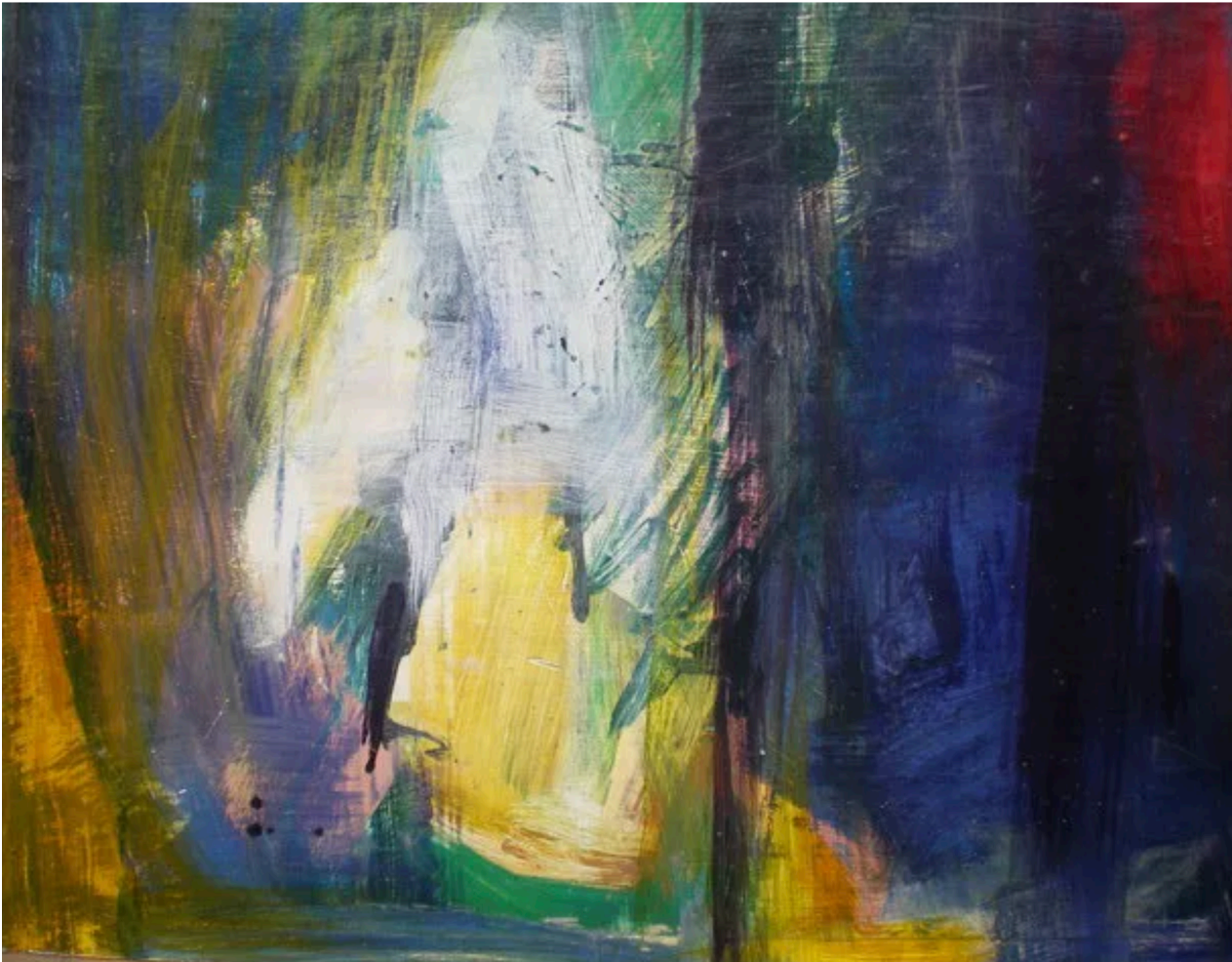


# EPIPHANY

2024



GOOD SHEPHERD  
NEW YORK



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# Welcome to Epiphany.

Epiphany celebrates the light of Christ being revealed to the wider world. This is symbolized by the visit to Bethlehem by the Three Wise Men, also known as the Three Kings or Magi. According to the Gospel of Matthew, they followed the star of Bethlehem to find Jesus and present Him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

The Holy Family receives these strangers from the East along with their gifts, becoming an icon of hospitality and inclusion. The story offers us a new sensibility — an expectation that God is at work beyond our tribes, cultures and spiritual communities.

The word Epiphany literally means “manifestation”. It is a season where

we consider the life of Jesus and ask, “what is God revealing to the world through the miracles, the vivid parables, the dramatic healings, the rich conversations, the fiery debates, and the wise teachings of Jesus?”

The work of our spiritual formation during Epiphany is to build a bridge between Jesus’ life and ours, even as we build bridges with our neighbors through hospitality.

