

WORSHIP AT HOME

4th January 2026 – Epiphany

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Opening words: HAPPY NEW YEAR!

*Arise, shine, for your light has come,
And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
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.
Nations shall come to your light
And kings to the brightness of your dawn.*

Isaiah 60 v 1 -3

STF 228: Hail to the Lord's Anointed

*Hail to the Lord's Anointed
great David's greater Son!
Hail, in the time appointed,
his reign on earth begun!
He comes to break oppression,
to set the captive free,
to take away transgression,
and rule in equity.*

*He comes, with succour speedy,
to those who suffer wrong;*

to help the poor and needy,
and bid the weak be strong;
to give them songs for sighing,
their darkness turn to light,
whose souls, condemned and dying,
are precious in his sight.

He shall come down like showers
upon the fruitful earth;
love, joy, and hope, like flowers,
spring in his path to birth;
before him, on the mountains,
shall peace the herald go;
and righteousness, in fountains,
from hill to valley flow.

Kings shall fall down before him,
and gold and incense bring;
all nations shall adore him,
his praise all people sing;
to him shall prayer unceasing
and daily vows ascend,
his kingdom without end.

O'er every foe victorious,
he on his throne shall rest;
from age to age more glorious,
all-blessing and all-blest.
The tide of time shall never
his covenant remove;
his name shall stand forever,
his changeless name of Love.

James Montgomery (1771-1854) from Psalm 72

Prayer

We praise you, O Lord.
Your star led the Magi to a humble abode
where they worshipped the King of Kings.
We too, come seeking the illumination
of your Holy Presence.
Enlighten us today,
as we encounter Our Saviour afresh. Amen

The Lord's Prayer

STF 175: Light of the world

Light of the world,
you stepped out into darkness,
opened my eyes, let me see
beauty that made this heart adore you,
hope of a life spent with you.

*So here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God,
and you're altogether lovely,
altogether worthy,
altogether wonderful to me.*

King of all days
oh so highly exalted,
glorious in heaven above.
Humbly you came
to the earth you created,
all for love's sake became poor.
So here I am...

And I'll never see how much it cost
To see my sin upon that cross. (repeat)
So here I am...

Tim Hughes (b.1977)

Reading: Matthew 2 v 1 – 12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, 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.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

*"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."*

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 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.'

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. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Reflection

I love the feast of Epiphany. The word means 'Reveal', and it marks the visit of the Magi who had followed the star to Bethlehem to find Jesus. It's a story that encompasses high drama, politics and supernatural intervention. And right at the centre of it all, there is a little child with bemused parents.

Nowadays it seems the season of Christmas starts earlier and earlier; I saw decorations for sale before the end of August! No wonder there are people who take them down on Boxing Day thinking, "That's it, Christmas is over for another year." Yet, the Christian calendar has developed to give us time to ponder as Mary did. The promised Saviour has been born, and he is receiving visitors. The wise men, contrary to most Nativity plays, did not meet the shepherds - they came along much later, even up to two years. We don't know how many there were, there were three gifts, but it is tradition, not scripture, which has decided there were three called Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar.

What we can be sure of is that they travelled a long way and it would have taken time, resources and determination. They spotted the star, interpreted its

meaning and then used their own logic to head to Jerusalem. It appears that they were not familiar with the politics and prophecies around the coming King. Herod, a politically savvy and ruthless ruler tried to manipulate the situation. He saw a threat, as his heritage was Edomite, not of the tribe of Judah. Herod's reign was punctuated with wiping out threats, even murdering family members.

When the Magi encountered Jesus, they had a life changing revelation. The King they sought to honour was in vastly different surroundings than they expected, yet in that meeting, spending time with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, something happened in their hearts. God communicated with them in a dream that they had to avoid Jerusalem. If we had read on, we would see that Joseph had a dream too and he took his little family, escaping to Egypt to avoid Herod's evil plans. Mary and Joseph in their turn, had a new revelation.

The whole story is a series of Epiphanies or revelations. God reveals his plans and purposes, his very Self in many and varied ways. What began for the Magi as an inkling, an educated guess, became something so important that they had to act on it. They were humble enough to accept that their ideas of where the King should be found might be wrong and were willing to seek in the unexpected places. These men were changed forever because of their seeking and finding the King of Kings.

We learn from the Epiphany story that when someone sets out to seek God, whatever their background may be, God reveals himself to them. What perhaps began as academic curiosity, became an urgent seeking then finding. The dream confirmed that their encounter with the Divine had moved from observational to deeply personal. And here we are today, celebrating Epiphany.

How does God reveal himself to you? Is your heart open to fresh revelations? As we venture into a New Year, may we be receptive to what God is saying to us in 2026.

Poem BC:AD by U A Fanthorpe

This was the moment when Before Turned into After, and the future's uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

This was the moment when nothing happened. Only dull peace sprawled boringly over the earth.

This was the moment when even energetic Romans could find nothing better to do than counting heads in remote provinces.

And this was the moment when a few farm workers and three members of an obscure Persian sect walked haphazard by starlight straight into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us pray

Yesterday, today, forever
You are God of all time
And God of our time.

This New Year brings with it
Age old consequences of
Greed, selfishness and pride.

As bearers of your Divine light,
May we make a difference in
The world.

We pray that your love-light will
Illuminate the souls of all humanity
That true peace and justice will rule.

In the Name of Jesus our Saviour and King. **Amen**

Blessing

Christ, Alpha and Omega,
bless you as we enter a New Year.

May Christ hold you
through the joys and challenges to come
and grant you his peace. **Amen**