

## What About Those Wise Men?

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2 (NLT)

There is an old saying: *"Life is what happens while you're busy making other plans."*

The wise men set out on a long, exhausting journey in search of a king. The appearance of a special star led them to believe that the prophecies of old had been fulfilled.

I've often wondered about the wise men of the Christmas story. How long did the journey take? What was the topic of conversation when they stopped for the evening and set up camp? As they made their way toward Jerusalem, did they "rehearse" their lines – wanting to say only what was right and proper to a king? Did they review what was considered proper etiquette when visiting royalty in a foreign land?

What was going through their minds as their caravan made its way through the wilderness? Maybe they envisioned great structures with all the trappings of enormous wealth in magnificent, ornate rooms. As they dined on a camper's diet, did they anticipate a banquet table with exotic foods?

Instead, they found a baby in a barn. For just a moment they must have experienced some disappointment. After all, they had traveled many miles by camel to discover that the special star had come to rest over a stable. They had followed a star to a barn ... not a castle.

Maybe, just maybe, this is the Christmas message we need to hear. You see - all of us at some time in our lives have followed a star, only to discover a stable.

- When we were young and fresh out of school, we set out to capture our dream – only to find ourselves in the "stable" of life.
- The career we coveted had been replaced by the mundane – the "stable."
- And the "great" retirement and Florida condo we worked so hard for is now a small, mortgaged home in Michigan – the "stable."

Two thousand years ago the wise men followed a star, walked into a barn and met with Jesus. And it was in Bethlehem's stable that they found eternal life.

This Christmas, instead of dwelling on our disappointments and bemoaning our failures, we should look at the grace of God and be thankful for salvation in Jesus!

Have a Merry and Blessed Christmas!

Pastor Bill and Sue

## **Messages from the Diaconate**

**Volunteers on Sunday:** We are seeking people to serve on Sundays in December. If you are able and available to lend a hand as an usher, liturgist, or fellowship host, please see John Peters or sign the sheet on the table inside the entrance to the Mayflower Room. Thank you!

**"Hanging of the Greens" & Potluck Dinner:** On Friday, December 4, we will gather to decorate the sanctuary for Christmas. Prior to decorating, there will be a Potluck dinner in the Mayflower Room at 6:00 pm. A spiral-sliced ham will be the featured dish along with other main dishes. Sign-up sheets are in the sanctuary and Mayflower Room. Please indicate how many in your party are coming. You may also call the church office or let a fellow member know if you'd like your name added. We need an accurate head count to ensure we have enough ham! If you can, bring a side dish. If not, come anyway! Hope to see you there!

Alas...for every decoration that goes up, it must eventually come down. In that light, please consider helping "take down the greens" after the service and coffee hour on Sunday, Jan. 3. It would be much appreciated!

**UCC "Christmas Fund" Offering:** In December, our congregation is taking up its annual "Christmas Fund" offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. The theme for 2015 is *Love Shines Through*, a message encompassing the spirit of the fund, which is to reflect the light of Jesus Christ in the lives of the many women and men who have so faithfully and selflessly served and now find themselves facing unforeseen financial crises. We ask you to prayerfully consider a donation to the best of your ability. Donation envelopes can be found in the pews. The offering will be collected on each of the 4 Sundays in Advent, thru December 20. Thank you!

**Sign-Up for Christmas Poinsettias:** With Christmas right around the corner, it's time again to order poinsettias for the sanctuary. If you'd like to purchase one or more poinsettias, please add your name to the sheet on the table at the back of the sanctuary or in the Mayflower Room. The sign-up period will extend to Sunday, Dec. 13. Price is \$7.00 / plant. Payment can be placed in an offering envelope at a Sunday service or given to John Peters, Diaconate chair. Poinsettias will arrive in time to be placed in front of the altar for the Dec. 20 Sunday before Christmas service.

**Christmas Eve Service:** Our traditional Candlelight Christmas Eve Service led by Pastor Kren is scheduled for Thursday, Dec. 24 at 7:00 pm. It promises to be a solemn, yet joyful celebration of the birth of the Christ child. Join us, if you can, as we come together to sing hymns of praise and hear special music, including a solo by Sue Kren.

**After-Christmas Service:** On Sunday, December 27, we will meet in the comfort of the Mayflower Room for an informal worship service led by Brian Sampson at 10:00 am. "Friends and Family" is this year's theme, so be sure to bring a friend or family member along to the 4th annual gathering in which we reflect on the "reason for the season" and recount favorite memories of Christmases past.

