

## **Epiphany – Beyond the Stable**

### **Outline One (for Eucharist)**

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

### **We gather**

We may approach God

### **In Jesus and through Jesus**

We approach God with confidence

### **In Jesus and through Jesus**

We approach God with freedom

### **In Jesus and through Jesus**

(Ephesians 3:12)

We come to worship,

**we come to worship.**

we kneel before Jesus,

**We kneel before Jesus.**

We bring our gifts,

**we bring our gifts.**

We bow to adore

**we bow to adore.**

## **Introduction – The visitors**

The wise men, often described as Kings, followed the light of the star. They took their gifts to Jesus, recognizing the new king born on earth. What gifts would we take to Jesus? What gifts do we have that we can use to help others, and to serve God's world?

### **Preparation**

You will need pens, a small picture of a wrapped gift for each person, and a small piece of map for each person.

## **We say sorry**

It is easy for us to come here,

**forgive us when we choose another way.**

It is easy for us to give to Jesus,

**forgive us when we choose another way.**

It is easy for us to share Jesus with others,

**forgive us when we choose another way.**

It is easy for us to follow,

**forgive us when we choose another way.**

May we worship in truth, and give up the lies in our hearts.

May we worship in love, and give up the hate we hold.

May we worship in peace, and give up the anger we feel.

May we worship in generosity, and give up the selfishness we keep.

May we worship in forgiveness, and give up the guilt we carry.

May we worship in joy, and give up the sorrow we hide.

Kneel down for this prayer. Spend a few moments with your eyes closed in silence, imagining that you are one of the Wise Men who have travelled so far to see Jesus.

We are here to meet with Jesus

**and we kneel before him.**

We are here to hear from Jesus,

**and we kneel before him.**

We are here to learn from Jesus,

**and we kneel before him.**

We are here to give to Jesus

**and we kneel before him.**

We are here to know Jesus,

**and we kneel before him.**

We are here to 'be' Jesus in giving to others

**And we kneel before him.**

As the Wise Men followed the star,

**we follow God's lead on our journey.**

As the Wise Men discovered Jesus,

**We follow God's lead on our journey.**

As the Wise Men travelled as changed people,

**We follow God's lead on our journey.**

**We listen**

**Talk:** 'Arise, Shine' (Based on Isaiah 60:1-6)

If appropriate develop basic signs or actions for 'Arise' and 'shine' and as those words are repeated during the talk, everyone takes part in those actions.

1. Arise, shine, and see (v1)

The first words of this passage from Isaiah say 'arise, shine'....so we're going to use those words quite a bit! The journey taken by the Wise Men was part of something much bigger. The passage from, Isaiah reminds us that this was part of God's plan. Isaiah was written up to 800 years before Jesus, the light of the world, was born. The light of the world was born, and so all people were called to see that light shine, and know the hope that the light of Jesus brings. In this new year, and after all the fun of Christmas, I wonder whether we are all turning to the light of Jesus?

2. Arise, shine, and come (v2-3)

Just as house plants grow facing the light that comes in from the window, so people turn to where the light comes from. This is especially the case when the world is full of the darkness of sin and failure. We are reminded that all people, including whole nations, should turn from the darkness and focus on the light that has come. Even kings will turn to the light – it is the light for everyone to come to. Are we willing to come to Jesus, recognising that he is the light, and worship just as those Wise Men did?

3. Arise, shine, and give (v5-6)

This prophecy talks of herds of camel and other animals heading to the light that has come to the world, and the riches of the nations being given to Jesus, the light. In verse 6 there is even a mention of gold and incense, mirroring two of the three gifts that were brought by the Wise Men to Jesus. I wonder what gifts we might give to Jesus if we could?

#### 4. Arise, shine, and give out

The Wise Man gave to Jesus, and we can give too. Our giving is to others in our lives, homes, schools, work-places and communities. God has given us all gifts and abilities. I wonder if we are willing to think of ways to use those gifts to serve others?

