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DECEMBER 2021 AND JANUARY 2022

MUSINGS FROM PASTOR DAN

The Star of Bethlehem

Missy, knowing my love for astronomy, told me a few weeks ago that the Star of Bethlehem will be appearing this year for the first time in 800 years. I was amazed and thought I can't wait to gaze at that through my telescope.

A little research revealed that the last time this star appeared was March 4, 1226. The next time it will appear will be in March, 2080, and then it will not reappear until after 2400. This astronomical phenomenon will only be viewable from 12/16 - 12/21 and will be seen about one hour after sunset.



We know well of the biblical account of the Magi, sometimes called the three Wise Men, or as I lovingly call them, the three wise-guys. They followed the star to find Jesus in the Manger. Matthew 2:1-12 records the account. A few things need to be noted about the story that we mark on the first Sunday after Christmas, called Epiphany. First, the Bible does not tell us there were three wise men. The number three is derived from the three gifts of gold, frankincense, and

myrrh. We don't know how many were involved in the search for Jesus in the manger. Second, what is reported as a star is really the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn. It may actually appear as a double-planet, but it will also be quite bright. The notion of the Jupiter Saturn conjunction being the star of Bethlehem wasn't even postulated until the 17th century by the German astronomer Kepler. Third, it seems that every effort to verify the conjunction of these two planets after Jesus birth would place the timing about 7 B.C. Even if Jesus were born in 5 B.C., as is often suggested, it is still off by two years. In addition, the wise men might not have even arrived until Jesus was about 2 years old, hence Herod's edict. Fourth, every other astronomical explanation including a comet, sometimes referred to as the "Broom Star," meteor, or supernova simply cannot be verified.

The simple fact of the matter is that the Star of Bethlehem was not an astronomical event. Rather it was an epiphany, hence the name of the day. An epiphany is an appearance of a divine entity. Some may argue that it was a theophany, that is, a manifestation of God. Either way, the "star" the wise men followed was something that God provided to guide them to the right location. It is unfortunate that some number of Christians over the years have tried to reconcile the works of God with natural phenomena to justify the reality of the event. It is further unfortunate because such unnecessary explanations discredit them and the Christian faith. In this

THE VOICE

instance, the fallacious aspects of the Magi have led Additionally, there is a theological revelation that to an incorrect understanding of the meaning of the can be observed that parallels Moses with Jesus:

story. While we may have heard the gifts and their symbolic meanings, (gold symbolizing royalty or kingship on earth, frankincense symbolizing deity, and myrrh symbolizing death as it is an embalming oil), the purpose of recording the account can be missed. While the symbolism of the gifts may be valid, these were standard gifts offered to any king or deity in the ancient world. Even the names, Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar were not recorded until sometime between the 6^{th} and 8^{th} centuries. And as if those issues were not enough, even one of our most popular Christmas hymns, "We Three Kings" is a mistranslation of the word "magi" that literally means magician. Of course, a magician in that time was not as we know today as sleight-of-hand performers. Rather, these were people of noble-birth, educated, wealthy and influential in their respective cultures.

The most significant part of the problem is that the Magi account is separated from the rest of the story in chapter 2. Matthew never intended that the Magi account be utilized as a classic Christmas time story with the gifts as focal points. He certainly never intended it to be separated from the rest of the chapter.

The events recorded in chapter 2 are a part of a larger literary segment that includes 1:1 through 4:25. As a literary unit, we may call it: The Beginnings of Jesus' Ministry – A Setting free through his life. This portion of Matthew's Gospel, (this Gospel was written for a Jewish audience), is structured in a 7part chiasm. What we discover in that arrangement is that the account of Magi is the second of five proofs Matthew offers to verify that Jesus is the Messiah. In fact, the focal point is not the Magi, or even Herod's persecution. It is about geography. Merry Christmas! This text fulfills the prophecies of the family's movement from Bethlehem to Egypt to Nazareth. The prophecies minimally include Jeremiah 23:5 and Numbers 24:7 for verse 2:2. Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2 for verses 2:5-6. Hosea 11:1 for verse 2:15. Jeremiah 31:15 for verses 2:16-18. Isaiah 53:3 for 2:23.

