A church building that was significant in my faith journey was the old chapel at Virginia Theological Seminary, built in 1881. Besides its historic value, it was significant because I worshiped there daily while attending classes at the Seminary. The church I attended for many years also worshiped in that chapel. The chapel's most iconic feature was a large stained-glass window above the altar that said, "Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel."

I always found it interesting that in a chapel of a seminary built to educate preachers, you couldn't see this window when you preached. It was behind you. You could only see it when you sat in the congregation. You could gaze at it most powerfully when you knelt to receive the Eucharist. The message is clear. All the baptized – the people of God – receive the Commission to preach the Gospel to all the world, not just those who receive formal training to do so. All of us who kneel to worship God are called to spread the news of God's love. As God reveals Godself to us, we're called to also reveal God to everyone – the people next door and the people of every nationality, race, and economic condition.

Today we celebrate Epiphany Sunday – the moment at which Jesus was made known to Gentiles – people from another country, race, and religion. We commemorate these astrologers' willingness to follow the star to find to Jesus, worship Him, and, again, follow God's call to return to their country without telling Herod where they had found the child.

As God revealed Godself to these astrologers, they were changed. And they spread the word of God's transformation to others. They helped spread the Gospel through their actions – obeying God's commandment to return to their country in a way that bypassed Herod and presenting their gifts. Legends that have become part of Christian tradition tell us that when these Magi returned home, they gave away most of their riches and traveled around the Eastern world to tell others about God's love. All of them are believed to eventually have been martyred for their faith.

At the beginning of Matthew's Gospel, we already see the mission to the nations -- to those who are different from us and those with whom we may have had conflicts. This mission to the nations is a theme of the Gospel. In the Magi's actions, we already see the beginnings of the commandment to Go ye therefore into all the world, preaching the Gospel. The Magi, while learned, weren't Seminary trained. Yet, they went into all the world and preached the Gospel.

Telling others about the goodness of God may seem a bit challenging now. We may be feeling isolated or abandoned, or out of sorts. We may be depressed or anxious. We're trying to keep ourselves and our families safe – we certainly can't worry about anyone else. Perhaps we even feel that God has forgotten us – after all, that prayer about the virus ending hasn't been answered yet. What good news, after all, is there worth spreading?

The good news is the same as it was for the Wise Men. God loved us so much that he became one of us to show us how to live, heal us, and die for us. Because of all these things, nothing that happens in the world is permanent. Only God exists forever, and we will be with God forever, no matter what chaos exists around us in the secular world.

We are called to share God's love with everyone we see. We are called to preach the Gospel. We don't have to use eloquent words. If we speak at all, we can simply share how much God's love has meant to us. We can invite others to join our online, and hopefully soon, in-person community. We can also share the Gospel without speaking by helping others with their burdens (physical and emotional), staying in touch with those who are most isolated, buying and delivering groceries to the vulnerable. We do these things for those who are like us and for those who are different. In short, we spread the Gospel by doing acts of kindness for others in Jesus's name. We let people know that even though the times now seem challenging, God will bring something good out of these times.

The 1881 chapel that had been both my parish church and the church of the Seminary I loved burned on Oct. 22, 2010. That iconic window, along with most of the rest of the building, was destroyed. The day after the fire, I went over to look at the ruins along with others, some of whom had been married in that chapel, been baptized themselves or had children baptized in it, had relatives buried from it, been commissioned from it, and been ordained in it. For all of us, viewing those ruins was a dark day.

From the ruins of that chapel, however, eventually emerged a new worship space. It holds more people, has modern technology and wonderful sounding bells. It has a children's room and several smaller chapels for personal or small group prayer. The chairs and space can be arranged in creative ways. It incorporates into its design a prayer garden out of the old chapel's remnants and has a processional banner featuring a phoenix rising from the ashes.

The words, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel" are carved into the west transept. You can see them most clearly as you leave the church to go out into the world.

God always brings good out of the ashes, even in the darkest of days. God wants us to tell the world about God's love and goodness, now more than ever. God wants each of us to go out into all the world and preach the Gospel.