Music will be performed by a soloist and 2 guest instrumentalists. Please plan to join us on this unique occasion!

**Altar Flowers Chart for 2016:** A new altar flowers sign-up for the soon-to-come New Year will be posted by the end of December on the sanctuary bulletin board. Start thinking now about a Sunday on which to dedicate flowers to a loved one in 2016. Blessings everyone.

## OUR CHURCH AT WORK In December

### Helpers for Sunday Services

#### Greeters:

December 6 – Ian Haas  
 December 13 – Ian Haas  
 December 20 – Ian Haas  
 December 27 – Ian Haas

#### Ushers:

December 6 – Available  
 December 13 – Available  
 December 20 – Available  
 December 27 – Ian & Cole Haas

#### Liturgists:

December 6 – Available  
 December 13 – Available  
 December 20 – Available  
 December 27 – Valerie Haas

### PRAYER LIST



Bernice Hartling	Medical Concerns
Shirley Fedraw	Medical Concerns
Bunny Hoganson	Medical Concerns
Geri Sampson	Medical Concerns
Suzanne Van Ranst	Medical Concerns
Dotty Klein	Medical Concerns
R. Ferguson Family	Healing, spiritual guidance
Gordon Grozdanoff	Medical Concerns
Arline Prois	Medical Concerns
John Adams	Medical Concerns
David MacKenzie	Medical Concerns
Pauline Gourlay	Medical Concerns
John B. Curtis	Medical Concerns
Barbara Allen	Medical Concerns
Larry Jabtecki	Medical Concerns
James Shippee	Medical Concerns
Family of Evelyn Benyi	Bereavement



## DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

1 Janice Chapman  
 13 Mary Ellen Matchynski  
 15 Shirley Fedraw  
 18 Brianne Schilbe  
 Elizabeth Bilton Rabinowitz  
 20 Kathryn Weyeneth  
 25 Baby Jesus  
 30 Bernice Hartling

### Dedication of Flowers - December

December 6 – Tammy & David Jabtecki  
 December 13 – Richard Bolton  
 December 20 – Poinsettias  
 December 27 – Available

### Fellowship Hour – December

December 6 – Available  
 December 13 – Available  
 December 20 – Available  
 December 27 – Available

#### **Dates to Remember:**

December 5 Craft Show  
 December 9 Trustees Meeting 7pm  
 December 10 Diaconate Meeting 7pm  
 December 24 Christmas Eve Service 7pm  
 December 27 After Christmas Service  
 10am in Mayflower Room

## 2015 Men's Club

### Christmas Tree Sale

The 2015 Men's Club Christmas Tree Sale is off and running. The trees arrived on Saturday, December 21st (albeit 3 hours late). We started with a hearty breakfast at 8 am and served about 20 volunteers with the help of Elaine Stacho, Polly Fitzpatrick, Roberta Adamson, and Linda & Matt Haling. The truck was to arrive at 9 am and the crew was ready to go. Not everything always goes according to plan. We were then informed the truck would arrive around noon and everyone went back home for a few hours. The trees finally arrived and the crew returned to unload the trees. The netting was then cut from all the trees and then the pricing team took over led by Diane Schilbe with the help of Nancy Wolter, Polly Fitzpatrick, and Linda Haling.

HINT: Guys, we're being out worked, out hustled by the women. This is supposed to be the Men's Club Christmas Tree Sale. (Probably got out sold by them last year, too.)

HELP: I do need some help with the scheduling. If anyone would like to help with the scheduling of the tree

lot shifts, please contact me. You do not have to work the lot, just need someone to make phone calls and send emails to ensure the tree lot is covered.

Thanks to everyone for their help and support

Jim Haling



## **I'M JUST SAYIN' ...**

...with Pat Stacho

I'm on vacation, but miss y'all so much I took time out to do my job! (I'm in Southern Georgia, thus the y'all )

My sister-in-law, Cindy, is a pro at roadtrips, so I knew this was going to be fun. We were excited to get going and do the "Thelma & Louise" impersonation....staying clear of all cliffs of course. Suitcases stashed, snacks packed, ice in the cooler, full tank of gas.....on our way.