<u>Moses</u>	<u>Jesus</u>
Pharaoh	Herod
1 st born male killed	Males under 2 killed
Escape in the Nile	Escape to Egypt
Left Egypt to go	Left Egypt to go
Israel	Israel

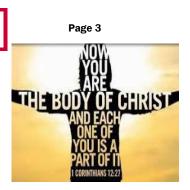
Thus, the Story of the Magi and Herod is indeed the second proof Matthew offers the Jewish reader, and us, to show through the completed prophesied geographical movements of the family, that Jesus is the Messiah.



Enjoy the celestial conjunction as it seems Jupiter and Saturn will be quite close, thus making their appearance exceptionally bright. Hopefully, we will have clear skies.

astor Dan

Our Shared Life



One of the themes that came out of the November congregational brainstorming session is that our "shared life" is important to us: **Serving, worshipping, gathering, and growing closer to God are all things** *we do together.* Here are some great upcoming opportunities to share the life of Faith with your brothers and sisters in Christ at St. Luke's:

Cookies and Cards–Wednesday, Dec. 1st (1pm)

• Volunteers needed to help address Christmas Cards to nursing home residents

Breakfast with Santa and Children's Christmas Shoppe Saturday, Dec.11th (9am-12pm)

- Bring the kids and grandkids to meet Santa, eat breakfast, and for the kids to shop for gifts for family members (prices under \$1)
- Contact Paula Dean or Katie Thomason to volunteer (We need LOTS of people to wrap! We also need help with set-up, food prep, and clean-up)

Share Shop and Breaking Bread-Saturday, Dec 18th (10am-12pm)

- Drop off donations of gently-used clothing, household items, and non-perishable food to the church between Dec 15th and 17th (receipts available during office hours)
- Volunteers needed to help set-up on Friday afternoon or clean-up Saturday around 12pm
- Contact Paula Penn or the office to volunteer

Men's Breakfast– Saturday, Jan 1st (8am)

- Pancakes, sausage, bacon, eggs—And the fellowship of your brothers! What could be better??
- Speaker is our very own Jim Orr
- Contact Jim Orr or Fred Burton to help prepare food or clean up

Advent Candle Lighting at Worship Services Dec 5th, 12th, and 19th and Readers at Christmas Eve Services (6:30pm Contemporary and 11:00 pm Traditional)

• Contact the office to sign up!

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,...that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel (Phil 1:27)

Prayer Concerns for December 2021



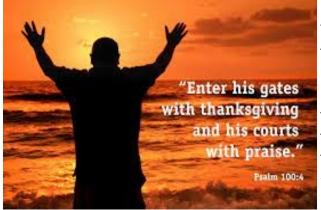
Ann Shuler, Lisa Alexander, JoAnne Staples, Michael Glatfelter, Julianna Conner, Jennie Russell, Elaine Orme, Lisa Williams, Mary Ann Palmer, Hayden Plutschak, Mailly Carnichan, Tom Trice, Sonny Callahan, Bruce Hastings, Pete Miller, Janet Boecker, Cindy Nicklin, Potsy Kemp, Debbie Riggin, Susan Fink, Owen Wevodau, Charlene Robbins, David Nagel, Rob Cohee, Cricket and Glenn Williams, Michael and Ryan Alexander, Ed Parry, Vicky Winter, Helen Vogt, Hollis Cantwell, Brooke Schroder, Archie

Carroll, Josh Breeding, Sylvia Holland, Alan and Gloria Vandam, Pat Browne, Lisa Barge, Carol Stockley, Hayden Semans, Conrad Rosemere, Elaine Friel, Sarah Price, Kay Koenig, and our country.

