“Keep Awake” - An Advent Message

"Keep awake." Good advice for pastors and longtime church members. It still surprises me, the revelations that come about the Christmas story. I've read it so often I sometimes have very little confidence that I will learn anything new. And then, when I least expect it, there it is. That has become more common as my ministry requires me to travel places far beyond my home. It was true for the Christmas characters as well who traveled well beyond theirs.

Joseph and Mary traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem to pay taxes. The shepherds were away from home working in the fields when the angels came. Even the angels had to leave their home in heaven. And eventually some foreign wise men, who got lost in their travels, found the Christ child in Bethlehem. The only thing these diverse characters have in common is that none of them was home for the Christmas miracle.

By contrast, who missed the miracle? Caesar the emperor and Quirinius the governor of Syria. Herod the king also missed the miracle, even though he heard the child was born. Herod’s priests and scribes missed it, even though they knew Christ would be born in Bethlehem. And the innkeeper missed the miracle, even though it was happening in his backyard. The reason they all missed the miracle was they stayed safely at home.

As the story goes, the only people who see the miracle of salvation, redemption and transformation are those who know they are not in the right place. I'm not saying you need to leave home physically for the holidays. I AM saying that you need to leave the life that is comfortable, but not in the right place.

This year, when you're acutely aware you and the world are not in the right place, you are now ready to leave the home you've built for yourself to find your true home with the family of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; Mother, Daughter, Sustainer.

Because the miracle of the Christmas story is that even God became homeless to find a home in you.

May it be so with all the blessings of God,

Bill (Rev. William P. Worley, PSEC Conference Minister)