



DON'T FORGET EPIPHANY!

AN EXPERIENCE OF INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP AND LEARNING

By Tori Schmit

Have you ever gone outside on a clear night
to lie down in a field and look at the stars?



The heavens are filled with them; so many that you can hardly begin to count. Let's lie down right here in the church and pretend we're lying in a field. It's dark, and there is no one else around. The sky is filled with thousands upon thousands of amazing stars—big bright stars and tiny winking ones. Blue, pink and white stars fill the night sky. As we gaze up at all the stars, we see one very special star that outshines all others—the brightest and the biggest.



This is how we begin our Epiphany service of worship. The floor at the front of the church is full with children gazing up to the heavens of the sanctuary ceiling. The rest of the congregation leans way back in the pews to join in the storytelling of that first Epiphany. And, as the story of the magi following that amazing star is told, stars begin to appear on the ceiling of the darkened room. Feasting our eyes on the night sky, we drink in the wonder of their journey and the majesty of the Christ child who greeted them at the story's end.

Litany for Dedication

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
how I wonder what you are,
Up above the world so high,
like a diamond in the sky!
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
how I wonder what you are!

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
wise men journey from afar,
following your shining light
to the holy babe tonight.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
now I know just what you are!

*Little Star, from My First Bible Songs.
Arranged by Anna Laura Page and Jean Anne Shaffeman.
Alfred Publishing Co., Inc.*



Preparing the Space

For our Epiphany worship service, we planned a simple but engaging sharing of the Epiphany story. No church school classes were held that day, giving the teachers a much deserved



The Presbyterian Church in Canada
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break after their extraordinary efforts leading up to Christmas. We all gathered together in the sanctuary for worship. The Christmas trees at the front of the sanctuary had been stripped of their decorations and filled with twinkling white lights. White candles were the only other decoration. It looked a little like Christmas, but different. Something important was going to happen, but what? Early in the worship service, the children and anyone else who wanted to join them were invited to come to the front and find a place to lie down on the floor. Robed and wired with microphone, I lay down on the floor and presented the message for the day. A few minutes into the story, I invited everyone to close their eyes and imagine a star-filled night sky. On cue, a choir member turned out all the lights and, bit by bit, the ceiling filled with the stars of the heavens. A borrowed stage light with a glass slide of the night sky cast a sea of stars over the entire ceiling and we were transported back to the night of the magi's journey. Pointing to the brightest star of all, we travelled with the magi to Bethlehem. We took all the time we needed to tell the story well. No three-minute lesson before we go off somewhere else!

This was a message for everyone, to be savoured by the congregation.

Later in the service, brown lunch bags filled with gold pipe cleaners were passed down the pews. Each person was invited to make a gold star from one or two of them and place it on the tree as part of the day's offering. In bringing each star to the tree, we thought of the ways that we could bring light into the world, just as Christ came to be our light. By the end of the service, the sanctuary was filled with shining lights welcoming the one who comes as light to us all.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage." Matthew 2:1-2