Sympathy to the family and friends of those who have passed away since the last issue of the Voice: Bobby Dean, Susan Bunker, Ron Maise, Linda Allen, Charlie Davis, Dana Shaffer, Peggy Hubbard, Nancy Shivley.



<u>Prayers for those serving in the U.S. Military</u>: John Biddle, Jake Brown, Chelsea Bunker, Seth Gill, Brockman Harris, Ethan Lister, JR Mann, Mitchell Mann, Justin Moore, Matthew Parker, Andrew Robbins, Dale Tuel, and James Wright,



To add names to these lists, we ask that you either call (410-479-2171), e-mail (stlukes@goeaston.com), or drop-off/mail to 100 South 5th Avenue, Denton. Please be sure to include your name and telephone number so that we can contact you regarding the status of the person needing prayer; otherwise, the name will be removed after a couple of months.

Thank you to all who remember those named on our prayer lists. Only God knows how many are blessed because you care enough to pray.

Faith Formation at St. Luke's

Growing in faith from birth through adulthood



Faith Formation Growing in Faith from Birth through Adulthood

Sunday School 9:30 am



St. Luke's children carrying

to the altar for a blessing

Operation Christmas Child

Advent Wreath designed by the elementary Sunday school class

> Adult Bible Study 9:30 am

Youth Group Events coming in January and February! Stay tuned...

THE VOICE

On Nov. 21st, we held a **brainstorming session** after our combined worship service. That session, we hoped, would elicit substantive thoughts and ideas regarding current and future ministries. Our hopes were more than realized as nearly forty of us remained to engage in the activity. Jody Herb provided our Leadership Council with a spreadsheet of ideas that we can begin to address. In our effort to be sure all of our church membership and supporters can also engage in this process, the list of ideas shared at that meeting are below.

YOUTH MINISTRY

We need our youth group back

More youth involvement in services

Start a youth gaga league next winter

Bring back ways to encourage teens to participate in church services

Youth Rally

Rejuvenate Sunday School Youth Group

Hire a Youth Minister

Invest in youth and children's programs

Youth outreach - MYF - Gather with other church groups Work with other church's youth ministries and plan events Youth Ministry - Service and building projects

Do more mailings FB posts to the Denton area to increase Sunday School attendance

MUSIC MINISTRY

Praise team out in the public more often Invite a known Gospel group to come and open to the public Old fashioned hymn sing Gospel concert and covered dish Family music night Worship night with Praise Band Recruit younger choir members

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Young adult activities - not meetings, give them a project to complete

Involve young adults by calling them and encourage them to come to church

Have a young adult (18-24) Sunday School Class

Parent Date Night - Youth cook for the parents - Young children can go to the nursery

CHURCH EVENTS

Outdoor yard sale

Gatherings to get to know each other

Evening bible study during the week

Bible study/prayer groups evening during the week (short ones 6 - 8 weeks)

Small group bible studies in the home. (Rich Warren - that would be support group as well.

Nurture internal customer helping to facilitate lifestyle changes (dinner/bible studies)

In-depth bible study - Community Bible Study (CBS) through zoom

Parent out night

Telephone prayer list

Call those who no longer attend and encourage them to come back

More ways to bring all 3 services together Combine 8:30 and 11:00 services Encourage our adult children to come to church Testimony during service Bring a friend to church day Increase the number of Wednesday prayer warriors More ecumenical activities Game night Movie night Casual picnics at Martinak Sewing retreat Church picnic at camp Pecometh Have one time ?? Service, have one on service with music more outreach to the congregation

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Gathering of youth groups Tap into community events to make church more visible Support of volunteer for board of child care Renew connection with His Hope Haven (Donations/ volunteers/meal) Battered Women's Shelter Outreach to people who move into the community Community Memorial Service Mini library boxes throughout the community Health sessions Projects that all church members can be involved within the community College scholarships for Sunday School students Christian movies shown in Greensboro Community Choir

