

Sermon “Small Steps”**Kirk of St. James****January 4, 2026****Rev. Amanda Henderson-Bolton**

It is always difficult to remember that the story of Christmas is not yet over. It is not tied to our Christmas trees, feasts, and family visits. It lasts far longer than discarded wrapping paper, though perhaps not quite as long as the glitter that fell out of the tissue paper I bought—I am confident that is eternal. Today is Epiphany a Sunday easily overlooked in the wake of Christmas and provides us with the last scene of the Christmas story. It is a Christian feast day that celebrates the revelation that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. It also celebrates the visit of the magi to the young Christ child.

The visit of the magi has an important spot within the Christmas story we know so well, for not only does it demonstrate the faith and determination of the wise men, it also marks another important revelation. Theologian H. Richard Niebuhr “likens revelation to “a moment when we are reading a difficult book, seeking to follow a complicated argument, and we come across a luminous sentence from which we can go forward or backward and so attain some understanding of the whole.” The same might be said for an epiphany. There comes some moment when an important truth suddenly becomes clear, and we can reinterpret our past and rethink our way forward in light of it. At epiphany—one of the most important and neglected holidays of the Christian year—we come to one of those moments when an event, the first revelation of Christ to the Gentiles, grabs hold of us and changes everything. Now the past makes sudden sense; now the future calls for a new direction. Epiphany points us to God’s universal love and universal sovereignty.”

Epiphany at its core is a revelation of how much God loves us, and how far that message extends—it encompasses all people of all time. Suddenly the gifts of the three kings appear small in comparison. The words of Isaiah “Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn” take on new meaning. This is not meant just for a king of Israel, but for the kings of every nation. As one writer said, “...that is the trouble with God. He does not

let you leave as you came. He sends you back, stripped of your presumptions, making for home by an alternate route." So in light of this New Year, and the Epiphany message that God loves us, where do we go from here?

Often we make New Year's resolutions, with the hopes that we will make some changes or shifts in our lives or behaviour for the better. The problem is we expect so much of ourselves up front, that when we see the story is starting to look a lot like last year's we get discouraged. For some magical reason I always think that I am going to wake up an entirely different person on January 1st. I have no idea why, clearly my goal setting is delusional. While musing about the struggle with resolutions and change, I came across a couple things that felt helpful moving into 2026.

The first comes from a page called *Typewriters Voice* which offers gentle musings and encouragement through short videos. One recent posted said, "You don't need big change, you just need small steps everyday. Tiny progress adds up quietly. Give it time. Let it grow." I think that is true of us as individuals, as churches, and communities. Together small steps and changes can make a huge difference in the world. The second is a piece I found called *Journeying with the Magi* by Linda Wright. I have included it in your bulletin to take home, I feel that it is something helpful we can use to guide us not only during Epiphany but also through the year.

Journeying with the Magi

A meditation

They set out to follow a star:

God is found in the moments of wonder that make us stop and ponder the mystery.

What have been your own 'awakening moments' of wonder that have led you deeper into mystery?

The star's light was seen in the darkness:

In their darker moments they trusted that the light was still to be found.

How have you experienced the dark? Where/how did you recognise the light?

They asked questions when they were lost:

Continuing to try to make sense of where they were and where they were being led, they looked for help.

What are the questions you live with?

Who are 'wisdom figures' for you? Who has helped you with your questions?

They travelled together:

We don't know how many of them, but we can imagine the little community that they became as they travelled together, sharing this experience.

Where do you experience community? What does this add to your journeying?

They met King Herod on the way:

For his own reasons of power and control he tried to deceive them. We need to recognise the twisted value systems of our world and not get caught up in them or be misled by them.

In what ways are you most often pulled off course?

They bowed down in adoration:

Falling on their knees they worshipped the King – a moment beyond intellectual understanding, and of recognition. We can imagine that moment of knowing in the deep silence.

Do you cultivate silence in your life so that there can be moments of knowing and of recognition?

They offered their gifts:

To be in the presence demanded a response, an offering – of themselves and of their gifts.

Identify your own gifts. What are you offering of yourself, your time and your material possessions?

In a dream they were shown the truth:

Because of the danger, they were warned to return by a different way.

Revelation can come to us through our dreams. Have you ever experienced this? How else do you experience God's revealing of the way to you?

For prayerful pondering:

Name and give thanks for a moment of wonder.

Resolve to offer your gift this year in a particular way.

Name some aspect of darkness and pray for light.

Name a companion on the journey and give thanks for their support.

Lynda Wright (*inspired by Michael Paul Gallagher's book Where is your God?*)

I pray that the year ahead for each of us, is filled with small steps and gentle moments. I pray you find ways to fill your heart, and at the same time share it with others and with the world. I pray you find the light you need, the hope to sustain you, and the strength to believe, and when you have moments where you feel like you are faltering, that your family, your friends, and this church community help lift you up. God's deepest blessings on you this epiphany and all year through.