

Sunday January 3rd 2021

The Feast of the Epiphany Service for all the Church Family



This Sunday you have the choice of reading the service and viewing the links as normal, or Watching the whole service in one continuous recording on this link: <https://youtu.be/5p7UWNFGpWc>

The Feast of the Epiphany

Hymn 1

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning <https://youtu.be/V3M4e7duoAI>

Welcome by Revd Brigid <https://youtu.be/V85xW4goV2w>

Welcome to our Joint Benefice service

We are thinking about wise men and gifts!

We hope you will imagine standing around the stable during our first carol

Greeting

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe.

**From the rising of the sun to its setting
your name is proclaimed in all the world.**

The Lord of glory be with you

The Lord bless you.

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Collect

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us,
that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Confession

The grace of God has dawned upon the world
through our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who sacrificed himself for us to purify a people as his own.
Let us confess our sins. cf Titus 2.11-14

God be gracious to us and bless us,
and make your face shine upon us:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

May your ways be known on the earth,
your saving power among the nations:
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

You, Lord, have made known your salvation,
and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations:
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

May the God of all healing and forgiveness
draw you to himself,
and cleanse you from all our sins
that we may behold the glory of his Son,
the Word made flesh,
Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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Praise

Blessed is the Lord

All for he has heard the voice of our prayer;

therefore shall our hearts dance for joy

All and in our song we will praise our God.

Hymn 2 What child is this? <https://youtu.be/bgTjhgUuGus>

Hearing and responding to the Word of God

Reading by Elodie Bennet <https://youtu.be/W2QZaYb2esc>

Isaiah 60 vs 1 - 6

“Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.
See, darkness covers the earth
and thick darkness is over the peoples,
but the LORD rises upon you
and his glory appears over you.
Nations will come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
Lift up your eyes and look about you:
All assemble and come to you;
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters are carried on the arm.
Then you will look and be radiant,
your heart will throb and swell with joy;
the wealth on the seas will be brought to you,
to you the riches of the nations will come.
Herds of camels will cover your land,
young camels of Midian and Ephah.
And all from Sheba will come,
bearing gold and incense
and proclaiming the praise of the LORD.”

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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Reading by Margaret French

Ephesians 3: 1 - 12

1I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles - 2for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, 3and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, 4a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. 5In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: 6that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

7Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. 8Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, 9and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; 10so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn 3 We three kings https://youtu.be/7uYu_42wqEs

*We three kings of Orient are,
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star:*

*O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,*



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*westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

Gospel Matthew 2 vs 1 – 12

Narrator: After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked:

Magi: Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.

Narrator: When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with

him. When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born.

They replied:

Chief priest: In Bethlehem in Judea.

Teacher: For this is what the prophet has written:

Prophet: But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among

the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.

Narrator: Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said:

Herod: Go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.

Narrator: After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

*Born a king on Bethlehem plain,
gold I bring to crown him again:
King for ever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign.*

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*O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

At the offering of Gold **Magi1**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe:
to you be praise and glory for ever!

As gold in the furnace is tried
and purified seven times in the fire,
so purify our hearts and minds
that we may be a royal priesthood
acceptable in the service of our kingdom.

Blessed be God for ever

**Frankincense to offer have I,
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising all men raising:
worship him, God most high.**

**O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.**

At the offering of Incense **Magi2**

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe:
to you be praise and glory for ever!

As our prayer rises up in your presence as incense,
So may we be presented before you
with penitent hearts and uplifted hands
to offer ourselves in your priestly service.

Blessed be God for ever

*Myrrh is mine: its bitter perfume
breaths a life of gathering gloom;*

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*sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in a stone-cold tomb.*

*O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

*At the offering of Myrrh Magi*³

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe:
to you be praise and glory for ever!

As you give medicine to heal our sickness
and the leaves of the tree of life
for the healing of the nations,
so anoint us with your healing power
that we may be the first-fruits of your new creation.

