



A MESSAGE FROM SYNOD STAFF

January 2021

"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: 1-12



Don't pack away the Christmas decorations just yet for while the 2020 calendar may have come down and a new one taken its place the season celebrating Christ's birth isn't quite over. The Christmas season extends through January 6, when we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord.

On this day the Christian church remembers the arrival of the magi – wise ones who journeyed from faraway lands following the light of a star bearing gifts worthy of honoring the arrival of a king. But they do not find the king where one might expect. He is not found in the halls of the palace in mighty Jerusalem. Instead, the star leads them to a modest village, Bethlehem, to a home where they find the child and his mother. Here in this ordinary place, these outsiders pause to pay homage, recognizing the deep presence of the Holy masked in the seemingly ordinary.

Epiphany is an easy day to skip over. It doesn't garner the fanfare of Christmas. This year it lands on a Wednesday, smack dab in the middle of the week. It would be easy to rush on by so we can just get on with the business of looking forward. The days are getting longer now. The calendar is fresh. We can close the book on 2020, a year many of us can't put behind us fast enough. We want desperately to rush headlong into the new year hoping for better things to come. But Epiphany offers us an important reminder to not get ahead of ourselves. There is value in pausing to recognize the holy in the humble.

Human nature leads us to often spend our days either dwelling on the past or planning for the future. But if we take anything away from 2020, may it be a greater appreciation for the present moment, for what is. The significance of time spent with others. The very gift of breath and life and relationship.

Epiphany means sudden illumination, new insight, a revelation. Perhaps the Epiphany for us now is to understand more deeply not only that Christ came to us in a stable long, long ago, or that Christ will indeed come again at some undesignated time and place in the future, but also that Christ is Emmanuel, God With Us, right now.

Perhaps our Epiphany is recognizing again the significance of pausing to honor the very holy in our midst. Might we pause to recognize Christ in the eyes of the ones with whom we sit? Might we practice gratitude for the small and beautiful gifts God offers us each day-the richness of a meal, the comfort of a conversation, the beauty of creation? Might we grow in our sense of the Holy Spirit weaving itself throughout our days? Might we not rush the journey, but rather pause to pay homage to our King by opening our own treasure chests brimming with gifts such as justice, compassion, and love ready to be poured out on our neighbors in honor of our King.

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NEWS & EVENTS

<http://wndsynod.org/events>

First Call Theological Education – Wed., January 27th from 10:30-12:30.

Church Leadership Forums will continue on January 26th at noon with guest Ryan Panzer. Previous forums can be viewed on the synod website.

Zoom Mini sessions for Those Leading Annual Meetings will be led by Deacon Beth Anderson over the lunch hours the week of January 4-7. Each session will be limited to 12 or fewer participants to allow participants time to experiment with various Zoom meeting tools and to ask questions.