

# twelvebaskets



## EPIPHANY SUNDAY C

A complete Sunday service ready to use  
for worship and inspire ideas in your church

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**Epiphany Sunday - Year C**  
5th January 2025



## **Order of Service**

Call to worship

**Hymn:**

**238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us OR**

**81 STF – Now thank we all our God**

Opening Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

All Age Talk

**Hymn:**

**86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens adore him OR**

**7 STF – God who made the stars of heaven**

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

**Hymn:**

**226 STF – Birth brings a promise OR**

**208 STF – Let earth and heaven combine**

Reflections on the readings

**Hymn:**

**8 STF – God with us: Creator, Father OR**

**407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom**

Intercessions

Offering / collection

Blessing the offering

**Hymn:**

**372 STF – Come down, O Love divine OR**

**459 STF – Captain of Israel's host, and Guide**

Blessing

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The Vine Services are compiled and produced by twelvebaskets.

Many more resources and inspiration for this week's lectionary, leading worship and other church use are available on [www.theworshipcloud.com](http://www.theworshipcloud.com).

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## Call to worship

God of new beginnings, we come to you now, at the start of this new year.  
Come into the opportunities,  
Hold us in the challenges,  
Travel with us each day, we pray,

Amen.<sup>1</sup>

## Hymn:

238 STF – Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us OR

81 STF – Now thank we all our God

## Opening Prayers

Let us pray,

Lord of all time and all space,  
We come to you in prayer this Sunday at the start of the new year, at the end of the  
Christmas season,  
Reflecting on the story we have heard again in recent weeks, we bring ourselves in  
worship.

Through Mary – teach us to be willing servants of your call on our lives. To step out in faith  
and trust in ways that we have not contemplated before.

Through Joseph – show us how to become risk takers ready to follow your will.

Through the Angels – encourage us to proclaim that you are God, so that all may hear the  
message.

Through the Shepherds – teach us humility and a quiet sense of confidence in the reality of  
your love for us and the truth behind the babe in the manger.

Through the Star – remind us to burn brightly and signpost the way so that others may find  
faith.

Through the Wise men – teach us to be searchers. Always looking for the real truth. Always  
willing to explore new pathways and track down fresh ideas.

Through the infant Jesus - Help us to find again that trust and dependency a newborn has.  
That vulnerability. That acceptance of love and care freely available to us.

Lord this scene of many facets draws us to a place of mystery and wonder for this is more  
than just a baby – human and divine.

Help us to look again at what we think we know and take an opportunity to see anew the  
wonder of Christ's birth - God incarnate

And to carry the hope and love of that story into the days and weeks ahead,

By your grace,

Amen.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Call to worship written by Tim Baker

<sup>2</sup> Opening prayers written by Tim Baker

## We say together the Lord's Prayer

### All Age Talk

Can you believe that Christmas was last year?

Well, the Christmas story isn't quite over as this week's readings take us to the story of the Wise Men. After Jesus was born, some very smart people – called Magi or Wise Men – saw a special star in the sky. This wasn't any ordinary star; it was God's way of saying, "Come and see the Saviour of the world!"

The Wise Men travelled a long, long way to find Jesus. They didn't even know him yet, but they trusted that this star would lead them to someone very special.

When they found Jesus, they gave Him wonderful gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Now these gifts were not random. Each one has a special meaning (you might want to make the below into a quiz)

1. Gold:
  - a. Gold is a precious metal, often associated with kings and royalty.
  - b. This gift symbolises that Jesus is the King of Kings—someone who would rule with love and justice.
  
2. Frankincense:
  - a. Frankincense is a sweet-smelling resin used in worship, often burned as incense.
  - b. This gift shows that Jesus is holy and divine—worthy of worship as the Son of God.
  
3. Myrrh:
  - a. Myrrh is another resin, often used in oils for healing
  - b. This gift points to Jesus' sacrifice and suffering - a reminder that He would one day die to save us from our sins.

What does this mean for us?

Well firstly it means, God's Love is for Everyone: just like the Wise Men, no matter where we come from or who we are, God loves us all.

Secondly, the Wise Men followed the star to Jesus. Today, we can follow God by praying, reading the Bible, and loving others.

Let's pray together:

Dear God,

Thank you for your big plan to love everyone.

Help us to follow you, like the Wise Men followed the star.

