



1 W. Wyomissing Ave., Mohnton, PA 19540

Jan. 12th – January 18th, 2025

www.calvaryumcmohnton.org

*Connect with God.
Connect with each other.
Connect with the community.*

The Gift of Christmas

1/05/25 sermon by Bob Wagner, CLM; Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

Today is the first Sunday of our calendar New Year, and it is the Sunday we have set aside to kind of finalize the Christmas season. In the liturgical year, tomorrow is the first day of the season we call Epiphany. This is the time when we spend time looking at the concluding events when the Magi, Wise Men or the Three Kings are believed to come to see the newborn Christ child.

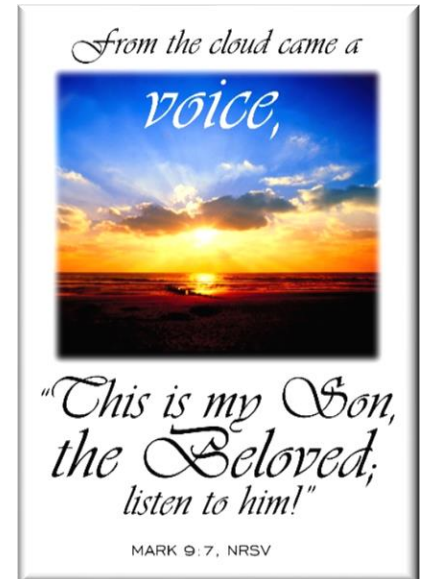
However, before we wander into these historical times, I have some questions for us to ponder. First, take a minute and reflect on what was the most memorable gift for you this past Christmas? Now the significance of that gift could have manifested itself in several ways.

For some of us, I'm sure, it was the special gift you never expected, but it arrived anyway. Then, for some of us it was the gift not received but given that brought the most joy. Most parents can relate to that special feeling you get when your children open that most sought-after gift. The look on their faces typically says it all. However, in this day and age, the smiles are not always as bright as we parents may have hoped. There are the looks on faces of family members when their present is wrapped up but has a message saying, "Amazon will be delivering this gift in a few days". What about the endurance of the gifts received? Here's a challenge: can you remember the gifts received in Christmas 2023? Are they still as special as they were when received or, has some of the utility and excitement of that gift worn-off? Are those gifts still around? Many of us can remember those sad Christmas mornings when little Johnny or Sally got their favorite gift, and twenty minutes after it was opened, it was on the floor in pieces. No one ever knows how that tragedy ever happened but the sadness in the eyes of the gift receiver, just breaks your heart.

I'd like to suggest one other source of gifts that I know many of you have received. By now, a large population of our world have converted over to our cell phones. Our cell phones have replaced many devices but one of the most significant in my mind has been the replacement of your camera. So, if I asked you what gifts you have received in the past, I'm hoping many of you would pull out your cell phone. Because on it you have captured some of the most precious gifts you have received in the form of photos of family, friends, and/or places you have been blessed to enjoy.

Enough pondering of Christmas gifts past. I pray that your Christmas morning experience this year was filled with all the love, joy and wonder that all of us crave in this special season. So why do we celebrate Epiphany over the next four weeks?

~Message cont'd on pg. 3



January 12th, 2025

9:15AM ~ Sunday school

10:30AM ~ Traditional Service

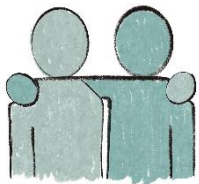
Rev. Dawn Taylor-Storm,
preaching

COUPLES' FELLOWSHIP

Next dates

Fridays: Jan. 17th, 24th,
and
Feb. 7th @ 7PM

COUPLES' PARTY
Friday, Feb. 14th



I Am Here

In Bread for the Journey, theologian Henri J.M.

Nouwen calls consolation — from “to be with” (con-) “the lonely one” (solus) — “one of the most important ways to care.” He writes, “Life is so full of pain, sadness and loneliness that we often wonder what we can do to alleviate the immense suffering we see.”

Although consoling doesn’t necessarily remove someone’s pain, Nouwen notes that it serves a deeper purpose: To console means “to be there and say, ‘You are not alone, I am with you. Together we can carry the burden. Don’t be afraid. I am here.’ That is consolation. We all need to give it as well as to receive it.”

[from churchart.com]

In case of inclement weather, please tune into Channel 69 News and watch the lower scroll, and/or check our website for any worship service or meeting cancellations/delays.

They will be posted on the **ORANGE** banner at the top of the home page.

The church office will follow the Governor Mifflin schedule for delays, early dismissals and cancellations.

January 6, 2025

Dear Members of Calvary UMC,

We are filled with gratitude for your hundreds of Reverse Advent Calendar donations, as well as other contributions and types of help throughout 2024 to the Mifflin Community Food Ministry. Client families of this ministry have benefitted all year from your gifts and the hours of dedicated service from the volunteers. We were able to serve nearly 150 families on our Christmas pantry weekend. Thank you for caring deeply about the Mifflin community.