Blessed be God for ever

*Glorious now, behold him arise,
King, and God, and sacrifice!
alleluia, alleluia,
earth to heaven replies.*

*O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

Narrator: And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

(Many Thanks to Ruben, Scarlet and Willow as the Wise Men, Finlay and Connie for reading, Brigid, Theresa, Matthew and Laurie as supporting actors, with Becky, Ann and Baby helping back stage)

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Sermon: By Diane Lystor <https://youtu.be/-Aaqj-JTOs>

May my words be in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.” (Isaiah 60 v. 1)

If ever humanity needed a guiding light it is now, in this dark time we are experiencing around the world. Disease, death, isolation, loneliness and poverty seem to be all around us wherever we look. We have not been able to gather together as the Body of Christ and celebrate his birth – yet he is still here among us, born again in our hearts on Christmas day.

So, let us celebrate this mysterious story that Matthew brings us today; let ourselves go into it and experience the wonder and joy with those ancient visitors as they reach their surprise destination and bow down and worship. Who were these visitors, the first gentiles to see Jesus? The Magi were almost certainly astrologers from Persia or Babylonia where astrology was a well-developed science. So they would have been studying the stars intently for years and would have noticed any phenomena in the skies. Venus which shines so brightly at this time of year is dazzling enough, but this was something even more spectacular – a supernova perhaps, a comet, or most likely of all, a conjunction of the planets Saturn and Jupiter.

Since Jupiter was then regarded as a royal or kingly planet and Saturn believed to represent the Jews, the conclusion was obvious! A new King of the Jews was about to be born! No wonder King Herod got in such a panic when these Magi arrived at his palace enquiring where this “new King” could be found! I find it entertaining to imagine the commotion such an event would cause today (pre Covid19 of course.) The paparazzi would be out in force to photograph political leaders and the rich and famous who would make sure they were seen to be there, rather than concentrate on seeing God’s Son for themselves; expensive tours would be arranged, SAGA would supply every single comfort imaginable for the rich elderly, while the poor would stand and watch in wonder like the shepherds Luke tells us about – but they got there first, by invitation! “The first shall be last and the last shall be first” the adult Jesus will tell his followers.

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What gifts would be given today? The Magi's gifts were expensive and extraordinary, yet they represent the "wholeness" of Jesus Christ. Gold for kingship, incense for worship and myrrh which was rich with healing properties, as well as being used for embalming the dead. "Myrrh is mine, it's bitter perfume, breathes a life of gathering gloom" Oh no it doesn't! Jesus's life was NEVER gloomy. It was dynamic, inspiring, extraordinary, loving, healing, commanding, kingly and worshipful.

In these gifts, the Magi show us the Wholeness of Jesus Christ who is our Saviour, our King, our Healer, our Great High Priest, our Friend and our Brother.

The Magi were drawn to His brightness and so are we: we are drawn to what Paul tells the Ephesians is "the boundless riches of Christ...." (Ephs. 3 v. 8) Some translations say "infinite" others "unsearchable" riches.

For me, this means that the more we seek in Jesus Christ, the more we find: the more we find, the more we discover there is to find. The "light" of Isaiah's prophecy is not merely found in Jesus Christ, it IS Jesus Christ and its brightness illuminates our whole life and will shine through us into a sometimes dark, lonely and frightening world.

Paul's Ephesian letter makes it quite clear, the boundless riches of Christ are for EVERYONE not just a chosen few. Also, that Jesus Christ has no hands on earth but us who love and follow him – drawn to His Brightness. We have to bring that light into the world in His Name. That is our gift to Jesus.

As the American theologian Howard Thurman wrote:

*When the song of the Angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the Kings and the Princes are home,
When the Shepherds are back with their flock,
Then the work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost: To heal the broken:
To feed the hungry: To release the prisoner:
To rebuild the Nations: To bring peace among people:
To make music in the heart.*

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So, let us arise and shine for our light has come, and let us bring peace and make music in people's hearts.

