

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
753 N. CALUMET AVE.
VALPARAISO, IN 46383

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WWW.FAITHLUTHERAN.ORG

*Embraced by God through Jesus Christ our Lord, we share this gospel of hope and healing
within and throughout our community*

Journey to the Manger – and Beyond



Matthew 2:1-6 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." ³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: ⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.' "

This Advent and Christmas season we have meditated on some of the characters we see in the story that leads up to the manger, including various figures we often see in our manger scenes. One set of figures we have not had an opportunity to discuss this year are the Magi from the east.

While we often include these Magi in the manger scene, as some of you may know, we don't know exactly when they came. Based on Herod's murderous response to their news, later in the book of Matthew, it may have been up to two years after Jesus' birth. Also, while we frequently refer to the Magi as the three kings, there are also some questions here as well. True, they did bring Jesus three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. However, we don't really know exactly how many Magi there were or even exactly who they were.

The magi may have some link to royalty. Their gifts do suggest a degree of wealth. Their name in scripture is also not Hebrew but Persian, and suggests that they may have been scholars, astronomers, royal advisors, and/or what some might call magicians. We see "wisemen" with similar job descriptions employed in Babylon at the book of Daniel, and in Pharaoh's court at the time of Moses. Some have even suggested that these Magi may be Jewish converts or at least people with access to Jewish writings taken to other countries when Daniel and other Jews went into exile in Babylon hundreds of years before Christ's birth.

So what does this have to do with Jesus' birth and with us? For starters, they add to the amazing and even mysterious mix of visitors to the Christ child. Men, women, young, old, Jews, people from other nations, and people with a wide range of social status and wealth, receive the message of the Christ child in a variety of ways. Yet in the end, if they are willing to receive it, the path to God's Word sets them on a path to Jesus.

The wise men are no exception to this. Like others their path begins well before they arrive to see and worship God come in the flesh. I have to wonder what kind of hours of study occurred before they took hold of prophecies found in places like Micah, Daniel, and the book of Numbers. What kind of lively debate and discussion may have occurred before the truth found in such places motivated them to take action and travel what may have been 800 or more miles. Was it curiosity or a leap of faith that motivated them to take such a long difficult journey, even for people of means? Granted king worship was not unheard of back then, but given the lengths to which they went to worship someone in a different country, and the way in which they found him, this certainly seems like something more. Moreover, given the fact that they went first to Herod's palace, I would imagine they were surprised to find Jesus wherever they found him, even if he had long since left the manger.

I think many of us are still surprised to find Jesus where we find him both in our daily lives, and on the pages of scripture. Yet, there He is working and active, if we only have eyes to see and follow to where he is and to where his star is leading us. In the word of the prophets, in the message of the angels at announcing the birth of our Savior, and in the other means through which God speaks to us, our ruler shepherds His people straight to His waiting and outstretched arms. These outstretched arms are often in the last places we expect them, in a manger, in a carpenter's house, stretched out on a cross, showing Thomas his hands in the weeks after His resurrection, and wrapped around us as we work, and play, and are engaged with Him in His Word. What message and directions does He have waiting for us there? What lively discussion is He calling us to engage in as he leads us off on a journey together? What surprises will we discover as we fall to our knees in worship? What gifts has the Lord given us to bring back to Him and lay at His feet? Christ alone can answer these questions as our shepherd leads us to step out in faith and follow Him.

In Christ,

Pastor Eric Schoeck

Note from the Pastor: Following Christmas, we will resume our study of *The Story*. Beginning with the story of King David, we will continue to delve into the story leading up to the manger and beyond, including some of the history and events that likely impacted and inspired the wise men to depart on their journey. I hope you will join us and invite others as well, as we continue to grow and live in our understanding of our place in God's story.

THANKS AND WELCOME FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A big thank you to outgoing Board member Mary Dunlap for her 6 years of service on the BOD. That's a lot of meetings and work behind the scenes to help keep our Faith family moving forward. And welcome to our newest BOD member, Sherri Nord. Thanks for taking on this important role in our congregation. Sherri will join Sean Allwardt, Dorothy Kehe and Paul Grossnickle as the current board members for Faith.



NEWSLETTER EMAIL OPTION

A new way to receive your issue of the Faithful Reporter will be offered beginning in February. If you would like to have the office email your newsletter to you please let us know. This will save on paper, ink and postage and is also a convenient option.

