



Wednesday Prayer

Epiphany – Coercion, Deceit, and the Good News

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” 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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. Matthew 2:7-11

Already, just six days into the new year, and we hear a story of attempted coercion and deceit from the king afraid of this new baby Jesus. And God intervenes and sends the wise men home by another road. The coercion and deceit of the king is stopped. The Good News prevails.

What does it mean to go home *by another road*? Many have been longing to go back to normal, or to the “new normal.” Yet we’ve also learned that our “normal” may have been harmful to others. I don’t want to go back by way of the old road. The new road may be less comfortable, more challenging, and yet lead to a better place for more people than just me.

Some of us old(er) folks want to go back to a time when social media and gaming didn’t play such significant roles in our children’s lives. And that’s not going to happen. So...we can go down the road of ignoring the potential dangers, or we can identify the risks and understand the way perpetrators work in a world of coercion and deceit as Herod did. And we can interrupt that path with our knowledge, care and support of young people.

Parents, grandparents, church leaders, community members, and Youth - Join us virtually on January 14th for [Online Safety for Youth](#) – and learn how youth can stay safe from online exploitation and what our role is as safe, trusting adults. The good news here is that we **can** help youth stay clear of the coercion and deceit that perpetrators use. We can share the Good News.

[**Register for Online Safety for Youth and join us on January 14, 7:00-8:15pm!**](#)

God, you sent your Son to disrupt harmful power structures and teach us to love one another as you love us. May we begin this year with a new understanding of how we can come together to share the Good News and work to keep all children safe and protected. Amen.

Written by Joy McElroy, Cherish All Children Executive Director, and community advocate for racial justice.