

Our Service Together

January 7th 2023

Epiphany

An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia, Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations and believed in throughout the world. alleluia!

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.
Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalms 72.10-15

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring gifts. All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall do him service. For he shall deliver the poor that cry out, the needy and those who have no helper. He shall have pity on the weak and poor; he shall preserve the lives of the needy. He shall redeem their lives from oppression and violence, and dear shall their blood be in his sight. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Scripture Reading Isaiah 60.1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
² For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.
³ Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.
⁴ Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.
⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought 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 proclaim the praise of the Lord.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel Matthew 2.1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ² asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' ³ When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:
⁶ "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."
⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' ⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day *Rev. John Webb writes:*

I have particularly happy memories of the first time I went to the Holy Land. As I saw the places where Jesus lived and taught he became real to me in a new way as a living person and not just a shadowy historic figure from the Gospels writings. I particularly remember Bethlehem and the church where the stable was believed to be and I knelt and lit a candle and prayed for our baby due in a couple of months. That baby is now over fifty and a mother herself, but I remember it as if it was yesterday. As a result, Christmas this year has been especially difficult and painful for me and I suspect for most people of faith. A traditional crib in Bethlehem has been symbolically built on rubble and their celebrations have been cancelled. There have been reports of savage and horrific events in Israel and Gaza and little evidence of the gospel of peace and reconciliation which is the heart of Jesus' message. I also feel guilty that the seeds of the present conflict were sown by our government during the first World War when conflicting political promises were made which never could be honoured.

So I welcome to-day which is Epiphany when we are reminded of the visit of the Wise Men. The significance of the Wise Men is that they represent the whole of the world coming to Jesus. At Christmas he is revealed to shepherds representing the people of Israel but now at Epiphany he is welcomed by the Wise Men representing the whole of creation. If you look carefully at most representations of the Wise Men in crib scenes you will find that one is African, one is Asian and the other is European representing all the racial groups of the then-known world. Jesus came not only to a select racial group, but to us all. That is why in many countries Epiphany is celebrated in preference to Christmas. But even as I find some consolation in that I can't help noticing two supposedly Christian countries, Russia and Ukraine, locked in a devastatingly destructive conflict supported by the rest of us.

Even as we look on unable to understand what is going on we have to remember that Jesus didn't remain a child for ever. As he grew up he had to face exactly those evil forces we can discern behind the present conflicts in the middle east and eastern Europe. They are fuelled by potent cocktail of historic grievances, jealousy, and a lust for power. He faced the worst that the world could give him, and yet he triumphed. So however terrible the situation may look we can know that Jesus is suffering alongside them. He offers hope in the darkest hour. He is the true light for whom the wise men were searching. So let us bow down and offer him our gifts and worship him.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

As we mark Epiphany with the visit of the wise men let us open our hearts and minds once more to celebrate the coming of Jesus. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Strengthen Michael our Bishop and those who seek to serve you in this diocese May they be filled with the spirit of wisdom and serve you as the first disciples. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have wisdom and optimism to lead us through this difficult time. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for nations at war, that they may reconcile their differences and live in peace. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the homeless, hungry and starving, that their needs may be satisfied. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Let us pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may bring light and hope in the darkest places. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them joy in your eternal kingdom. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. Amen.

The Collect

All: O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: 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
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me;
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.