



Dover First UMC's Weekly Newsletter

January 2, 2026

Let's Worship Together

Sundays at 10:20 a.m.
in the Sanctuary

Recharge Service

Live Contemporary Music
Last Sunday of the Month
Fellowship Hall at 6 p.m.

Nursery Care

Sunday mornings
for children 1 to 3
in rooms 1 and 3

Preschool

Sunday mornings
for children 4 to 6

Children's Ministry

Kidz Min Church
during Sunday Worship

Youth Ministry

Youth Group for grades
middle and high school
Sundays at 6 p.m.

Our Website

Visit **doverfirst.org**
for online services,
special studies,
announcements,
opportunities to serve,
and the church calendar

Sisters and Brothers,

Welcome to 2026! My prayer is that your 2026 would be blessed with God's presence. I understand that life is going to take turns and bring about highs and lows. Through it all I trust that you will know God's presence in your life. I have found that if we are going to find God's presence in life we need to practice attending to God.

There are many ways to attend to God: prayer, participating in worship, celebrating communion, fasting all come to mind. But in 2026 I would like to invite you to join with me in focusing on reading Scripture. It made news this fall that Bible sales were up in America so let's put them to use in 2026. I think many get intimidated by reading the Bible (especially the Old Testament). So rather than something like a "read the Bible in a year plan" I want to focus on specific books and understand them. With that in mind, here is my Bible reading plan for January. Beginning on Sunday, I am reading Philippians in January. Each week I am taking one chapter and rereading it each day. Philippians is a book about joy and hope and I cannot think of a better way to enter 2026 than thinking on these.

January 4-10—Chapter 1

January 11-17—Chapter 2

January 18-24—Chapter 3

January 25-31—Chapter 4

I invite you to join with me in this exercise and if you want to add to it, you can use biblegateway.com (or a similar program) and read each day from a different translation.

Blessings,

Pastor Wes



Welcome to Worship

Epiphany Sunday

January 4, 2026

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude “Birthday of a King”
William Neidlinger

Call to Worship Psalm 72:1-4

L: Give the king your justice, O God,

ALL: And your righteousness to the royal son!

L: May he judge your people with righteousness,

ALL: And your poor with justice!

L: Let the mountains bear prosperity for the
people,

L: And the hills, in righteousness!

**ALL: May he defend the cause of the poor of the
people,**

ALL: Give deliverance to the needy,

ALL: And crush the oppressor!

*Hymn #254 We Three Kings

Scripture Isaiah 60:1-6

*Hymn #221 In the Bleak Midwinter

Prayer

*Hymn #2173 Shine, Jesus, Shine

Scripture Matthew 2:1-12

Anthem “Arise and Shine! Your Light Has Come!”
arr. Joseph M. Martin

*Offering Introduction/Doxology/Prayer/Lord’s Prayer

Message Guided by Light, Blinded by Power
Pastor Wesley George

Communion

*Hymn #251 Go, Tell It on the Mountain

*Benediction

*Postlude “Go, Tell It on the Mountain”
arr. Colin Curtis

Guided by Light, Blinded by Power

Scripture: Matthew 2:1–12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi from the east came to Jerusalem,² asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east and have come to pay him homage.”³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him,⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶ ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah,
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the magi and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east, until it stopped over the place where the child was.¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Questions

1. How would you feel if you were the magi in this story coming to Jerusalem and experiencing Herod and the religious leaders?
2. Why would “all Jerusalem” be frightened about the birth of a new kind, were they not anticipating the birth of the Messiah?
3. The magi say that a king is born, why does Herod think to ask about the Messiah, what does this say about him?

Background

Related Scriptures: Psalm 72; Isaiah 60:1–6; Luke 2:1–20

The difficulty with the term magi is that it can mean a specific priestly role in the Persian court and/or a general astrologer or soothsayer. There is no clear identification in Matthew for the magi whether they had a formal priestly role or not.

