

From the Pastor's Desk

From the Pastor: ... Merry Christmas!!! ... Happy Epiphany!!!

Merry Christmas! Yes, we look around and the world tells us that Christmas is over for another 300 days or so, yet we in the church do things differently than the world. We prepared throughout Advent, and now we pause after the hustle and bustle of the shopping, the parties (or get-togethers), the packages, and the cards, to ... CELEBRATE. We stand together at the manger in awe of God's great love. We stand in awe at the manger because we know all that this baby's birth has set in motion. So, yah, I'm still playing Christmas carols, my tree is still proudly displayed in the front room, my lights shine brightly in the windows and if truth be told, we're still writing our Christmas cards. We are in the midst of the Christmas season. The liturgical color is not red, but white, symbolizing the purity of Christ and our joy at his birth. White suggests gladness, light, and joy.



And yet, Christmas does come to an end at Epiphany, twelve days after Christmas.

Epiphany is an often overlooked season of the Church year. Christmas celebrating diverts our energies from this January time, left to taking down the tree and putting away the Christmas "stuff." For the church, Epiphany is one of the most important seasons, commemorating the revelation of Jesus as light to all nations. Epiphany concludes the Christmas season. It's appropriate to leave some of the lights up ... to remind us to celebrate the light. The light continues to shine!!

The word epiphany means manifestation. During the season of Epiphany, we celebrate the manifestation, the coming of God, to all people in Jesus. The Epiphany of Our Lord is celebrated on January 6th and the season continues for five Sundays. The liturgical color is green, the color of living, growing plants. The color green suggests spiritual growth. It is truly a festival of light.

Epiphany also is a term that has come to be used when we have an experience of understanding or new insight, what would be called a "light bulb" moment. Just as Advent teaches us about waiting and preparing, the season of Epiphany helps us to understand that looking for light in other places or directions can lead us on a very powerful spiritual journey.

The Magi who came from the east (the story can be read from Matthew 2:1-12, reread it this month) had tracked a star and followed it all the way from their homes, sure that it foretold a great happening. These wise folks kept their eyes open always for new signs.

In this epiphany time of revelation, of light illuminating the Christ, what are the signs that speak to us? What lights shine on us and reveal Jesus anew? How can we better follow, starting today? How can we be like the Magi, allowing faith to continue to be born or renewed in surprising circumstances. I have a suggestion, put a candle in the middle of your table or desk. Let it symbolize the ways that Christ's light shines on new circumstances, people, places, events each and every day. Use the light as part of your daily devotional or journaling time. Take some quiet time alone with God each day...to bask in the light. Think about the witnesses that shine on us from expected and unexpected places, calling us to deeper faithfulness and commitment. Think about how you can witness to the light. And then be that light for others so that God might be glorified. May God's light truly shine in your lives Epiphany Joy!! *Pastor Karen*