



Faith Country

Shared Ministry

Faith Country Chronicle

January 2016



January 2016 Message for Congregations and Lay and Rostered Leaders



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ -



Throughout 2016 I invite you to reflect with me on the theme of "Practicing Our Faith" as you gather for church council, adult study, youth group, coffee group, choir rehearsal and are engaged in learning, discernment and reflection together. Dorothy Bass has edited an excellent resource published several years ago by Jossey-Bass, *Practicing Our Faith*, which I will be using as a primary resource. Together with Don Richter, Dorothy Bass has also edited a second book, *Way to Live: Christian Practices for Teens*, published by Upper Room Books, which is also an excellent resource. Each article will include a Scripture reference, thematic reflection, questions for consideration, and a prayer.

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Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to the stranger. Romans 12:13

En nombre del cielo, buenos moradores, dad a unos viajerosposada esta noche.
(In the name of God, we ask those who dwell here, give to some travellers lodging this evening.)
Traditional Song for *Las Posadas*

Hospitality

For many decades, this particular congregation and neighborhood has been a home and a welcome *posada* (shelter) for a diverse group of people. The various cultures which make up the neighborhood create a rich and vital community.

On this December evening, children of every age process down the street, some with lighted candles in hand and others carrying on their shoulders statues of Mary and Joseph. Each Advent, the young and the old re-enact the story of Joseph seeking lodging for his young wife, Mary, who is weary from travel and heavy with child.

For nine nights in a row, children and adults assume the identity of the weary couple or of the innkeepers, processing around the inside of the church or throughout the neighborhood, moving from one designated location to the next. This is the cherished ritual of *Las Posadas*.

At each site an ancient exchange is repeated. Those playing the role of Joseph approach the inn, knock on the door, and say in a loud voice: *En nombre del cielo, buenos moradores, dad a unos viajerosposada esta noche.* From inside a chorus of voices responds: *Aquí no es meson sigan adelante; yo no puedo abrir no sea algun tunante* (This is not an inn; move on - I cannot open lest you be a scoundrel). As Joseph moves from one inn to the next, the innkeepers grow angry and even threaten violence, while the night grows colder and the couple's weariness turns to exhaustion. *Venimos rendidos desde Nazareth, yo soy carpintero de nombre Jose* (We are tired travelling from Nazareth; I am a carpenter named Joseph), Joseph anxiously implores. Finally, he even reveals Mary's true identity, begging for *posada* for just one night for *la Reina del Cielo*, the Queen of Heaven - to no avail.

Finally, on the ninth day, the eve of Christmas, Joseph's request moves the heart of an innkeeper, who offers the couple all that he has left - a stable - and this humble place becomes the birthplace of Jesus.

In an outpouring of love and festivity, those gathered on the final night celebrate the generosity of the innkeeper and the *posada* given to Mary and Joseph in song and dance, food and drink. Candy and treats from the *pinata* shower the children, and the community recalls anew how the stranger at one's door can be God in disguise.

In January we move through the season of Christmas to Epiphany where we discover that Christ is the light of the world. Although *Las Posadas* is an engaging ritual in preparation for Christmas, the reality it addresses is a painful one year round: the reality of human need and exclusion. The ritual affirms the goodness of taking people in, and those who once needed *posada* are reminded to offer it to others.

We know only too well the reality of the need to give and to receive hospitality. I am thankful that many individuals and communities within our Synod, and across Canada, are working to provide *posada* and a welcome to strangers - to those weary and exhausted.

This is a lesson that is needed in all our communities for just as the human need for hospitality is a constant, so, it seems, is the human fear of the stranger.

Hospitality was a crucial practice among the early Christians. One word in the New Testament incorporates a profound truth: *xenos*, the Greek word that means "stranger", also means "guest" and "host." This one word signals the essential mutuality that is at the heart of hospitality. No one is strange except in relation to someone else; we make one another guests and hosts by how we treat one another.

