

“THE MEADOWS MESSENGER”
A Communication of Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church
January 2019, Issue



November and December Financial Reports

We hope that you find this information helpful as you pray for this congregation and evaluate your giving and participation in the worship, work and mission of this part of the Body of Christ. Sincerely, the Session and Pastor.

Tithes and Offerings needed for each week of 2018 = \$1,744.48. This figure is based on a total 2018 budget of \$90,713.00 which was approved by the Session.

NOVEMBER 2018

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (4 weeks)	\$6,977.92
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (4 weeks)	\$4,908.00
This results in a budget shortage for this month	(\$2,069.92)
Total Expenses (4 weeks) resulting in an overage for the month	(\$2,508.49)

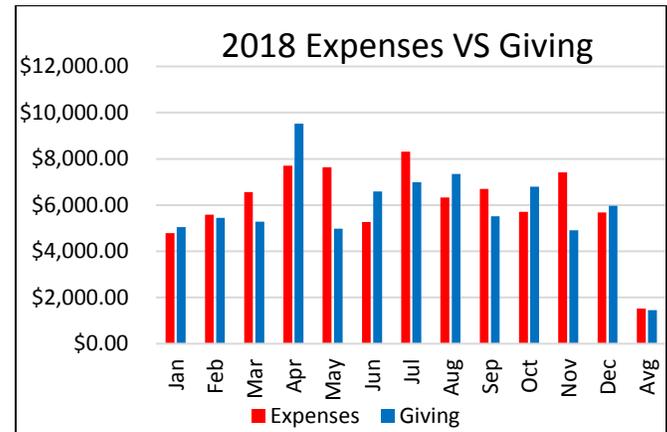
DECEMBER 2018

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (4 weeks)	\$6,977.92
Actual Tithes and Offerings received (4 weeks)	\$5,970.00
This results in a budget shortage for this month	(\$1,007.92)
Total Expenses (4 weeks) resulting in an overage for the month	\$292.01

YEAR TO DATE 2018

Total Tithes and Offerings needed (51 weeks)	\$88,968.52
Actual Tithes and Offerings (51 weeks) received	\$74,413.75
This results in a budget shortage to this point	(\$14,554.77)
Total Expenses (51 weeks)	\$77,661.79
This results in a shortage to expenses for the year	(\$3,248.04)

For those of you who understand a chart better than a bunch of numbers, below is the 'picture' of our YTD finances for December 2018 (through week 4 of 5):



Session Highlights

Stated Meeting – November 25th

The Session:

- Reviewed and approved the financial report for October
- Approved a change in the trash pick-up: trash removal from Republic will be canceled and Mae Smith will be paid \$100.00 a month (with \$25.00 more for large events like the chicken pie/country ham suppers and homecoming) to remove the trash.
- Set the following calendar items:
 - A congregational meeting for Sunday, December 16th to elect elders for the class of 2021
 - The installation of the new elders on Sunday, January 13th
 - The new elders will be examined during the January 20th session meeting
- Voted to cancel the December Session meeting. Any situation requiring action will be dealt with in a called meeting or phone poll.

Phone Poll – December 12th

The Session was polled and approved:

- The expenditure of \$100, for Payne Grating to remove snow from our parking lot.
- Rental of our fellowship hall on Sunday, January 27th from 1:00-6:00 pm by The Fallen Outdoors, a group which provides opportunities for hunting, fishing, camping and support for veterans of all branches of service.

Some Bible Trivia

New Year's Day is in just a few days and many of us will reflect on the past year and perhaps make some resolutions for the new year to help us live better. So, this month I have chosen trivia questions on the topic of remembering.

1. What was given as a reminder that the world would never again be destroyed by a flood?
2. What ritual was to be a reminder of Christ's body and blood?
3. What day of the week is a reminder of God's completed creation?
4. What festival was to be a memorial of the Jews' salvation from the wicked Persian Haman?
5. What was the manna inside the Ark of the Covenant a reminder of?
6. What feast was a reminder of the death angel killing the Egyptian firstborn?
7. What woman did Jesus say would have her story remembered for doing a kindness to him?
8. Who set up 12 stones to remind the people of God's power in bringing them across the Jordan?

