



# THE WINDOW OF UNIVERSITY BAPTIST CHURCH

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## thinkCRITICALLY

### PASTOR'S PANE

It's funny that they have come to be known as the wise men. In the biblical accounts they were referred to as "magi," and for the Jewish audience of the first century this was not, by any stretch of the imagination, to be considered as complimentary. You see, the Greek definition of "magi" is not one of intellectual brilliance, but rather of magicians or astrologers, characters disdained by the Jews. In fact, the Old Testament is replete with criticisms of magicians and astrologers. Thus, these magi would have been looked down upon by most people in Israel.

These so-called wise men weren't recognized in their time as being all that wise — not by their own people or even Herod and his Jewish brain-trust. I mean, Herod and his counselors must have been amused by the visit from these foreigners, but they weren't impressed enough to question or follow these strange visitors and their strange hypothesis. And it doesn't appear that these travelers from the east made that great of an impression with their own people. After all, nothing radical seems to have taken place after their visit and their most amazing discovery. There were no follow-up visits or pilgrimages of any sort. You can't help but get the feeling that the magi's return was met with as much skepticism as their departure months earlier. (In fact, I have often imagined developing a great short story by relating this adventure from the perspective of the wise men's wives' points of view.)

So then, what made these men, ignorant of Scripture and shallow in the ways of theological tradition, wise? Well, it seems to me that what made these magi wise is the same thing that makes anyone wise. It's not so much a matter of one's intelligence quota or the genius of one's thinking as it is the commitment of one's heart. For whatever reason it was that led them to Bethlehem, they were still magi until they came into the presence of the ChristChild. And it was in the mystery of that moment that their hearts were so touched that they bowed in reverence. It was that experience of coming to Christ, as we Baptists like to say, that changed their way of thinking so much that they returned home a different way. And while the text most probably meant that in geographic terms, I can't help but think that there is a spiritual connotation as well.

One other factor in their becoming wise was their ability to be prepared. In coming to Christ, they had the forethought to bring gifts — gifts that spoke of whom they were and Whom He was. The gold, frankincense and myrrh have been analyzed by theologians for centuries as to their meanings. Whatever value one attaches to these symbols, it seems to me that they represent the best that these men had to offer.

It is not so much their gifts as their spirits which reveal their wisdom. They are thoughtful, generous and reverent in what they bring. And for that reason, they become wonderful

guides for us in this Advent season. I say that because as an integral part of our Advent preparation, we are including the consideration of our gifts. The ecclesiastical word we sometimes use in defining this is "stewardship." It's a good word that some of us in the church have been apologetic about, worried that the world sees us as only asking for money. Unfortunately, the problem of the church is not so much one of talking too often about money and resources, but too seldom because materialism is the spiritual issue of our time.


Thus, as we make our way to Bethlehem, one of our spiritual disciplines will be to consider what it is that we wish to give to Christ this year. It will entail some serious spiritual introspection. After all, what do you give for Someone Who has given you everything? It is my fervent hope and prayer that our journey to Christmas will enable us discoveries that make us wise indeed!

Thinking with the heart,

Mike

★ "We saw his star...and have come to worship him." ★

# Live Nativity



University Baptist Church

★ Sunday, DECEMBER 11th ★

**4 TO 6 PM**

Invite your friends  
and family

Live Nativity Scenes  
Petting Zoo  
Crafts and Cookies

## love CONTINUALLY

### SPIRITUAL FORMATION

**Worship Preparation:** Throughout the week, please set aside time to study the following Scriptures for this coming Sunday.

**The Call to Prayer:** Glory to the Father, to the Son, & to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, it is now and evermore shall be.

**The Daily Examination:** In the last 24 hours, recall when you most vividly encountered God. Reflect on this experience. Offer gratitude for this.

#### The Daily Readings:

##### Sunday, December 11

Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 146:5-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

##### Monday, December 12

Psalm 42; Isaiah 29:17-24; Acts 5:12-16

##### Tuesday, December 13

Psalm 42; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Jude 17-25

##### Wednesday, December 14

Psalm 42; Zechariah 8:1-17; Matthew 8:14-17, 28-34

##### Thursday, December 15

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 2 Samuel 7:1-17; Galatians 3:23-29

##### Friday, December 16

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 2 Samuel 7:18-22; Galatians 4:1-7

##### Saturday, December 17

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 2 Samuel 7:23-29; John 3:31-36



This Christmas, you can give the Book of Hope to children in need by checking in on Facebook at UBC. Every 3 check-ins provides a book to a child. We've partnered with Reach by Causely and OneHope to make this possible. To learn more about OneHope, check out their site:

<http://onehope.net>

## live CREATIVELY

WMU-JLK WILL BE ON

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13TH.

6:30PM

COVERED DISH AT GLENDA EVANS' HOME

### CALENDAR

#### Sunday, December 11

9:15 AM Sunday Morning Bible Study  
10:30 AM \*Worship Service & Christmas Carol Celebration - Sanctuary  
10:30 AM \*Church of the Nations w/ UBC - Sanctuary  
4:00 PM Live Nativity

#### Monday, December 12

#### Tuesday, December 13

7:00 AM Gathering of Men - Fellowship Hall  
8:30 AM Silent Prayer Vigil Heritage Room

#### Wednesday, December 14

2:00 PM Bells Jubilate Rehearsal - Music Suite  
6:30 PM Sanctuary Choir Rehearsal - Sanctuary

#### Thursday, December 15

#### Friday, December 16

5:30 PM Youth - Boy's Night Out

#### Saturday, December 17

9:00 AM Superheroes of Kindness - Meet at UBC

#### Sunday, December 18

9:15 AM Sunday Morning Bible Study  
10:30 AM \*Worship Service - Sanctuary  
10:30 AM \*Church of the Nations - Chapel  
12:00 PM Open Air Ministries - 17th St. & Florida Blvd.  
5:00 PM Youth Christmas Party - Youth Room

\*Childcare provided

### FUN FACTS

#### Sunday, December 4th

Morning Worship .....	160
Guests .....	4
Sunday School Total .....	136
Preschool .....	11
Children .....	9
Youth .....	6
College .....	NR
Young Adults .....	NR
Median Adults .....	14
Inter-Generational .....	18
Senior Adults .....	78
Church of the Nations .....	NA
Guests .....	NA
Weekly Offering from 12/04/16 .....	\$12,776.75

For more details on what's happening @ UBC, visit our website:  
[www.ubc-br.org](http://www.ubc-br.org)

Or follow us on:



think  
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live  
CREATIVELY

love  
CONTINUALLY