

## Church at Home for Epiphany Sunday January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2021

***‘Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee’.***  
Isaiah 60:1

Happy New Year! Let’s pray that the roll-out of the vaccine, the gradual lengthening of the daylight hours and the patience of so many will slowly see off the lockdown fears, frustrations and disappointments of last year! As we enter the season of Epiphany, we also find this hope as the light that was revealed in the manger begins to shine at the baptism and in the ministry of Jesus. This is the light that has gone out into all the world.

The last Christmas story about the arrival of the Magi, which we remember today, also points us to this great truth, namely that Jesus is the light of the world and that in him all people will be blessed. The wise men represent the world coming to worship the Christ Child and in our day we are privileged to see how this has been fulfilled, as the Christian Faith has spread to every country on earth!

### **Here are the Bible readings for Epiphany:**

[Isaiah 60:1-6](#) – The Prophet writes of light rising in the darkness for the whole world and how all people including kings will be drawn to this new dawn. The kings will bring gold and frankincense.

[Psalm 72: 10-15](#) – The Psalmist sings of kings bringing gifts to the redeeming One who will care for the weak and needy.

[Ephesians 3 :1-12](#) – The Apostle explains how he was called to share the mystery of Christ with non-Jews, because it is God’s plan to include the whole world in the experience of God’s love revealed in Jesus

[Matthew 2:1-12](#) – The Evangelist tells of the visit of the wise men, first to Jerusalem and then to a house in Bethlehem, where they find the child. They bring gifts and their worship to the new King.

### **Here are some suggestions for hymns and songs:**

[O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness](#)

[We three kings](#)

[Three kings from Persian lands afar](#)

[Darkness like a shroud](#) (Kendrick)

[The light of the world is Jesus](#)

[Light has come into the world](#)

[Angels from the realms of glory](#)

[Star of wonder](#)

### **The Collect for Epiphany**

*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.*



Take a moment to bring the past year before God, remembering the good and the bad things that have happened. Reflect on what God has been saying to you, your family, the church and the world through this time of pandemic. Also ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind those words, thoughts and deeds that have let God and yourself down. As you say sorry, ask for God's forgiveness through Christ and God's help to start again:

*God of new beginnings,  
God of a new heaven and a new earth,  
God of new creations,  
God of yesterday, today and forever,  
We come to you to start again.  
There is no better place to be.  
Amen*

### **Some initial reflections on the Gospel**

Epiphany in many parts of the world is as important a day as Christmas Day. It is celebrated as *Three Kings Day* by Spanish-speaking Christians and it is at the heart of Christmas for Orthodox Christians in Eastern Europe where it is linked to a celebration of the baptism of Christ.

The Magi were the scientists of their day who recognised in the Christ Child something more profound than their earthly wealth, their religious devotion or even their power to heal (represented by the three gifts). After a year in which the economy has suffered a severe set-back, people's prayers for quick solutions disappointed and the health service stretched to its limits, maybe their example of bowing low at the manger is one which can speak to us all. Only as we come close to God in Christ with our worship, can we hope to find strength for whatever lies ahead. Wise people still seek him.



### **The visit of the Magi by He Qi**

Dr. He Qi was among the many people sent to the countryside during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. As a young man, he escaped hard labour by painting pictures of chairman Mao Zedong. During those years, he once found a copy of Renaissance artist Raphael's *Madonna and Child* in a magazine, and was so moved by it, that he began to paint copies of it at night. He Qi earned a doctorate in religious art from Nanjing Art Institute, having studied medieval art in Hamburg, Germany. He was a professor of Christian Art at Nanjing Theological Seminary before moving to St. Paul, Minnesota in 2004

**For our prayers,** let us remember:

Hospital staff treating patients suffering from COVID 19; relatives waiting anxiously to visit; and those waiting for other operations; those in Care Homes and those who are able to visit; today's news headlines and any particular situations and people in other countries that God has placed on your heart; those known to us who are ill, in hospital, anxious or who have been bereaved.

Add any other particular people and situations that The Holy Spirit brings to your mind as you have been praying and then say our family prayer, **The Lord's Prayer**.

## For further reflection



The Adoration of the Magi  
by Edward Burne-Jones

- The Magi are sometimes depicted as representing people from every part of the globe. Do you know Christians from other countries? How is their experience of following Jesus both similar and different from your own?
- Because the Magi had visited King Herod, this sadly led to the terrible ‘Massacre of the Innocents’ in Bethlehem, in which he tried to kill Jesus. God sent his Son into our unsafe and violent world to show us what love looks like. Children still suffer disproportionately in our world through poverty, wars, natural disasters and abuse. What does our faith in Christ have to say to this pain?

### The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is  
stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are  
home,  
When the shepherds are back  
with their flock,  
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.