#### **We respond**

Give each person a small picture of a wrapped gift, and have pens available. On the small picture invite everyone to write or draw as gift or ability they have that they could offer to Jesus and use to help others.

As this is a Eucharistic service place a bowl or basket at the front for people to put their piece of paper when they come up to receive the elements or have a blessing.

This prayer of blessing could be used:

God and Father of all creation, we thank you that you made us and gave us all gifts to use in your service and to help others. Bless these gifts and the people who are offering them, as we continue to seek to give what we have to others, and use our gifts generously.

#### **We celebrate**

#### **Preface before the Eucharist**

Now we give you thanks that your son is a gift to the world that was worshipped by the Wise Men, and is worshipped by us. As we come here to remember your great gift, may we also become gifts that bless others.

#### **We go out into the world**

Arise, shine, and see the light of the star.

Arise, shine, and see the new king worshipped in the stable.

Arise, shine, and see your gifts changing the lives of others.

Arise, shine, for God is with us.

### **Closing Prayer**

May we travel on our journeys to find the light of Jesus,  
and may we all shine for Him.

And the blessing....

We have worshipped God's great gift,  
we have worshipped Jesus.

We will go with Jesus in our hearts,  
we will worship Jesus.

### **Ending**

Every family receives a fridge magnet as a gift, and hold it in their hands. This is to remind us all of God being with us on our journey, and helping us to give and use our gifts. Once every family has the magnet in their hands ask them to repeat the simple prayer that is on the magnet:

**Loving God, help me be a gift for others today**

## **Epiphany – Beyond the Stable**

### **Outline 2**

Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:10-15

Matthew 2:1-12

### **Preparation**

If possible, ask members of the congregation in advance to bring any small unwanted gifts, or other items that can be used by homeless shelters and foodbanks such as packet and tinned food, to be handed over during the service.

### **Opening Activity**

You will need a flipchart and paper, and suitable pens. As people arrive have a team of volunteers to ask each person one thing they think they are skilled or gifted at doing. Then write that gift or skill, with no names, onto the flipchart. This will be used later.

### **Opening Prayer**

**Jesus is here today,**

and like the Wise Men, we are here to worship him.

**Jesus is here today,**

and like the Wise Men we are here to receive from him.

**Jesus is here today,**

and like the Wise Men we offer ourselves to him.

### **Responsive Psalm (Based on Psalm 72:10-15)**

Bring gifts to the new King from all places,

**Bless the new King all day long.**

All bow down and worship him,

**Bless the new King all day long.**

He will save all those in need,

**Bless the new King all day long.**

He will take pity on the weak,

**Bless the new King all day long.**

He will rescue those who are oppressed,

**Bless the new King all day long.**

He values everyone, we are all precious,

**Bless the new King all day long.**

Bring gifts to the new King from all places,

**Bless the new King all day long.**

**Talk** (Based on Matthew 2:1-12)

If appropriate, ask for three volunteers. Give one a clock to hold up on the word 'time', another a map to hold up on the word 'place', and the third a wrapped box to hold up on the word 'gifts'.

#### 1. The right time

God chose the right time to send the gift of his son Jesus to the world. And when it happened, at the right time, the Wise Men read ancient prophecies and studied maps. At the right time they decided to set off on the long journey to Bethlehem...not that they were completely sure where they would end up! They were aiming for the right place, and had the right gifts with them. At the right time each night the star would shine in the sky to show them which direction to go in. They followed the star,



and trusted that they would get to the new king at the right time. God's timing is always right – they knew that they had to do things at the right time.

## 2. The right place

Each day, as the Wise Men rested, with the right gifts beside them, they knew it was the right time and the star was leading them to the right place. When they got nearer they had to ask the way to the right place, which upset King Herod and all the other important people in Jerusalem. But by following the star they knew they were heading for the right place. And finally...as the star stopped in the sky over the little town called Bethlehem, they had found the right place at just the right time – the time God had planned for it all to happen.