The Pastor's Ponderings

January 06th is labeled, in the church calendar, as the Day of Epiphany. The following article is largely a repeat from January 2018. I am repeating this pondering on Epiphany not because I lack imagination (which sometimes does happen) but because last January several people

asked me, several Sundays after Epiphany, why there were numbers and letters in chalk on the church door (which probably means they did not read the newsletter). But more importantly, I repeat this article because I believe that entering a new year with purpose and prayer is very important.

I know that some of you probably have a difficult year ahead of you with declining health, chronic illnesses, financial and relationship challenges, and the raising of teenagers. Part of my prayer, therefore, as we enter the new year is that you will sense the presence of God with you in all the beauty and messiness of your life. And, I hope this pondering will help you see how a post-Christmas celebration can help you bring in the new year with a sense of expectation for what God might do in your lives in 2019.



Seeing God in Our Lives¹
By Rachel M. Srubas

Cassi, a member of my church, once dreamed a dream so vivid, so compelling, that when she woke up, she was sure she knew what God was calling her to do with her life. That day, she enrolled in a foster parent training course.

After months of preparation and mountains of paperwork, Cassi invited a friend and me to her now child-ready home. It was the sixth of January, the Epiphany of the Lord, also known as the Feast of Epiphany or Three Kings' Day. I brought two items: a candle and a stick of chalk. We lit the candle to signify the light of Christ that once shone brilliantly in the heavens, leading the

¹ December 2017/January 2018 issue of "Presbyterians Today", pages 21-22.

Magi, wise star-watchers from the east, to follow its beams all the way to Bethlehem. There, the Gospel of Matthew tells us, they found the young Savior with his mother.

Now, why the chalk? A centuries old Epiphany tradition more common in Europe than in the United States is known as “chalking the door”. On Epiphany, the day following the Twelfth Day of Christmas, guests gather at a home to invoke the Magi’s and Christ’s own blessing upon it. Drawing on the second chapter of Matthew – the only Gospel [telling the story of] the Magi – those gathered may read a brief, responsive liturgy or say a prayer.

Although Matthew never mentions the Magis’ names, tradition has it that they were called Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. The initials CMB also abbreviate a Latin house blessing, *Christus mansionem benedicat*, meaning “May Christ bless this dwelling.” Chalking the door on the Feast of Epiphany involves writing – with chalk – these three letters, interspersed with crosses and flanked by the numbers of the present year, on the lintel of a house’s front door.

When we three women chalking the door of Cassi’s house on Epiphany, we prayed that she would soon receive her long-awaited foster care license. We prayed that one of the roughly 18,000 children who live under our state’s supervision would soon find with Cassi a safe and loving foster home. This was the holy day marking the Messiah’s revelation as a homeless infant born to a young unmarried woman and an honorable foster father. It was fitting for us to seek God’s blessing on the vocation to care for children in need that had come to Cassi through a powerful dream.

The English word epiphany is rooted in the Greek word *epipháneia*. An epiphany is a revelation, a manifestation. All six occurrences of epiphanies in the New Testament’s original Greek language refer to Christ’s coming. Notably, none of these occur in Matthew’s account of Christ’s revelation to the Magi. Even so, the story portrays the

manifestation of God in person. The Most High is shown forth in the least likely, humblest [appearance].

Matthew’s second chapter also refers to three dreams that convey divine guidance to the dreamer. First comes the dream that warns the Magi to steer clear of [deceitful] King Herod. A few verses later, Joseph is warned to flee with Mary and the infant Jesus to Egypt and then Joseph is told to return with his exiled family to Israel, to the Galilean town of Nazareth.