Howard Thurman

### Epiphany

It might have been just someone else’s story,  
Some chosen people get a special king.  
We leave them to their own peculiar glory,  
We don’t belong, it doesn’t mean a thing.  
But when these three arrive they bring us with them,  
Gentiles like us, their wisdom might be ours;  
A steady step that finds an inner rhythm,  
A pilgrim’s eye that sees beyond the stars.  
They did not know his name but still they sought him,  
They came from elsewhere but still they found;  
In temples they found those who sold and bought him,  
But in the filthy stable, hallowed ground.  
Their courage gives our questing hearts a voice  
To seek, to find, to worship, to rejoice.

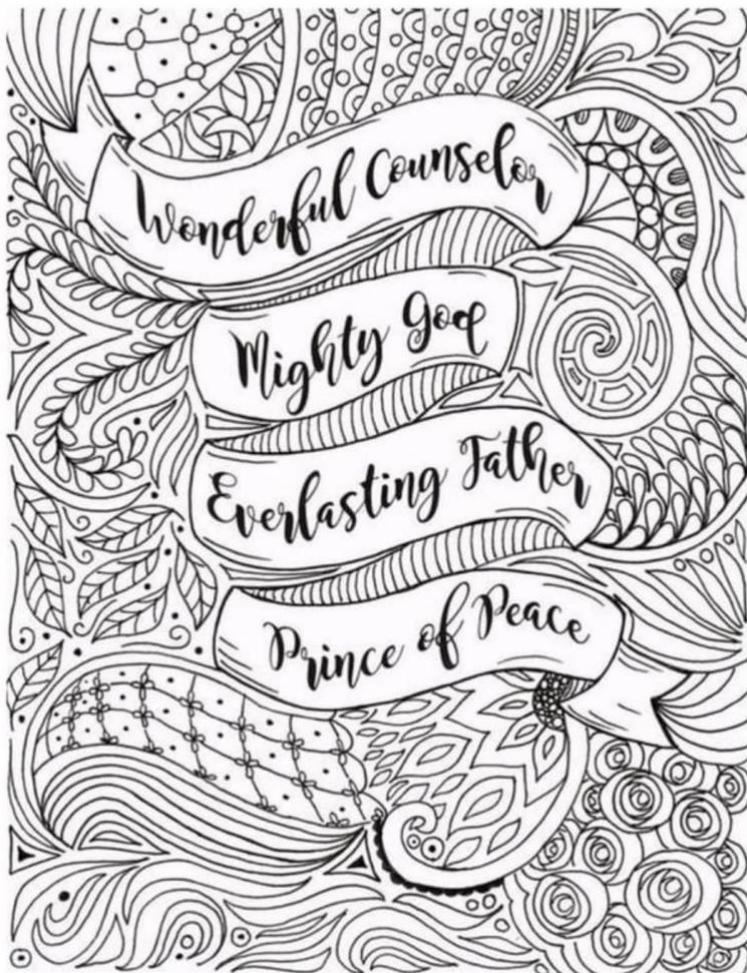
Malcolm Guite

End the time of church-at-home by saying out loud the words of **The Grace**, reaching out your hands to include in your imagination all those you know and love, who live here in the village and beyond

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## Activities for the whole family

A colouring page you could print and colour together



### Discussion

#### A question for adults to ask children

*Why do you think the magi brought Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?*

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh were very expensive and precious gifts, the magi thought they were visiting a King and a palace so they chose costly gifts.

God had a bigger plan, the King of Kings was born in a stable not a palace. The three gifts of the magi teach us more about Jesus' identity than they probably realised. Gold reminds us that Jesus was a royal King, Frankincense which was used in the temple reminds us that Jesus is Holy, the ultimate High Priest. Myrrh was used after death to prepare the body; it seems a strange gift for a baby but we know that Jesus had been born to save everybody through his death on the cross and resurrection.

#### A question for children to ask adults

*What is the best present you've ever received?*

### Wise Men Still Seek Him...

Complete this wise man themed scavenger hunt to explore the story further together.



#### Find something STAR shaped!

The wise men followed a star to find Jesus.

**Ask:** Who or what can we follow to help draw us closer to Jesus today?

**Wonder:** What does it feel like to draw closer to Jesus, how does it change us?



#### Find something GOLD!

One of the gifts of the wise men was gold, it reminds us of Jesus' royalty, He is the King of Kings!

**Ask:** What does it mean to be royal?

**Wonder:** God calls us His children so we must be royalty too. How does my royalty change the way I live?



#### Find something that SMELLS GOOD!

One of the gifts of the wise men was frankincense, the precious incense was used in the temple, it was believed to help carry prayers to God.

**Ask:** What is your favourite smell?

**Wonder:** In Psalm 141 David hoped that his prayers would be like a pleasant smell to God. What do you think your prayers smell like?



#### Find something that reminds you of EASTER!

One of the gifts of the wise men was myrrh, when Jesus died on the cross myrrh was placed on his body before he was placed in the tomb

**Ask:** What did Mary find in the tomb in the easter story?

**Wonder:** Do you think the wise men knew what would happen to Jesus when they chose their gifts?