Show us how to share your love with others. Amen.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> All Age Talk written by Matthew Forsyth

**Hymn:**

86 STF – Praise the Lord! You heavens adore him OR

7 STF – God who made the stars of heaven

**Readings:** Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12

**Hymn:**

226 STF – Birth brings a promise OR

208 STF – Let earth and heaven combine

**Reflections on the readings**

Today's reflection is written by Raj Patta – let's listen to his words now.

Graduating from the University of Manchester and receiving a PhD degree has been one of those moments that I always cherish. Ever since my graduation my PhD supervisor started to call me Dr. Raj, which was even more special. During my graduation I received many congratulatory mails and texts from friends and families from far and wide. Among those emails, one stood out for me for it read, "Many congratulations Raj, we are very happy for you and the family. You can now move more easily wherever you wish to. Life becomes easy. Once again, many congratulations on passing your driving test." Only then I realised that Dr. before my name is not always doctor Raj, but 'driver' Raj.

Well, while I am on driving, I remembered that during my driving lessons, one of the lessons was going to a set destination by reading the sign boards. Another lesson and part of the test was independent driving following the navigation to a set destination on the sat nav. Travelling with the old sat navs was always interesting. It took some time to follow the navigation, sometimes I took a wrong exit, sometimes the GPS device took me to a different location. It has been a learning experience. I know there are many in our congregations who still use the A to Z maps, with notes on the directions to follow to reach their destinations.

With a 'P' sign on the back of my car, as a new probation driver, I was reminded of reading Matthew 2:1-12, realising how the Magi followed a GPS to reach Bethlehem. The star served as a GPS for these kings, astrologers, wise people to find the 'King of Jews' in Jesus at Bethlehem. Mind you as you will know, it was never mentioned that they were 'three wise men', all we know is that there were three gifts and so we assume that they were 'three wise people.'

They were a company of people who saw the star, followed it to find the 'King of Jews.' How did this company of people follow the single GPS available in a star? Because it was a star, did all of them see it and follow it collectively, or was one taking the lead for the others in following the star and they would have taken turns in leading the crew of the wise people? We don't really know.

But, somehow, the star served as a collective GPS – taking all of them to Bethlehem. What was 'wise' about the Magi? Of course, since they read the signs of the times and since they followed the star, they would have been considered wise. Perhaps since they were able to travel together in a company, collectively travelling from the Far East following a single star made them, for me 'wise' people. For me the wisdom of this magi shines forthrightly for their travelling in a group, celebrating their unity in diversity in finding the 'King of Jews.'

All this company of wise people followed their GPS the 'rising Star' carefully throughout their journey, until they were nine miles away from Bethlehem. On approaching Jerusalem,

they took a wrong exit and went to the palace of Herod assuming that either he or his son would have been the 'King of Jews.' If you've ever taken a wrong turning, perhaps you can relate?

This wrong exit experience would have taught the magi humility, to recognise not to presume things but to allow themselves to be led by the spirit of God, for wisdom is the gift of God. The Magi lost track of their star, and it took a long time for them to be rerouted before they could get back to their GPS directions towards Bethlehem. How frustrating it would have been to be lost just nine miles from Bethlehem? The wrong exit delayed their journey to their destination for they had to encounter King Herod to inform him about the birth of Jesus, and that entry into a wrong exit even cost the lives of several two-year old babies who were slaughtered by Herod because the Magi were not able to track and find Jesus.

By the help of Holy Spirit, they were rerouted back to their destiny from Jerusalem to Bethlehem and found the star. In verse 10 we read: "when they saw the star, they were overjoyed." What a relief it would have been to rediscover their GPS directions. I can imagine what a joy it would have been to back on the right directions after being lost in a wrong exit. They were "overjoyed." The star brought them to the right place, a house in Bethlehem where Mary and Joseph stayed with their baby Jesus, and they worshipped Jesus by offering their gifts.

Augustine wrote, "Christ was not born because the star shone forth, but it shone forth because Christ was born; we should say not that the star was fate for Christ, but that Christ was fate for the star." (Benson Bobrick, *The Fated Sky: Astrology in History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 79).

The star tells the story of light coming into the world in a powerful way, one that fulfilled the promises of the prophets and caught the attention of the magi, who had the eyes to see what others, including Herod and his scribes, did not, and provided them with a direction to go.

I want to share with you five things related to following the star.

