



## A Bright Star

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I don't know how widespread the practice is, even though it's been around for decades. Giving out "star words" is a revered Epiphany tradition for many congregations, and I worshipped with just such a congregation recently. Worshippers were invited to pick a paper star out of a basket, as we left the sanctuary. Each star had a unique word printed on the opposite side. It was a gift to the recipients, words to guide us throughout the year.

Epiphany marks the revelation to the magi that the baby Jesus was the one whose reign was foretold. Like the magi who followed the star to where the child lay, we are invited to follow our star word as a tangible reminder of God's presence and revelation on a daily basis in our lives. The printed star offers the opportunity to see God through a new lens and invites us into a prayer practice of observation and expectation.

In that moment of selecting your word, there might be a temptation to put back the one you first receive. Some of us might want a better word to guide our year. Don't like the word "Margins"? Want to throw it back in the basket and root around until you find "Happiness"? Tsk, tsk, tsk! One of the boundaries of this activity is this you accept the first word you receive -- as a gift. We might not know what this gift will mean over the course of the year, but we practice seeing God in that gift.



If we pick the word we want, we've already narrowed the possibilities for how we might see God revealed. We will have zeroed in on what we *should* want or be, without freely receiving the gift through revelation. For that reason, your social media feed among Presbyterians right now might include people asking others for a star word. The dictionary is full of words that could be chosen at random, but the gift of a word has the potential to inspire and direct our attention – and intention – to the holy.

I admit that, as a presbytery leader, I've thought about rigging the system by including practical star words in the basket. Pastors might be equally tempted. Could we stuff the basket full of words like volunteer, deacon, teacher, leadership, generosity to the church, or even "building & grounds"? Would that be too obvious? The Presbytery will be starting a search soon for a new treasurer (with thanks to our outgoing treasurer, Tom Wolfe, who needed to step down from the position). I joked with the Personnel Committee that maybe someone would get a paper star with "Treasurer" printed on it. That's probably why I'm not in charge of the words.

[Email me](#) if you would like a star word. I promise not to make you our next Presbytery Treasurer. Whether you choose to receive a star word or not, I pray your year will be filled with revelation of the Christ in your midst. May that gift sustain and surprise you throughout the year.