

“Guided by the Light “
Epiphany Sunday
Matthew 2:1-12
The Rev. Nancy Conklin

Each year on this Feast of Epiphany, we are invited to listen anew to the very familiar story of those three wise men who followed the Light of a Star to see for themselves the newly born King of Israel. The arrival of those Persian astrologers in Bethlehem was yet another sign of what the angels proclaimed to the shepherds on that most holy night two years before — the good news of great joy that the babe who had lain in a manger is the Savior of the World. Further confirmation that Christ came for all; not just for his fellow Jews, but for Gentiles, and by extension, all of us throughout history.

The magi’s pilgrimage to the manger was also a sign of the congruence between God’s Word and God’s Wisdom. The Incarnate Logos and Wisdom Sophia are the creative forces that govern all things and guide the universe and our own souls toward wholeness and joy. The stars in the sky, the light that governs the day, the light that governs the night, and the light of the Spirit within us all witness to God’s ongoing revelation in our lives and in the life of our world.

The appearance of a new star in the east was God’s unique revelation appropriate to the Persian people, reminding us that Epiphany is the day we celebrate that God’s revelation is found along the many religious pathways of humankind. Heeding the wisdom revealed through God’s Book of Nature, to quote St. Augustine, the magi set off on a journey. It was common practice that, upon learning of the arrival of a new king in a neighboring land, to send emissaries with gifts in celebration of the beginning of a new reign. The Light of the Star was sufficient enough to guide the magi east toward Jerusalem, where anyone would have expected the new king of Israel to be born. Once there, they magi receive further revelation from God’s Word guiding them onward to Bethlehem, where they found the king for whom they had been searching.

Perplexed by Herod’s response to their quest for the holy one of Israel, their ambivalence was confirmed by a dream, alerting them that Herod intended to harm the holy child. Taking the dream seriously as revealing of divine wisdom, the magi heeded the warning and set off in a new direction. Joseph also received that same revelation to flee Herod’s violence in a dream, and when he awoke, Joseph and his family set off in a new direction. They went as God told them to Egypt, to become strangers and refugees in a foreign land, depending on the hospitality and kindness of strangers.

As we begin a new year of our pilgrimage through life, we do so in hope and expectation of what epiphanies might come our way to guide us through all our twists and turns, abrupt endings, and new beginnings, or those not always so welcome, but necessary, course corrections. In addition to charting our life’s course, God gifts us with those epiphanies that suddenly shine light on the true nature or deeper meaning of something about ourselves or our experience. Those “aha!” moments of enlightenment of what Spirit is doing in me, where I am and how I am. Heeding those epiphanies, we grow deeper in the wholeness and joy God intends for us. We embark on this new year, with Isaiah’s promise ringing in our ears: “Arise, shine; for your light has come...” We no longer have to live in darkness. Always, we begin again. There are new roads for us to travel upon in this new year. To help guide us on our journey we will continue the tradition of receiving our own star from God. After offering our gifts at the manger, you will be invited to choose a word from the basket passed to you. As you pray with your word, or place it in a prominent place, allow it to reveal epiphanies of meaning and direction that you might walk in the Light of God’s Word and Wisdom.