#### 1. Hearing/ Reading about the star:

Matthew tells us that the Magi have seen "his star at its rising" (Matthew 2:2). His readers would have made a connection to the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would be like the stars of heaven (in Genesis 15:5 and 22:17); Jesus is one of these descendants who surely stands out. Imagining that the Magi were from non-Jewish background, they read the star at its rising, and followed it.

#### 2. Seeing the Star:

The fact that the Magi, astrologers from the East, seeing the star, come looking for the new-born king shows that the Gospel message is not just for those of Jesus' inside community but for all people. The star, therefore, helps to communicate the universal significance to Jesus' birth.

They found the star in the course of their work, which leaves the challenge for us... If you are a writer does your pen lead to Jesus? If you are a doctor does your stethoscope help you to discover more about Jesus, if you are a teacher do you follow the Christ in your classroom, if you are a mechanic does your spanner help lead you to Jesus?

#### 3. Knowing the Star:

We need to put our feet to action to follow in the faith we have. To put conviction to our belief. This community of wise people knew the importance of the star, and were prepared to act on their knowledge, putting into practice their theoretical knowledge. How often do we get stuck at the point of conversation about theoretics, instead of moving into action?

#### 4. Followed the Star:

They travelled both day and night following the star – showing persistence and perseverance. Without giving up, they followed the passion of their life – followed the star and followed their dream. Are you persistent in your faith journey? In striving for justice and peace?

#### 5. Being a Star:

What about you? Can you be a star for others? As it says in Daniel 12:3: Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and they will lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.

The community of Magi followed collectively, they worshipped in humility, they offered gifts, and ultimately returned by a different path – all of which showed that they were listening to God's call on their lives, they were shining like stars. Will you do the same this Epiphany, and beyond?

May we, this season, follow the Star called Jesus the brightest star the world has ever seen and become a star for Jesus showing to many the path to righteousness in Jesus Christ. Wishing you all a star-filled, Word-filled and Word-fulfilled New Year. Amen.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Hymn:**

8 STF – God with us: Creator, Father OR

407 STF – Hear the call of the kingdom

#### **Prayers of intercession**

Gracious God,  
We come to you in prayer,  
Knowing that there are many ways in which your world is crying out in need.

God of all grace,  
We hold before you all the news stories, all the world-situations, all the global leaders, all the 'big decisions' that we have heard about this week, and the ones that worry us most.

We pray for all affected by the ongoing conflict and violence in our world, and the impact we know that has on ordinary people, on mental health, on whole economies.

We pray for all who do not feel safe at home, and who have been forced into fleeing their homes, as refugees or internally displaced people.

Come, Comforting Father, come, Prince of Peace, come, Holy Spirit.

God of this neighbourhood,  
We pray for those closer to home who are on our minds,  
For those in hospital, those living alone, those grieving and hurting and wishing things were not as they are.

We pray for all who live with the brokenness of human relationships.

In a moment of stillness, we bring to you now the people we know, who are on our hearts, who we wish to pray for this day.

*[Hold a few moments of stillness].*

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<sup>4</sup> Reflection written by Raj Patta

Lord, you know our hearts, and you know the pain we carry.

At the beginning of this new year, come by your grace, to set free the oppressed, to heal the wounds, to give a fresh start to those who feel weary.

Come, Comforting Father, come, Prince of Peace, come, Holy Spirit.

And finally, Lord God, we take a moment to pray for ourselves.

Help me, help each one of us, to hear your still small voice – prompting and reminding us to be a part of the change we want to see in the world.

Lord, we pray, help us to be an answer to prayer today. Amen.<sup>5</sup>

### **We will now take up the offering.**

God of new starts,

As we begin our journey into this new year, we know that you are journeying with us.

We know that we have received so much, and we give thanks for all we have received.

We give these gifts today, and ask you to bless them, to bless each one of us,

That we might be involved in the building of your Kingdom here on earth, Amen.<sup>6</sup>

### **Hymn:**

372 STF – Come down, O Love divine OR

459 STF – Captain of Israel's host, and Guide

### **Blessing**

We have come to the manger-side, we have met with the Christ child,

Now, we rise, we head for the door, we stumble out into the big, wide world, and into a new year.

Amongst all the uncertainty of what 2025 will hold for us,

God of grace, travel with us, as we seek to share something of the Christ who lives within us.

Amen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Prayers of intercession written by Tim Baker

<sup>6</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker

<sup>7</sup> Additional prayers by Tim Baker