

“Planning An Epiphany Party”

By Julie R. Harley, lead pastor

Evotional for Jan. 3, 2012

We're pretty happy about the 40+ new members who joined First United in the last year, so we decided to throw a party for them. Pastor Rob and the awesome new members committee decided to hold it on Epiphany, which is January 6, at the home of Jane Barker and Melinda Haag in River Forest.

So this morning at staff meeting, we had a good time coming up with ideas for this party. Epiphany is the 12th day of Christmas, when we celebrate the Magi's visit to the baby Jesus, so here are our suggestions:

- *Hang a huge, prelit star over Jane and Melinda's house.*
- *Everybody has to come dressed as a wise man (we call it Royalty Casual; toga party was our second choice).*
- *All guests bring a gift – gold, frankincense, myrrh or American Express gift cards welcome (and will be accepted as payment toward your 2012 pledge).*
- *Since the magi were astrologers, everyone has to put their zodiac sign on their nametag.*
- *Park your animals outside (though we're not sure River Forest actually allows camel parking).*
- *Music by herald angels; decorations by Michelangelo; party favors by da Vinci.*

I love the fact that the nativity scene was a strange menagerie of animals, humans and angels who gathered around the holy child. God was pretty wise (omniscient, even), knowing there's nothing that gets the attention of a crowd of strangers better than a newborn baby.

Epiphany celebrates the manifestation of God to the whole world – Gentiles as well as Jews. The Magi were strangers at the party when the world first received God's gift to the world: Jesus Christ, aka Emmanuel, God with us. We celebrate those who have been on a long journey and miraculously found their way to First United. We are deeply blessed that God has led them here to share a little light in the darkness.

New members: welcome to this strange menagerie where our main focus is still the same: to find Jesus and be overwhelmed with joy. See you at 7 pm this Friday, wings and halos optional.

Concerns: *Will Stitzel at Rush Hospital; those in treatment for cancer; and Ben and Kari Wilcox.*

Joys: *Congratulations to Terry McIntyre and Jackie Kareb on the birth of granddaughter Genevieve. We celebrate the long life of our member Marion Hill, who died on Dec. 26 at Presbyterian Homes in Evanston and whose memorial service will be held there at 1:30 pm on Thursday, Jan. 5.*