

January 3, 2022

Dear Resurrection people,

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem... (Matthew 2:1)

An epiphany is an insight that comes to us seemingly out of nowhere. It is not something we work out with careful reason. It is not an outcome of the scientific method. It is *given*, not achieved. The epiphany given to the wise men is, "God is here!" It is a mystery that the same epiphany is not given to Herod, whose pitiful soul is in dire need of comfort. Convinced he can trust in no power but his own, he will continue grasping, raging, and killing. His fear leaves no room for wonder, and it will cause many to suffer.

The feast of the Epiphany, on January 6, encourages us to make room for wonder in our lives. Before we move to a list of things we ought to be doing in the New Year, let's stop at wonder. Let's stop at wonder when we feel compelled to fix or we hear that nagging voice begin to whisper, "You are not enough. You haven't done enough. You must do better." Let's stop at wonder, because we understand now more than ever that life is fragile and there are many things we will never be able to control. Let's stop at wonder so we don't miss all the goodness God surrounds us with every day.

With this brief devotional message, I open the first quarterly pastoral letter of 2022. Because our congregation continues to be dispersed, and we don't know when that will change, it seems prudent (and overdue) to communicate broadly with you in a more intentional way that doesn't always have to do with urgent congregational business. Four times a year, you can expect to receive a letter like this from me. In addition to sharing spiritual insight appropriate to the season, the purpose of the letter will be to bring everyone up to speed on some of the most important things going on in our life together as space allows.

If you would prefer to receive this quarterly letter in electronic format *only* please send a quick email with that wish to digital@rlcindy.org, and we'll make that change to the mailing list.

Details about upcoming congregation meetings on Jan. 9 and 23 have been shared in previous mailings. Please contact the church office if you have any questions about those, especially regarding remote participation and voting.

We're very excited to add a new staff member this month. Rebecca Vernon joins us as our new handbell director. Rebecca has many years of experience as a music educator and as a church musician. A gifted vocalist herself, she is the director of choirs at Perry Meridian Middle School and has deep roots in Perry Township. You may have seen her in worship

a time or two already with her husband Larry, including on Christmas Eve, when Rebecca filled in with the Grace Notes. Please be sure to extend a warm welcome to Rebecca and Larry when you have the chance.

January and February are somewhat quiet times in the rhythm of the church year, but Lent is just around the corner. We'll have Ash Wednesday worship on Mar. 2 at 7 p.m. For each of the five following Wednesdays in Lent we will gather for Holden Evening Prayer at 7 p.m. – a practice we have dearly missed over the last two years.

New this year during Lent will be small groups forming to discuss the book *The Heart of It All: The Bible's Big Picture* by Samuel Wells. It's a short read, so there won't be a lot of homework. Wells summarizes what he sees as the central message of the entire Bible in fewer than 100 pages! Groups will meet weekly during Lent, and there will be opportunities for both in-person and online participation. Look for more information and opportunities to sign up in the month of February. If you think you might enjoy leading a group, I would love to hear from you.

Finally, here's something you can help us with: please spread the word about the Parish Administrator role. It's a critical position for our ministry, and it could be a great opportunity for someone who doesn't want every day at work to be the same. It's a good mix of interpersonal interaction and keeping things moving behind the scenes. Questions about the role may be sent to personnel@rlcindy.org.

Keep your eye on your email, rlcindy.org, and social media as well as the Connections flyer in the bulletin for details about weekly events and ministries. And please don't hesitate to reach out if you'd like to chat with me about a need you have, something happening at the church, or something you're just excited to share.

I'm glad to be in this community with you as we grow together in faith and wonder for the sake of the world.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ryan".

Pastor Ryan