

Stewards of God's Grace: January 2022

Stewarding potential

January begins with a significant holy day—the Feast of the Epiphany on January 6th. The gospel of Matthew tells us the story of the Magi travelling to bring gifts to the new-born king whose birth they had seen revealed in the rising of a bright star. Once they arrived in Judea they consulted with King Herod since they assumed the king would know where a new-born king was to be found.

They were wrong. Herod encouraged them to find the child and, when the star they had first seen reappeared, they followed its light to a home in Bethlehem. There they presented their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the young child and his parents. Then, being warned in a dream not to return to tell Herod of the child's whereabouts, they returned to their homeland by another route. Jesus' father was warned in a dream to leave Bethlehem because Herod was going to have the child killed. It's a story of turmoil and terror occasioned by the birth of a child.

Everyone who learned of the child saw potential. The gifts given by the Magi indicate they saw the little one as a king worthy of worship. Jesus' parents saw him as one who would act for God to save his people. Herod saw him as someone with the potential to displace him. All were true. And each person acted in accordance with the potential they saw. The Magi made a difficult journey to honour him with their gifts; Jesus' parents make a frightening journey to Egypt in order to save him; and Herod brought violence to others in an attempt to destroy him. The potential we see in ourselves, in others, in our community and in the world can shape our actions. So it's important to consider what potential we are seeing and in whom or what. Seeing the potential in what God is doing is an act of faithfulness. Protecting and nurturing that potential is an act of stewardship.

In *Imagining Abundance* Kerry Alys Robinson says "For a person of faith, stewardship is both the proper care of all that has been entrusted to one *and* the recognition of and response to the potential at hand." Too often we consider stewardship to be how we manage the resources we currently have to accomplish what God is calling us to now and forget to consider potential opportunities. Parish budgets calculate the cost of current ministry and ask us to give accordingly. They seldom ask us to consider the needs of our community and how we might potentially meet them. Looking for potential and acting to realize it can be scary. But it is vital if we want to do more than exist.

Kerry Robinson tells the story of her great-grandfather John Raskob who, at a time of political and personal defeat, envisioned creating the world's tallest building and having a friend and political ally run it. It was 1928 and the building he envisioned became the Empire State Building. Despite the 1929 stock market crash and the Depression he followed through and employed thousands to make it happen. Finished in 1931, it took 40 years before the building was fully occupied—something he did not live to see. But we can still see the result of him stewarding the potential he saw. What potential are you stewarding in your life, your church, your community? What do you want to see happen?



photo by Dohko