

# JANUARY – BRING IT ON

With all the violence, conflict, greed, and division going in today's world, it often seems more like the end times of Revelation than the season of good news that God has chosen to "pitch his tent," take on flesh and enter into the messiness of our daily lives. Add the funk of icy January days and it's sometimes hard to stay hopeful.

What we forget, however, is that the mood of the world of Jesus' time was pretty similar to our own. Yet, like today, some people held on to hope and looked for signs of promise even in the darkness. The great feast of the Epiphany which we celebrate near the close of the Christmas season reminds us of that.

The three kings are said to have come from far-away lands. They probably didn't know each other. We don't even know their names, though we've named them. What we do know for sure was that there was a longing throughout the world for something more, something better. In the midst of their own darkness, they sought light, a "star" that would guide them to what would satisfy their deepest desires.

How did they recognize the star? In the midst of millions of lights in the evening sky, how did they know which one would be "it"—the one they were searching for all of their lives? And once they had seen it, how did they know how to follow its light? What were the signs that they were on the right track? What turn should they take? When should they move or stay still? I'm sure that God provided signs and spoke to them in the silence of their hearts—and they continued the search.

During their years in the desert God led the Israelites with the pillar of fire by day and the pillar of cloud by night. Probably others travelling in the same place at the same time didn't see it, but the Israelites had become tuned in to the

ways of God. The kings did the same. And each of us has our own heart journey to find the baby in the manger, the one who is our heart's deepest desire, the one who will be with us always and never leave us to face the mess in our lives alone. He is Emmanuel—God with us—and he's never leaving!



What "star" is shining bright in the midst of the chaos of the evening news? What promise is there that evil will not win? Where do we see God's goodness and presence in the headlines? I think of the courage of Lauren Hill, a brave young woman battling terminal cancer whose bravery and determination to do something for others lights up our lives and focuses us on the good in the world; of Tony Fairhead and Childhood Food Solutions who work to create a food safety net for children on the days school isn't in session; of Lisa Hyde- Hill whose mentoring and encouragement has positively

touched hundreds of people through her work at the Villages at Roll Hill Community Center; and of Shirley Cade, director of St. Leo's food pantry who serves over 1200 people each month, not just with food, but with love and respect.

If the kings were travelling through Cincinnati, I think they'd find signs pointing them to Jesus. I know we'd find him here too.

One bit of goodness, one small ray of light, leads to another and another and suddenly the light is growing stronger. We're coming nearer to the infant king with our own gifts of ourselves and we know that peace and justice are possible.

So January, bring it on with your gloominess and cold. We're warmed by the Son and you can't extinguish our hope.

—Angela Anno, Pastoral Associate