

# Opening Reflections for Committees: January 2018

Witness and Fellowship Ministry Team

## Epiphany

*Epiphany. The Gentiles' Christmas. The word "epiphany" means "appearing," as in the appearing of a deity, the appearing of God. We celebrate the visit of the magi, those mysterious Persian astrologers who traveled the eastern caravan routes following a star. The visit of the Magi is recorded only by Matthew. Matthew is writing to his fellow Jews, reminding them that this little One who is born "King of the Jews" is also King of all kings, the Lord of all lords, the Savior and Redeemer of the world. Israel's messiah is the world's messiah. No one has a monopoly on Him. Epiphany is about God's mission to seek and save the lost by sending His only Son from the heights of heaven to be born and die in all humility. The mission that began in a tiny, obscure little corner off the world in Bethlehem, that went to Egypt and then moved to Nazareth and Cana in Galilee, that went to a cross outside of Jerusalem, an empty tomb, an upper room of fearful disciples in Jerusalem all to an embrace of all the nations. Christ's mission is also the Church's mission, and our own, to proclaim that this little King before whom the wise men bowed in humility is the Lord and Savior of all. God is restless to save, and His church is too, that everyone hears the good news of Jesus applied to them.*

*That's the message of the Magi - that Jesus the Christ has come not to save the salvageable or to redeem the redeemable or to save only a chosen few. He has come to save the sinful many - a whole world load of sons and daughters of Adam. We speak of Epiphany as the season of light. Even as all the Christmas lights are coming down, the light of Christ shining undeservedly down on us, and we, reflect His light into our present darkness. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."*

*The magi opened their treasure boxes and laid their gifts at the Child's feet - gold, incense, myrrh. Gold fit for a king. Incense fit for God. Myrrh, the fragrance of death, the oil of burial. This little King who is God in the flesh has come to suffer and die. These were precious, costly gifts. Not leftovers or spare change. Something brought intentionally. Something fit for a king. They would serve the holy family well in their flight to Egypt as King Herod tries to kill King Jesus ahead of His time.*

*We give gifts to each other at Christmas time in imitation of the Magi. One problem, though: the wise men didn't give gifts to each other. They gave gifts to Jesus. They presented Him (not His mother Mary, nor Joseph, but Him) with gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. Our offerings, those checks we write or that cash we set in an offering plate every week are our gold, incense, myrrh. Yes, they pay the bills and balance the budget. But they are "offerings" - an act of worship - not "contributions" or dues to keep our membership in good standing. Sacrificial, priestly thank offerings. Gifts of devotion and homage to the King who conquered Death by dying on a cross. What do you think the magi would have offered if they'd known what precisely what sort of a king Jesus was?*

*Epiphany is season of light and worship and joy and offering and praise to God who is wonderful and gracious to not leave us in darkness, who has reached out to us through others, and who reaches out to others through us, to make know the great good news that this world has a King who is the Prince of Peace and the Savior of the human race.*

*Bask in the glory of His light. Live as children of the light. Reflect His light to this darkened world. Once you too were far off, but Christ has drawn near to you, and drawn you near to Him. Once you were in darkness, but now you are in the Light who is Jesus Christ, your Lord.*

*A blessed Epiphany to all of you. Amen*