

Epiphany (Jan. 3 - Feb. 14, 2021)

Jesus offers newness



A New Year is here! In this 2021 Epiphany series, we explore early chapters of the Gospels Mark and John, taking note of the ways that Jesus offers newness in a variety of ways. Fully aware of our own context, the 2020 pandemic year, and divisive political climate, we not only consider how Jesus disrupted the familiar by seeing peoples' needs, wounds, and injustices up close, but also how Jesus invites us now (in 2021) to see those right in front of us, to be present to others' wounds and longings, and to take risks by crossing boundaries to be transformed and to help transform. Such vulnerable, personal acts of love inevitably become political, as well.

Small groups will lead worship during this series, and we look forward to how a wide variety of participants engage the Gospel texts and what stories of newness, needs, healing, and transformation that emerge. As an Assembly faith community, we have had to adapt to all kinds of newness due to the COVID-19 pandemic. "Returning home the same way we came" when the pandemic is over is not realistic. Newness will surely continue. In wrestling with the challenges of newness, we ask ourselves: what have we had to let go of, or what will we willingly drop, in order to pick up the life-giving good news Jesus offers? What "nets" are we trapped in, and what does it feel like to become freed? What could it look like to be healed, seen, forgiven? We are also invited to consider relating and reconciling giving as Jesus did, becoming people who see, care for, heal, and forgive others. These questions surely have implications for our daily lives at home, work, and as an Assembly family (including in worship), as well as for being agents of change as followers of Christ.

Join us in these six weeks as we follow Jesus on an action-packed journey of ministry and healing, taking risks to be changed by the newness Jesus offers.

During **Second Hour**, Karl Shelly and Paul Keim will be leading an adult Sunday School class focused on exploring the parameters and meaning of Progressive Christianity. You will also have the option to be in fellowship break-out rooms instead using this link [Break out rooms](#)

[Link to Lectionary texts](#)

Art by Dave Zelenka

Date	Text	Story	Theme	Worship Leader	Preacher
1/10/21	Mark 1:4-11	Jesus' baptism	New in baptism: being Spirit-led	Small Group Bee	Kristen Swartley
1/17/21	John 1:43-51	'Can anything good come from Nazareth?'	New eyes: "Come and see" (Jesus)	Group Polar Bear	Sean Smuts
1/24/21	Mark 1:14-20	Simon & Andrew drop their nets to follow Jesus	Leaving old ways, following new priorities & callings	Group Beta	TBD
1/31/21	Mark 1:21-28	Unclean spirit	New authority: Release from that which binds us/inner voices	Group Cardinal	Scott Coulter
2/7/21	Mark 2:1-12	Jesus heals the paralytic	Newly healed, new understanding	MYF	Karl Shelly

A Note about Zoom worship:

Zoom has given us new ways to interact with each other. During this season of Epiphany we are encouraging worship participants to be intentional about how we use Zoom's chat feature. In the past, we have enabled participants to use it to communicate with everyone; to share their commentary, words of affirmation, and fun banter. Some of us have enjoyed this interactive piece of worship in that it made worship feel participatory and engaged.

During this season, we are changing the settings so that you will also be able to chat privately with people instead of only chatting publicly. We especially hope that you share your words of affirmation or expressions of care using the private chat; just to the one you're chatting to. Affirmation is good and important, but we don't want our worship to be a space where some get lots of public affirmation and others don't. This leads to some people feeling undervalued and others feeling like worship participation is about getting "likes" rather than deepening our relationship with the One who proclaims that all of us are beloved by God.

However, we are inviting people to use the "everyone chat" during two parts of worship:

- 1.) During the call to worship, all are encouraged to type into the chat the things that you are "bringing with you" to worship each morning; the concerns you carry; the things you want to lay down. If you are watching the service from your couch, you might want to get closer for this part of worship, so that you can read the chats. Or you might just enjoy the time of silence.
- 2.) During the Sharing time. Some people feel more comfortable typing rather than unmuting and sharing aloud. Pastors will be monitoring the chat so that those concerns can be included in the pastoral prayer and the Wednesday prayer and sharing.

