



Steeple News

January 2012



No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I strain to reach the end of the race and receive the prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.....

—Philippians 3:13-14

Pastor's Page

Early Christians had no celebration for the birth of Jesus, because the date was unknown. In about the fourth century, December 25 was designated as Jesus' date of birth, possibly because it had been the day of the pagan festival *Sol Invictus*, which followed the winter solstice and marked the sun's rising in the sky against winter's darkness.

The story of the Epiphany is found in the second chapter of Matthew. Tradition states that there were three magicians that came to worship the Christ child, but truth be known, it could have been an entire entourage of a large number of travelers. The number three is derived from the three gifts mentioned in the Bible; gold, frankincense and myrrh. The story says the Magi, wise men, came from the East (possibly Persia or beyond) and followed the star (possibly a comet) in search of the newborn King.

Because the Magi apparently arrived after Christ was born, the date of January 6 was adopted in about the fifth century. The baby was probably four years old at the time. Tradition states that the names of the magician were Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar.

We call this time of the year, Epiphany, which means a revelation or awakening. The people of wisdom came to an awareness of this new revelation of God's kingdom. In Europe, most Christians celebrate January 6th as the day of Epiphany where there is an exchange of gifts among family members. The idea of gifts relates to the gifts of the magi as they worshiped the child.

Now that we know the history of the continued story of the child of Christmas, let us enter this next year with worship, sharing and renewed relationships with people around us. Are we having a new epiphany? The year 2012 is the beginning of a new chapter for First Congregational Church. O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

Your interim pastor,

Rev. Gary Proietti

Faith Practices:

Giving and Receiving Hospitality

Create a community that welcomes all, especially those who are different from the mainstream of the current community.

Keeping Sabbath

Discover how you can be intentional about rest, worship, and working for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation.

Living Stewardship

Learn to live in harmony with others and the world, through relationships, liberation, grace, justice, peace, mutuality and material possessions.

Playing and Living Joyfully

Invite God into this process as you seek recreation and re-creation, doing justice and moving outside yourself into sharing one with another.

Giving Testimony and Witness

Recognize God's action in your life and find ways to express it meaningfully with others.

—ucc.org

Remember in Prayer

Pat Clemens, Linda Finlaw, Linda Bennett, Gary Snyder (Marianne's father-in-law), Anna Wargo, Frank Gioffre, Rick Ward, the family of Roger Perl, Marianne Snyder, Jackie Harward, Jim and Jean Nickols, Tom and Jackie Holland, Judy Shover, the Search committee, Vision team III, those serving in the military, and all people suffering from natural disasters.

Thank you to Kay Otto for use of a wheelchair, Ethel Lois Smith for a walker and tri-cane and Phyllis Brucker (a neighbor of Bement's) for a wheelchair and crutches for the church.

Thank you to all the Bell Ringers and those who gave to the Salvation Army Red Kettle drive in December: Sandy Shively, Becky Coleman and her friend Sue, Trish Bragdon, Bob Bement, Linda Phillips, Marianne and Garryn Snyder, Dan and Amy Pogacsnik, Meredith Holler and family, Diane Willis, Pauline Malone, Pat Carson, Kay Hartman, Nan Link and Max and granddaughter, Rylie Mullen, Ron and Bobette Nemire, Margie Bernhardt and Mary Appleoff (Barb Bement's sisters). The congregation and community collected \$592.61. This money can be utilized through the Milan Unit of the Salvation Army contact: Peggy Kuhl at St. Anthony's Catholic church in Milan.

We are blessed and grateful to Kay Otto, Kay Hartman, Becky Coleman for helping with the American Red Cross blood drive on December 2, 2011. A big thank you to the congregation and community for their response by giving 18 units of blood.

