

THE BELLTOWER



1ST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF KANKAKEE

Farewell to Barbara Taylor—Erzinger

A beautiful memorial service was held for Barbara December 18th. Both Pastor Ray and Dr. Franklin Garton led the service, Dr. Jeff Bell of Olivet sang. Her son Perry gave a moving speech representing the family.

Barbara was best known for her dedication to making the church grounds look good. In fact the memorial garden is because of her.

Her words of encouragement, support and her quick wit will be sorely missed. We can take comfort though in knowing she is now with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Staff

Paul Johnson,
*Director of Music,
Office and Building
Manager*

Mark Wadley,
Maintenance



We said farewell to Pastor Ray Sunday, Dec. 30th. We will miss you, but know that God has a plan both for you and our church. Thank you for the time you spent with us! May God bless you as you continue to serve Him in Gibson City.

Epiphany Reflections

Epiphany

Many of us were introduced to Epiphany through the familiar silhouetted-image of Three Wise Men bearing gifts as they followed the Great Star by night. In some cultures, Epiphany is known as the *Day of the Kings* (*Día de los Reyes*). It is also known as Twelfth Day or Twelfth Night, reflecting an old custom of giving a gift for each of the days from December 25 to January 6 for the 12 days of Christmas. The day has special meaning for a number of reasons. Several branches of Christianity celebrate the birth of the Christ Child on January 6 or January 7

The word *epiphany* means *appearance* or *manifestation*. Popular usage likens *epiphany* to words such as *eureka* or *aha!* Use of this word by some English speakers conjures images of having a light bulb turned on, or of being able to see something that was once hidden from view. The texts for the Sundays after the Epiphany dramatize the many ways that we people came to understand who Jesus was, through his baptism, the miracle at the wedding, or through that bodacious declaration in his hometown synagogue! But, this ever-widening circle of revelation began 'outside the circle' of Judaism, so to speak, with the Magi.

Who were the Magi?

Many versions of the Bible refer to them as the *Wise Men*. We often forget that these Magi or Wise Men were non-Jews. Older sources suggest that they were priestly descendants of one of the tribes of the Medes known for their knowledge of the stars (astronomy) and their ability to interpret dreams.

What can we learn from the Wise Men?

First, the Wise Men began their journey because of their beliefs.

It was a common belief that when a world leader like a king was born that a special stellar phenomenon would appear in the sky. The Magi saw something that convinced them that they had seen the long-awaited sign. Historians tell us that the Jews, the Romans, and the Persians were all watching the skies about that time, looking for signs of the birth of an extraordinary king. A few years before, around 11 BC, Halley's Comet had been seen. There were other stellar phenomena, including a bright star, Sirius, which appeared brightly in the daytime instead of at night. The Wise Men saw the star and began their journey.

May God give us all inspiration for this year's journey.

Second, the Wise Men were willing to follow what they had seen into unknown territory.

Their journey took them outside their country and their comfort zone. The Wise Men risked the consequences of disobeying Herod, who was known to behave as a madman when provoked and returned to their country by another way.

The Christian journey is often an off-road excursion.

Third, the Wise Men were committed to the journey -- wherever the star might lead.

The Wise Men set out to find a newborn King by following a star and ended up in finding a baby born to young, relatively poor parents! Not exactly what they expected and not exactly what befit their dignity as priests.

In this coming year, may we look to heaven for guidance and comfort and may we accept God's blessings in whatever forms we find them, just as the Wise Men accepted that their long, expensive journey led them to a baby born to young, inexperienced parents who lived on the poor side of town.

Finally, the Wise Men brought gifts.

They did the thing that people in the East or in Africa or in India would do when visiting royalty. They brought gifts.

Gold was the kind of gift that you brought to a king.

Frankincense was the kind of gift that you would bring to a priest.

Myrrh was given to someone who was about to die.

On This Twelfth Day, or Three Kings Day, otherwise known as Epiphany, think of the gift that you will offer to God in the coming year. The gift of time? The gift of your talents? Your service in the community? Your witness and testimony? The gift of undying love and devotion?

Their greatest gift comes to us in the form of a realization. The Wise Men were the first Gentiles to recognize that Jesus belongs to everyone. Good news is for everyone, not just a select few.

Star of wonder

Star of light

Star with royal beauty bright

Westward leading

Still proceeding

Guide us to thy perfect light.

Amen.

Building Manager Update

This past month nothing major has happened (fortunately). There are some issues we will have to address next year though.

1. Air conditioning CE wing upstairs. Since we moved Juan 3:16 upstairs we will need to install air conditioning before it starts to get really hot. They use that area 3 times a week. If we just install window units we might be able to get it done for around \$10,000. As the landlord it is our responsibility.
2. Tuckpointing. A sizeable portion of our brick exterior is in need of tuckpointing ; specifically areas where the mortar between the bricks has deteriorated. Without the mortar water gets into the building. One of the most critical areas is by the good shepherd stained glass window. Water is leaking into the building. For now we have had the area caulked, but it will require attention in the spring.
3. Furnace chimney. The chimney is literally coming apart...you can knock pieces of the brick off. The result is a leak into the Juan 3:16 office upstairs. The ceiling is actually caved in at one spot. It looks really bad, but until the chimney is fixed it would be pointless to fix it. The estimate for that job is 5K. The building will have to be shut down for 3 days...the power has to be cut to the building since the area where the mason needs to erect the scaffolding is right where the power lines coming into building are. My hope is we can get it done during the KSD District 111 spring break.
4. Sanctuary lighting. The current fixtures are shot, most will not hold the down light. Would cost just as much or more to repair the fixtures. Estimate around \$35,000.
5. Stained glass. There are numerous windows that need attention. This is not inexpensive, but the longer we wait the more expensive it gets.

I know this is a lot, and an expensive list. However if we fail to act there could be significant damage done to building. Please be in prayer that we will grow the church so we can stay in this beautiful facility.

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Mary Maddox sent a thank you note to the church. We sent her flowers when she was in the hospital a few months ago.

"The lovely bouquet of flowers that you sent to me in October when I was in Riverside Hospital lifted my spirits considerably. I've been home since Nov. 8th, but still have a long way to go in the healing process. My daughter, Susan, has been my guardian angel throughout the past two months.

Thank you Sue Barclay for the card and words of encouragement that accompanied the flowers.

My love and gratitude to all,

Mary Maddox"

In the pulpit

At the time this newsletter is being written we have pulpit supply for the first two Sundays. Karen Williams will be here. Session will be meeting with our Area 4 Moderator soon. By the end of the month the Presbytery will appoint a moderator for us. The Session will be seeking out candidates to be our pastor. Please be in prayer for them during this process.