



First Mennonite Church

Midweek E-Newsletter

January 5, 2022

From Pastor Tom

What Is Epiphany?

Tomorrow, January 6, happens to be an important day on the Christian calendar. No, I'm not talking about the one-year anniversary of the unrest at the Capitol building in Washington, D.C. I'm talking, rather, about the day known as Epiphany. So what is Epiphany? Well, for starters, let's review what "an" epiphany is. According to my dictionary, epiphany is 2) an appearance or manifestation especially of a divine being; 3a, #1) a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something; 3a, #2), an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking; 3a, #3) an illuminating discovery; and 3b) a revealing scene or moment.

Did you notice I skipped definition 1? Well here it is: when capitalized, Epiphany is "January 6 observed as a church festival in commemoration of the coming of the Magi as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles." In other words, Epiphany is a continuation of the Christ story (some even consider it the final day of the Christmas season, the so-called "12th Day of Christmas," and not coincidentally the day to take down one's Christmas tree ☺).

Epiphany, in fact, is not just a single day on the Christian calendar; it is a season (the "Season of Epiphany," which concludes with Transfiguration Sunday and is followed by the season of Lent, which always begins with Ash Wednesday). And not surprisingly, one of the recurring themes throughout Epiphany is light. As in, the light of the star the Magi followed along their quest to find the new king, as told in Matthew 2:1-12. As in, the light promised in Isaiah 60:1-6, which begins with the words, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you." And other themes are equally resonant with the definitions of "epiphany" quoted above, including: divine revelation; manifestation; mystery (as in Ephesians 3:1-12, another Day of Epiphany text).

This Sunday I still plan to preach what would have been last Sunday's sermon on John 1:1-18. Which as it turns out, is a wonderful Epiphany text. It talks about the "mystery" of Jesus Christ, who he is, where he came from, what he is about. It talks about the "light" that Jesus brings to the world. And it certainly talks about Christ as a "manifestation" of the divine God. So in preparation for Sunday January 9 (also known as the "First Sunday after the Epiphany"), I encourage you to read the above texts from Matthew, and Isaiah, and Ephesians. And I especially encourage you to read the text from the Gospel of John. It's a great way to end the Christmas season, and begin the Season of Epiphany, in the "new" year, 2022!

Among Our Friends and In Our Prayers

- ☞ Let's remember our farmers, especially those caring for livestock amidst these fluctuating (and sometimes bitter cold!) temperatures!
- ☞ Let's remember our teachers, as they begin a new term or semester!
- ☞ Let's remember our students, as they go back to school!
- ☞ Let's remember those in other lines of work, as they try to serve others in so many varied ways!
- ☞ And as always, let's remember those who are grieving, and those struggling with illnesses of all kinds!

Upcoming Events

- ☞ **Offering this Sunday:** Note that this Sunday is a designated offering Sunday. All contributions, unless otherwise indicated, will go to the MCC Relief Sale.
- ☞ **FMC Annual Meeting:** Our Annual Meeting will be held on **Sunday, January 23**, following a carry-in meal. There are several purposes of the annual meeting. First, to briefly reflect on the year past with gratitude for God's goodness to us and to those among us who have served; second, to vote to affirm leaders who have been identified to head up ministries of the congregation for the next year; third, to vote to affirm the proposed budget (please review the copy that should be in your mailbox by this Sunday), and finally, to have a discussion of possible important issues. Please make this event a priority as an important time in our church life together.
Doug Miller, moderator
- ☞ **Bethel College hosts two activities for the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday that are free and open to the public, both in Memorial Hall: Jan. 17, 7 p.m.**, program with Jasmyn Elise Story as the featured speaker; **Jan. 18, 2 p.m.**, screening of the Kellogg Foundation's 2022 National Day of Racial Healing event. Sponsors are Bethel College Student Life, the Bethel College Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT) Campus Center and the Kansas Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution (KIPCOR). *Current Bethel COVID protocols require masking indoors regardless of vaccination status.*
- ☞ **Everence will hold an informative Medicare webinar on Tuesday, Jan. 18, starting at 6:30 p.m.** Topics will include: when and where to sign up for Medicare, what Medicare does (and doesn't) cover, Medicare Parts A, B, C and D in clear, understandable language plus budgeting for health care costs in retirement. There will also be time for your questions. Information will be presented by staff from the Everence offices in Central Kansas. To register contact Everence at 316-283-3800, 877-467-7294 or central.kansas@everence.com. Attendance recommended for those approaching retirement or those ready to sign up for Medicare.

Other Announcements

- ☞ **It's time for the annual church directory update!** If your information has changed this year, please contact Kara in the church office (620.947.5662 or secretary@fmchillsboro.com) by January 15.
- ☞ **A time and date for Marcella Ediger's Celebration of Life service has not yet been set by Marcella's family.** Stay tuned.
- ☞ **Life Enrichment at Bethel College has been canceled for spring 2022**, due to ongoing health and safety concerns. Organizers hope to resume Life Enrichment in fall 2022.
- ☞ **Healing & Hope:** A confidential group of women supporting each other in seeking healing and hope after experiencing betrayal trauma (a spouse or partner's use of pornography, affair, or sexual addiction). The group is hosted by First Mennonite Church of Newton and facilitated by Audrey Ratzlaff, M.Div, and Gail Unruh-Revel, LCSW, CST, CSAT. Meetings will be via zoom, and occur every other Tuesday beginning after the first of the year. Please contact the facilitator, Audrey Ratzlaff (aaratzlaff@yahoo.com), or Pastor Laura Goerzen of FMC Newton (laurag@firstmennonitenewton.org) for more information.
- ☞ **Luis Elier Rodriguez, a WDC pastor and ACPE Educator, would like to announce his book *On Significant Components of Spiritual Care*, now published and available for purchase.** This book can be helpful for pastors, chaplains, spiritual counselors, ACPE Educators, CPE students, and people with careers related to spiritual care and human services. Also, it is a resource for spiritual retreats and spiritual caregiver's training. You can send any feedback to the author's email: Lerodriguez@houstonmethodist.org.

Verse of the Week

"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow."— Isaiah 1:16-17 (NRSV)