

The Good News Gazette

The First Presbyterian Church
94-96 Main Street Chester, NY 10918
January 2016

The Epiphany of Our Lord

Epiphany is a funny word. One of those words that was more common years ago than it is today. No one says they've had an epiphany anymore. Chances are many people on the streets may not even be able to define what epiphany means. It comes to us from the ancient Greek word epiphaneia which means "manifestation, striking appearance" and is often used to describe a sudden or striking realization of something – for example a scientific breakthrough, an enlightening realization, some sort of philosophical discovery.

For Christians Epiphany marks the coming of the Wise Men. The Epiphany of our Lord. It is when we celebrate that Wise Men from the East – foreigners, not Israelites, that recognized and believed Jesus to be the King of the Jews, Christ, the Son of God. They saw the star rising and they followed. They followed and through this and through the Magi (wise men) Christ was revealed to the Gentiles, to the world. For they had an enlightening realization. And so every year we celebrate this enlightening realization, revelation that God came down to earth and was made known, not just to the Jews but to the Gentiles.

The story of Christ is always an interesting one on multiple levels. Not only has God come down to earth, our Emmanuel. But his birth is first announced to the lowest of the low – the shepherds out keeping the sheep in the fields. They wouldn't have even owned the sheep. Someone richer would have hired them to take care of them. It was a dangerous job and to work the night shift, even more so with thwarting off wild beasts to protect both the sheep and yourself. Then the first people to experience the epiphany, God incarnate, this new King of the Jews, were foreign wise men from the east. Magi – a magician. A term used to describe anyone who practiced or studied astrology, alchemy, and magic. To these students of science, in a sense, is to who Christ was first made manifest. Two unlikely groups of people. Not to kings, rulers, the religious elite, but rather these groups of foreigners and low men on the totem pole.

And it is through these people that God chose to work through. The shepherds were called by the angels to go see the new born king, the child of David. They went singing praises and telling Mary all they had experienced, saw, and heard. Announcing good news to Mary and perhaps to any and all who would listen to the crazy stories these shepherds brought with them. The wise men came to Jerusalem asking where was the one who is to be King of the Jews. Scaring King Herod and announcing and making way for a new ruler, not just of the Jews but of the whole world.

And perhaps God still works through some unlikely people and in some unlikely ways to make Christ known to the world. Unlikely people like us who may not be something special like a king or queen, ruler or celebrity. Holding no real authority or power in the world. But people who have come and seen the wonder and the work of God. Who may not have heard angels out in the fields but have some voice inside of us (or even outside of us) drawing us into God's fold. Who may not have seen a star rising but when looking at the stars can't help but believe in the great Creator God.

And maybe to make God known, to help others to experience the Epiphany of our Lord, it's time to try ministry in some unexpected ways that we've never done it before. Ways that will not only surprise us, but surprise those around us. Things that might make us uncomfortable but allow others to feel

comfortable entering in. And in the end things that will make Christ manifest to us all – more manifest to us as we experience God in new ways, and manifest to others who may have never experienced Christ at all. May we all come to have deeper epiphanies of our God and Savior this coming year. Amen.

Rev. Erin Moore

January Second Offering

Our second offering for Sunday, January 20th will be for Apportionment. Apportionment (Per Capita) this year is \$31.50 per member. Please consider covering at least your portion, if not a little extra. It would be a great help to the church! (Unfortunately, we are still paying for 72 members when we obviously have less than that coming to church, so any little extra bit would be of great help!)

All Hands On Deck!

We are hoping to start planning so more and possibly new things starting in this new year. But first we need to find out where some of the energy is before we begin any projects. We talked about some ideas in October but it is time to get one or a few of them nailed down.

Here is the list again to help refresh your memory:

Cooking classes

Church picnics

Movie or game nights

Community garden

Add another worship service during the week

New fundraisers – concerts, 5k run, yard/garage sale

Trivia night

Turning the chapel back into a gym or at least usable space

Youth food drive and informational hunger event – something similar to a 30 hour famine that is put on in many churches

Ecumenical services and activities with other churches in our area

Church bazaar/fair – games, food, fun, fellowship

Some have already started to take initiative on things – like cleaning out the chapel. We will continue this project throughout the winter months and hopefully see much progress by spring! Keep your eyes peeled and your ears open for ways you can help! We also need to start cleaning out rooms in the CE building. You can even plan among yourselves when workdays would be good for small groups of people during the week or on a Saturday.

Some have asked about the idea of community gardens on our property. We have usable space in the fenced in area between the two buildings. We can also get funding from presbytery for this but we need to make sure we have help from the congregation (and possibly the community) to get it up and running before we apply for funding.

The Covenant Brass Quintet we had come up this summer for a benefit concert asked if we would like to be considered for their list of performances for their Lenten Concert Series this year. We would need to make a decision soon to get a date on the calendar and flyers out and around town.

HRP Green a new committee, based on environmental efforts to care for creation, formed just over 6 months ago. This winter they are putting on an environmental film series and we have been asked if we would be willing to host a viewing in our region of the presbytery. This would likely be the end of January. Please let Pastor Erin know if you would be interested in helping (putting up flyers around town,

helping get some bags of popcorn ready the evening of, etc... nothing strenuous!).

Our Crafters Group would love to have some crafts and gifts to sell at our next Roast Beef Dinner. Scarves, hats, maybe even a blanket if you are feeling ambitious. Also, things like cookie or soup ingredients in a jar, hot cocoa in a jar, etc... If you have any interest please see the bulletin board or speak with Pastor Erin.

What other ideas jump out at you or have been on your mind (or were on your mind years ago but stopped thinking about)? What other activities would you like to participate in or see the church put on? Where do you see needs in the community that aren't being met? And not necessarily just helping the less fortunate, but perhaps we need to offer fellowship times for those who may be lonely, perhaps we need to offer prayer space for people to just come in and have a few quiet moments, or we could offer a safe space for youth to come and hang out – play volleyball or something.

We will be holding another meeting soon but if anything has popped out at you please speak to Pastor Erin or someone on session to help get things moving! We are looking forward to the new year and getting more involved and holding more activities in our community!

Looking Ahead

January 5 – Deacons meeting at 12pm in the library

Confirmation Class at 7pm

January 10 – Session meeting following worship

January 12 – NO Women's Council today. (See January 26)

January 19 – Confirmation Class at 7pm

January 21 – Crafters meeting at 3pm in the library (planning crafts for the next church dinner).

January 24 – Tentative date for screening of “Racing to Zero: In Pursuit of Zero Waste” at 7pm.

January 26 – Presbytery Meeting at Stony Point at 9:30am

Women's Council Valentine Creating/Meeting at 1PM.

January 31– Congregational Meeting following worship

Also, be on the look out for announcements about our New Members Class.

If you have an article or announcement you would like to have in the next newsletter, please have it into the church office by January 25th.

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If you are in need of pastoral care, please contact our pastor at the church office number (845-469-4877).