First stop, cracker barrel in Ohio. We wanted to ration out our snacks, all healthy, fruit...celery...bottled water, etc., so we settled on pecan crusted catfish. On our way out, we shopped! Surprise!! I bought a beautiful scarf, my sister-in-law bought gloves. And, I almost forgot, some roasted peanuts to add to our snack supply.

We hit the road again and managed to travel two and a half hours before stopping at a rest stop in order to unburden our bladders of the Cracker Barrel' s famous endless refills of iced tea. (As my grandpa used to say, "I'm going to die like the Indians...It'll drown in my own teepee!)

We decided to spend the night in Lexington, Kentucky. We checked in at Hampton House, conveniently located across the parking lot from Bob Evans.

Our snacks were still safe. I enjoyed some vegetable soup and a BLT. We relaxed in our room with free coffee and cookies, and slept like we had worked 12 hour shifts at Chuck E Cheese! In the morning, after free breakfast, (over-priced) and refreshing the ice supply in our snack cooler, we were again on the road.

Our day was spent at Keenland Horse Park. Absolutely beautiful. The grounds are amazing, with statues of Secretariat, as well as jockeys, etc. I will bet that American Pharaoh's is being created as we speak! We walked around the stables, bigger than my house, and certainly much leaner. These animals eat hay, HAY. Yet, you did not see a speck on the floor. Pete and I cannot eat a bowl of popcorn without getting the vacuum out. The park was being decorated for the holidays....in 80° weather. Depressing, but beautiful.

We had lunch in one of the park's betting snack bars. We ate, bet a bit on the races, and won enough to pay for lunch.

All in all, not a bad day. We ended our day at another Hampton House, about 125 miles down the road. No need to bore you; same scenario, replace Bob Evans with Ruby Tuesday's. I will admit it was very comfortable; I slept like a rock, and liked the idea of not having to make the bed! Although I couldn't leave my towels on the floor after my shower.

Lots of miles, lots of rest stops, lots of stretching breaks, even a lot of singing along with the oldie stations, and even hitting the snack cooler until, finally, the "surprise" airstrip Cindy had promised....THE BILTMORE, in South Carolina.

Beautiful doesn't begin to describe the Biltmore mansion. It was built by the Vanderbilt family, on 8,000 acres. There are 57 bedrooms, a swimming pool, a bowling alley, a library with over 10,000 volumes. leather wallpaper...it is just unbelievable. Google it...please. Whatever you see, multiply the splendor by ten.

Remember my snacks, our dinners and free breakfasts? We had lunch. at one of the restaurants in the complex. Food became a luxurious experience.

We shared Almond fried brie, with red pepper jelly, chicory and toasted cranberry pecan points....yeah, really. I had French onion soup with melted Gruyere and provolone. Cindy hassling pea and bacon soup with toasted Bennett seeds, chili oil and celery leaves.

For our entrees, (\$\$\$ for lunch) we ordered cider burned turkey with cheddar cheese, heirloom tomato, pickled onion and fragile & monk aioli on toasted focaccia. AND a busy to burger grilled sirloin topped with aged white cheddar, Bibb lettuce, smoked bacon jam, served with truffle fries! We split them and OMG...I have never enjoyed lunch, dinner, snacks, or impromptu romance as much as that lunch! We shared dessert...Brown butter pumpkin cake with maple sea salt bitterness, cream cheese mousse!

Uh huh...that's right! Certainly more than soup & sandwich. I have so much more to tell you. I went to my grandson's, am at my son's now. I will be home in time for our craft show, and will continue this saga of my annual road trip. But, for now, re-read that luncheon we devoured. I can still taste it...Just sayin'...



### **Treasurer's Report for October 2015**

Income- \$2,345.00  
Expenses- \$10,279.97

Capital Improvement Fund - \$11,267.26  
Investments with UBS valued at \$206,865.19

\$5,000.00 was transferred out of UBS Investments to meet expenses

Matthew Haling, Treasurer

## **Save the Date!**

Are you looking for unique Christmas gifts, or have friends who are? Come shop at our 1st Craft Show on Saturday, December 5th. Tell your friends and family! Call Pat Stacho @ [313-381-1699](tel:313-381-1699) if you have questions.

