

First Unitarian Universalist Church
The Call of the Star
Rev. Sandra Fees
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The measures our ancestors had to take to find their way in the world are striking. They needed quite detailed maps, some significant land marks, and the stars to guide them. Following the stars could not have been easy, even for the so-called experts, the Magi who were the astrologers and scientists of their time.

Today we have some sophisticated equipment to help us and we still struggle. The other day I was listening to a segment on the radio about GPS receivers. The global positioning systems for the car will map an exact location so you can get from door to door without getting lost or stopping for directions. You don't even need a map.

I was thinking about how much I could really benefit from one of these, not just because I was lured by the marketing of another great piece of technology. But because I'm directionally challenged.

I got to thinking a GPS system would have been just the thing for the Magi in the Christmas story. If they had GPS they could have used that instead of following the star to find Jesus.

But of course there's more to this story. It isn't simply about following a set of coordinates. The GPS system will only work if you already know where you are headed. And the Magi only knew they were going to Bethlehem, not the precise location of the infant child they sought. GPS could not have gotten them to the manger.

At its deepest level, the story isn't about geography or science. There have been many attempts to find naturalistic explanations for the star – novae and supernovae and the like. When we try to get there through this kind of logic, we may miss the deeper mystery of the story and of our lives.

It has more to do with the mysteries that occur in the human heart and spirit. An electronic gadget, no matter how much fun or how useful, won't help the Magi or us discover these.

The star, the Christ child – these are enduring symbols and images of divine light that give meaning and purpose to our lives. The work of finding the child in the manger, of following the star, is the spiritual seeking of our lives. It means finding what we are called to do. To live a called life means living for a purpose beyond one's own self. To find a higher cause.

The call of the star is seemingly something that comes from outside ourselves – from God, or nature, or community. But it also comes from within our own hearts. What matters is that it is our own, that it gives power and substance to our lives. It must be authentic, giving shape to what holds meaning for us and for others.

Sometimes when we begin to look for the call in our lives, we feel it needs to be something monumental, something dramatic. A call sounds pretty grand. We may mistakenly think we need to be like the great heroes throughout the ages whose examples we so admire.

The Call of the Star (cont'd.)

Rev. Sandra Fees

To live a called life is to learn to give birth to our own gifts and passions – however grand or simple. We are not being asked to imitate the great rabbis and leaders of the past and present. Though we may be inspired by their message and life, we need to seek our own star.

We may be called to be a loving parent. Finding purpose can mean choosing to live by the golden rule or caring for the earth. Bringing laughter into the world and rescuing animals may be our mission.

In my own life I have been called to ministry and to be a loving companion to my husband. Writing, being a steadfast daughter, and stretching myself beyond what I thought I could do – these give direction to my life. Being a gentle but strong presence for others is part of my sense of purpose.

This Christmas, I find I am also being challenged to be bolder and speak the truth a little louder. This means taking a risk with people in some uncomfortable areas – talking about racism, facing my own fears, embracing the full strength of who I am and not being worried about letting others see it.

Mary Wellemeier in her poem asks us:

*What precious new beginning are you seeking this night?
For what do you push through crowds?
What have the angels told you?
What is the call of the star?*

My hope for you this Christmas is that you will seek the call of the star in your everyday existence. That you will allow yourself to travel into unknown places guided by the light of your own heart. My hope is that you will find the strength and perseverance to journey to Bethlehem.

Amen.