

On the Road to Radiance

Matthew 2:1-12 by Patty Friesen Epiphany Sunday Jan. 3/21

Epiphany monologue - The Magi Seek the Messiah

On the road to radiance this morning, Steph the Magi listens to her restless dreams and does not return to Herod. She stands in the gap between Herod and the Christ-child by disobedience to Herod. She stands with the Christ-child. Here are three other stories of three wise ones standing in the gap for a better world.

Swift Current-area business owner Scott Lamb says he would have lost his home about six years ago if it wasn't for the quick actions of members of the nearby Swift Current Hutterite colony.

"They saved my house from burning down. They caught a fire in front of my house and got it under control before it could have been really bad... I mean, how do you describe a neighbour? That's everyone's dream neighbour: someone who saves your house."

Lamb said his positive experiences with the Swift Current colony, as well as several others, have left him troubled by reports of Hutterites being denied services or made to feel unwelcome as they grapple with COVID-19 outbreaks. "They're our neighbours, and...a vital part of our community."

He said he and a friend were discussing the situation late last week when they hit on the idea of organizing a vehicle parade to show their support. Lamb said he and his friend started making phone calls and had 30 vehicles committed to take part in the parade within just a few hours...Lamb said he got calls and emails [the following morning] from members of several area colonies, thanking everyone who participated.

Lamb said the highlight of the evening for him was seeing the reaction from the colony's children. "I think for me the takeaway was the kids' faces; they were smiling and waving. I think, for me, that's the most important thing that happened last night, was just reassuring the kids."

Bryn Levy, "Vehicle parade supports Hutterite communities" in *Saskatoon StarPhoenix* (Aug 7, 2020), p. A3.

Pastor Isaac Villegas of Chapel Hill Mennonite Fellowship in Durham, North Carolina was at a Black Lives Matter protest this summer, wearing a yellow vest as a marshal to welcome people into the protest, to direct the thirsty to water stations, to notify medics if someone needed care and to de-escalate conflict. The protest marshals were described as the skin to the body of the protest, holding the people within their circle with care like a body's skin.

Quoting Villegas: "I remembered that Sebastian Moore, a Benedictine monk, described public demonstrations as devotion to God. Unlike the birth of contemplative prayer in the medieval monasteries, he wrote, devotion to God will be public. Our public body was a prayer of fire to burn away society's institutionalized violence against black people. Within our body, I glimpsed features of the world we longed for. People gave out granola bars, water, offered care. These acts prophesy a world to come, a society reorganized for the well-being of all. Theologian Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz would call it the kin-do of God, a way of life in which strangers grow into siblings. Jesus' movement in the first century knew all about these social practices of communal care: food distribution, healing, kinship - a community devoted to the work of love. That's the prayer I offered with my body in a yellow vest, as I became skin for others." (*Christian Century*, September 9, 2020, p. 35)

Most of us will not probably be involved in a protest or have to refuse an order of a king but there are many ways we stand in the gap for others. Sponsoring a refugee family is one way we stand in the gap. Julie Collazo is a part of Immigrant Families Together, a group in New York City who work at posting bond for immigrant mothers incarcerated in detention centres at the Mexico/US border to reunite them with their children. Julie is a lapsed Catholic who worked with a Jewish synagogue to obtain the release of Rosayra Pablo Cruz from Guatemala and reunite her with her two boys. As Immigrant Families Together hosted a reunion party for Rosayra and her sons, Julie reflected,

“We are the beloved community - in the words of Martin Luther King. We are the ones who just show up, right where we are and with whatever we have saying, “How can we he? How can I be a force for making this better?” In the Jewish faith, in the Hebrew language, there is a word that sums up what we did that day of reunion, a word Rabbi Kolin offering in her Rosh Hashanah sermon. The word is *hineini* and means “Here I am.” The word made me think about the lyrics of one of my favourite folksongs that I learned growing up in the Catholic Church, one I taught myself to play on the piano because I loved it so much: *Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart.* Though I hadn’t stepped into a church in years, the words were on instant recall. They were a guiding light.

Hineini. Here I am. Here we are. That’s really what this is all about, just showing up. Showing up with what we have, where we are. It seems so simple, but it’s incredibly profound and powerful. We are the ones we have been waiting for. As Rabbi Kolin explained in her sermon, “The power of saying the word *hineini* is enough to change the course of history. It’s enough to heal profound suffering for one single person, or for the whole world. It’s a legacy

given to us by our tradition. When our name is called, we are a people who respond: *Hineini*.

(The Book of Rosy, p. 186)

We are all people capable of offering such kindness to those around us. The religious life in which we participate encourages and supports such spiritual standing in the gap on the road to radiance. Let us pray...

Hymn of Response: Here I am Lord. #365? HWB