



Dear Friends,

What a two years it's been. I remember last Christmas as we fought through the end of 2020 like the Whos in Whoville refusing to let the Grinch of disease, division or despair to steal Christmas. We had some joyous memories in spite of doing ministry in unprecedented times. As I waved my glow stick gleefully in the parking lot on Christmas Eve singing "Joy to the World" after two Candlelight Parking Lot Services in a flat-out blizzard, I thought maybe the pressure and horror of 2020 might pass. It didn't. I spoke to a young teacher after our Mosaic service last Sunday and she said quietly to me, "I think 2021 has been harder."

So here we are again. It's Christmas time 2021. COVID's Delta variant is spiking again, political divisions have not been eased, racial tensions and injustice have not been healed. I am reminded that Isaiah said that Christmas Light came not to those who "sat" in darkness, but to those who "*dwelled*" in darkness. There is a difference, and it sure feels like we have been sitting here for a while. This year, we are following some faithful followers of Christ who learned the patience of waiting. We are celebrating "*Día de Los Tres Reyes*," or Three Kings Day in English, as our Advent and Christmas theme this year. This celebration is treasured in many parts of Latin America, including Mexico and Puerto Rico.

The Magi were sages from the East, most think from the area of Persia. They were astrologers, scientists, physicians, and scholars in all forms of history, art and literature. It is why in the English vernacular they became known as the "wise men." The Magi had studied the annals of history and the religions of the world including the Hebrew Scriptures. These learned men deduced that all of it attested to the fact that one day a True King would come and he would be the King of Kings and sent from God. Over centuries of turmoil that would make 2020 and 2021 look like a flea bite, they waited faithfully. And when they saw his Star rise in the sky, they set out. We stand as beneficiaries of their faithfulness.

What can we learn from them to help us continue to be a faithful church in this season of 2021? We shared these in our handbook for our Three King Celebration this year:

- 1) **They Looked Up** – If the Kings never looked up, they would have never seen the star. Do not just look at the lights, the glitz, and the world around you this Christmas. Look up above the noise by joining us in worship every Sunday, Christmas Eve, December 26<sup>th</sup> and January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Take time to look up whether in-person or online.
- 2) **They Gave** - At Christmas we often celebrate gift exchanges. Notice that there was no "gift exchange" from the Three Kings. They simply came to give in honor of the One who had come into the world to give his life for us. They gave to support his mission to redeem the world. Shortly after the kings' visit, the holy family had to flee from the political terror of Herod and became refugees in the land of Egypt. How did they manage and survive? Obviously from the gifts of the kings. They gave to a mission greater than themselves.

Attached is a way that you can give to our "Follow the King Christmas Offering" this year through your gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh at a precarious time for churches in America. Many churches did not make it through 2020. More closed their doors in 2021. Garfield Memorial has been a beacon of light and we have been able to do that through your generosity. The need is great in these uncharted waters. You all came through in incredible ways in 2020. The need and the challenges around us remain the same as we end 2021. Will you follow these ancient earthly kings who looked up, gave to a mission greater than themselves and gave to the King of Kings that first Christmas? Merry Christmas and God bless us every one!

Chip Freed, Lead Pastor

Please return your gift in the enclosed envelope to our church office (3650 Lander Rd., Pepper Pike 44124) or go to [garfieldchurch.org/giving](http://garfieldchurch.org/giving). Join us on Christmas Eve in person or online [garfieldchurch.org/christmas](http://garfieldchurch.org/christmas)



## "Follow the King" Christmas Offering Campaign

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." . . .

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. **(Matthew 2:1-2, 11)**

***This Christmas, please consider joining the Three Kings in giving a special gift to the newborn king. There will be no public recordings of gifts. Just lay them at the feet of the babe in the manger.***



### **Consider a Gift of Gold - Gifts of \$10,000 and above**

The gift of Gold was given to acknowledge Christ as King of Kings, Lord over all of the powers of this world - rulers, titles, money, fame, etc. "He utters his voice, the earth melts" (Psalm 46:6). Gold was the acknowledgment of royalty. It was valuable and long-lasting, a symbol of God's everlasting throne.

### **Consider a Gift of Frankincense - Gifts of \$5000 and above**

The gift of Frankincense was also a gift made to a king. Whereas gold was used to crown, frankincense was used to anoint. Temple priests burned frankincense ceremonially in worship. Therefore, it reminds us that Jesus is our True High Priest, interceding for us to make us right with God.

### **Consider a Gift of Myrrh - Gifts of \$1 and above**

All gifts are sacrificial, but Myrrh reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus. On the cross, they offered him Myrrh. Myrrh was believed to have medicinal power and it reminds us that Jesus is our Savior and our Healer, who heals us and the world from our brokenness and sin.

If you cannot give financially this year due to the adversity of the pandemic or other reasons, do like the Little Drummer boy who had no money, but gave what he had. Commit to give of your time, your talent, your witness and your prayers in moving the mission of the Newborn King.



### **Consider a Legacy Gift**

As we emerge from two of the most difficult & challenging years in the church, now is a good time to prayerfully consider a Legacy Gift to the mission and ministry of Garfield Memorial Church. Consider making a significant gift either at the end of this year, the beginning of the next, or even included in your will, out of your desire to see the witness of Garfield Memorial Church remain strong through 2030 and beyond. A good way to do that is to give to the Garfield Memorial Foundation designated for "The Future Ministry of Garfield Memorial Church." The Foundation assets are managed to bear interest and dividends for years to come. Our Business Office can help advise and refer you on these matters. These immediate years have reminded us of the fragility of life and the forces aligned against Christ's Church. Now is a faithful time to consider a Legacy Gift.