

# The Elizabethan



The Newsletter of St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church      Burien, Washington

January 2017

## From Fr. John:

What is Epiphany?

For Anglicans and other denominations, Epiphany is a feast day that falls on January 6<sup>th</sup>, because it is the 12<sup>th</sup> and final day of Christmas. The name for the feast comes from the Greek , *epiphainein*, that means “manifestation.” Consequently, the season of Epiphany is also known as the time of manifestation. Epiphany season includes the six Sundays that follow the feast day and the first Sunday after Epiphany is celebrated as the Baptism of Jesus, making it one of the four feast days appropriate for baptizing people into the church. The season of Epiphany runs until the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of the season of Lent.

Western Christians began celebrating the Epiphany in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. During the medieval period, people celebrated Christmas for the 12 days from Christmas Eve on December 24<sup>th</sup> until Epiphany, which is why we also call it Twelfth Night. From then up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Epiphany was as big a celebration as Christmas Day. Episcopalians still consider Epiphany to be one of seven principle feast days in the liturgical year.

Twelfth Night (the feast day of Epiphany) marks the magis’ visit to the baby Jesus, a story found only in the Gospel of Matthew. According to the author of the Gospel, the magi found Jesus by following a star across the desert to Bethlehem. Matthew 2:11 says that the magi offered symbolic gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gifts were symbolic: gold representing Jesus’ royal standing; frankincense his divine birth; and myrrh his mortality.

The surprise to many is that in this visit, Jesus was made manifest as the savior to all people, not just the Jews. Matthew’s Gospel is considered to be the most Jewish of the four, yet there is no urgency for any non-Jews to become Jewish. Like many Gentiles in Matthew’s Gospel, the magi have a powerful experience of the Christchild and then go on to lives that we know nothing about!

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Over the years, however, we have added an impressive amount of detail to the story that has little grounding in Holy Scripture. We often say, for example, that three Wise Men went to find Jesus in a stable. Balthasar is often represented as a king of Arabia, Melchior as a king of Persia, and Caspar (or “Gaspar”) as a king of India. Caspar is traditionally portrayed as old with a white beard, and he is the bearer of the gold, often kneeling. Melchior, whom we tend to portray as standing, is usually seen as a middle-aged Arab man, offering frankincense from his native land. (The finest frankincense still comes from Somalia, which is where we get some of what we burn at St. Elizabeth.) Also typically standing, Balthazar is portrayed as the youngest of the three, a black-skinned man who has brought myrrh either from Saba (which is now south Yemen) or from Ethiopia.

None of these names come from Scripture nor is there any mention of a stable or of how many magi there were. (Some parts of the Orthodox say that there were 12!) And yet, all around the world, people celebrate Epiphany in ways that center on Three Kings. Much of the Spanish speaking world knows Epiphany *Dia de los Reyes* (Three Kings' Day). Many parts of the French-speaking world celebrate with a *gâteau des Rois*, or “cake of the Kings,” with tiny porcelain figurines of Jesus, Mary and Joseph baked into them. In England, the traditional “Twelfth Cake” had a bean and a pie baked into it. The man and woman who got one of these in their piece of the cake were chosen as the King and Queen of the festivities. Scottish tradition involves a black bun, which is a fruitcake baked into a pastry shell. The black bun also contains a hidden bean that names its finder as King for the evening.

In Britain, hundreds of years ago, a traditional roast lamb honored three Kings' visit to the Christ child and in some European countries, children leave their shoes out the night before to be filled with gifts, while others leave straw for the three Kings' horses. The range and evolution of these celebrations is delightful and despite being “non-Biblical” are all expressions of joy at the manifestation of Jesus Christ, “the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church and the author of our salvation.”

Our food cupboard in the office is well used and stocked by just a hand full of people. Its location in the office allows us to interact with the people that use it and maintains a connection between St. Elizabeth and the community. Thank you so much to those that contribute!!!

## Dinner for Six

During 2017, St. Elizabeth's will launch a Dinner for Six Ministry which promotes community and fellowship. Each group of six will have a host and meet once a month for a meal and conversation during January – March with the host changing each month. After Easter, new groups will be announced in April for another 3 months, and again in July and October. Groups are free to choose their date and style of dining, i.e., at the host home, dining out, a full meal, a soup supper, a potluck or whatever the group would like. The host reaches out to the group members to set a date, time, menu, location that is agreeable with the group by email. Dates and times can be flexible to accommodate schedules and transportation needs. After the meal and conversation the group will read through the Compline service from the prayer book.

In January, we are planning to start with four groups. If you signed up for the program – you should be hearing from a host in early January or before. If you did not sign up but want to participate, contact Janey Montgomery, 319 231 4574 or [janeymontgomery68@gmail.com](mailto:janeymontgomery68@gmail.com) or Gwynne Taylor 206 617 0731 [gwynnetaylor@me.com](mailto:gwynnetaylor@me.com). Hopefully, we will have more groups going in April and throughout the year.

## The Elizabethan

*The Elizabethan* is published monthly by St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church. The deadline for articles is the fourth Friday of each month.

Articles, calendar items and ideas may be mailed or emailed to the addresses below or left in *The Elizabethan* box in the Parish Office.

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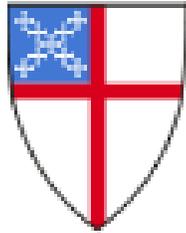
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St. Elizabeth Episcopal Church

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**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**Annual meeting/potluck:** The annual meeting of the parish is scheduled for January 29<sup>th</sup> after the Sunday Mass. We will have a coffee hour/potluck and then move on to the business of the church.

This is an essential part of parish life where we make decisions about new vestry members, convention delegates and report on the past year. This is your church and your participation is both appreciated and expected. We hope to get through the meeting efficiently in an hour. There is a sign-up sheet for the potluck in the hallway, but even if you are not bringing something for the potluck, please come in support of our church community!

*January is St. Elizabeth's turn to collect items for the women at **Hospitality House**. There is a list of items needed on the bulletin board and in the office. Please contribute if you can.*

**Episcopal visitation:** That's an Anglican way of saying "Bishop Rickel is coming!" On March 5<sup>th</sup>, the first Sunday in Lent, Bishop Rickel will be at St. Elizabeth, presiding at the Mass and making himself available for conversation at Coffee Hour. Let's have a good turn-out to welcome him and show him how healthy and strong this parish has become.