January 2025

The Good News Herald

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A Small Church with a Big and Open Heart!

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From the Pastor



Happy New Year! May 2025 bring you and your loved ones many blessings! May it be a year in which God's Kin-dom of love, peace, mercy, justice, and grace grows stronger in our broken world.

As the world celebrates a new year, we in the church calendar also celebrate the season of Epiphany. Epiphany, an often-forgotten season in the Church. But it is a season I love because this is the season in which we see the mystery of Christ made known to humanity in a deeper way. It begins with the wise men (# is unknown) from a distant land who have the courage to follow a star that they believe holds an epiphany, a revelation of a divine mystery. The season of Epiphany is an invitation for us to explore how God has and is revealed to the world in Jesus.

For this new year, and for the season of Epiphany, I share with you this reflection by Rev. Ruth Faith Santana-Grace (you can read her entire reflection by going here where the image is also located):

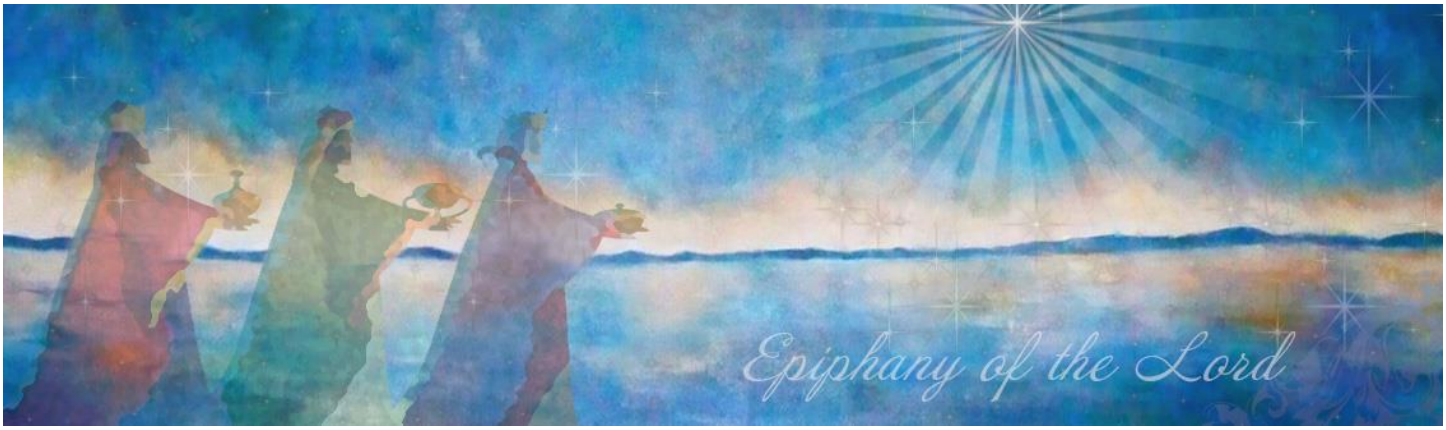
"I have come to understand that the magi are wise – not so much because of their knowledge or studies. They are wise because of their spirits. They are wise because their eyes are not simply turned inward toward the world with which they are most comfortable. They are wise because they sincerely seek understanding beyond what they already know. They are wise because their minds are open to what is going on around them in the world. They are wise because their hearts are open to something beyond themselves. It is this openness that allows them to recognize God's presence and revelation. It is this openness that allows them to proclaim the Messiah as part of their journey. This is the essence of their wisdom. Perhaps it is the essence of all wisdom – that openness to what is greater than ourselves, with a willingness to embrace the mystery of God.

As we begin a new year, I find it helpful to remember this kind of wisdom. We are often tempted to believe we have all the answers. We are tempted to define the world around us by what makes us feel safe. By doing so, we can easily be in danger of missing God's ongoing revelations. So I invite us into a season where we continue to look toward the sky, notwithstanding the darkness. I invite us to look for that light beyond our comfort zones. I invite us to seek out new opportunities. I invite us into a season where we continue our journey of faith together, allowing God to reveal God's self again and again in the face and presence of the apparently ordinary – an infant whose cries and vulnerabilities have brought the possibility of salvation and redemption into the whole of humanity and our world.

