

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP:

‘Lift up your heads, O you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty – he is the King of glory’ (Psalm 24:9-10).

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious Lord, we welcome you here today. Come by your Holy Spirit and fill this place with your presence. We lift up our hearts to you and offer the praise that is due your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SONGS:

THE VIRGIN MARY HAD A BABY BOY

**The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,
The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,
The Virgin Mary had a baby boy,
And they said that His name was Jesus.**

**He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.
Oh, yes! believer. Oh, yes! believer.
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.**

**The angels sang when the baby was born,
The angels sang when the baby was born,
The angels sang when the baby was born,
And proclaimed Him the Saviour Jesus.**

**He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.
Oh, yes! believer. Oh, yes! believer.
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.**

**The wise men saw where the baby was born,
The wise men saw where the baby was born,
The wise men saw where the baby was born,
And they saw that His name was Jesus.**

**He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.**

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**Oh, yes! believer. Oh, yes! believer.
He come from the glory,
He come from the glorious kingdom.**

AT THIS TIME OF GIVING

**At this time of giving
Gladly now we bring
Gifts of goodness and mercy
From a heavenly King.
Earth could not contain the treasures
Heaven holds for you,
Perfect joy and lasting pleasures,
Love so strong and true.**

**At this time of giving
Gladly now we bring
Gifts of goodness and mercy
From a heavenly King.
May His tender love surround you
At this Christmastime;
May you see His smiling face
That in the darkness shines.**

**At this time of giving
Gladly now we bring
Gifts of goodness and mercy
From a heavenly King.
But the many gifts He gives
Are all poured out from one;
Come receive the greatest gift,
The gift of God's own Son.**

Lai, lai, lai, lai, lai... (etc)

CONFESSION

Lord God, we confess that we have sinned, through our own fault, and in common with others, in our thinking, in our speaking and in our actions.

We ask to be forgiven. By the power of your Spirit turn us from evil to good, help us to forgive others, and keep us in your ways of righteousness and love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. Therefore, let us hear his word to us today: 'Your sins are forgiven.' **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

NOTICES

- Ecumenical Chain of Prayer across Norwich @ Quaker Meeting House, Goat Lane, Thursday 18th January, 11.45-12.00.
- Church Meeting on Sunday 21 January
- Prayer evening on Tuesday 23 January

READING: MATTHEW 2:1-12 – Mike A

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ "'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him.'

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

REFLECTION: JOURNEYING TOWARD JESUS

INTRODUCTION

Well, the decorations have been put away for another year. Christmas may be over for most people. Yet from 6 January we are now in the Christian season of Epiphany, the time when we remember the arrival of the Magi from the east to worship King Jesus in Bethlehem. Epiphany means 'manifestation' or 'revealing', and the festival of Epiphany is a celebration of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentile world, as represented by the Magi.

THE LONG JOURNEY

When we think about the Christmas story, we know that Mary had a long journey – 90 pregnant miles. But the visitors from the east, the Magi, had a far longer journey. Scholars differ in their views regarding the home of the Magi. Some suggest they came

from Persia, modern day Iran, others suggest Saudi Arabia, as frankincense and myrrh originate from southern Arabia. Well, wherever they came from, one thing is clear, they travelled a long distance and, as Matthew tells us, they journeyed by the light of 'his star' (v2). When it comes to baptism, it can take a long time until someone is ready to be baptised. Their journey towards Jesus may take years. For others it can be a very quick journey. But whether the journey is long or short, the destination is clear, the destination is faith in Jesus and lives that worship him. The Magi, having reached their destination, offered their worship and their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Today Saeid, Sue, Terry and Emma all offer their gift of worship to Jesus, the worship of their lives, and the Lord accepts their gifts with gladness and joy.

OPPOSITION

In Matthew's first chapter we read of a Jewish king, born of Jewish descent, according to the promises of the Jewish scriptures. The gospel tells us that in the time of King Herod 'Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea' (v1). Herod was a notoriously severe ruler who dealt ruthlessly with any pretenders to his throne, even killing members of his own family to secure his rule. So, with the arrival of the Magi asking about a new king of Israel, Herod would be looking for a way to stop any challenge to his authority. To you being baptised, don't be surprised at any opposition you face following your baptism. As followers of Jesus, you will find some oppose you, mock you or challenge you. Don't be afraid. You are on the winning team!

THREE GIFTS

A little later, we are going to sing the carol 'We three kings.' However, the gospel doesn't mention how many Magi there were. There could have been a dozen for all we know. But Matthew's gospel does mention the number of gifts given to Jesus: three – gold, frankincense and myrrh. Their gifts are prophetic. They tell us something about the one to whom they are given. Gold was a gift for kings. Giving gold to Jesus says that he is a king. In fact he is the King of kings. Frankincense was used in temple worship, as an offering to God when prayers were said. Giving frankincense says Jesus will be the link between us and God. Myrrh was used as a spice for burial. Giving myrrh says Jesus' death will be a sacrifice which will open the way for us to come to him. Three gifts, all with meaning that tell us who Jesus is and what he came to do. He came to rule as king, he came to connect us to God, and he came to give his life in sacrifice so that we might live eternally. Today those being baptised will receive a gift, the gift of God himself when they are baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

SEARCHING FOR JESUS

As the Magi represent the praise of the Gentiles, so the star suggests that even creation worships. The lights of heaven rise to greet the birth of the Christ and hail God's incarnation. Although the nations and the skies are moved to worship, Israel's leaders reacted differently. It is shameful that the religious leaders who knew the ancient prophecies of the coming Messiah couldn't even be bothered to go and search for the child themselves when they heard the news the Magi brought. Thankfully, you who are being baptised have bothered to search for Jesus. Three of you came on our

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last Alpha course. If anyone is here that would like to come along to our next Alpha course, please do talk to me afterwards.