## 3. The right gifts

And so they arrived at the right time in the right place with the right gifts. We don't know why the Wise Men thought they were the right gifts, but we know what they meant. The gold was to for as King, the incense was for someone who would give themselves, and the myrrh was a reminder of sacrifice. Jesus would give himself, he would be sacrificed as he was put to death, and through all that he was a king. They were the right gifts, at the right time, in the right place.

We are here now and today. You could have been doing other things right now, but instead you're at the right place at the right time. God is the God of time and this is all part of his plan. The only question is what gifts can you bring? Can you use your personal skills and gifts to help others? As you worship Jesus as the Wise Men did, at the right time in the right place, can you offer the right gifts to use as you serve Jesus?

## **Gifts to use**

If completed, bring forward the flipchart that has gifts and skills written on it. If that wasn't done, spend a few moments asking people in the congregation (of all ages) to tell you what their skills and gifts are, and write them down.

Ask everyone to be quiet, and to thank God for the skills and gifts they have. Then invite everyone to hold their hands out in an offering gesture, and invite them to think

about what it means to offer those skills and gifts to God. How can those gifts help share Jesus with others?

Invite the congregation to bring forward any items such as unwanted gifts and food items (if warned ahead of time). Then pray, asking God to bless those gifts and those who receive them, as they represent a little of Jesus' love for them.

### **Prayer**

The Wise Men gave up their comfort to travel to Jesus,

**may we give our all for him.**

The Wise Men gave up their time to meet Jesus,

**may we give our all for him.**

The Wise Men gave up their status to worship Jesus,

**may we give our all for him.**

The Wise Men gave their best as their offering to Jesus,

**may we give our all for him.**

### **Alternative Prayer**

The Wise Men travelled for many days to find the new King.

They help us see that Jesus came to save all people.

The Wise Men gave gifts to Jesus, and used their own gifts on their journey.

They help us see that we all have gifts to offer.

The Wise Men went on their way, to travel through their lives.

They help us see that we can use our gifts on our own journeys.

## **Blessing**

May we offer our best gifts to Jesus, today,

And we offer to use our best gifts to help others, every day. And the blessing....

## **Ending**

Every family receives a fridge magnet as a gift, and hold it in their hands. This is to remind us all of God being with us on our journey, and helping us to give and use our gifts. Once every family has the magnet in their hands ask them to repeat the simple prayer that is on the magnet:

**Loving God, help me be a gift for others today**

## **Candlemas – Share the light**

### **Outline 1 (for Eucharist)**

Malachi 3:1-5

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-40

### **We gather**

Responsive Introduction (based on Hebrews 2:14-18)

You came to the world as a child, just like us

#### **You came to bring light**

You came to the world and suffered temptation, just like us

#### **You came to bring light**

You came to the world to free us from the fear of death

#### **You came to bring light**

You came to the world and gave your life for all people

#### **You came to bring light**

Lights of the world

Have a number of candles lit around the church. If it is a dull day or evening service this will work well. Make sure that all lights are off, and walk around the church. Ask everyone to say 'The Light of the world is in....' and ask for suggestions for the final word. It could be a country, the name of a person, or a town or community. Repeat the phrase a few times, moving around the candle-lit church and asking for suggestions.

### **Introduction – Light in our lives**

Talk about the meaning of Candlemas. It is when Jesus was presented, as was the custom, in his local temple. It is a reminder that Jesus is special, and some of the

people in the temple realised just how special he was. Then use this responsive prayer:

Jesus, you were born to bring light

**You bring light to our lives.**

Jesus, you brought light to the temple,

**You bring light to our lives.**

Jesus, you brought light to those who saw you,

**You bring light to our lives.**

Jesus, your light shines in our own darkness,

**You bring light to our lives.**

Jesus, your light is for us to take and shine,

**You bring light to our lives**

**We say sorry**

**Confession:** Light in dark places (based on Malachi 3:1-5)

The light of Jesus shines on the darkness of our lives.

The light of Jesus shines on all the evil and bad in our world.

The light of Jesus shines to purify, refine, and make good.

The light of Jesus will shine on the cheats, the cruel, and the unjust.