BIBLE STUDY

Pre-school bible study Small groups Empty Nester groups/study Bible Studies/video studies Women's conference or retreat

VISITATION

Shut - ins who are still living in their homes Nursing Home, Hospital etc. Sponsor not just new members but visitors to acclimate them to the church Create a list in the bulletin of the Shepard list (Those that are home bound) different from the prayer list Find a way to minister to the home bound Home bound visitation group

OTHER

Ordain Deacons to help with pastoral care Adds in Star Democrat Caroline Review How can we help each other - Elders Maintain and update building and grounds Walking Group Swimming in Fellowship Hall Week night fitness classes Fitness classes with Christian music Recruit Sunday School Teachers & MYF leaders Communication - keep all people informed about t

Communication - keep all people informed about plans, decisions and actions

Need a new church directory

St. Luke's UBER service

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PLEASE KEEP OUR UBILEE SHARE SHOP IN

YOUR PRAYERS

SHARE YOUR ABUNDANCE WITH SO MANY IN NEED!

Share Shop

Saturday, December 18, 2021 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.

St. Luke's United Methodist Church 100 S. Fifth Avenue, Denton, MD 21629 Fellowship Hall

> Donation Collection Times: Sunday, December 12 – Friday December 17



Needed (in good condition):

Clothes, Shoes, Accessories Bedding – Sheets, Blankets Kitchenware Toys, Books, DVDs, CDs, Games Baby Supplies: (NEW Diapers, Lotions, Baby Food, Formula) Bikes, Strollers, Children's Items Suit Cases, Backpacks Rugs *Working Appliances & Furniture



Volunteers are needed to help sort donations ahead of time and also to assist in many ways the day of Share Shop. Also needed: Large shopping bags (drop them off in the church office ahead of time.)



December 2021



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

		100	1	2	3	4	
	Advant	2024	10am Prayer Team	6:30pm Boy Scouts			
	Advent	2021	1pm Cookies &	Scouts			
		1	Cards				
			6pm Bells				
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Communion	12pm AA	7pm AA	10am Prayer	6:30pm Boy		9am Breakfast	
8:30 Trad'l Worship 9:30 Sunday School	7:30pm NA		Team 6pm Bells	Scouts		with Santa	
9:40 Ignite Worship			7pm Praise Band			11am Children's	
11:00 Trad'l Worship			7:30pm Choir			Christmas Shoppe	
12	13	14	15	16	17		
8:30 Trad'l Worship	12pm AA		10am Prayer	6:30pm Boy		10am Share	
9:30 Sunday School	7:30pm NA	7pm AA	Team	Scouts		Shop	
9:40 Ignite Worship 11:00 Trad'l Worship			6pm Bells 7pm Praise Band	7:30 Church Council		11am Breaking	
			7:30pm Choir			Bread	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
8:30 Trad'l Worship	12pm AA		10am Prayer		6:30pm		
9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Ignite Worship	7:30pm NA	11am Blood Bank	Team 6pm Bells		Contemporary Service	🔬 Merry 췷	
11:00 Trad'l Worship			7pm Praise Band		11pm	Christmas	
		7pm AA	7:30pm Choir		Traditional		
					Service	a tu vit	
26	27	28	29	30	31	s di	
		20	10am Prayer	ეს	31		
8:30 Trad'l Worship 9:30 Sunday School	12pm AA 7:30pm NA	7pm AA	Team 6pm Bells				
9:40 Ignite Worship	/.30pm 101	/Piii 221	7pm Praise Band				
11:00 Trad'l Worship			7:30pm Choir		(6		