## **Member News**

Valerie Haas and Cole Haas have joined the cast of *Cheaper by the Dozen* at the Players Guild of Dearborn. The show opens January 8<sup>th</sup> and runs for three weekends. Come and see the antics of the Gilbreth family as Mr. Gilbreth tries to impress upon his 12 kids the importance of efficiency through motion study. Tickets are available on the website:  
[playersguildofdearborn.org](http://playersguildofdearborn.org)

## **Operation Christmas Child Thanks**

Thanks so much to all who donated items or funds for the Operation Christmas Child shoebox mission. We packed and delivered 12 boxes this year. Please say a prayer that the children who receive these gifts are touched by the spirit of God.

## Advent and Christmas

### From the Pluralism Project at Harvard University

The Christian year begins in late November, with the four-week season of preparation known as Advent. For Christians, preparation for Christmas is not simply the crescendo of excitement that has come to typify the Christmas season in America. This season of watchfulness and expectation is meant to prepare the heart for the second coming, the “advent” of Christ, as well as for the celebration of Jesus’ birth some 2,000 years ago.

In many churches and Christian homes, the period of preparation is kept by the weekly lighting of Advent candles, one on the first Sunday in Advent, two on the second, three on the third. On the fourth Sunday of Advent, just before Christmas, all four candles are lit. The lighting of candles draws upon ancient traditions of kindling fires at the time of the winter solstice, the darkest time of the year. From the fourth century, the celebration of Christ’s birth was set on December 25, the time of the Roman celebration of the “Sol Invictus,” the “Unconquered Sun,” at the time of the winter solstice when days began to lengthen once again.

From its earliest days, the Christian tradition has spoken of Christ as the “Light” of the world. For Christians, the candles and lights of the season symbolize the Light that has come into the world. One Christmas hymn begins, “Break forth, O beauteous, heavenly Light, and usher in the morning!” The Christmas lights of today, decking trees, homes, and public buildings, might be seen to be a modern transformation of the ancient symbolism of light.

America has added much to the Christmas tradition. In the nineteenth century, the custom of New Year’s gift-giving was redirected toward Christmas, as new German immigrants brought with them the traditions of the Christmas tree and Christmas gifts. In 1823, Clement Moore’s poem “Twas the Night Before Christmas” entered the Christmas repertory. By the late nineteenth century, the European St. Nicholas had been transformed, through myth and commerce, into the full-fledged Santa Claus, jolly, bountiful, and distinctly American. The

The nineteenth-century Americanization of Christmas also produced many of today’s most popular carols, such as “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” written by Phillips Brooks in 1868. Today, throughout the Christmas season, the repetition of the story of Christ’s birth is sung in carols, told in story, and enacted in dramas. The scene of that story is recreated in homes, churches, and even parks, with the “nativity scene,” also called a *crèche* or a *nacimiento*. Countless churches present Christmas pageants, as church members take on the roles of Mary and Joseph seeking room in the inn and finding space in the stable. The congregation, children included, become for a moment the shepherds and angels, and the wise men who saw the star from afar and came bearing gifts.

Hispanic Americans, like immigrants before them, have brought their own traditions of Christmas to America. Among them is the Mexican tradition called the *posada*, which means “inn.” For nine nights, the community follows Mary and Joseph through the streets as they look for room in the inn, stopping at one house after another, singing “In the name of heaven, I beg you for lodging, for my beloved wife cannot walk.” In one place after another, the innkeeper responds, singing, “This is not an inn, so keep on going. I cannot open. You may be bad people.” In such cities as Dallas, Texas, and Fullerton, California, the pilgrims sing their parts. After a long journey through the streets, they find shelter in a church or community hall, and celebrate with hot chocolate, Mexican sweetbreads, and the breaking of the *piñata* filled with candies.

Along the Mexican-U.S. border in San Ysidro, California, the ritual drama of the Christmas *posada* has taken a powerful new turn. There, at night, across the fences of the border, under the floodlights of the Border Patrol, groups of Christians gather on both sides of the border, bearing images of Mary, Joseph, and the innkeeper. Joseph sings from the Mexican side, “Don’t be inhuman. Have mercy on us. The God of Heaven will reward you for it.” The U.S. delegation, dramatizing the innkeeper, sings, “This is not an inn, so keep going. I cannot open. You may be bad people.” From both sides of the border, they release doves who fly free. As these Christians hold candles in the night

air, they speak of the significance of the birth of Christ, the one to whom no human being was an “alien.” As one American participant explains, “We cannot welcome Christ and reject the poor or the alien.”