

# Called To Be Light In A Dark World

*Happy New Year!*

Somehow, 2020 is upon us. In the midst of the celebration of newness and possibility, another reality exists in the background: January, the month whose arrival we celebrate, is a long and dark month.

It is gray and dreary, cold, can be an extremely challenging time for those who struggle with seasonal affective disorder. The holidays are over, the days are short, and many folks are stuck inside. This is a tough month.

A few years ago, at the end of January, I spent some time in Iceland—a country that, due to its northern position on the globe, only gets around three (3) hours of sunlight every day during deep winter. I was mentally prepared to feel sad and exhausted during my time there because of this. When we got to Reykjavik, however, one of the first things I noticed was the presence of light—almost everywhere. On doorsteps, in windowsills, lining the streets—it's a tradition in Iceland during winter to fill public spaces and homes with lanterns, so that even in the midst of darkness light might shine through. I was shocked at how such a seemingly gloomy place could suddenly become so cozy and filled with hope.



View of Reykjavik Lights at Night

At the beginning of this long, dark month, we celebrate the feast of Epiphany (January 6). Epiphany heralds the arrival of King Herod's wise men at Jesus' manger after being led by the light of a star, but it's also about so much more than that—this is the story of a child who brought so much light and hope into the world that he made the powers of empire shake in their boots. Terrified of this new sign of justice, peace, and favor of the lowly, King Herod sent those very wise men to figure out this child's identity and location so that he could be killed. But something happens when the wise men meet Jesus, the light of the world—they realize that this child, this sign of hope and new life and God's reign on

Earth, is for them, too. And then they live according to that knowledge—they change their course, and never return to King Herod. They become signs of Christ's light in the world.

Epiphany is a feast about light in the midst of darkness. In the face of terrible empire and murderous intent, the wise men are called to proclaim the hope of the reign of God and to change the course of history. Now that God's love and grace have become flesh in our world, look at what is possible!

In the midst of this dark season, remember that we have received the gift of Christ's light, which no darkness can overcome. Remember too that we are called to be signs of that light—to be lanterns—in the world. God equips us for ministry and for life in relationship, even though we have no idea what lies ahead and sometimes don't even trust ourselves. Forgiveness and reconciliation are ours—grace is ours.

May we shine like sacred lanterns of God's holy hope and light in the midst of this dark world.

Amen

*Peace, Pastor Marissa Becklin*