January 2022

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

Epiphäñ ^P Epiphäñ ^P						1 8 am Men's Breakfast
2 Epiphany & Communion 8:30 Trad'l Worship 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Ignite Worship 11:00 Trad'l Worship	3 12pm AA 7:30pm NA	4 7pm AA	5 10am Prayer Team 6pm Bells 7pm Praise Band 7:30pm Choir	6 6:30pm Boy Scouts	7	8
9 8:30 Trad'l Worship 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Ignite Worship 11:00 Trad'l Worship	10 12pm AA 7:30pm NA	1 7pm AA	12 10am Prayer Team 6pm Bells 7pm Praise Band	13 6:30pm Boy Scouts 7:30 Church Council		
16 8:30 Trad'l Worship 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Ignite Worship 11:00 Trad'l Worship	17 12pm AA 7:30pm NA	18 7pm AA	19 10am Prayer Team 6pm Bells 7pm Praise Band 7:30pm Choir	20 6:30pm Boy Scouts	21 Voice Deadline	22
23 8:30 Trad'l Worship 9:30 Sunday School 9:40 Ignite Worship 11:00 Trad'l Worship	24 12pm AA 7:30pm NA	25 7pm AA	26 10am Prayer Team 6pm Bells 7pm Praise Band 7:30pm Choir	27 6:30pm Boy Scouts	28	29
30 10:00 All Church Worship	31	1	1]

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St. Luke's United Methodist Church Treasurer's Report