The Mifflin Community Food Ministry is not affiliated with Helping Harvest (formerly Greater Berks Food Bank); therefore, we are especially grateful for any gift. We use all gifts of time, money, food, paper products, and other types of donations to serve God and the families in need in our area through this ministry.

The Food Ministry is open the third Saturday of every month at Zion EC Church, 57 N. Church St., Mohnton, from 9-11 a.m.

Sincerely yours,
Janet C. Reese, Secretary

The 2025 Altar Flower chart is available for sponsors to sign up. Check your calendar to see which special occasion/person you’d like to honor or remember by sponsoring flowers to adorn the altar for Sunday worship.



CHURCH STAFF OPENING: Janet Dearstyne will be retiring the end of March 2025.

We are looking to hire someone for the role of Administrative Assistant to begin on March 1st. This will allow a period of transition.

If you or someone you know is interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Michelle Tomczak, SPRC Chair, at 484-650-0223. The job description is posted on the bulletin board near the end of the main hallway,

~Message cont'd from pg. 1

The word Epiphany comes from the Greek word "Reveal". As Christians we celebrate Epiphany because we believe that this is the period when Christ was revealed to the world. In our scripture this morning from the Gospel of Matthew you heard that account. As you know, within the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, there can be a good degree of repetition about events as experienced by the author of the Gospel. But the journey of the Magi is unique to Matthew. That's why last week I encouraged you to open your Bibles to Matthew chapter 2 and refresh your memory. There are several references in both the Old and New Testaments regarding the birth of Christ but, the reference to the visit by Magi is not one of those events.

There are some uniqueness's concerning the Magi. We opened our service today and sang "We Three Kings. Did you know that this famous carol was written by John Henry Hopkins, Jr. he was born in Pittsburgh, PA.? John had 12 siblings and was the son of pioneer parents. John reflected the artistic talents of both his parents in music, poetry, and art. His musical talents led to the writing and composing of a number of fine hymns and tunes, as well as anthems and services. He was ordained a priest in 1872. The song, "We Three Kings" was originally written for a Christmas pageant and quickly became a very popular Christmas Carol. As I read the biography on the carol, I wondered how much the need for some entertainment value may have led to some embellishments in our carol.

Matthew tells us in his account that there were "wise men" from the east. There is no real mention of how many Magi were actually included. I believe Mr. Hopkins may have planted the theory of three as he counted the three gifts (gold, frankincense and myrrh) which Matthew did capture in his Gospel. We now even believe we know the names for these three Magi. Melchior who tradition tells us was from Persia, Caspar believed to be from India (where our mission team is currently residing), and Balthazar from Arabia.

I don't want us to get hung up on the number of Magi. As I was preparing this message, I could not help but remember Carol Gordon. Some of you may remember Jack and Carol Gordon who were members of Calvary a few years back. Both have since passed on, but they represented how we can learn from believers who share their spiritual journey with us. Carol and Jack regularly attended our Thursday morning Bible study. Carol was a firm believer that the "numbers" in the Bible were just there for us to have a perspective of the magnitude of the event. She felt, and taught me that it is the event, not the number that is significant. Now if you can accept Carol's belief, one, two, three, thirty Magi is not the point. It is the point that Christ was revealed to shepherds tending their flocks nearby. With the visit of the Magi, Christ became revealed to the world. And so we celebrate Epiphany.

Okay, if we are not to get hung up on the number of Magi, should their gifts become our focal point? Gold was a symbol of wealth and prominence in biblical times and was used as a store of value and for jewelry. It was traded from sources in Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula, India, and the Sinai Peninsula. Frankincense was also very valuable, and some scholars estimate it would have cost around \$500 per pound in modern money. Frankincense was so valuable that it was sometimes considered to be worth as much as gold. The reason it was so valuable was because the trees that produce frankincense were almost impossible to grow outside of the Arabian Peninsula, so they were in constant short supply. Myrrh was a highly valued gift that was worth around \$4,000 per pound. Myrrh was a fragrant gum resin that came from trees in Ethiopia and South Arabia. It was used for many purposes, including as fine perfumes and anointing or embalming oil. Myrrh was also used to treat conditions like battle wounds and skin inflammations. At the crucifixion, Jesus was offered wine mixed with myrrh as a pain killer. These gifts were meant to signify loyalty and reverence for a king and had spiritual symbolism.

~ Message cont'd on pg. 4

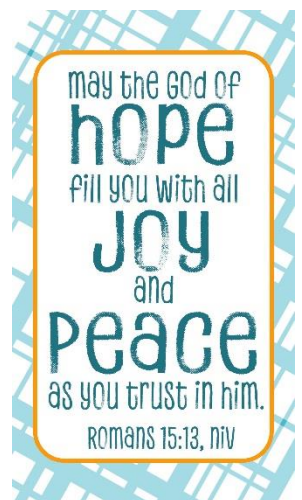


- 16 – Cheryl Neal
10 Pebble Brook Ln.
Mohnton, PA 19540
- 16 – Amelia Fortunato
1737 Alden Ln.
Wyomissing, PA
19610
- 18 – Karyn Spengler
1531 Meadowlark Rd.
Wyomissing, PA
19610

Thank you to everyone who donated to SAFE BERKS. We had a nice selection of items from the Wish List to deliver before Christmas.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated by the families at the shelter.

