

LIFE @ FIRST

On the Journey

VOLUME 14
ISSUE 47

DECEMBER 7, 2021

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angels rejoiced, the shepherds came running to see the newborn baby, and the wise men embarked on a long and treacherous journey, following a star, to find this child born to be the King. But not everyone rejoiced. There were very different reactions to the birth of Jesus. We find at least seven different reactions to Jesus' birth in the characters of the Christmas narrative. And what is interesting, is that throughout all of history, we also find these same seven reactions to Jesus that were present when Jesus was born. And they are still present reactions in our times today.



Perhaps the most common of these reactions in Jesus' time, and also in our time today, we find in the religious leaders who just seemed indifferent to the news that the Messiah had been born. They didn't seem to care! That is very surprising because their job as God's representatives was to build a longing for and expectation of the coming of the Messiah, but when news came that THE King of the Jews was born, they didn't care!

This year during Advent, we are exploring the different reactions to the birth of Jesus that we find in the birth narrative of Jesus, and these are found in the different characters in the story. Perhaps, it will help us understand why, even today, some come running when they hear the good news of a Savior, and why others are so hostile to Him, even seeking to destroy any knowledge of Him.

Two years ago, before Covid found us, at Christmas time, our preschool came to the church to pack some children's packs for

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SUNDAY WORSHIP - 9:00 AM

Worship Leader - Dave & Shari Graber Music - Worship Team

You can now join in the live stream of Sunday sermons by clicking onto You Tube, then typing in FMC INDIANA in the search box. We begin at 9:00 AM on Sunday mornings, but the livestream may not be fully available until 11 AM.

BIRTHDAYS

Sara Weaver	12/8
Theo Outman	12/8
Betty Birky	12/17
Curt Troyer	12/19
Bobbie Werker	12/21
Loretta Troyer	12/23
Fannie Hochstetler	12/24
Edna Mast	1/8
Grace Rheinheimer	1/11
Charles Hartzler	1/14
Sam Weirich	1/15
Linda Young	1/16
Mary Weaver	1/17

First Mennonite Church
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Middlebury IN 46540
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*Our mission is to extend grace,
build peace, and share love
within & beyond our faith
community*

Worship Service
Sunday 9:00 am
Sunday School 10:15 am

Office Hours

Pastor Phil
Tuesday 9:30a—1:30p
Thursday 1:00p—6:00p

Pastor Tim
Wednesday 2:00p—6:00p

Business Office
Monday and Tuesday
8:00a—5:00p

On the Journey

(Continued from page 1)

the Food Pantry. Afterward, I was supposed to read them a story, then they would return to the school. But after the story, I took the children into the sanctuary to see the Christmas decorations in the church, and that year our decorations included a manger with a doll in it, wrapped up in a blanket.

I lit the candles and turned on the lights, and the children ran into the sanctuary to see what was there.

When one of the children saw the manger with a baby in it, she stopped and enthusiastically exclaimed, "WOW...WOW!"

Then she asked, "Is he real?"

Nobody said anything, so she asked again, "Is he real?" And she persisted. She needs to know if the baby in the manger is real. And now she is looking at me and asking the question, "Is he real?"

I am not often stumped by theological questions. I have spent a lifetime struggling and working through doubts and questions and faith issues. I know what I believe and why I believe it. I have very deep convictions about Jesus and His eternal Kingdom. And I am not easily swayed by half-baked theories that keep popping up and get thrown in our faces these days.

But I was stumped by this question from a 4-year-old child, "Is he real?" that she kept asking. Was she asking if the story is real, or was she asking if the doll in the manger is real?"

By now, she was standing in front of me asking, "Is he real?" This is something she needs to know. And by now, I knew it was me who was going to have to answer her question.

And finally, I responded. "Jesus IS real," I said. "Yes, Jesus is very real, and he came to earth to save us. He came as a baby, and when he was born, he was placed in a manger so he could rest." That was all I said. But that was all it took. Her question had been answered.

But I was not prepared for what she did next. She ran back to the manger, got down on her knees, bent in over the baby in the manger, and kissed him on the forehead. I was very deeply moved in my soul by what I had just witnessed. I don't know if I have ever seen a more authentic expression of affection or a more fitting reaction to Jesus who left his home in heaven and came to earth to be our savior, and it came from the mouth of a 4-year-old child. Jesus once said, "From the mouth of babes..."

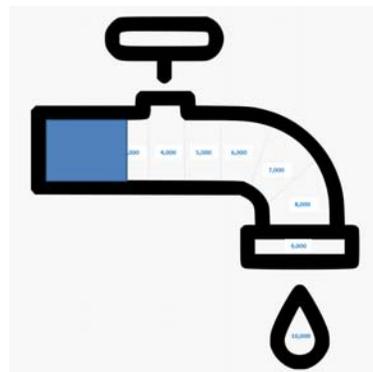
Written by Philip Yoder
December 2021

Philippine Water Project

We're still just over 1/4 of the way there at \$3,379.50! Our water is not advancing very

quickly!

