

First Presbyterian Church
Epiphany: Seeing A New Way Home
Mt.2:1-12
Rev. Catherine Oliver

Yesterday, January 6 was Epiphany. Wasn't it great? What did you do to celebrate? O.K. don't be shy, what did your family do to celebrate Epiphany, the last day of the Christmas season?

Our family took down our Christmas tree that had been looking like a potential fire hazard for the last week or so. We carefully put away my childhood nativity and the other Christmas decorations.

Then just as **the day** was being **transformed into the night...** with the temperatures dropping again into the cold ... my family bundled up and marched around the neighborhood waving sparklers and boldly singing our favorite Christmas carols.

Fake news alert:

The majority of what I just said is true, except for the last part about the sparklers and marching around the neighborhood singing carols.

My husband is a PS -pastor's spouse and my 25 year old daughter is a P.K.- pastor's kid.

They have all done their fair share of church time and churchy things so marching around the neighborhood in the freezing cold, holding sparklers and singing carols was not going to happen this year!

But, at my seminary in California, that is exactly what our Korean seminary neighbors taught us and what my family loved doing on Epiphany!

Epiphany, is a time of celebration!
Epiphany means something awesome has appeared in our lives.
Some new and exciting way has been born in our world and we now get to follow that way!
Boldly we sing and carry that way forward with sparkling light!

But unfortunately In the U.S., Epiphany is one of our lessor known nor celebrated Christian holidays.

Like the Magi, or wise people, I am someone who is a star gazer.

I listen to God's word for me not only in the "Good *Little Book*", our bible, but also as our Celtic sisters and brothers would say, through the "Big Book" found in and through God's amazing creation!

Our scripture lesson tells us that God is shown to us, manifested to us in nature and in dreams. And a significant part of this story is that God **calls all people**, including foreigners, the Magi, to come and follow the light.

I see Epiphany as an important reminder that like the wise ones, we're all called to wake up, speak out and find God's star, and follow. God's light, leads us to Christ a star of wonder a star of light and peace. Unlike following Herod's way which was a way of violence and destruction, the star of Jesus is the way of peace..

Do you remember the song?
Star of wonder, star of night
Star with royal beauty bright
Homeward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to Thy perfect light

As Christians we believe that Jesus is the perfect light. He gave himself as a witness and voice for us to follow. Amen!

No longer do we stay silent when the least of these are being abandoned by so called health care reform. Amen!

No longer do we fear speaking truth, against the Herods that have violated women
Amen!

It is our time of epiphany, our time to choose...

This week we've heard from other nations concerned about our country's leadership. There have been boorish tweets between two world leaders boasting who has the bigger nuclear button.

I can't help but see Jesus, becoming physically sick listening to this immature rhetoric.

As in times past, we're living in fearful times. Scripture said that when King Herod heard there was a new king of the Jews he was afraid.

I imagine, that if it would have been possible, he would have tweeted something out but instead Herod, the King of the Jews, allowed illegal aliens to represent him. He asked kings of another country to find what he could not find... which was ...the light of the world.

About this time last year my husband, Mike and I were preparing to go on a journey, to a foreign land. At only 56, Mike had been diagnosed with Lewy Body dementia, the

second leading cause of dementia after Alzheimer's. After receiving the poor prognosis of life expectancy, Mike made a bucket list of things he wanted to do before he died. And one of those involved seeing and experiencing other parts of the world.

Our youngest daughter was living in Spain, the oldest in South Korea and the middle daughter in Boulder, CO.

But all 3 daughters planned a three-week trip starting out in a foreign land we'd never experienced, but always wanted to see, Europe. The bright star guiding our way, were 3 determined daughters overseeing our trip.

In many ways Mike and I and our girls were on a spiritual journey or quest, much like the Magi. We knew then, but we know even more now, that life is precious and everyday counts.

As I ponder the story of the Magi and what is happening in our world today I wonder if we aren't all on a spiritual journey and just don't realize it?

I wonder if we're all seeking to find a star that will light our way home in this life to what God is longing for us?

And so I wonder. What are your traveling plans? If we are all seekers, then where are you longing to go, where are you being called to serve and what are you hoping to find?

And what if. What if you considered yourself a prophet or a Magi? Someone who is seeking to find and can give voice to your deepest truths...

As for me and my family we walk day by day. We believe that God is providing strength and courage and will never leave us without a GPS. Maybe next year we will celebrate Epiphany with sparklers and songs...maybe?

But for now I leave you with this poem sent to me by my dear friend Mary Porter.

Entitled:

Prophets of a Future Not Our Own

This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities. We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.

~ Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero ~
(murdered on March 24, 1980)

