



NEW SCANDINAVIA LUTHERAN CHURCH

JANUARY NEWSLETTER 2025

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wisemen from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage."

Matthew 2:1-2

The holidays are over. For some, the decorations are stored away for the next 11 months. Presents and the wrapping left behind are placed in their appropriate spots. The cookies and candy are gone. The fellowship and parties are in the history book, at least most of them. Everyone has gone home and back to the craziness of life. The joy that we experience around the holidays is gone. But is it really?

The theologian in me chuckles every year as I put up and pack away my multiple nativity scenes. I smile as I grab the wisemen and debate where to put them within the scene, as they weren't even in Bethlehem and never gathered around a stable on that Christmas night. Jesus was a child (probably a toddler) when they finally showed up. So where do I put them?

I say all of this because I wonder what Mary thought as these outsiders, these astrologist/scientists came to their home in Jerusalem. (Please give me a little latitude here) Mary's memory of what happened on that Christmas night is filed deep in her brain. Her decorations would also be packed away for another year. She is chasing after Jesus and may even have other children in the home. Then there is a knock on the door and upon opening it she sees standing before her these men with a handful of strange gifts. Obviously, the reminder of who Jesus truly is continues for Mary. Many may have forgotten about this baby born in a humble stable and this recognition is over, but the truth of who Jesus is continues to be shared around the world.

Here we are in January. Our living rooms look bare as we adjust to the normal layout of the room. So what is next? While Christmas lasts 12 days, from December 25 to December 6th (Epiphany), our celebration of Christ's arrival doesn't need to end. The church season of Epiphany is all about Christ being revealed in the world. We move into a time where our stories tell us that people have been taking notice because Jesus isn't like everyone else. People's eyes are open. People are taking notice. They are having their moments of epiphany.

As we enter a new year, I encourage us to look around and see what Jesus is doing around us and around the world. Sometimes it's hard as we don't always focus on God in the world. With wars around the world and fighting within our country: with hatred seeming to be how people see others; with sickness all over in our communities, where does Christ make his presence known and make you stand in awe.

Here is a task for you- Find one thing every day that makes you stand in awe, one thing that causes you to say "Christ is here/there," for the month of January and mark it on a calendar. No really! Give it a try. Let me know if it gets easier or harder as the month goes along. Let me know new things that you notice. I think you will be surprised.

God's peace be with you. **Pastor Sara**