By standards such as these, Cassi’s dream of the direction her life was meant to take, seems downright biblical. Her dream was fulfilled and our Epiphany prayers were answered when later that year, an infant who had been exposed to drugs in the womb was placed in Cassi’s care. Both the baby and the foster mother flourished.

The dream of the Magi, the insight of Joseph, and Cassi’s experience all manifest this truth: When our minds are at rest and we are receptive to the light that shines in the darkness, sometimes God is revealed to us, and our lives’ purposes are made clear.

But what if you’re someone who rarely remembers a dream, much less receives divine guidance by night? You might think you’re exempt from epiphanies and immune to the self-revelation of the Lord. Resist this conclusion and remember that you, as much as anyone, are a beloved child of God, created in the image of your Creator. The very fact that you’re reading this meditation on epiphanies means you’re open to the One who made you, whose handiwork you show forth simply by being alive. You, yourself, manifest the Maker’s creativity. To you, perhaps quite unexpectedly, God can be made known.

No one can manifest mystical knowledge at will. It would be hazardous to try. However, through such practices as prayer, Scripture reading, spiritual direction and compassionate service to others, people of faith become gradually formed by the Holy Spirit into disciples who have the

mind of Christ. The key to becoming an epiphany-receptive Christian is to practice self-emptying love, like Cassi, who fosters babies unable to repay her, or like Joseph, who raised Mary's child as his own. Jesus appears in many people, from fragile infants to older adults, and all need love. Jesus is the ultimate receiver and revealer of God. If you know nothing else, know this much: to you belongs the holiest epiphany of all – Jesus Christ, your savior and lord. (End of the article)



<https://gone-fishin.org/2012/12/02/this-christmas-season-2012/star-of-bethlehem/>

Included at the end of this article is a liturgy which you can use to bless your own home in celebration of Christmas and the Day of Epiphany:

Start an Epiphany Tradition

While Christmas marks the coming of God to us, Epiphany celebrates the appearances of the Lord in the midst of humanity. Epiphany [lifts up] the revelation of God to the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

Epiphany not only discloses the Savior to the world, but also calls the world to show forth Christ, to be witnesses to God's true light. The timeless mystery of the incarnation – God in flesh – leads us forth to show and tell of Christ as God's gift of grace and salvation for all people. Some call this ongoing epiphany the work of Christmas.

Epiphany is observed on January 06th. Mark that day by chalking your own door. If you [want to do this], here's how your inscription will look:

20 † C † M † B † 19



After chalking the door, light a candle and invite those gathered at your home to say a responsive liturgy such as this:

Leader: Peace be to this house and to all who pass through its doors.

All: With the wise men from the East, we ask, 'Where is the child who has been born a king?' We have come to worship him.

Leader: When the star stopped over the place where the child was, the Magi were overwhelmed with joy! They entered the house and saw the holy Christ, with Mary, his mother.

All: With those who first adored him, we have come to honor the Savior. God, we thank you for revealing Jesus to the world. May the living Lord bless his home and all who live or visit here. Amen.

OR, say any of the following Epiphany prayers offered by the PCUSA Office of Theology and Worship.

God of light, shining in darkness, through a little child, born in Bethlehem, you open to us the treasure of your grace. Help us to search diligently for him, so that we may offer our lives to you with thanksgiving, joy and praise; through Jesus Christ, the rising star. Amen.