So let us think about the times when we have been filled with darkness, and commit ourselves to allow the light of Jesus to shine in us.

Light of Jesus, shine on us. Make us clean, and help us to offer you the best we can be. Amen

## **We listen**

### **Story / Talk** (Based on Luke 2:22-40)

Repeat this a few times, shining the light into different places, each time saying a different one of these:

The light shines on us

The light shines in the dark places of our lives

The light shines on our town/village

The light shines on those in need

The light shines on people across the world

Teach the congregation the phrase: '*The light shone*', asking them to repeat it whenever you say it. Then tell the story of when Jesus was presented in the temple (Luke 2:21-40), commonly known as Candlemas, covering these key points:

#### *1. The light shone* – in Bethlehem

Jesus had been born in the stable, and the *light shone* from the new-born king. The *light shone* in the sky as the Wise Men followed the star to see the new king. When Jesus was a few weeks old his parents took him to the temple to be presented there, which was the custom at that time. His parents wanted to give thanks for their son, and the *light shone* in the temple with candles lighting the way. An old man named Simeon was nearly always there. The *light shone* out of him – he loved and trusted God, and held on to God's promise that he would see the son of God before he died. As Mary and Joseph brought Jesus, Simeon was aware that the *light shone* from this special baby. He realized that the baby was the promised light of the world, and the *light shone* from him. He held the baby Jesus, giving thanks to God, and in that temple the *light shone*.

Anna was an old lady who also worshipped in the temple. She saw that the light shone, and she too went to see the baby. She knew that Jesus was the promised new King, and the *light shone* from her as she prayed and spoke to Jesus and his parents.

The *light shone* in the temple from the candles, and the *light shone* from the faces of Simeon and Anna as they saw Jesus and knew that God had sent him to save the world. The *light shone* from Jesus, who was and is the light of the world. As we remember Candlemas, when the *light shone* in the temple, we also remember Jesus, who shines on to bring light to the world.

### **We respond**

Invite the congregation to sit in quiet, or talk to one or two people around them. Ask them to consider places in the community that need the light of Christ to shine. What difference would the light of Jesus make? Is there anything we can do to shine the light?

End with repeating the phrase '**Help us to shine your light**' three times all together.

### **We celebrate**

#### **Preface before the Eucharist**

We give you thanks for the light that shines – the light of Christ, and we pray that we would become lights for our world as we remember Jesus and the light he brings.

### **Prayer**

The light shone in the temple, and Jesus brought the light. We give thanks for the light that Jesus gave to Simeon and Anna, and the light of God that they shared.

The light of Jesus shone as he healed and helped. We give thanks for the light that Jesus offers all who turn to him, and the light that changes lives.

The light of Jesus shines in and through those who follow him. We give thanks for the light of Jesus that shines in us, and can shine from us to help others.

## **We go into the world**

### **Blessing**

Jesus brought light of the world, and we can be his light.

Jesus brought light to Simeon and Anna, and we can share his light.

Jesus brought light to everyone, and we can spread his light.

And the blessing of God the creator, Jesus the light, and Spirit the helper, be with us as we shine with his light today and every day. Amen

### **Ending**

Every family receives a candle mat as a gift, and hold it in their hands. This is to remind us all of God being with us on our journey, and helping us to give and use our gifts. Once every family has a candle mat in their hands ask them to repeat the simple prayer that is on the magnet:

**Loving God, help me be a light for others today**

## **Candlemas – Share the Light**

### **Outline 2**

Psalm 24:7-10

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-40

### **Preparation**

Make sure you have enough candles for everyone in the congregation to take away with them. As they arrive give them a candle, but ask them to put it down and not light or use it during the service.



You will need pens and candle-shaped paper for everyone.

### **Introductory Prayer**

From the darkness of the outside world

**we have come into the light.**

From the darkness of our own guilt and sorrow

**we have come into the light.**

From the darkness of our own lack of faith

**we have come into the light.**

### **Responsive Reading** (based on Psalm 24:7-10)

Lift up, open up, gates and doors,

So the King of glory may come in.

