Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we celebrate Epiphany. As one author puts it, “Many voices try to guide and shape our lives. When is a call God’s call? How do we decide?” (Herbert O’Driscoll) Today’s gospel (Matthew 2:1-12) is an extraordinary passage that tells the story of a group of wise men being called to court with their king. He inquires what they might know about the “child”. Herod is a manipulative, conniving and abusive leader who fully intends to have others do his dirty work of finding the child and then having him murdered. Unfortunately the wise men have no idea of his plan. All they know is they are supposed to find the Christ Child and report back to their king. There are many astrologers who would have been aware of a certain conjunction of stars that inferred a phenomenon indicating the birth of the King. This group of magi decided to take a long and dangerous journey to find the child. The point of this passage is that the way of wisdom is to contemplate and decide on a certain course of action based on “promptings” in each of our lives. Is it possible that God sends these promptings through scripture, prayer, meditation and the wise counsel of others in order that we may choose certain directions and events in our lives based on those spiritual experiences? Quite simply, does God call us?

So here’s the warning, sometimes others in our lives make recommendations or suggestions that I would like to call the Herod factor. These are people who would like us to avoid evaluating their suggestions and recommendations and simply do whatever they tell us to do. Clearly their motives are unhealthy. But instead of blaming others for our choices, we need to take responsibility for our decisions and actions based on the fact that we have intentionally evaluated what may be the promptings of God or maybe unhealthy recommendations of others. Let me be clear that I do believe we need to surround ourselves in wise counsel but this must be done with caution and care. Ultimately, scripture, prayer, meditation and the counsel of others is the combination that is most promising when making important decisions. Today we remember the magi who took the risk to go and experience the Christ Child, and in a dream were warned not to return to Herod. They trusted that dream and went home by a new direction. Ultimately we respect and admire their great courage to take a dangerous trip to experience Jesus and then to listen for God’s voice to make a healthy decision for the future.

Today it’s important for me to share with you that we are on a very limited access to the church building. This will likely last for two weeks. Five people will be present for the preparation of worship services. We will remain in close contact as the covid situation changes, but for now services are livestream only.

Arrangements are in process to host our Vestry meeting January 30th. This will be a zoom meeting. You will receive a formal invitation in the next few days. You are invited to email your Vestry report by next Monday afternoon, if you have not already. All motions need to be submitted by January 16th so that the coordination and administration of this meeting will be well in hand. Your copy of the Vestry report will be emailed to you January 20th by noon. If you wish to have a hard copy, you may pick up a copy of the Vestry report January 24th between 9am and 4pm. It never hurts to let us know that you are coming since the doors are locked during this time of covid. We want to be able to greet you upon your arrival. For those who are interested in the event and activities about parish council. The next meeting is January 25th by zoom. If you have not already received an invitation for that meeting and wish to be present, please call the office.

Last but not least, as we begin this new year, please be assured that a visioning process is well underway and we are eager to embrace new opportunities and experiences for ministry in 2022. May God bless you during these difficult days. Please be assured of my prayers.

Yours in Christ

Stephen

Rev Dr Stephen Hendry