



**Worship Service: Epiphany – Gifts  
(typically Sunday after New Year’s Day)**

**Helpful Elements:**

Christmas hymnal and sing-along recordings  
Advent stand and electric candles  
White table covering  
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, when we remember the wise men who came to visit 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.

**(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. 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.

**Hymns:**

**Joy to the World**

**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, <sup>2</sup>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.” <sup>3</sup>When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup>and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, King Herod asked them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup>The king’s advisors told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophets. ...”

<sup>7</sup>Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and learned from them what time the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup>And Herod sent the wise men 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.”

<sup>9</sup>After listening to the king, the wise men 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. <sup>10</sup>When the wise men saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. <sup>11</sup>And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, the wise men offered the child gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup>And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, the wise men departed to their own country by another way.

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

**Hymns:**

**We Three Kings**

**The First Noel**

**Second reading:** A History of Epiphany

Epiphany is commonly known as Three Kings' Day or the Feast of the Epiphany. The word "epiphany" 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.<sup>1</sup>

Across the world, Epiphany celebrations vary. In the Spanish-speaking world, Epiphany is called *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.<sup>2</sup>

The three Kings themselves—named Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar—represented Europe (Persia), Arabia (India) and Africa (Babylon) respectively. It's interesting to note that the Wise Men were the first Gentiles to publicly recognize the divinity of Jesus.<sup>3</sup>

The three gifts also carry meaning:

- Gold: fit for a king
- Frankincense: an incense used in temple worship services; a sign of divinity
- Myrrh: a spice used for embalming, foreshadowing Jesus' death

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

**Hymns:**

**Angels We Have Heard on High  
Good Christian Friends, Rejoice**

**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: it increases our own joy to give joy to someone else
  - Customs, celebrations, like birthdays and Christmas
- Have you received a favorite gift in your life? Who was it from, and what did it mean to you?

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

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

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

- Favorite pet; tools for a hobby, like horseback riding or shooting; collection of photos or songs
- The most meaningful gifts indicate that the person knew you, loved you! “It’s the thought that counts.”
- What are God’s gifts to us? Let’s name as many as we can...
  - 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 God’s 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:**

**Go Tell it on the Mountain**  
**Away in a Manger**

**Third Reading:** Isaiah 60:1-7

Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
 and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>And nations shall come to your light,  
 and kings to the brightness of your rising.

<sup>4</sup>Lift up your eyes all around, and see;  
they all gather together, they come to you; ...  
<sup>5</sup>Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and exult ...  
They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall bring good news, the praises of the Lord.

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

### **Hymn: What Child is This**

**Fourth Reading:** Prayer for Epiphany from the Scottish Episcopal Church:<sup>4</sup>  
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 marvelous light. ...

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

### **Hymns: Silent Night**

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

## **O Holy Night**

**Optional 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:**

**Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming**

**Hark the Herald Angels Sing**

**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**