In the Name of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Affirmation of Faith <https://youtu.be/v4FXgXz6xak>

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

All We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

All We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

All This is our faith.

We believe and trust in one God,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Prayers of Intercession: read by: **Beth Eley** <https://youtu.be/Fty6HA4HiC4>

Let us Pray

Heavenly Father, As the Wise Men confirmed the kingship of your Son in Bethlehem long ago by bringing Him precious gifts. We come to you this morning of Epiphany in adoration of Him. Thanking you for your love to us

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in sending your only Son our saviour Jesus Christ into the world. We thank you for the gifts you have given each of us. Help us to use them wisely. We thank you for your guidance and protection over the past year and ask you to continue to be with us in the time ahead.

Guide our leaders in government, give them wisdom and understanding to know what is best for our country at this difficult time.

We thank you for all those in the NHS who have tirelessly laboured throughout this Covid. Of their dedication and sacrifice.

We pray for your Church throughout the country and especially the in Dengie where we live. Be with our own Reverend Steven, give him strength to carry out his duties around the parishes.

We pray for our new Bishop of Chelmsford Guli Francis-Dehquani. Give her guidance to know what your plan is for the church in the diocese and pray for all those who bring your message of the Kingdom. We bring our children to you Father. Our schools, teachers and pupils. Help them each one to overcome the difficulties they are experiencing at this particular time.

And finally, this morning we look at your world and what we are doing to it. You sent your only Son Jesus to teach us how to live. May this year, Father, be a year of love and peace throughout the world providing for all in need. Not destroying, but building. Enjoying and preserving your creation.

Amen

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer

Prayers for Healing: read by: **Jayne Hill**

We pray for all of those who are facing adversity. Minister to all who are lost or without faith; bind up the broken, and give rest to the weary. And help us care for and serve them in their time of need. This time of year, is difficult for many, and more so with the isolation, uncertainty and difficulty this year.

We pray for:

Beryl Habgood

Phil Marshall

Lois Gardner

Ernest Norman

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Molly Garwood

Mike Batt

Beryl Dixon

Jean Winn

Cally Thorpe

Josh Pitman

Georgia

Andy Smith

We pray for all those we know and all those in our parishes and who have COVID 19, that they may recover and be aware of your healing powers. We pray that all those we know keep safe in these worrying times.

We especially pray for those in hospital:

Pascal: Harley's father who is very poorly on life support.

Tony King

Trevor Cole

and all the people from our parishes who have this virus.

We continue to pray for the staff, residents, and their family members of those in **Down Hall and Swan Care Homes**. We also pray for those who are suffering and are known only to you.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer

We pray for those who have passed away, **Stephen Wills**, and his Mother **Rosemary Wills**, to be buried on 15th January at Bradwell with Stephen's Father and Rosemary's Husband Leslie. We also continue to pray for **Betty Brand** and **Freda Eyre**.

Lord in your mercy

All hear our prayer

Merciful Father

All Accept these prayers

for the sake of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

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The Lord's Prayer

All Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.

Final Blessing <https://youtu.be/Fty6HA4HiC4>

A blessing on the season of growth,
A blessing on all that is done:
The blessing of the fertile Creator,
The blessing of the virile Son,
The blessing of the Spirit, sustaining,
May God and the earth be one.

All Amen.

Blessing, honour and glory be yours,
here and everywhere,
now and for ever.

All Amen.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

All In the name of Christ. Amen.

Hymn 4: O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness <https://youtu.be/jurx8TcRg4w>

Music: Bethlehem Down - Peter Warlock

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=52b5ntrop3U>

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Notices

Steven Poss is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Spiritual Communion

Time: Jan 3, 2021 10:00 AM London

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75124721995?pwd=aGgvclgzVjhS08xVi9SekwySE1uZz09>

Meeting ID: 751 2472 1995

Passcode: v0bJ2N