Please consider how you can participate in this fundraiser. Let's flood the water out of the spigot!!



Worship

We are looking at the different reactions to Jesus found in the birth narrative of Jesus, and today we notice the reaction of the Religious Leaders – **Indifference**. To us, this is rather surprising! We would expect that the religious leaders would be very excited to learn that the Messiah, whom they have been longing for and praying for, was born in their lifetime, that God was acting to once again deliver Israel, and that it was all happening in their lifetime. But when news came that there were “Wise Men” in Jerusalem seeking the newborn King (Messiah), and that they were following His star, the religious leaders didn’t seem to care. It didn’t arouse curiosity in them, and they made no efforts to go and find the newborn king themselves. WHY? Perhaps, it was because it was foreigners who made the claim of the birth of the Messiah. If God had indeed sent the Messiah, surely, they would have been the first to know about it.

And there had been hundreds of “false messiahs” before this one, all claiming to be the Messiah. All of them were wrong, and most ended up on a Roman cross. So, why get excited about this one? Also, they had it all figured out as to when and how the Messiah was to come among them, and this didn’t fit their calculations, so they quickly dismissed the claims of the Wise

Men, thinking they were mistaken and misled.

Sermon Title: **Reactions to Jesus – Indifference (The Religious Leaders)**
Sermon Text: **Matthew 2:1-6**

The Wise Men were after all, Gentiles, and God doesn’t care much about Gentiles, let alone announce the birth of a Jewish Messiah to them. The religious leaders were completely disinterested. This Messiah didn’t come just like they imagined he would, so they dismissed the reports of the birth of a Messiah as misinformed rumors.

Administration

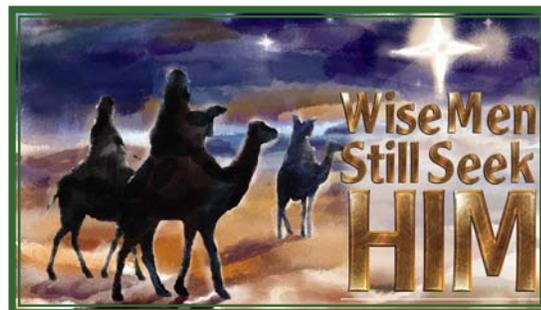
Stewardship Report for
December 5, 2021:

Money Given to Budget \$ 4,286.00

Amount Needed Weekly for Budget
\$ 5,047.52

Year To Date Money Given to Budget
\$ 69,040.00

Amount Needed Year-to-Date for Budget
\$ 70,665.28



*Reminder that next Monday,
December 13, the business office
will be closing at 11 am*

HVAC Controls

Please remember if you adjust one thermostat in the Fellowship Hall the temperature on the other side should be adjusted to match it. When this doesn't happen, one unit works extra hard to compensate for the other resting unit. If you do raise the temperature for church, or your event, please make sure you lower them both back to 62° when you leave to both help us keep our heating bill down, and preserve our units!

Burial Aid

As many of you already know, Levi Mast passed away Saturday, November 27th and services were held last Wednesday. Levi transferred his membership here on October 15 1972 from North Goshen Mennonite.

As an active member of the Burial Aid program, you will find envelopes in your newsletter envelope or in your mailboxes which are due back the week of Christmas. Thank you in advance for your timely response.

Preschool

The Preschool Board met in December and heard the Christmas parties will be on December 14 & 16; the service project at the food pantry will be December 15 & 17. We were closed the week of Thanksgiving due to a teacher contracting COVID. Then we had a substitute teacher for a week that worked out very well. Friday, December 17 will be Rachel Scroggins last day as our Lead Teacher. Please join us in thanking her for her 16 years of teaching and loving our preschool kids!



Unidentified Money!!!

If you are dropping cash into the office slot, it's important that you identify what it is for!! Currently we are actively receiving money for Fatima, Water Project, Prayer Shawl, Coffee Fund, various Sunday Schools, Food Pantry and of course our General Fund. I don't want to cheat any group out of their funds, but if I can't identify what it's for, it likely will won't benefit your desired fund. There are several bank bags above, and ziplock bags below, the microwave in the kitchen, and plenty of scrap paper on the ledge outside of my office, please take a moment to scribble something to indicate it's purpose and put it in a bag of some type. I presently have a roll of cash, wrapped in a twist tie, and misc loose coins that I have no idea how to apply! Please claim it this week with an email, a note in the mail slot or phone call or I'll apply it to the general budget next week!

Outreach

FMC Sewing December Project is to adopt a Pantry Family and Support the FMC Shut in Boxes

Final Day to add items to the You Are Loved boxes is Sunday, December 12th.



Publishing deadlines!!

All **newsletter** submissions need to be in to the church office by **12 noon on Monday**, **Bulletin** submissions are due by **10 am on Tuesday!**

I'm generally pretty prompt about having everything ready to go Tuesday mornings! Don't miss getting your items published in the newsletter or bulletin.