There will be a sign up sheet in the Narthex. Please give us your email address (print very clearly please!) and your newsletter will come to your in-box rather than your mailbox. You may also call us at (219) 462-7684 or email us at office@faithmemorial.net.

Of course, if you would rather continue to receive your newsletter through the mail we are happy to do so. No changes will be made unless you sign up for email or notify us.

**Happy
Birthday**
to ALL with January Birthdays

<i>Karen Martensen</i>	<i>Jan. 3</i>
<i>Jon Dunlap</i>	<i>Jan. 13</i>
<i>Shirley Knutson</i>	<i>Jan. 13</i>
<i>Ken Kehe</i>	<i>Jan. 15</i>

If we have left out your birthday please call the office at 462-7684.

During the months of January and February our Sunday School children will continue their Winter Service Project—collecting for the Porter County Animal Shelter.



THOUGHTS FROM THE DEACONESS

"I Am the Light of the World"
John 8:12

Do you know how to dance? Maybe you took ballet or tap lessons as a child. Did you have a family member who taught you how to polka or waltz? Did one of the physical education classes in high school include square dancing? Maybe you did the cha cha or the twist or the jerk? Is dancing something you always wanted to do, but it never happened. Or, maybe, it just wasn't appealing. Dancing, in whatever form or style, has been part of many cultures ever since the world began. We even read of Miriam and the Israelite women dancing after Pharaoh and his army were drowned in the Red Sea. And, King David danced as the ark of the covenant was carried into Jerusalem. Dancing can, whether alone, with someone, or in a group bring joy and relief from a stressful day.

So, what does dancing have to do with Jesus as the light of the world? Definitions of light abound on the internet. But there is one that caught my attention: "Light is an electric field tied up with a magnetic field, flying through space. You can think of the two fields as dance partners, wrapped up in an eternal embrace."

When we talk about Jesus as the light of the world, we seldom include ourselves in that image. Jesus is the one who does the work of bringing light to a dark world. The darkness of death and hell are banished by Jesus' brightness. But we forget the words of Jesus in the gospel of Matthew that say we are also to be light in this world. Our light is to shine before others so that God is glorified.

So, what does dancing have to do with Jesus as the light of the world? Thanks be to Jesus for calling us to be his dance partners in bringing the good news of grace and salvation to a dark world. And thanks, too, that this dance is for all eternity.

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

WINTER CHOIR SCHEDULE

Sunday, January 19	11:35am-12:05pm rehearsal
Sunday, January 26	11:35am-12:05pm rehearsal
Sunday, February 2	11:35am-12:05pm rehearsal
Sunday, February 9	Sing during 9:00am service



GROWTH GROUPS

Join us as we seek to strengthen and support each other in our walk with Christ.

Sunday Adult Bible Study

Sundays at 10:30am

Meets in the church parlor or Gathering Space

Children and Youth Sunday School

Sundays at 10:30am

Education Wing

Women Wanting Wisdom

Generally meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month, 6:30pm. Contact Deb Porter for details at (219) 764-8425.

Foundational Christian Beliefs

(Discovery & New Member Class)

New classes begin based on interest. Let Pastor Schoech know if you would like to participate.

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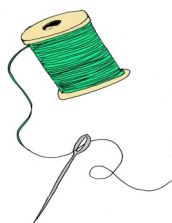
Email:
office@faithmemorial.net



**SEWING SEEDS OF
LOVE**

Do you like to sew? We meet the second and fourth Thursday of the month at 9:00am, at church, downstairs in the sewing room.

Amateurs and experts alike are welcome! For more information please speak to Donna Cawby.



FAITH WORSHIP SCHEDULE

The Second Sunday after Christmas, January 5, 9:00am Holy Communion
The First Sunday after the Epiphany, January 12, 9:00am Word & Prayer
The Second Sunday after the Epiphany, January 19, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Third Sunday after the Epiphany, January 26, 9:00am Word & Prayer
The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 2, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 9, 9:00am Word & Prayer
The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany, February 16, 9:00am Holy Communion
The Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany, February 23, 9:00am Word & Prayer
Ash Wednesday, February 26, 7:00pm Holy Communion

Wise Men
Seek Him Still

