

St. Luke's Church

A Celebration for Epiphany



A united and ecumenical service based on United Reformed Church and Church of England services

A service for all people who want to worship God, hear his word, and respond to his love.

Gathering

Greeting

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

And also with you.

Welcome and Introduction

Today, three wonders mark our worship.

A star leads the wise men to the Christ-child.

Alleluia.

Water is made wine at the wedding feast.

Alleluia.

Jesus is revealed as the Christ in the waters of baptism.

Alleluia. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Hymn *Songs of thankfulness and praise* (tune St Edmund)

**Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus, Lord, to thee we raise,
manifested by the star
to the sages from afar;
branch of royal David's stem
in thy birth at Bethlehem;
anthems be to thee addressed,
God in man made manifest.**

**Manifest at Jordan's stream,
Prophet, Priest and King supreme;
and at Cana, wedding guest,
in thy Godhead manifest;
manifest in power divine,
changing water into wine;
anthems be to thee addressed,
God in man made manifest.**

**Manifest in making whole
palsied limbs and fainting soul;
manifest in valiant fight,
quelling all the devil's might;**

manifest in gracious will,
ever bringing good from ill;
anthems be to thee addressed,
God in man made manifest.

Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
mirrored in thy holy Word;
may we imitate thee now,
and be pure, as pure art thou;
that we like to thee may be
at thy great Epiphany;
and may praise thee, ever blest,
God in man made manifest.

Christopher Wordsworth (1807-85)

1 *The King of all the World is Revealed to the Wise Men*

Journey of the Magi by T S Eliot

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,

And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

Gospel reading Matthew 2 1-11

During the reading, three gifts will be placed on the altar.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Hymn 326 As with gladness men of old

Reflections on the story

From Isaiah

Arise, shine out, for your light has come;
the glory of the Lord is rising upon you.

The nations will come to your light,
and kings to your dawning brightness.

They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Your gates will lie open continually,
shut neither by day nor by night.

No more will the sun give you daylight,
nor moonlight shine upon you.

But the Lord will be your everlasting light,
your God will be your splendour.

A poem Epiphany by Malcolm Guite

It might have been just someone else's story,
Some chosen people get a special king.
We leave them to their own peculiar glory,
We don't belong, it doesn't mean a thing.
But when these three arrive they bring us with them,
Gentiles like us, their wisdom might be ours;
A steady step that finds an inner rhythm,
A pilgrim's eye that sees beyond the stars.
They did not know his name but still they sought him,
They came from elsewhere but still they found;
In temples they found those who sold and bought him,
But in the filthy stable, hallowed ground.
Their courage gives our questing hearts a voice
To seek, to find, to worship, to rejoice.

2 *The New Creation is Revealed in Water made Wine*

Gospel reading John 2.1-11

During the reading, water and wine will be placed on the altar

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come.' His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.' Now standing there were six stone water-jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the jars with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, 'Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward.' So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, 'Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now.' Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Hymn Glory to thee, O Christ (Tune: ST. MICHAEL)

**Glory to thee, O Christ,
Who by thy mighty power
Didst manifest thy glory forth
In Cana's marriage hour.**

**Thou spakest: it was done:
Obedient to thy word,
The water changing into wine
Proclaimed the present Lord.**

**Blest were the guests who saw
That wondrous mystery,
The great beginning of thy works
That kindled faith in thee.**

**And blessedè they who know
Thine unseen presence true,**

**When in the promise of thy grace
Thou makest all things new.**

**So, led from strength to strength,
Grant us, O Christ, to see
The promised supper of the Lamb,
Thy great Epiphany.**

Hyde W. Beaton, 1863; alt.

Reflections on the story

From The Book of Revelation

I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying,

‘Behold, the dwelling of God is among mortals.
**He will dwell with them and they shall be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them.**

Behold, I make all things new:
I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

To the thirsty I will give water as a gift
from the spring of the water of life.’

A poem Epiphany at Cana by Malcolm Guite

Here’s an epiphany to have and hold,
A truth that you can taste upon the tongue,
No distant shrines and canopies of gold
Or ladders to be clambered rung by rung,
But here and now, amidst your daily living,
Where you can taste and touch and feel and see,
The spring of love, the fount of all forgiving,
Flows when you need it, rich, abundant, free.
Better than waters of some outer weeping,
That leave you still with all your hidden sin,
Here is a vintage richer for the keeping
That works its transformation from within.
‘What price?’ you ask me, as we raise the glass,
‘It cost our Saviour everything he has.’

3 *The Christ is revealed in the Waters of Baptism*

Gospel reading Mark 1.1,4-11

During the reading water is poured into the font

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark
Praise to you O Christ

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, 'The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.'

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. And a voice came from heaven, 'You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Hymn 335 Out of the flowing river

Reflections on the story

From the Prophet Ezekiel

I will take you from the nations,
and gather you from all the countries.

I will sprinkle clean water upon you,
and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness.

A new heart I will give you,
and put a new spirit within you.

You shall be my people,
and I will be your God.

A Poem Jesus' Baptism by Malcolm Guite

Beginning here we glimpse the Three-in-one;
The river runs, the clouds are torn apart,
The Father speaks, the Spirit and the Son
Reveal to us the single loving heart
That beats behind the being of all things
And calls and keeps and kindles us to light.
The dove descends, the spirit soars and sings
'You are beloved, you are my delight!'
In that quick light and life, as water spills
And streams around the Man like quickening rain,
The voice that made the universe reveals
The God in Man who makes it new again.
He calls us too, to step into that river
To die and rise and live and love forever.

Our response

Beginning a New Year

It is the custom in the Methodist Church for members to rededicate themselves to Christ's service at the beginning of each new year. John Wesley established this practice, which he drew in part from roots in English Puritanism, and it has been adopted by Churches more widely in recent years. Let us now use one of these Covenant Prayers.

Lord God, holy Father,
since you have called us through Christ
to share in this gracious covenant,
we take upon ourselves with joy the yoke of obedience
and, for love of you, engage ourselves to seek and do your perfect will.
We are no longer our own but yours.

**I am no longer my own but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you;
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing;
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things**

**to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

We enter this covenant not for ourselves alone, but as God's servants and witnesses,
so let us pray for the Church and for the world.
Loving God, hear us as we pray for your Church ...
Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world ...
Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

We give thanks for our families and friends, for all who are dear to us;
help us to treasure all that they bring to us,
and to share generously all that we have to offer.
Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

Have compassion on all who suffer ...
Lord in your mercy:

Hear our prayer.

We praise you for all who gone before us, those who have cared for us,
Those who have inspired us, those who have taught us our faith.
Bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom. **Amen.**

Collect

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us,
that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

**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.**

Sending out

Hymn 327 Brightest and best of the sons of the morning

The collection will be taken during this hymn.

May God the Father,
who led the wise men by the shining of a star
to find the Christ, the Light from light,
lead us also in our pilgrimage to find the Lord.
Amen.

May God the Son,
who turned water into wine at the wedding feast at Cana,
transform our lives and make glad our hearts.
Amen.

May God the Holy Spirit,
who came upon the beloved Son
at his baptism in the river Jordan,
pour out his gifts on us
who have come to the waters of new birth.
Amen.

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The cover picture is on an altar piece in the Church of St. Mary, Woodbridge, Suffolk - and includes a first depiction of a wise woman!