

LIMEY PASTOR

Star of joy

Beloved brothers and sisters of Eastern Oregon — and participants in the continuing spiritual life of our state:

A few years ago, as part of my seminary training, I visited the Holy Land and went to Bethlehem and visited the place where it was said was the place that Jesus was born. On the floor was a silver star, the place said to be the actual spot where Mary gave birth to Jesus. About the size of a dinner plate, it was securely fastened to the stone floor.

I kneeled before it and placed my hands on the star.

I reflected on my own wandering voyage in the skies in a modern airplane to get to Paris, then to Jordan and then by land over mountains to Israel. My father had left me money in his will to do this journey. The ancient star in the heavens, the Lord's indicator to the wise men and astrol-ogers, had unerringly made the trip to overshadow Bethlehem as indeed Joseph and Mary had done. Unlike now, where modern man has created a separation wall in Israel to keep the people apart, people were able to come and go as God intended — on his world.

Arriving in Bethlehem was beautiful. It felt like a Genesis.

The symbolism of this story is clear. In this time of census, the counting of humans by the Roman occupiers, all of the inns and hotels were full, just as we humans are full of earthly business. The only place that Jesus could be born in was the stable, where the animals made their homes. The animals made way for the most humble of beings, Jesus. No human beings could make way for him. But the least of the crea-tures gave up their places for him.

The shepherds, who were out-side and awake in the night, saw the arrival of the star, just as the wise men had done and came to see what the angel proclaimed to them. The star shone brightly on the small scene below, where a mother and father, shepherds and

wise men from the East had come to see whatever new thing God had made.

Jesus was born under the light of the star. The world changed.

I was lucky enough in California to track down Dr. Nevit Ergin in San Mateo, an elderly doc-tor who had been succes-sor and pupil of Hasan Shushud. He had Zoro-astrian roots, and was a descendant of the wise men, so I was told by an old mentor. The wise men of the gospel text were lovers and servants

of God. Dr. Ergin, now passed, gave me a set of his translations of Rumi that he had made for the Turkish government. He also told me a secret before he passed away so it wouldn't be lost. I will try and do the same.

Here in Eastern Oregon, I had the pleasure of serving Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Boardman until I was way-laid by my heart surgery. Now I have been invited to visit Grace Lutheran Church in Enterprise, Oregon. I have a "tingle" about it. I will be visiting their church on December 30 and will look for-ward to going even further east in my home state. My heart tells me that the further east you go in Oregon, the safer things will be in coming days.

I was told about Grace by my colleague, Pastor Jody Becker, of the North American Lutheran Church, who had just come back from Ethiopia. So if they have an idea of wanting me to be more permanent I will have to find a place to work as their congre-gation is quite small — and the drive from my house is six hours. I am looking forward to be meet-ing these people, whose town is so aptly called Enterprise. May God be with us all!

I wish all of you the very best of the Christmas season. Keep fol-lowing the star, the shepherds, and the wise men! Amen.

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COLIN BROWN COMMENT

Youth event rings in New Year

By TAMMY MALGESINI

East Oregonian

An epic New Year's Eve party is planned for area youths.

"This year is going to be hot," said David Gutierrez, youth pastor at Living Faith Church. "I don't want that stigma that church is boring."

The New Year's Eve Lock-In is Monday, Dec. 31 beginning at 7 p.m. at Living Faith, 1611 Diagonal Blvd., Hermiston. While the event begins and ends at Living Faith, church buses will transport youths and chaperones to other destinations, including Knock-erBall at the Hermiston Christian Center and laser tag at Campus Life. Other activities available include a Fortnite Dance Battle, board games, pool, ping pong, basketball, watching a movie, eating pizza and much more.

The entourage will return to Living Faith at midnight to ring in the New Year with live music and an inspirational message. The event ends Tuesday, Jan. 1 at 1:30 a.m.

Open to youths ages 12-18, the auxiliary activities will be split with middle school students at one destination while high school students will be at the other. The cost is \$15 per person, which is payable at the door.

Initially organized by Living Faith, the idea behind the New Year's Eve Lock-In was to provide a fun and safe night for youths, Gutierrez said. In the fall of 2015 when he started at Living Faith,



Photo contributed by Rod Bragato

A live band performs during the 2017 New Year's Eve Lock-In. Tickets for the youth event are \$15 each, which can be purchased at Living Faith Church in Hermiston.

several other youth leadership positions were filled in the area. Rather than being exclusive and focusing on activities for just their own groups, Gutierrez said the leaders decided to work together collaboratively.

"It kind of exploded from there," he said. "Last