Birthdays/Anniversaries

Jan. 2	Lori Stith
Jan. 6	Miranda Land
Jan. 7	Lov Deitz
Jan. 11	Amy Pogacsnik
Jan. 12	Kathy Deehr
Jan. 12	Matthew Wilson
Jan. 13	Alex Burnham
Jan. 14	Victoria Gibbs
Jan. 16	Joanne Grant
Jan. 16	Hollie Beatty
Jan. 17	Darcy Hartman Vaeth
Jan. 17	James Nickols
Jan. 17	Bev Hupfer
Jan. 17	Brian & Darcy Vaeth
Jan. 19	Claude Kernell
Jan. 19	Holly Bragdon Bianchetta
Jan. 20	Shannon Gibbs
Jan. 20	Don Leonard
Jan. 20	Chase Carter
Jan. 21	Kami Moon
Jan. 22	Maxton Soviak
Jan. 24	Nash Lindner
Jan. 25	Jean Nickols
Jan. 25	Kyle Robson
Jan. 26	Joshua Amstutz
Jan. 27	Payton Gammie
Jan. 30	Rylie Holler

January Worship Leaders

Jan. 1	Ushers:	Grant Coleman, Mike Drake Sandy Shively, Amy Pogacsnik
	Acolyte:	Valerie Deehr
	Liturgist:	Linda Phillips
	Children's Story:	
	Nursery:	
	Coffee Hosts:	Congregation
Jan. 8	Ushers:	Grant Coleman, Mike Drake Sandy Shively, Amy Pogacsnik
	Acolyte:	Aurora Bragdon
	Liturgist:	Diane Willis
	Children's Story:	Rev. Gary Proietti
	Nursery:	
	Coffee Hosts:	Annual Meeting/Pot Luck
Jan. 15	Ushers:	Grant Coleman, Mike Drake Sandy Shively, Amy Pogacsnik
	Acolyte:	Rylie Mullen
	Liturgist:	Bill Deehr
	Children's Story:	
	Nursery:	
	Coffee Hosts:	
Jan. 22	Ushers:	Grant Coleman, Mike Drake Sandy Shively, Amy Pogacsnik
	Acolyte:	Chase Aruskevicius
	Liturgist:	Ron Nemire
	Children's Story:	Bobette Nemire
	Nursery:	
	Coffee Hosts:	Pot Luck
Jan. 29	Ushers:	Grant Coleman, Mike Drake Sandy Shively, Amy Pogacsnik
	Acolyte:	
	Liturgist:	Wilma Jean Kernell
	Children's Story:	
	Nursery:	
	Coffee Host:	Alternate date Pot Luck

Stewardship Message

Magnifying God

My soul magnifies the Lord....Luke 1:47

We hear Mary's song each Advent and revel in its beauty and radical proclamation. But I wonder if we skip too quickly past this odd first phrase. What does it mean to "magnify" something? We use a magnifying glass to make something look bigger to us; the magnification of microscopes helps us see small things as they look bigger. But how can we make God look bigger to us; why would we want to when God is already so big?

The way Mary uses the word is slightly different than this. Her soul, she says, *proclaims* the greatness of God. She is so overwhelmed by her growing understanding of what God is about to do that she can't say, or sing, enough about how amazing God is. She proclaims this not only through a magnificent song, but in her body as she nurtures her child and in her steadfast faith which she holds as a witness to God's work in the world. By her actions as well as her words, she proclaims the wonder that is God.

This Advent and Christmas, how is your church magnifying God in your community? What does God ask of you in order to help give birth to the promises of which Mary sang? How is God's greatness manifest in the life of the Spirit being born in your life and faith community? May your spirits rejoice with Mary as you see God at work in you!

Rochelle A. Stackhouse is the Senior Minister of The Church of the Redeemer, United Church of Christ, New Haven Connecticut.

God is still speaking,

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



This resource is a free service and is made possible by your gifts to Our Church's Wider Mission.

How do we Magnify God?

Fellowship with others.





Together in Mission



Teaching



Honoring Others



Coming Together For Rally Day

Serving



**Helping
Others**



Volunteering



**Praising God
Serving our community
Angel Closet
Hunger Task Force
Second Sunday Sharing
Communion
Believing**