There are three key stories for the season of Epiphany, each a point of dramatic revelation: the story of the Magi visiting Christ child, the story of Jesus being baptized, and the story of Jesus’ first miracle turning water into wine.







## “It goes against nature to set goals in the middle of Winter.”

— Leah McDermott

### AN EPIPHANY REFLECTION

By Alicia Divers

As we usher in the New Year, there is a societal, even capitalistic urge or expectation to improve, change, and evolve into a magically new version of yourself as the clock strikes midnight. January hums to the beat of the familiar refrain, "A new year and a new you." Don't get me wrong; there is a certain kind of energy and comfort in knowing that things do indeed eventually come to an end. For many of you, the start of a new calendar year brings great energy, clarity, and movement. But for a moment, let's suspend the "goal-setting you," or "the new habits you," and orient ourselves away from the annual calendar filled with resolutions and expectations. Instead, let's locate ourselves within the seasonal calendar of winter that embodies stillness, and darkness, designed for internal reflection, hibernation, and rest.

Our bodies have a way of defying the calendar and inviting us to attune to the rhythms and seasons around us. Winter is for being, not becoming. She creates space, bandwidth, and a pause.

Even now, I invite you take a pause. Take a moment to close your eyes and find your breath. Begin to attune to the inner part of you and bring to mind winter.

What do you sense? How does it feel? What memories come to mind? What sensations do you feel?

Welcome what is coming into your awareness. Don't try to change it, but see if you can just be with the sensation, the emotion, or the memory

that winter and all it has to bring. Just begin to notice within yourself what is present now.

Winter's simplicity and quietness serve as a reflection of our inner state. As nature sheds its external layers, appearing dormant to external observers, it extends an invitation for us to embrace stillness. The season encourages us to be present in our inner lives, resisting the urge to constantly strive or transform.

Consider this winter as an invitation to "be" rather than constantly "become." Amid the external demands, let's practice the art of allowing. Embrace the tranquility and be present with the spectrum of emotions within – anger, grief, joy, disappointment. Resist the impulse to change or fix; simply be with what is, fostering a connection with our authentic selves during this season of introspection that will make way for the “becoming” and new life of spring.

So, what are some tangible ways that you can support yourself just “be”ing this winter? I would recommend cozy blankets, hot tea, deep conversations, dinner parties, or conversely canceled plans, home-cooked meals, nights-in, and yummy soups. Or how about, supportive movements like yoga or walking, nesting and decluttering, meditating, and journaling. Grab a loved one and, enjoy quiet nights of starry skies, one-to-one connection, and prayer.

Winter invites you to be just as you are. Rest, release, and be restored. Then, you can be ready to shed the sleep and blossom up into spring.



**HIBERNATE**

**REST**

**DECLUTTER**

**GO INWARD**

**FEAST**



# Quiet Joy: On Winter's Invitation To Be Transformed

By Micha Boyett Hohorst

We all have stories of the moment Life shook us so deeply that we woke up and realized our way of being in the world wasn't going to work anymore. Mine happened over the course of Fall 2019, after a nasty fall down some concrete stairs. The concussion that followed did not line up with my general way of dealing with setbacks. I did my duty to rest a few days and move on with my responsibilities, but my inflamed brain and body refused to cooperate. It was seven months before the confusion, the fogginess, and the chronic pain began to settle. There was only one way for me to heal, and it was a way I refused: slowness, rest, and releasing the expectations I had on myself and my family.

It's trendy right now to talk about rest. But it's still not acceptable to actually practice it. I know this because, even though I've been writing about rest, thinking about rest, and attempting to practice it intentionally in my days, I still beam like the "Girl of the Year" award winner I was in middle school whenever someone comments on my ability to hustle. "People admired me for how much I got done," Katherine May writes in her book *Wintering: The Power of Rest and Retreat in Difficult Times*. "I lapped it up, but felt secretly that I was only trying to keep pace with everyone else, and they seemed to be coping far better." She goes on to point to that feature of modern life we all recognize, our "believing that everything is urgent and that I can never do enough."



I didn't know how to heal from my concussion. I knew how to do the exercises the physical therapist gave me. I knew how to take the medicine the neurologist prescribed. But rest? Who knows how to rest, really? Everything is urgent. And if we are good because we get things done, who are we if we don't?

May says that "transformation is the business of winter." I love the east coast for the starkness of winter's business. After a decade in California, I'm still mesmerized by the austerity of this season's bare trees, and the backdrop of the sky that reveals itself only in winter. It's wise for us to recognize that we are shaped by the reality of the sideways and brief daylight, the bareness, the cold that surrounds us. Winter strips us in the same way it does the trees. We've just trained ourselves not to notice, to bundle up, turn on our heaters and artificial lights, and keep on producing. But what if this season is an invitation to acknowledge our limits, and honor the limits in one another, to practice being still, less productive, more joyful?