This is the essence of Epiphany! And you and I – we have been invited to be part of this grand revelation by embodying God's love in the places where we find ourselves, believing that we have been called together 'for a time such as this.'"

May we be wise and living reflections of that Christ light that broke into the darkness of the night thousands of years ago.

Blessings,
Karla



https://presbyphl.org/2023/01/05/the-wisdom-of-epiphany-by-rev-ruth-faith-santana-grace/

JANUARY CALENDAR

January 5 - Worship and Friendship time; Please sign up for Book Group by this day

January 12 - Adult Education following worship, featuring a Jewish and a Palestinian peacemaker

January 19 - Council Mtg following worship

January 26 - Congregational Meeting following worship

HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

While the total amount contributed needs to be confirmed, Kriss Ace reports we have enough money to buy four flocks of chickens, one bag of seeds, one goat and a water buffalo. Thank you to all who contributed to this project!



Book Group will start again in February!

We had such a wonderful Fall Group and everyone is looking forward to our next book! We welcome newcomers!

- We will meet 3 times for our next book: Sundays Feb, 9, 23, and March 9 from approximately 10:45 (following Worship) to 11:30 a.m.
- The group decided to read *Bethlehem Besieged: Stories of Hope in Time of Trouble*, by Rev. Mitri Raheb. Mitri is a friend of the Wisconsin Conference UCC and has been to Madison several times (most recently last Fall). The Book Group members want to learn more about Palestinian life.
- Rev. Mitri Raheb is a Palestinian Arab and Christian Lutheran pastor who ministers to his people in Bethlehem, where his family has lived for hundreds of years. He is a Palestinian Christian peacemaker, and the most published Palestinian theologian.
- In this book, he presents a powerful collection of compelling personal stories of desperation and hope in the midst of lethal conflict, bringing the Palestinian/Israeli conflict up close and personal. Raheb's lifelong commitment to his people has kept him in the legendary birthplace of Christianity, even as Bethlehem has become a flashpoint in the world's most volatile and hate-filled conflict. His passionate personal testimony lifts up the stray gesture toward friendship, the brave attempts to rebuild life and livelihood in a destroyed land, and the unquenchable desire for justice and peace.
- Professor Harvey G. Cox of Harvard Divinity School writes of this book: “It is required reading for anyone who wants to understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its importance for the whole world.”
- Since writing this book, Mitri founded and is President of the Dar Al-Kalima University in Bethlehem. With the mission of educating the next generation of creative leaders in Palestine (and the Middle East).

The book was copyrighted in 2004 and hard to find in stock. Prices range from $14.25 to $20.00. **If you want a copy, please contact Pastor Karla by January 5.** If you need a partial or full scholarship to be able to afford the book, please let her know that as well.



Friendship Time

Join us on Sunday January 5 as we gather for friendship and refreshments. Many thanks to Sue Bovre for bringing the refreshments! We will gather on the first Sunday of every month and invite you to sign up to provide refreshments (see sign-up sheet on the bulletin board)!



Many thanks to our volunteers who did such a beautiful job decorating our sanctuary!



The Nominating Committee is looking for individuals interested in serving on ministry teams for 2025. If you are willing to use your gifts on committees such as the Finance or Worship & Ministry, please contact a Council member or Pastor Karla. Thank you!



We were delighted to find the nativity statuette shown above (lower right) in our closet. If you know how Zwingli came to receive it, please let our pastor or someone on the Council know!

Cookies for Kelsch

Many thanks to all those who provided goodies and/or helped prepare gift trays! Debbie Versnik delivered them and says the staff were very appreciative!



Advent Worship Memories





In an effort to keep the congregation apprised of our financial status, we will be reporting the monthly contributions and expenses in the bulletin and newsletter.

