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And there, ahead of them*, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage.

Matthew 2:9-11, NRSV *The Wise Ones

Christmas/Epiphany 2022

Beloveds;

Heraclitus, the fifth century Greek philosopher noted that change is the only constant in life. For the past three years, in planning our Christmas services, we have made and revised plans, will the buildings be open? If they are open, what will the protocols be? Do we need people to register to attend? What about visitors? How do we distribute the Zoom link? This year, we are planning for our buildings to be open fully for our Christmas services.

Fernie Knox United will celebrate at 201 Second Avenue at 7:00 pm online and in person. Christ Church Anglican will celebrate at 591 Fourth Avenue at 9:00 pm online and in person for Christmas Eve. Christmas Day will be at Christ Church Anglican at 10:00 am on Sunday. And as that is our 4th Sunday, we will celebrate Holy Eucharist.

Imagine, the Wise Ones, who were following a star, understanding that a baby had been born as the rightful King of the Jews. They ended up at Herod's temple and, unknowingly, started a paranoid rampage as they asked if Herod knew where this baby had been born. Herod, who had declared himself King of the Jews was inwardly terrified, yet outwardly calm as he suggested they find the star, meet this blessed baby and return to tell him what they had seen.

For years we have celebrated the arrival of the Wise Ones as though it were on the same day as Jesus' birth. Except it wasn't. Much scholarship has been written about when Jesus was born and how old he was when the Wise Ones visited. Note the difference in the language. Jesus in Matthew's gospel is described as an infant and the Wise Ones visited him in a house.

This would indicate that he was born some months before the Wise Ones found him and paid him homage. The reading goes on further to indicate that they learned, in a dream, not to return to Herod and to go home by another road.

Imagine the sky on the night when Jesus was born. There would have been no light pollution, only multiple points of light in the sky. There would be no International Space Station, no space garbage, and no satellites to be mistaken for stars. Imagine the silence.

I'm always awestruck in the truest sense of the word, when I see the stars (and satellites) in the sky on a clear, crisp night. I strain my eyes to see as far as I can focus and imagine that there are life forms on other planets or other solar systems that are doing the same thing, wondering who or what else is out there.

I sometimes wonder when I look at the sky, if there is a sense of the future, or a sense of the past before us? I enjoy the quiet night sky when I can see it clearly. My thoughts turn to the Wise Ones as they ride their camels while following a star. If you've ever tried to follow a star while driving a car you know how challenging this can be. Imagine this on the back of a camel?

They brought their most important and meaningful treasures to meet the one they had heard of and dreamed of. The one who would realign the world and bring an end to the Roman occupation of the known world. The one who would bring much needed peace on earth. What saddens me is that we are still searching for this peace on earth.

It's been a tough year. Far too many funerals this year, and the summer especially; so many funerals for young people who died by suicide or as a result of drug use. My heart aches for the families left behind, trying to make sense of something utterly senseless.

We have been through the sale of Fernie Knox United Church and the decision to move into the Christ Church Anglican building. And now the ministry of "living together" and worshipping together in the same space becomes real. There will be teething pains. There will be conflict. There will be laughter and there will be tears. There will be lament, and there will be hope.

At some point the building located at 201 2nd Avenue will be deconsecrated. Which means it will no longer be under the judicatory of the Pacific Mountain Region. God will still be in the building. It will remain a holy and sacred place. And, God willing, it will become a gathering place for arts and music in the community.

And so, as we say farewell to 2022 and look with hope and anticipation to 2023, may we see things as though it were the first time as we reimagine what our Worship Space and Parish Hall may be as we lean further into the life of Ecumenical Shared Ministry.

From my home to yours, I wish you a peace-filled Christmas and a holy festive season.

With every blessing,

Andrea

The Reverend Canon Andrea L. Brennan, Incumbent