In the wisdom of the Church calendar, we find the season of Epiphany, literally the manifestation of divine wisdom or a moment of sudden revelation or insight, right smack in the middle of winter. Revelation in the darkness, in the sparseness of our

own lives. How will we allow ourselves to be transformed?

I'm still learning how to live with a body that experiences chronic pain as a consequence of that fall four years ago. But the gift of my body's limits has been God's invitation to find out what it means to rest, and actually learn to practice it. It's not, I've learned, sitting. It's not necessarily napping. It's a simpler sort of knowing, a kind of pursuit of joy for the sake of joy. As May writes, "I had no idea how much these quiet pleasures had retreated from my life while I was rushing around, and now I'm inviting them back in: still, rhythmic work with the hands, the kind of light concentration that allows you to dream, and the sense of kindness done in the process."

Maybe kindness is the word we're invited to this season of Epiphany. Can we allow ourselves to cease the relentless pursuit of doing enough, and instead choose to be kind to ourselves and one another—to make warm and generous meals, to sit with people we love under blankets, to dream, and to ask ourselves who we are if we're not proving ourselves?

Maybe we all need to heal our brains a little—concussed or not—in order to learn to be in this world in a truer way. Maybe our own inner winter can only be made whole through joy.

## **Winter Small Groups**

Winter groups launch the week of January 15th a 6-week exploration of the Lord's Prayer. Small groups are a great way to meet people in the congregation and develop friendships that support your faith.

Many of our groups, specifically in Manhattan, are already at capacity and we are looking for individuals who would be willing to lead groups through hosting in their homes and/or willing to serve as a facilitator. If you are interested in learning more about small groups leadership, you can contact our Pastor of Community and Mission, [Alicia Divers](#) for more information.

## **Epiphany Concert Series**

This Epiphany we'll be holding a candlelight concert series as we lean into the quiet and contemplation of the winter season. Join us every Wednesday, January 10-February 7, at 7pm in the Chapel for our Epiphany concert series featuring instrumental performances by musicians in our Good Shepherd Collective.

## **Youth Ministry**

The youth ministry is jumping back into its regular schedule of Sunday mornings at 9:30 in Sherred Hall and Wednesday nights in the Duhan(?) Hall basement lounge together from 6-8. (Dinner on Wednesdays is always included!) We are planning lots of great experiences for our students this winter and spring, and can't wait to share them soon. Parents, if you'd like more information on our youth program, or would like to be added to our youth group email list, send a note to Micha Hohorst at [micha@goodshepherdnewyork.com](mailto:micha@goodshepherdnewyork.com).

## **Family Valentine's Lunch**

On Sunday February 11th, we are having a Family Valentines' lunch and crafts event at 12:30pm in Sherred Hall on the second floor. We will be creating something beautiful for our loved ones. All materials and food provided. RSVP at [gabriela@goodshepherdnewyork.com](mailto:gabriela@goodshepherdnewyork.com) so we can plan accordingly.



# Chalking The Door.

To chalk the door for Epiphany, one would write in chalk on the outside doorframe:

**20 + C + M + B + 24**

Feel free to adapt this practice as you see fit, but see below a suggestion for how to incorporate prayer and scripture readings into the practice of chalking the door!

*After singing a joyful hymn, such as “O Come, All Ye Faithful” the leader begins:*

**Leader:** Peace be with this house and with all who live here. Blessed be God forever.

**All: Blessed be God forever!**

**Leader:** Today we gather in this holy place to recognize that Christ dwells here. As the Three Kings followed the light of the star, we too follow the light of Christ to be a place of welcome, a people of generosity, and a dwelling place for God. The home is where we first learn to pray and search for Christ, to forgive and receive forgiveness, to offer our gifts, and to bless each other.

Let us then ask God to open our hearts so that, as the doors of this home are opened to neighbor and traveler, this family may be a source of welcome for all in need and a place where Christ is found.

As the words of the Gospel of John are proclaimed, let us consecrate this door and the home it protects, and all the doors herein to Christ who is the sheep.

Let the front door be the threshold that leads both ways to the blessings and goodness of God.

*As the Scripture below is proclaimed, the oldest and the youngest persons of the household may take turns using chalk to inscribe “20 + C + M + B + 24” on the outside lintel of the front door.*

A reader may slowly read the following text of sacred Scripture from the family Bible as the inscription is written over the door – John 1:13-14.

**Reader:**

In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God,  
and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. And the Word became flesh  
and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory,  
the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.  
The gospel of the Lord.

**All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

(inscribe 2) (inscribe 0) (inscribe +) (inscribe C) (inscribe +) (inscribe M) (inscribe +)  
(inscribe B) (inscribe +) (inscribe 2) (inscribe 4)