November contributions	$4,499
November expenses	$8,798



With respiratory illnesses on the rise, it's time to refresh the basics. If you're experiencing symptoms like sneezing, coughing, sore throat, and/or runny nose --- Stay home. Mask up!

(When) the Weather outside is frightful . . .

. . . please use your best judgement in determining whether it is safe for you to venture out to worship or another church event. In the event of inclement weather, Pastor Karla and Council President Petra Streiff will decide whether to cancel worship no later than 7 a.m. on Sunday morning.

In the event of a cancellation, the Council will send out an email, and post it on social media, and those without email will be called. If the church event is on a school day, we will follow guidelines of the local school district. If you have any concerns for your safety, please stay home! And if you are stuck at home during a storm, and are in danger or need assistance, please let us know so we can get you the help you need.



On Sunday, December 29, Zwingli celebrated the ministry of Rev. Rich Pleva and his wife Ruby - to finally have an in-person celebration which we couldn't have when Rich and Ruby left during COVID! Fog and illness kept some away, but those who attended enjoyed this celebration! Thank you, Rich and Ruby, for the blessing of your ministry at Zwingli!

Items of Note

January Birthdays

David Ace

Jeanette Bossingham

Michael Bovre

Doug Brown

Louise Brunkow

Dennis Hustad

Dale Kahl

Brian Legler

Noah O'Dair

Debbie Versnik

January Anniversaries

Kathy & Bob Johnson

Katie & Mike O'Dair



Liturgists needed

We are scheduling Liturgists for the months of January-February-March. It would be most helpful if you would sign up now for a Sunday or two.



Upper Room Devotional Booklets for January/February are now available on the bookshelf by the mailboxes.

We are happy to continue providing this resource for your faith life. If you would like to help sponsor this ongoing ministry, please contact Pastor Karla or the church office. Suggested donation: $2.00/copy or $22/bi-monthly issue (10 copies).



JANUARY 26 after the worship service

Annual reports will be available at the church and via email. Please plan to attend!



Minutes of the November 17, 2024, meeting are now available in the wall pockets near the mailboxes.
Contact the church office to request an electronic copy.

Video Presentations following worship January 12

At the Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting last June, the delegates voted to study a resolution from our Palestine Justice Working Group. This resolution calls for a “Just Peace Between Palestine and Israel” and refers to a resolution that was passed at the United Church of Christ General Synod in 2021. This resolution recognizes that all people living in Palestine and Israel are “created in the image of God and that this bestows ultimate dignity and sacredness to all. It also rejects any theology or ideology including Christian Zionism, antisemitism or anti-Islam bias that would privilege or exclude any one nation, race, culture, or religion within God’s universal economy of grace.”

What was voted on by the Conference delegates was to ask churches to study this resolution, in whatever way they choose, to prepare our delegates for a vote at our 2025 meeting on whether to also adopt this resolution for peace with justice in Israel and Palestine.



To be a part of this study we will show two videos on January 12 after worship. One is about the life and work of Father Elias Chacour, a Melkite (similar and related to Roman Catholic) priest. He grew up in Galilee, norther Palestine, and at the age of eight his quiet Christian village was raided by Zionist (later Israeli) soldiers and they were told they had to leave or be killed. Most of them left, with no where to go, and this begins his story of learning to be a peacemaker and teacher.



The second video is a short talk by Mark Braverman, an American Jew (he says he loves being a Jew). Born in 1948, he says he was taught that the whole world was their enemy but especially the German people and the Arabs. He goes on to tell of how he had an identity crisis as he learned, by going to Palestine, that these things are not true.

Both of these men are remarkable and faithful voices for peace with justice between Israel and Palestine. Please join in viewing these videos. They are only about 40 minutes long (together) so there will be time for discussion within an hour.

“Blessed are the Peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

Notice of Public Hearing

The church has received word from the Town of Montrose that there will be a public hearing on January 28 regarding the addition of more entertainment venues and lodging around and behind the Creamery building. The notice will be posted on the bulletin board for anyone who might be interested in attending.