Shepherd of Israel, you sent a star to enlighten the wise and a child to topple the tyrant. Make us wise enough to seek you among the least of your

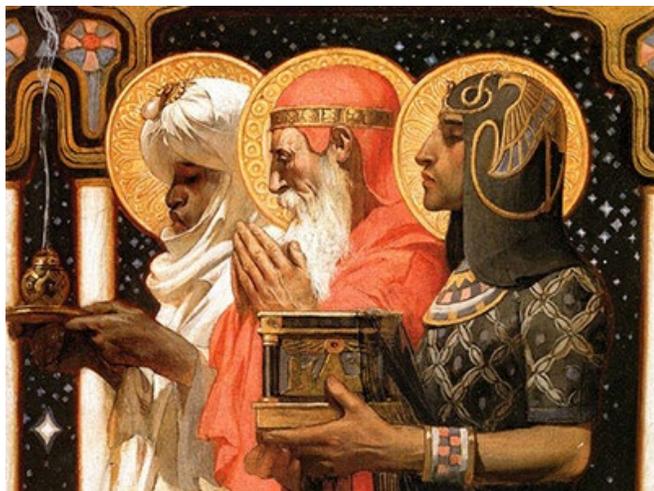
children, wise enough to trade our treasure for the gift of overwhelming joy. Amen.

May 2019 be a wonderful time for you all – a time when you become more aware of God’s presence and work in your life.

Pastor Yvonne

A Meditation on the Magi
The Rev. Dr. Steven S. Tuell²

For millions of Western Christians, January 06th is the Feast of the Epiphany, a day associated particularly with the light of the star that guided the Magi to the Christ Child (see Matthew 2:1-12). Tradition says that there were three Magi, that they were kings from three continents and three races, and that they were named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.



The Saturday Evening Post, Christmas 1900 - "The Gift of the Magi" by Joseph Christian Leyendecker.

Of course, that is the way it is in our Christmas pageants and in our crèches. But none of this tradition appears in Matthew’s simple account:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the territory of Judea during the rule of King Herod, magi

came from the east to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him” (Matthew 2:1-2).

The Magi were a clan of priests and astrologers from Persia – our words “magic” and “magician” derive from “magi.” Matthew does not tell us how many Magi came – the traditional number three comes from their three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh (Matthew 2:11-12). The idea that they were kings from distant lands and races comes from Isaiah 60:1-6, traditionally read as fulfilled in the visit of the Magi:

Nations will come to your light
and kings to your dawning radiance.

... the nations’ wealth will come to you.
Countless camels will cover your land,
young camels from Midian and Ephah.
They will all come from Sheba,
carrying gold and incense,
proclaiming the Lord’s praises.

Still, there is an appropriateness to the tradition’s reading of the Magi as representing the whole outside world. After all, they come to the manger as the ultimate outsiders. They come not only from outside Judea, but also from outside the Roman Empire itself – from the land of the feared Parthians, an armed and unstable threat on The [Roman Empire’s] eastern frontier. They were not Jews, either ethnically or religiously; while Matthew says nothing of their religious heritage, they [probably] would have been Zoroastrians³. Remarkably, it is Matthew who tells their story: Matthew, the most Jewish of the Gospel writers, is the one who records a visit to the Christ child from foreigners and unbelievers! Yet in this gospel these foreigners come, not as enemies to threaten the Child, but as pilgrims to honor him.

² Rev. Dr. Steven S. Tuell is the James A. Kelso Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. This meditation is from his blog, “The Bible Guy”.

³ Zoroastrianism is one of the world’s oldest religions and has active practitioners in our day. It is a monotheistic faith (belief in a single creator god), is centered in a dualistic understanding of good and evil and predicts the ultimate destruction of evil.

Herod's religious experts also see the Magi's star, and they rightly interpret the Scriptures that witness to the coming king:

*As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
 though you are the least significant of Judah's
 forces,
 One who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf
 will come out from you.
 His origin is from remote times, from ancient
 days.
 Therefore, he will give them up until the time
 when she who is in labor gives birth.
 The rest of his kin will return to the people of
 Israel.
 He will stand and shepherd his flock in the
 strength of the Lord,
 in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
 They will dwell secure, because he will surely
 become great
 throughout the earth;
 he will become one of peace.*

(Micah 5:2-5; see Matt. 2:4-6)

But these faithful, patriotic citizens stay in the false security of Herod's walled palace and never see the miracle. Instead, it is the foreign, Gentile Magi who become the first, faithful witnesses to the new thing God is doing – breaking into our world as one of us there in Bethlehem.

