

THE ROAD AHEAD
I placed another calendar
Today up on the wall,
And pondered on the coming year,
And just what may befall
In all the days and weeks and months
Before the year has fled –
I wondered why I cannot see
The road that lies ahead.

The days, like jig-saw puzzles, pass –
Some happy, some fun,
Some full of sorrow and of pain;
We take them as they come.
We strive to put each in its place
As though the year we tread.
Sometimes, a hopeless puzzle seems
The year that lies ahead.

I look at the new calendar
And wish that I might see
What beyond tomorrow lies –
What's waiting there for me.
But God, in His far wiser way,
Makes time a book unread,
And we must walk in hope and faith
The road that lies ahead.

SOUTH COMMUNITY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
NEWSLETTER

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JANUARY 2024

MORNING WORSHIP 9:30 A.M.
SUNDAY SCHOOL 11: 00 A.M.

PASTOR JIM MORT
Marion Church Phone- (231)) 743-2834
Parsonage Phone- (231) 743-0062

Vision Statement

*We are a family united by God's love: serving, sharing and
growing together. It is our mission to call people into a
relationship with Jesus Christ.*

Musings on the Wise Men

We just celebrated Christmas. One of the Christmas carols you heard during December was "The Twelve Days of Christmas." This concept of Christmas having more than one day is unfamiliar to us. What the song is referring to is the twelve days in the Christmas season. This season begins on Christmas Day and lasts through January 5th.

The day after the Christmas season is called Epiphany on the church calendar. I always associate Epiphany with the silhouetted image of Three Wise Men bearing gifts as they followed the star. The word *epiphany* means *appearance* or *manifestation*. During Jesus' life, people came to understand who he was in many ways: through his baptism, the miracle at the wedding, or his declaration in the synagogue in Nazareth. But he was first revealed to the Magi. Who were these so-called Magi? They were non-Jews – the first revelation as to who Jesus was (outside of Joseph, Mary, and Elizabeth). It was to these people who were outside of Judaism! Older sources suggest they were known for their knowledge of astronomy and their ability to interpret dreams.

These wise men or Magi appear as a small part of the story surrounding Jesus' birth in the gospel of Matthew. Though they are in the story for a short time, they are still significant for us today.

1. They began their journey because of their beliefs. It was a common belief that when a world leader like a king was born that a special stellar phenomenon would appear in the sky. The Magi saw something that convinced them that they had seen the long-awaited sign. The Jews, the Romans, and the Persians were all watching the skies about that time, looking for signs of the birth of an extraordinary king. The Wise Men saw the star and began their journey.
2. They were willing to follow what they had seen into the unknown. Their journey took them outside their country and their comfort zone. And the Wise Men risked the consequences of disobeying Herod, who was known to behave as a madman when provoked and returned to their country by another way.
3. They were committed to the journey – wherever the star might lead them. The Wise Men set out to find a newborn King by following a star and ended up in finding a baby born to young, relatively poor parents in a stable! Not exactly what they expected after their long, exhausting, and expensive journey!
4. They did what the people in the East would do when visiting royalty. They brought gifts. Gold was the kind of gift that you brought to a king. Frankincense was the kind of gift Myrrh was given to someone who was about to die. Their greatest gift comes to us in the form of a realization. The Wise Men were the first Gentiles to recognize that Jesus belongs to everyone. Good news is for everyone!

Our faith will take us on a journey to unfamiliar places this year. May we look to heaven for guidance, comfort, and strength. May we accept God's blessings where we find them in whatever form they take. May we offer up what we have to our King. And may we share the good news with everyone!!!

Blessings.

Pastor Jim

FINANCES:

Receipts for November - \$ 4,057.99
Disbursements for November - \$ 3,785.87
Receipts year to date - \$ 46,281.39
Disbursements year to date - \$ 47,909.99

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES ***

2- Zoey George
11- Nancy Broersma
28- Dean & Venecia George ***
** ** ** **

Poinsettias

In memory of Arden & Ruth Peterson, Leon & Elouise Harris

In memory of our parents...Jim & Janet Mort

In memory of Don & Esther George

In Memory of Maurice & Evelyne Thomas & Alan Thomas

In memory of Dorothy, Elmer, Greg, & Joseph George
Donna & Ronald Carr

In memory of Doug & Virginia Anderson & Gary Anderson

In memory of Theresa Webster

In memory of fathers & grandparents...Rick & Sheila Mannor
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A PRAYER FOR THE NEW YEAR

Lord, whether I leave behind a year of joy
Or of trials and difficulties,

I pause to give thanks.

Thank you for being with me every day of the year.

Thank you for making all things new
and for giving me the grace of fresh starts
and new beginnings.

Remind me of your presence in the days to come,
Even when I feel pushed and rushed by busyness..

Be glorified in my life this year.

~Amen~

A NEW YEAR'S BLESSING

May God make your year a happy one!
Not by shielding you from all sorrows and pain,
Buy by strengthening you to bear it, as it comes;
Not by making your path easy,
But by making you sturdy to travel any path;
Not by taking hardships from you,
But by taking fear from your heart;
Not by granting you unbroken sunshine,
But by keeping your face bright,
even in the shadows;
not by making your life always pleasant,
but by showing you when people
and their causes need you most,
and by making you anxious to be there to help.
GOD'S LOVE, PEACE, HOPE & JOY
To you for the year ahead.

NEW YEAR

May peace and love be with you,
As another year draws to a close,
For Christmas brings again
The understanding friendship knows.
The memories of days gone by
Come again in December.
A tree, a wreath, a paper bell,
For days that you remember.
The humble and the great will sing
The joyful Christmas song,
While kind thoughts bring near again,
Friends to help the year along.