**Who is this King of glory?**

He is the Lord, strong and powerful,

He is the Lord, mighty in battle.

**Who is this King of glory?**

Lift up, open up, gates and doors,

So the King of glory may come in.

**Who is this King of glory?**

The Lord Almighty,

He is the King of glory.

### **Confession**

The creation you made has not been cared for and we live in darkness,

**in sorrow we ask for your light.**

The journey you took has not been followed and we live in darkness,

**in sorrow we ask for your light.**

The suffering you went through has not been felt and we live in darkness,

**in sorrow we ask for your light.**

The sacrifice you made has not been valued and we live in darkness,

**in sorrow we ask for your light.**

The hope you sent has not been received and we live in darkness,  
**in sorrow we ask for your light.**

The future you offer has not been grasped and we live in darkness,  
**in sorrow we ask for your light.**

### **Reflection and discussion** (based on Luke 2:22-40)

Ask the congregation to form themselves into small groups of 6-8 in each, and where possible a mix of ages. Tell each of these sections of the account of Jesus being presented in the temple, asking the questions and giving a short time for discussion after each one.

A few weeks after the birth of a baby the mother, sometimes with the father, took the child to the temple to give thanks for a safe birth. The temple was the centre of worship, and would have had candles lit. Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple. How do you think they felt?

An old man called Simeon had felt God promise him that he would see the new King, the light of the world. On the day Jesus was brought to the temple Simeon felt the spirit of God telling him to go there. What do you think Simeon would have thought?

As soon as he saw the baby Simeon knew Jesus was the light of the world, and he celebrated with a special prayer. (Read Luke 2:22-40). The Bible says that Mary and Joseph 'marvelled' at those words – what do you think that means?

At the same time a Godly lady and prophetess, Anna, was in the temple. She saw Jesus and gave thanks that God had sent the promised saviour. What would her reaction have been to seeing Jesus?

After all this had happened Mary and Joseph left the temple with the baby Jesus, having been reminded again that he was special. What do you think they talked about on the way home?

Jesus brought light to the world – Simeon's words were that Jesus would be a 'light of revelation'. Jesus gives the light of his love to us – how can we share that light with others?

### **Prayer activity**

With: pens and candle-shaped paper (optional)

Ask everyone to close their eyes for 30 seconds and really concentrate on what they see. Ask them to 'see' the faces of work colleagues, friends at school, neighbours, and others in the community who may be sad and struggling with dark things in their lives.

Ask those who are able to write on a piece of candle-shaped paper the names of those they have thought about, and take the paper as a reminder to keep praying for the light of Jesus to shine.

Then ask everyone to silently pray for them, asking God to bring the light of Jesus into all the dark places of peoples' lives.

### **Discuss/presentation - light in our world**

Invite representatives of two or three charities or organisations to come along and share briefly what they do to bring light into the lives of others. It may be that your church is directly linked to community work, homeless shelters, foodbanks, mission agencies, and so on.

This is a reminder that, as the light of Jesus shone at Candlemas, so we are called to take the light and hope of Jesus into the dark places and situations in our world.

### **Blessing the candles**

Gather all the candles to be used in church this year, and ask everyone to stand (if they are able) and hold up the candle they were given at the beginning of the service.

Bless us, your people, as we seek to follow the light of Jesus

Bless us, your followers, as we seek to shine with the light of Jesus

Bless these candles that shine in our church and homes, as a reminder of the light of Jesus

### **Closing Prayer**

May we know your joy in our hearts,  
for you are the God of light and joy.  
May we know your happiness in our spirits,  
for you are the God of light and happiness.  
May we know your smile on our faces,  
for you are the God of light and smiles.  
May we share your joy, happiness and smiles  
And share your light with all those we meet,  
for you are the God of light.

### **Ending**

Every family receives a candle mat as a gift, and hold it in their hands. This is to remind us all of God being with us on our journey, and helping us to give and use our gifts. Once every family has a candle mat in their hands ask them to repeat the simple prayer that is on the magnet:

**Loving God, help me be a light for others today**