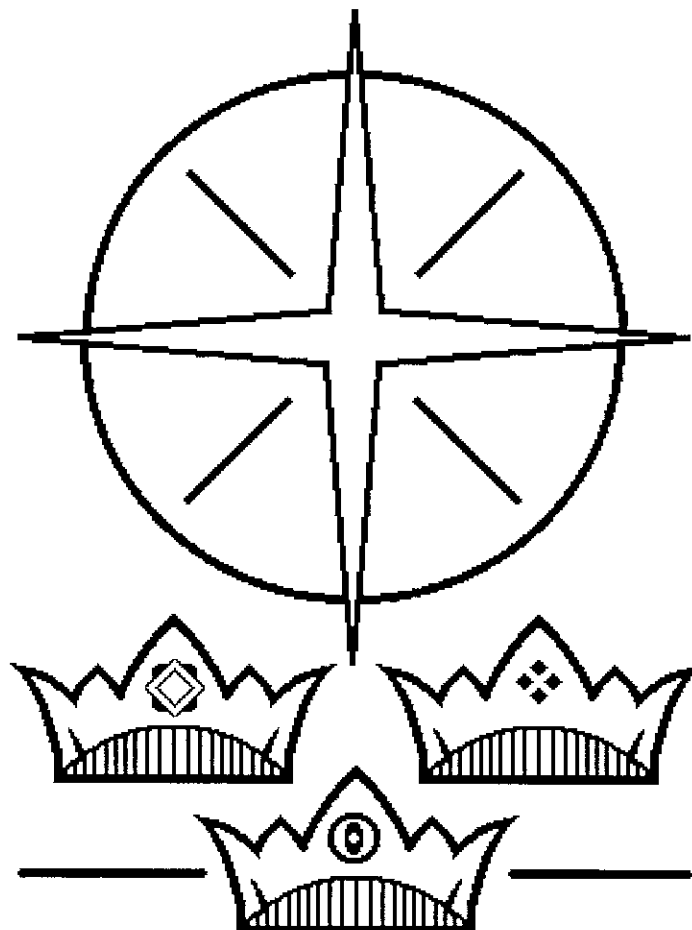


THE VISITOR

from Saint Marks United Church of Christ

January 2008



EPIPHANY

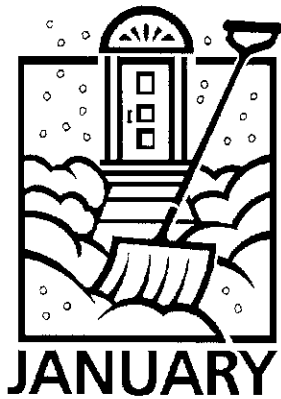
MATTHEW 2:9-11

WHEN THEY HAD HEARD THE KING, THEY SET OUT; AND THERE, AHEAD OF THEM, WENT THE STAR THAT THEY HAD SEEN AT ITS RISING, UNTIL IT STOPPED OVER THE PLACE WHERE THE CHILD WAS. WHEN THEY SAW THAT THE STAR HAD STOPPED, THEY WERE OVERWHELMED WITH JOY. ON ENTERING THE HOUSE, THEY SAW THE CHILD WITH MARY HIS MOTHER; AND THEY KNELT DOWN AND PAID HIM HOMAGE. THEN, OPENING THEIR TREASURE CHESTS, THEY OFFERED HIM GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE, AND MYRRH.

From the Senior Pastor

The Rev. Dr. John E. Manzo
January , 2008

There is an old Latin expression, *Tempus Fugit* which means *time flies*. It seems that the year 2007 just got here and now it is ending and we begin 2008.



As I look back on 2007 something incredibly exciting took place. We did a great deal of research and developed a Mission Statement for St. Marks United Church of Christ. The words of it come very much from the people of St. Marks and a belief that we are being called, by God, to move in certain directions.

Mission Statements are not about a church's mission. They are about God's mission being carried forth by a church. Mission statements are less about taking a poll and more about coming to a sense where people are truly at. This is why we developed an in depth survey and also took time for people to sit, talk, and listen to one another.

The Church Council approved the Mission Statement and it will be a driving force for us in 2008 and beyond. The words are short, concise, and rich:

The Mission of St. Marks United Church of Christ is:

- To reach up in Worship of God
- To reach out in Evangelism
- To reach beyond ourselves in Mission
- To reach in to grow in Christian Discipleship

Obviously Worship is at our core. We strive to Worship God with integrity and innovation at the same time.

Our hope is that Evangelism, both bringing in new people, but involving them and helping them to assimilate into the life of St. Marks is of great importance.

We are a church rich with mission opportunities and the recent development of a mission team is going to enable us to grow in doing mission.

Last, of course, is that we have a commitment to grow in Christian discipleship and all the routes that takes us.

During the coming year the Church Council will be working to make the vision a reality. Doing a vision process and developing a Mission Statement is a useless proposition unless we actually **do** what we feel called to do.

I am personally excited about this because what we have come up with reflects some marvelous things about the people of St. Marks.

First, the faith commitment of people is very high. People truly do feel called by God and challenged by God to grow in their faith as Christians.

Secondly, people do believe that we have something special present at St. Marks. We are a diverse congregation when homogeneous congregations are more the norm; we are a welcoming congregation that seeks to embrace rather than 'fix' those who may differ from us.

Lastly, we see our faith as something to be shared and lived out in the world. We seek to bring the face of God to those we meet both near and afar.

2007 was a year we accomplished a great deal and we are the better for it. In 2008 we begin the year with a bold, new mission.

It is a time of great blessing and rejoicing for each of us as the old year comes to an end and the new year begins.

Bible Study

The weekly Bible Study begins again on Thursday, January 11th. We will be studying the Book of Genesis. Classes begin at 7:30PM and last for one hour. The preferred translation for this study will be either *The Jerusalem Bible* or *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

These translation is often viewed as one of the most elegant translations of the English Bible. It also retains the Hebrew names for God in the English giving greater clarity to the words and the Word. If you cannot find one, I will have some available if you'd like to purchase one.

Men's Fellowship

We will be meeting on Saturday morning, January 5th at 9:00AM at Ninny's. All men are welcome!