Las Posadas is more than a ritual. It crystallizes the community's experience of being nourished and challenged daily by a central Christian mystery - namely, that the stranger at our door can be both gift and challenge, human and divine - every day of the year.

Read and Reflect: Romans 12:9-13

Discuss and Reflect:

What in this reading leads you to say, "I wonder about..." or, "I noticed..."

Share a story in which you experienced being a stranger, describing the situation and emotions you experienced.

Did anyone receive you with hospitality? If so, what concrete forms did the hospitality take?

Comment on the following: One Greek word in the New Testament incorporates a profound truth:

xenos, the word that means "stranger", also means "guest" and "host." This one word signals the essential mutuality that is at the heart of hospitality. No one is strange except in relation to someone else; we make one another guests and hosts by how we treat one another.

Pray together: Gracious God, let your grace enfold us in confidence and peace, that we may welcome every stranger as guest and host. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

In Christ Jesus - Shalom,
+Larry

The Rev. Dr. Larry Kochendorfer, Bishop
Synod of Alberta and the Territories Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

Spirit -Led Leadership - Hope-Filled Discipleship - Innovative Tradition - Collaborative Partnerships

Epiphany

What is Epiphany?

Epiphany in Christianity is a feast celebrating the 'shining forth' or revelation of God to mankind in human form, in the person of Jesus Christ. The observance had its origins in the eastern Christian church, and included the birth of Jesus Christ; the visit of the three Magi (Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar) who arrived in Bethlehem; and all of Jesus' childhood events, up to his baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist.

The feast was initially based on (and viewed as a fulfillment of) the Jewish Feast of Lights. This was fixed on January 6. Observers of Epiphany often celebrate the Christmas holiday as well on December 25.



What is the History of Epiphany?

The first reference to Epiphany in the Latin West is a slighting remark by Clement of Alexandria in *Stromateis*, I, xxi, 45: "There are those, too, who over-curiously assign to the Birth of Our Saviour not only its year but its day..." Origen's list of festivals (in *Contra Celsus*, VIII, xxii) omits any reference to Epiphany. The first reference to an ecclesiastical feast of the Epiphany, in Ammianus Marcellinus (XXI:ii), is in 361.

Thus in the Latin church, the feast of Christmas was established before Epiphany. Over time the western churches decided to celebrate Christmas December 25. The eastern churches continued to treat January 6 as the day marking Jesus's birth.

This has given rise in the west to the notion of a twelve day festival, starting on December 25, and ending on January 6, called the twelve days of Christmas, although some Christian cultures — especially those of Latin America — extend it to 40 days, ending on Candlemas, or February 2 (known as Candelaria in Spanish).

Prior to 1970, the Roman Catholic Church (and prior to 1976, the Anglican churches) reckoned Epiphany as an eight-day feast, beginning on January 6 and continuing through the Octave of Epiphany, or January 13.

More recently, Roman Catholics in the United States mark Epiphany on the Sunday after the first Saturday in January (before this the Sunday between January 1 and January 6, in years when there was one, was designated the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus), and all Catholics and Anglicans (along with many other Protestants) now formally end the Christmas season on the Sunday immediately following January 6, or, for American Catholics, the ensuing Monday in years when the Epiphany falls on January 7 or 8. In either case, the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is observed on the latter day, after which the first installment of Ordinary Time begins.

Epiphany Today

Today in Eastern Orthodox churches, the emphasis at this feast is on the shining forth and revelation of Jesus Christ as the Messiah and second person of the Holy Trinity at the time of his baptism. Usually called the Feast of the Theophany, it is one of the great feasts of the liturgical year. "Theophany" comes from the Greek for "God shining forth."