Matthew's story is our story. The Wise Men sought Jesus so that they could worship him and offer him gifts. We too can seek Jesus and worship him and offer him what we have. Let's offer him our lives.

OFFERTORY SONG: COME BEFORE THE KING

**Come before the King on bended knee
And give him glory
Crown him King of kings in majesty
Face to face in this holy place
With Jesus, the King.**

**Come before the King with gifts to bring
And give him glory
Crown him with your lives forever
Worship now, in his presence bow
To Jesus, your King.**

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of all goodness, we offer to you these our gifts along with our lives. Bless all we have given for your glory's sake. **Amen.**

INTRODUCTION TO BAPTISM

The Lord is here.

His Spirit is with us.

Jesus Christ came that we might have life

And have it in all its fullness.

Jesus said: 'no-one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit.'

God loves us even before we come to love God ourselves. Though we cannot understand such love, God invites us in baptism to accept it with the openness and trust of a child. In the waters of baptism, God sets us as a seal upon his heart, for his love in Christ is stronger than death. Christ's journey from death to resurrection is the pattern for our lives, in union with him. Jesus himself was baptised by John in the River Jordan. His baptism found fulfilment in the cross, where he gave himself for the life of the world.

Paul writes: 'Don't you know that all who share in Christ Jesus by being baptised also share in his death? When we were baptised, we died and were buried with Christ. We were baptised, so that we would live a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father. If we shared in Jesus' death by being baptised, we will be raised to life with him.' (Romans 6:3-5 CEV)

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PRAYER OVER THE WATER

Gracious God, send your Holy Spirit upon us and upon this water, that all who come for baptism may be born anew of water and the Spirit. May they walk by the light of faith and continue for ever in the risen life of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PROFESSION OF FAITH

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

Candidates We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took human nature, died for us and rose again?

Candidates We believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

Candidates We believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

Candidates This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Each of you have come to baptism in response to the call of Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Do you believe that Jesus loves you, and calls you to follow him?

I do

Let's hear how you have come to this point of wanting to be baptised.

TESTIMONIES:

BAPTISM

N, do you take God our Father to be your Heavenly Father; do you take Jesus his Son to be your Saviour and Lord; and do you take the Holy Spirit to be your helper and guide?

I do.

N, I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

N, Christ claims you for his own. Receive the sign of his cross.

BRIEF TIME OF OPEN PRAYER FOR EACH CANDIDATE

SONGS:

AS WITH GLADNESS

**As with gladness men of old
did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light,
leading onward, beaming bright,
So, most gracious God, may we
evermore be led by Thee.**

As with joyful steps they sped,
Saviour, to Thy lowly bed,
There to bend the knee before
Thee whom heaven and earth adore,
So may we with willing feet
ever seek Thy mercy-seat.

As they offered gifts most rare
at Thy cradle rude and bare,
So may we with holy joy,
pure, and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to Thee, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every day
keep us in the narrow way;
And, when earthly things are past,
bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
where no clouds Thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,
Thou its sun, which goes not down.
There forever may we sing
hallelujahs to our King.

WE THREE KINGS

We three kings of Orient are
bearing gifts we travel afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star

O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.

Born a king on Bethlehem plain,
gold I bring to crown him again
King for ever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign

O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,

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**Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.**

**Frankincense to offer have I,
Incense owns a Deity nigh
Prayer and praising all are raising,
Worship him, God most high**

**O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.**

**Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom;
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in a stone-cold tomb**

**O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.**

**Glorious now, behold him arise,
King and God and sacrifice!
Heaven sings `Alleluia`,
`Alleluia' the earth replies.**

**O star of wonder, star of night,
star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.**

GOOD CHRISTIANS ALL, REJOICE

**Good Christians all, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Give ye heed to what we say,
Jesus Christ is born today;
Ox and ass before Him bow,
And He is in the manger now.
Christ is born today;
Christ is born today!**

**Good Christians all, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Now ye hear of endless bliss,
Jesus Christ was born for this:**

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He hath opened heaven's door
And all are blessed forever more.
Christ was born for this;
Christ was born for this!

Good Christians all, rejoice
With heart and soul and voice;
Now ye need not fear the grave,
Jesus Christ was born to save;
Calls you one and calls you all
To gain His everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save;
Christ was born to save!

THE WELCOME

Sisters and Brothers in Christ, God has received you by baptism into his Church.
We welcome you into the Lord's family. We are members together of the Body of Christ; we are children of the same Heavenly Father; we are inheritors together of the Kingdom of God. We welcome you.

GIVING OF BAPTISM CERTIFICATES

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as in heaven
Give us today our daily bread
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us
Lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For the kingdom, the power
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

SONG:

AMAZING GRACE (my chains are gone)

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
the hour I first believed!

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**My chains are gone, I've been set free,
My God my Saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy rains,
Unending love, amazing grace.**

**The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.**

**My chains are gone, I've been set free,
My God my Saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy rains,
Unending love, amazing grace.**

**The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forebear to shine.
But God who called me here below
will be forever mine.**

**My chains are gone, I've been set free,
My God my Saviour has ransomed me.
And like a flood his mercy rains,
Unending love, amazing grace.**

CLOSING PRAYER AND BLESSING

Gracious and most holy God, we thank you for your saving power and life-giving love. May we each walk in the power of your Spirit and live in your love all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

And the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with you and with all whom you love, now and for evermore. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve and share the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.