Epiphany celebrates the light of God shining into the entire world with the birth of Christ, and indeed, the light of God's revelation shining into all our lives yesterday, today – and one day, forever! May we learn from the wise men to be "wise guys" ourselves: to be ready to receive God's blessing from the hands [of others], and to hear God's word in the voice of a stranger.

Some Bible Trivia Answers

1. A rainbow – Genesis 9:13-16
2. The Lord's supper – Luke 22:19
3. The Sabbath – Deuteronomy 5:15
4. Purim – Esther 9:28

5. God's supernatural provision for the people during their desert wanderings – Exodus 16:32
6. Passover – Exodus 12:11-14
7. The woman who anointed his feet at Bethany – Matthew 26:6-13
8. Joshua (and the elders) – Joshua 4:7



Doesn't it seem that some people are like squirrels?

You might have fun reading this funny story out loud to hear the Cajun dialect.

Da Cajun, his name Jean Paul, moved to Arkansas and bought him a donkey from an old farmer for \$100. Da farmer agreed to deliver da donkey da next day. Da next day, dat farmer drove up and said, "I'm Sorry, but I have some bad news ... the donkey died just last night."

“Well, den, just give my money back, yeah.”
 “I can’t do that sir, I went and spent it already.”
 “OK, den. Just unload him right dar.”
 “What are you gonna do with dat dead donkey?”
 “I’m gonna raffle him off.”
 “You can’t raffle off a dead donkey, you dumb Cajun!”
 “Well dat’s where you wrong. You watch you, an you learn how we Cajuns so smart!”

A month later the farmer met up with the Cajun and asked, “What happened with dat dead donkey?”

“I raffled dat donkey off. I sold 500 tickets at two dollars apiece and made \$998.”

“Didn’t anyone complain?”

“Just dat guy who won. So, I gave him his two dollars back.”

Funny Instructions on Real Products Who Writes These Things?

On Tesco’s Tiramisu dessert (printed on bottom):
 “Do not turn upside down.” (Too late!)

On Sainsbury’s peanuts: “Warning: contains nuts.” (Duh!)

On most brands of Christmas lights: “For indoor or outdoor use only.” (Is there another option?)

On a child’s superman costume: “Wearing of this garment does not enable you to fly.” (I don’t blame the company. I blame parents for this one.)

Cartoons:

https://www.wiscnews.com/opinion/cartoon/hands-on-wisconsin-cold-weather-keeps-pests-away/article_0a68aed6-1731-578f-9631-3bce0be9fd56.html

https://www.boredpanda.com/funny-cartoons-wrong-hands-john-atkinson/?page_num=4&utm_source=google&utm_medium=organic&utm_campaign=organic

Cover Image: <http://foundationmusicschool.org/january-newsletter/>

Doings at Quaker Meadows Presbyterian Church

Elders on Call

December 30th – January 05th – Kathy Staton
 January 06th – January 12th – Anita Woods
 January 13th – January 19th – Judy Galey
 January 20th – January 26th – Lelia Bruder
 January 27th – February 02nd – Ann Dietz

Ministry with the Children

The Christian Education Committee has not met to assign the responsibility for the children’s sermons.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, **January 03rd, 10th and 17th** - Bible study, pastor’s home at 12:30

Sunday, **January 06th** – the Session will meet briefly after worship to examine the new elders on their knowledge of the Book of Order.

Sunday, **January 13th** – the new elders will be installed during worship.

Sunday, **January 20th** – Session meeting following worship

Monday, **January 21st through Friday, February 01st** – Pastor Yvonne will be out of town participating in the third session of her Doctor of Ministry studies at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Birthdays

Jonathan Reel – January 01st
 Todd Anderson – January 08th
 Doreen Caudill – January 17th
 Crystal Bradshaw – January 18th
 Mark Paul – January 29th