For Period January through December 2021 as of October 31, 2021 S/B 83%

	For Feriod January through December 2021 as of October 31, 2021						C/B 030/		
Description	Annual Budget 2021	Actual Income or Expense To Date	Variance	S/B 83% % Budg Used	Budget through September 2021	Actual Income or Expense To Date	Variance	S/B 83% % Budg Used	
-									
Income	242 207 00	204 272 12	27 024 07	84.34%	201 022 50	204 272 12	(2 440 62)	101 210	
Offerings Offerings - Sunday School	242,307.00 100.00	204,372.13 39.00	37,934.87 61.00	39.00%	201,922.50 83.33	204,372.13 39.00	(2,449.63) 44.33	101.21% 46.80%	
interest Income	25.00	27.67	(2.67)	110.68%	20.83	27.67	(6.84)	132.82%	
Building Use	3,000.00	4,921.00	(1,921.00)	164.03%	2,500.00	4,921.00	(2,421.00)	196.84%	
Administrative Building Use	0.00	.,	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00		
Total Income	245,432.00	209,359.80	36,072.20	85.30%	204,526.67	209,359.80	(4,833.13)	<i>102.36%</i>	
Expenses									
Pastor Expenses									
Salary	58,000.00	48,333.30	9,666.70	83.33%	48,333.33	48,333.30	0.03	100.00%	
Travel Reimbursement	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	
Cable TV at parsonage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	
Hospitalization/Dental	18,180.00	18,700.00	(520.00)	102.86%	15,150.00	18,700.00	(3,550.00)	123.43%	
Bishop's Retreat Continuing Education	0.00		0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00 0.00	0.00 0.00	0.00% 0.00%	
Pension Plan	9,512.00	8,719,37	792.63	91.67%	7.926.67	8.719.37	(792.70)	110.00%	
Pastor Expenses - other	9,512.00	0,/19.3/	0.00	91.07%	0.00	0.00	0.00	110.00%	
Total Pastor Expenses	85,692.00	75,752.67	9,939.33	88.40%	71,410.00	75,752.67	(4,342.67)	106.08%	
Staff Expenses									
Staff Salaries	71,400.00	55,120.03	16,279.97	77.20%	59,500.00	55,120.03	4,379.97	92.64%	
Wage and Tax Expenses	7,140.00	4,588.11	2,551.89	64.26%	5,950.00	4,588.11	1,361.89	77.11%	
Worker's Compensation	1,428.00	549.00	879.00	38.45%	1,190.00	549.00	641.00	46.13%	
Expenses - other		0.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	0.00		
Total Staff Expenses	79,968.00	60,257.14	19,710.86	75.35%	66,640.00	60,257.14	6,382.86	215.88%	
Other Operational Expenses Accounting & Legal	400.00	537.31	(137.31)	134.33%	333.33	537.31	(203.98)		
Annual Conference expense	500.00	150.00	350.00	30.00%	416.67	150.00	266.67	36.00%	
Christian Education/Sunday School	1,200.00	228.21	971.79	19.02%	1,000.00	228.21	771.79	22.82%	
Conference Apportionments	22,379.00	15,665.00	6,714.00	70.00%	18,649.17	15,665.00	2,984,17	84.00%	
Easton District Office	1,343.00	1,119.00	224.00	83.32%	1,119.17	1,119.00	0.17	99.99%	
Janitorial Supplies	1,000.00	338.50	661.50	33.85%	833.33	338.50	494.83	40.62%	
Electricity/Oil	12,000.00	11,061.45	938.55	92.18%	10,000.00	11,061.45	(1,061.45)	110.61%	
Equipment Rental & Maintenance	6,500.00	3,825.24	2,674.76	58.85%	5,416.67	3,825.24	1,591.43	70.62%	
Kitchen/ParsonageFuel	4,000.00	2,661.27	1,338.73	66.53%	3,333.33	2,661.27	672.06	79.84%	
Grass and Shrubbery Maintenance	1,800.00	3,230.00	(1,430.00)	179.44%	1,500.00	3,230.00	(1,730.00)	215.33%	
Insurance	10,300.00	9,255.00	1,045.00	89.85%	8,583.33	9,255.00	(671.67)	107.83%	
Maintenance and Repairs	5,000.00	3,624.28	1,375.72	72.49%	4,166.67	3,624.28	542.39	86.98%	
Miscellaneous	100.00	412.29	(312.29)	412.29%	83.33	412.29	(328.96)	494.75%	
Music Committee	1,200.00	933.00	267.00	77.75%	1,000.00	933.00	67.00	1392.54%	
MYF Program	200.00	0.00	200.00	0.00%	166.67	0.00	166.67	0.00%	
Office Supplies	3,000.00	1,649.65	1,350.35	54.99%	2,500.00	1,649.65	850.35	65.99%	
Postage Pastor/Organist Substitutor	1,300.00	788.55	511.45	60.66%	1,083.33	788.55	294.78	72.79%	
Pastor/Organist, Substitutes	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00%	
Pastor's Moving Exp Escrow Acct Stewardship	0.00	0.00 1,020.57	0.00 279.43	0.00% 78.51%	0.00 1,083.33	0.00	0.00 62.76	0.00% 94.21%	
Telephone	1,300.00 2,000.00	2,592.17	(592.17)	129.61%	1,085.55	1,020.57 2,592.17	(925.50)	155.53%	
Water and Sewer	1,500.00	1,071.76	428.24	71.45%	1,000.07	1,071.76	(925.50) 178.24	155.55% 85.74%	
Spiritual Life	1,750.00	1,393.22	356.78	79.61%	1,458.33	1,393.22	65.11	95.54%	
Worship Materials	1,000.00	215.01	784.99	21.50%	833.33	215.01	618.32	25.80%	
Total Operational Expenses	79,772.00	61,771.48	18,000.52	77.44%	66,476.67	61,771.48	4,705.19	92.92%	
Total Expenses	245,432.00	197,781.29	47,650.71	80.58%	204,526.67	197,781.29	6,745.38	96.70%	
Net Income over Expenses	0.00	11,578.51	(11,578.51)		0.00	11,578.51	(11,578.51)		

St. Luke's United Methodist Church 100 South Fifth Avenue Denton, Maryland 21629

410-479-2171 email: stlukes@goeaston.net

Return Service Requested

To:

The Voice

of St. Luke's UMC Dec 2021 & Jan 2022

St. Luke's UMC Staff

Rev. Dan T. Gedman- Pastor

Administrative Assistant: Carrie Soldano Director of Music: Becky Zinser Director of Ignite Band:: Alicia Weippert Nursery Coordinator: Alex Penn Sexton: Denny Weaver

Visit St. Luke's Online at www.stlukesdenton.org or on Facebook



Merry Christmas And Happy New Year!