

***In him was life, and that life was the light of all humankind. (John 1:4)***

I'm back! What an adventure I had in Palestine / Israel and Jordan! I was one of 8 pastors and a total of 45 people who went with the Bishop to the Holy Land the past two weeks. What a spiritual moment for all of us! The tour guides were great and the church leaders of the *Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL)* were so excited to see us to fill us in the newest issues of the Palestine / Israel conflicts and how the church is involved in those daily strains on the life of the Christians in those areas.

In the next few weeks I will be preparing an opportunity for us to gather so that I can share a presentation of my Holy Land adventure. In the mean time we are working through the time of the Epiphany and remembering the words of John stating that Jesus is the word and the Light of the world. The Christmas season was absolutely wonderful! I want to take a moment and thank all of you for the wonderful gifts, prayers and love that you shared with me during Christmas. YOUR light did indeed shine through and gave me a reason to enjoy and celebrate the birth of our Lord. THANK YOU!

This is the season of LIGHT – The Lord's Light – that has entered our lives through the Christ child and energizes our lives with his work in the world. It is the action we have been preparing for in Advent! In our scriptures this month we will be reading about Jesus calling his disciples and teaching them how to share the news that the Lord is HERE! We will be reflecting on what it means to us that God's light became onto us. The scriptures will be about Christianity spreading into the world and the beginning of the Christian Church.

Now, when we think of a "new year" we often look to setting some New Year resolutions. This year my resolution was to go to the Holy Land! THAT WAS EASY... but really, we often fail at keeping those resolutions. Now, when I go to the internet to find the most common resolutions, I found the typical items such as lose weight, save money, quit smoking...ect. What I didn't find much of are resolutions that are related to one's faith or spiritual life. I know that this really is a place we ALL need to focus more on. Here are some resolutions that I suggest might be good to put into practice... especially during this time of Epiphany where your light can shine and make a difference in the world.

- **GROW** - Grow in your relationship with God... What does this mean to you?
- **ATTEND** - Grow in your relationship by being .more faithful in your worship attendance
- **GIVE** – Grow in your giving as a grateful response to God's blessing and a desire to support the work of God's kingdom here on earth.
- **SERVE** – Grow in your serving the church and others who are in need. How can you volunteer at the church or use your talents to assist others?

**May the Spirit of God help you grow in your relationship with God and with others!**

**AMEN**

**Pastor Tony Scheer**