they are invitations or challenges
- Scripture stories, music, and personal experiences were shared
- Sometimes our words are an opportunity to rethink about the meaning and definition and lived reality of what a word means
- Star Words can sometimes be affirming to what we are doing
- If at first you are confused or puzzled by your word, be open to what may be revealed!
- We all may feel differently about our word, but we will all get to see how it plays out

Blessing of the Star Words: Rev. Sarah Fryman, from A Sanctified Art

God of heaven and earth,
God who twinkles among the stars
yet was born in a manger,
you are here among us.
You are God with us, Emmanuel.
You know the intricacies of human life,
the weariness and the joy,
the laughter and the heartbreak,
tired bodies and little wins and anxiety for what is to come.
You knew the grief of losing a loved one.
You knew the feeling of not having a bed to call your own.
You knew the pain of betrayal and sore feet and being misunderstood.
And so with confidence that nothing is too big, too small, too complicated for you to hold,
we ask for your hand on those in our community who are hurting.
Yet within the weariness of human life, you also knew joy.
You knew the companionship of close friends
and the joy of dancing at a wedding while the wine was flowing.
You knew laughter and deep love and how a field of flowers can take your breath away.
We know that you are present in all the joys of our lives,
and you are celebrating with us this evening.
You hold it all, God, so we lay it at your feet.
We lay it before you so we can return home lighter,
rejoicing at the wonders we have encountered in this place.
With gratitude and joy we pray, amen.

Resources for Star Words:

- <https://sanctifiedart.org/blog/how-does-a-weary-world-rejoice-liturgy-for-epiphany-sunday>
- <https://spaciousfaith.com/2023/01/04/worship-words-star-words-for-epiphany/>
- <https://www.trcnyc.org/starwords/>

Join the NJ Synod Anti-Racism Team on Feb 20th from 7-9pm

A Long Talk About the Uncomfortable Truth with co-creator Kyle Williams
Would you like help handling tough, uncomfortable conversations about racism? Join the conversation focused on truth, understanding, and problem solving, leading to individual and cooperative activism. In essence, the experience is an honest conversation about how we can all do more than just being personally “not racist.”

Register on the NJ Synod Website:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAudOGrrzMjEtQ91nS9ldkg4UFqIFj_IT9b#/registration

See you next month for Go and Love (your neighbor) on February 27th at 7:00 pm

Go And Planning Team:

- Rev. Maristela Freiberg, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to Bishop
- Rev. Courtney Smith Westerlund, Messiah Oakland
- Rev. Danielle McCleary, St. Matthew Secaucus
- Lois Parrett, Abiding Presence Ewing, and NJ Synod Staff
- Rev. Judy Anderson, St. Thomas Brick
- Rev. Dianne Lewis, Trinity Jersey City
- Rev. Menzi Nkambule, St. Matthew Jersey City
- Rev. Joe Graumann, St. Stephen Woodbury
- Rev. Sarah Fryman, Grace Bayonne
- Lynn Perry, Grace Mendham