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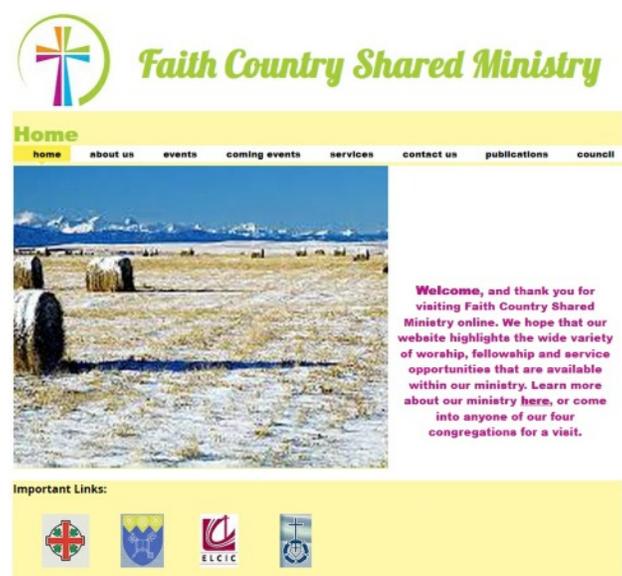
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The Irish call this day Little Christmas. In Rome, "Epiphania" was transformed into Befana, the great fair held at that season, when sigillaria of terracotta or baked pastry were sold (Macrobius I, x, xxiv; II, xlix). In Spain, Cuba and some Latin American countries Epiphany day is called El Día de Reyes (Kings' Day, as the Magi are known as the Los Tres Reyes Magos) or Pascua de Negros (Blackmen Christmas). In Spanish tradition, on this day, the Magi deliver Christmas presents.

Source: "Epiphany." ReligionFacts.com. 10 Nov. 2015. Web. Accessed 17 Dec. 2015. <www.religionfacts.com/epiphany>



Recognize the picture on the left?

It's the latest version of the home page of our "Shared Ministry" website (www.fcsm.ca).

Be sure to check out our website regularly. We add new material often and update our calendar of events frequently.

Most recently we have added several new publications from the Anglican diocese and the Lutheran synod. These are all packed with news and articles that are informative and interesting to read.

And of course check out our "Newsletters" around the end of each month for the latest edition of the "Chronicle".

Pastor Rick

P.S. We're always open to suggestions for new material for our website. Let me know if you would like to see something on our website that's not already there.



Faith Country Shared Ministry

~ January 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 Sneihun Baptisms at Trinity 9:15a Bethania Communion Service 11a Trinity Communion Service	4	5 1:30p Hope Worship Committee	6 9:30a Sedgewick Area Worship Committee - Bethania	7 7:30p FCSM Council meets at Bethania	8 5:30p Epiphany feast	9
10 9:15a St. John's Eucharist Service 11:15a Hope Communion Service	11	12	13 7p Hope Council meets	14	15	16
17 9:15a Bethania Song Service 11a Trinity Song Service 12:30p Bethania special meeting	18	19 11a Lutheran Cluster Meeting	20	21 10a Galahad Health Centre Service	22	23
24 9:15a St. John's Morning Prayer 11:15a Hope Communion Service	25	26	27	28	29	30
31 10:30a Joint Worship Service & Pot Luck Luncheon at Bethania 3p Worship Service - Killiam Health Centre	Notes:					



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~ February 2016 ~						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 7p Big Knife Villa Service	4	5	6 Participating in Hope event at Hughenden
7 9:15a Bethania Communion Service 11a Trinity Communion Service	8	9	10 7p Hope Council meets	11	12	13
14 Valentines Day 9:15a St. John's Eucharist Service 11:15a Hope Communion Service	15 Family Day	16 11a Lutheran Cluster Meeting	17	18	19	20
21 9:15a Bethania Song Service 11a Trinity Song Service	22	23 10:30a Galahad Pastoral Care	24	25 10a Galahad Health Centre Service	26	27
28 9:15a St. John's Morning Prayer 11:15a Hope Communion Service	29	Notes:				