

**Worship Service: EPIPHANY / GIFTS
(typically Sunday after New Year's Day)**

Helpful Elements:

Christmas hymnal
Advent stand and electric candles
Nativity scene (separate table) with Wise Men
Tins of frankincense and myrrh
Costume-shop gold crown
Instrumental Christmas music

Welcome: I want to welcome all of you to our worship service today, the celebration of Epiphany, a commemoration the wise men's visitation of the Christ Child in Bethlehem and the **gifts** that they presented. My name is _____, and I'll be leading our worship today. Thank you all for coming. Please join me as we open our time in prayer.

Opening prayer: O gracious Lord and God, who by a star did lead the wise men to see your great love for all people in Christ: Enable us by your Holy Spirit to know your gifts of hope, peace, love, and joy in our own lives, and to freely share them with others as precious gifts, just as the wise men gave on that glorious day. May your Holy Spirit bless our time together that we may be refreshed by your presence. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Hymn: Joy to the World

(Turn on the candles of Hope, Love, Joy, Peace, and the Christ Candle – or have someone in the front row “light” them.)

For the final time this season, we light the candle of Hope (purple), the candle of Love (purple), the candle of Joy (pink), the candle of Peace (purple), and the white candle, the Christ candle, which symbolizes Light.

Hymns:

**God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen
Angels from the Realms of Glory**

First reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men [called Magi, in Greek] from the east came to Jerusalem, ² saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ “And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.”

⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. ⁸ And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” ⁹ After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. ¹¹ And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

**It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
We Three Kings**

Second reading:

Epiphany is commonly known as Three Kings’ Day or the Feast of the Epiphany. It means “manifestation” or “showing forth”; in a book, an epiphany is a sudden realization or revelation of the plot twist. In the church, Epiphany refers not only to a certain day but to the church season that follows it – a season that ends when Lent begins on Ash Wednesday.

The day is meant to remember the first two times when Jesus' divinity, according to Christian belief, was revealed: when the three kings (also known as wise men or Magi) visited the infant Jesus in Bethlehem, and when John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the River Jordan.¹

Across the world, the day's festivities vary. In the Spanish speaking world Epiphany is known as *Día de los Reyes* (Three Kings' Day). In Mexico, crowds gather to taste the *Rosca de Reyes* - Kings' bread. In other countries, a Jesus figurine is hidden in the bread.²

The three Kings (Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar) represented Europe (Persia), Arabia (India) and Africa (Babylon) respectively.

The Wise Men were the first Gentiles to publicly recognize the divinity of Jesus.³

The three gifts also carry meaning:

- Gold: fit for a king
- Frankincense: used in worship services in the temple; diety
- Myrrh: used for embalming

[play instrumental Christmas music; carry around the frankincense and myrrh to see and smell]

Hymn: The First Noel

Interactive Homily: Let's talk a bit more about gifts.

- What is the meaning of gifts? Why do we give gifts?
 - Love; remembrance; honor; joy; increases our own joy to give joy to someone else; custom; celebration
- Have you received a favorite gift in your life? Who was it from, and what did it mean to you?
 - Favorite pet; tools for a hobby, like horseback riding or shooting; collection of photos or songs; indicated that the person knew you, loved you! "It's the thought that counts."
- What are God's gifts to us?

¹ adapted from <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/common/epiphany>

² <https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/common/epiphany>

³ <http://www.sharefaith.com/guide/Christian-Holidays/definition-of-epiphany.html>

- Love, joy, peace, salvation, forgiveness, assurance, presence, truth, light, comfort, food, friendships, purpose, blessing, eternal life
- What are our gifts to God?
 - Thanks/gratitude, honor, service, love
- How can we best share those gifts with others?

Let us silently thank God for his many gifts, and pray for the wisdom and creativity to share them with others.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, in your love and mercy, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

Angels We Have Heard on High
O Little Town of Bethlehem

Third Reading: Isaiah 60:1-7

Arise, shine, for your light has come,
 and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
 and thick darkness the peoples;
 but the Lord will arise upon you,
 and his glory will be seen upon you.
³ And nations shall come to your light,
 and kings to the brightness of your rising.
⁴ Lift up your eyes all around, and see;
 they all gather together, they come to you;
 your sons shall come from afar,
 and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.
⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant;
 your heart shall thrill and exult,
 because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,
 the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you,

the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord.
⁷All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you;
the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you;
they shall come up with acceptance on my altar,
and I will beautify my beautiful house.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Fourth Reading: Scottish Episcopal Church: Prayer for Epiphany⁴

Worship and praise belong to you, God our maker.

Out of nothing, you called all worlds into being,
and still you draw the universe to its fulfilment.

Day and night celebrate your glory
till time shall be no more.

In Christ, your only-begotten Son,
you have revealed yourself to the world.
By the guiding of a star,
you made him known to the nations
as the son of David and king of Israel;
that in following him,
we might be led from darkness
and into his marvellous light.

Filled with the Spirit,
who descended upon your Son at his Baptism in the Jordan,
we who are baptised in his name
strive for his heavenly kingdom
in whose radiance we are transfigured
and the earth is transformed.

As children of your redeeming purpose

⁴ <http://www.scotland.anglican.org/who-we-are/publications/liturgies/experimental-eucharistic-prayers-suitable-christmas-epiphany/>

who celebrate the manifestation of your Son,
we offer you our praise,
with angels and archangels
and the whole company of heaven.

Hymn: Go Tell it on the Mountain

Reading: A Poem by Hafez, a 14th-century Persian Poet

Life Starts Clapping
Wherever
God lays His glance
Life starts
Clapping.
The
Myriad
Creatures grab their instruments
And join the
Song.
Whenever love makes itself known
Against another
Body
The Jewel in the eye starts
To
Dance.

Hymns:

What Child is This

O Holy Night

Closing Blessing: The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymns:

O Come All Ye Faithful

(optional) Doxology