Any attempt to identify the star the magi followed is simply speculation. While some guesses are better than others there is simply not enough information in the text to help us identify the heavenly light.

The traditional interpretation of the Church about the Magi is that they represent all gentiles who come to believe in Jesus this has led to the interpretation that they were from various parts of the world and met in Jerusalem all following the same star.

Guided by Light, Blinded by Power

Reflection

We often assume the magi were unbelieving court magicians from the area of Persia. Let's keep that assumption for the time being and consider what they would think about their journey. God — through a star—led them to search for the king of the Jews. Now, they come to Jerusalem, the capital, and tell the leaders, both political and religious, that they have been sent to find the new king. Not only are these people shocked by the news, their initial response to the magi's comments is fear, from the king and the whole city. Then the king calls in the religious leaders and asks them about a prophesied king. They are literally hearing the king and religious leaders discuss God's message to them about a promised coming king. And then they are dismissed to find that king and they do find what they are looking for as their private message from God confirms the message that those tasked with preserving and understanding God's message have said. I think that most people at this point would understand that God was speaking to them. Yet what would they think of Herod and the rest of the Jews at the time? These individuals who were frightened by the coming of their Messiah. These people who saw the magi following not simply the star but the words of the prophet and did not want to journey with them. What would the magi think of this witness. My guess is they would have trusted in their own experience of God but would have little positive to say about what they discovered in Jerusalem. This means whatever their religious ideals were prior to the trip were completely reinforced during it. And likely they might even assume that God was no longer heard by that people. After all, how would you feel if you were proclaiming God's king had arrived and the response of the people was to turn in fear. And not only that, but they also sided with those currently in power when they wanted to have that king murdered. I know that if I was one of the magi I would question if they had ever heard from God or if they took the message seriously. Herod and the people around him wanted to be in charge, they wanted power. When the magi came saying that God had come to earth and placed power in a different person, Jerusalem reacted in fear. The magi sought God's reign in the world while those in Jerusalem rejected this idea to maintain the power they had.

"The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians: who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, walk out the door, and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable." — Brennan Manning

This quote comes to mind when I think about the experience of the magi. They had an authentic experience with God and when they went to God's people with it, they did not encounter people excited by God. I think of so many in the world today who are hungry for encounters with God and who want to see that our encounters with God are making a difference in our lives. They are confused and upset by Christians who claim to hear from and commune with God but then do not live out the ideals they know we should be holding to. They want to see that we have encountered the life that we speak about. That we do not prop up injustice in the name of preserving power. That we care for those we say we care for and want what is best for all. The same way the magi came to Herod's court looking for excitement about the coming king, the world around us wants to see our excitement about living in his kingdom. The religious experts that Herod brought in did end up pointing the magi toward Jesus but was this really effective? It is probably stretching the analogy too far to say that the magi would have stayed with Jesus if they had seen faith from these religious leaders. However, this is certainly true today. If the people around us only hear us talk about the way to find Jesus without seeing how he has changed our lives, they will probably walk away thinking that he is simply another good person in a sea of good influences. We are not simply people who point the way to Jesus, we are people who encounter Jesus and help others to encounter him.

This Week at Dover First UMC

Sunday **Epiphany Sunday**
10:20 a.m. Worship Service
Communion

Next Sunday
10:20 a.m. Worship Service



Dover Ave. Elementary Prayer Partners

As staff and students return to school on Monday, please remember to pray for the staff member that you chose to pray for at the beginning of the school year, as well as for the students.

Monday No Events

Tuesday
7 p.m. Boy Scouts
Scout Room
7 p.m. WMM Church
Spanish-Speaking

Wednesday
5:30 p.m. Girl Scouts
Multipurpose
Room
6 p.m. Friends in
Fellowship
Lounge
6:30 p.m. Cub Scouts
Education Zone
7 p.m. Choir Rehearsal

Thursday
1:30 p.m. Book Club
Multipurpose
Room
7 p.m. WMM Church
Spanish-Speaking

Friday No Events

Saturday No Events