~Diane Anderson
Safe Berks Liaison



~Message cont'd from pg. 3

Now, I asked you a few minutes ago if you remembered your gift or gifts from past Christmases. I'm sure some of you still have and cherish those gifts. But many of us may no longer have those gifts or use those gifts or they have simply been consumed.

If your family is anything like ours, as our children, especially our grandchildren in this day and age, it becomes harder and harder to buy a meaningful gift. The cost of many of today's most sought-after gifts is daunting. Then there is the consideration of a monetary gift. I believe that almost every young person or family can utilize a monetary gift either to pay bills, buy necessities or maybe even to put it toward that gift that's typically beyond reach under normal circumstances. What about the gifts that Matthew mentions as being given to baby Jesus at His birth? Do we ever hear of these gifts having a near or long-term benefit for anyone? Certainly, anyone who has ever purchased any type of perfume, of which Frankincense and Myrrh were similar too, realizes that the value of its use is fleeting.

So, why make an effort to celebrate a journey and the sharing of gifts if the actual numbers and significance is suspect? The answer came to me as God reveal the true meaning as He always does. The true meaning for Christmas and why we celebrate the journey of the Magi is unlike any other gift we may have received, the gift from God in the form of this baby, is available to everyone. Not just the shepherds and the Magi. Not just you and me but also for everyone who will repent and claim the name of Jesus Christ. Not only is this gift available to all but it is the only gift that has stood the test of time and is as available today as it was in Matthew's time. This gift does not tarnish, does not evaporate, does not break when put into action, does not decrease in value when used.

I realize that the Christmas season has taken on a number of unique, and in many ways special, meaning for us and our families. However, I'd like to suggest that each of you possess a gift that money cannot buy. We all have this gift, but it is a unique and personal gift for each of us and yes, money can't buy it. Did you think of what it might be? Some you may be thinking it is our Father in heaven which is certainly the best gift. But He is the same for each of us. What is your unique gift that money can't buy? I believe it's your own personal faith journey. Your journey has been crafted by experiences and individuals in specific times that only you and God witnessed. No one else has a journey quite like yours. My prayer is that on this day when we celebrate Jesus being REVEALED to the world, that you consider taking the time, like our sister Carol Gordon and share your gift with others that you meet in your daily life. Like our closing hymn from last week suggested, "Go Tell it on the Mountain" that Jesus Christ was born. Share your priceless gift and reveal your relationship with Jesus Christ.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Amen

In It to Gather

CALVARY SENIORS & FRIENDS MEETING FOR FELLOWSHIP, LEARNING, & FUN!

On Thursday, February 6th,
Calvary seniors (and friends)
are invited to attend an "In It
to Gather" event at Calvary in
the Chapel beginning at 12PM.

◆ Lunch will be provided.

◆ A local historian will talk
about Berks County history,
specifically its settlement,
local Indians, and the French
and Indian war in this area.

◆ A fun activity after the
speaker to conclude the
afternoon.

PLEASE RSVP TO THE
CHURCH OFFICE (610-777-8441)
ON OR BEFORE JANUARY 31ST, IF
YOU'D LIKE TO ATTEND.





Happy New Year! **The Mifflin Community Food Ministry** (MCFM) is sending you the history of Souper Bowl of Caring (see below) and asking that **Calvary members participate, on Sunday, February 9, 2025, in Super Bowl Sunday by bringing in a canned food item that Sunday, with a \$1 bill rubber-banded around it, and donate the food and money to the Mifflin Community Food Ministry, 57 N. Church Street, Mohnton, PA.** You may respond to us by email. Thank you for your help.

~Janet Reese, MCFM Secretary (janet.reese484@gmail.com)

A simple prayer: "Lord, even as we enjoy the Super Bowl football game, help us be mindful of those who are without a bowl of soup to eat" is inspiring a youth-led movement to help hungry and hurting people around the world. This prayer, delivered by Brad Smith, then a seminary intern serving at Spring Valley Presbyterian Church in Columbia, SC, gave birth to an idea. Why not use Super Bowl weekend, a time when people come together for football and fun, to also unify the nation for a higher good: collecting dollars and canned food for the needy? Youth could collect donations at their schools and churches in soup pots, and then send every dollar directly to a local charity of their choice. That was 1990. Since then, SouperBowl of Caring as part of Tackle Hunger, has generated an extraordinary \$193 million for soup kitchens, food banks and other charities in communities across the country. In addition, hundreds of thousands of youth have experienced for themselves the joy and satisfaction of giving and serving, inspiring people of all ages to follow their generous example (see Souper Bowl of Caring).

Please be a part of helping the millions of households in America without enough food by starting with the Mifflin area. Thank you.

Members may drop off your canned soup donations on the display table in the Gathering Area anytime between now and Sunday, Feb. 9th. OUR GOAL???

Let's FILL UP THE TABLE to overflowing!

