

**Worship on January 5, 2024**

(CCLI: License Number #3156883) (Welcoming Elder: Anne Neuman)

**Sunday Order of worship**

**We Gather**

- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship
- Praise song BOP 43 God's name forever shall endure (Psalm 72)
- Prayer for worship and Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance
- Praise song BOP 376 Lord, the light of your love is shining
- Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)
- First reading: Isaiah 60:1-6
- Second reading: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 (Refrain 3)
- Third reading: Matthew 2:1-12
- Sermon: **The visit of the Magi**
- Hymn BOP 173 We three kings
- Communion with the Apostles' Creed
- Prayer for the people

**We Respond**

- Offering, Doxology (BOP 79) & Dedication
- Song for the Journey BOP 474 The love of God comes close

**We Serve**

- Benediction
- A Sung Blessing

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**Responsive Call to Worship (Based on Living Faith 10.5)**

One: Arise, shine, for your light has come

**All: And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.**

**Praise song – BOP 43 God's name forever shall endure (Psalm 72)**

**Prayer of Adoration**

God of power and might, God of grace and mercy, heaven and earth are full of your glory. You chose to become one of us in Jesus Christ, sharing our joys and sorrows, displaying your greatness in the child of the manger. We praise you for your amazing love, great enough to embrace the expanding universe, yet close enough to enter our humble hearts. During this time of worship, surprise us with your grace once again, that we, with the whole Church and your precious creation, may praise and honour your holy name, our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

**Prayer of confession (Unison)** *(Let us come to God with the prayer of confession in unison.)*

**God of goodness and guidance, in Christ you sent us light to live by, yet we seek shadows in which to hide. In him, you promise new life, but we prefer with old habits, nursing**

**grievances and clinging to familiar opinions. You are generous with your love, but we reject neighbours and fear strangers who differ from us. Remake us in the image of your Son with your mercy, and teach us how to follow him in the year ahead.**

**Heavenly Father, hear us, as we offer the Prayer that Jesus taught us:** (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. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

### **Words of Assurance**

Here is the good news of the Gospel! Jesus Christ is God's elect, chosen for our salvation. In him we find God's acceptance. Let us give thanks to God for this gift, and be at peace with God, be at peace with ourselves, and be at peace with one another.

**May the Peace of the Lord be with you.** *(Let us bless each other with the peace of the Lord.)*

**Praise song – BOP 376 Lord, the light of your love is shining**

### **Prayer for children**

**Sung prayer for illumination (BOP 445 Open our eyes, Lord)**

- First reading: Isaiah 60:1-6
- Second reading: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 (Refrain 3)
- Third reading: Matthew 2:1-12

**"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."**

### **SERMON: The Visit of the Magi**

Today, we celebrate the feast of Epiphany, the revelation of Christ to the nations. The story of the Magi's journey to Bethlehem is both familiar and profound. It offers us lessons about seeking, finding, and worshipping the King Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

The Magi started their journey seeking the King. Matthew's Gospel tells us that Magi from the East came to Jerusalem asking, in v2, **"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."** These Magi were likely scholars or astrologers, individuals of wisdom and learning. Despite being Gentiles from distant lands, they recognized the significance of the star and embarked on a long and tiring journey to find the newborn king.

Their journey reminds us of the universal call to seek Christ, the Saviour. God's revelation in creation, like the star, invites all people to come to him. The Magi's determination and perseverance highlight the need for faith and dedication in our spiritual journey. Are we willing to pursue Christ with the same passion, even when the path is uncertain or difficult?

The Magi's journey also reflects the importance of spiritual discernment. They did not blindly follow the star; rather, they interpreted its meaning and sought the truth. Their example reminds us to be attentive to the ways God speaks to us, whether through scripture, prayer, or the world around us.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, the Magi's inquiry troubled King Herod and all Jerusalem with him. Herod's reaction was fear and hostility. He saw the newborn king not as a Saviour but as a threat to his power. His deceitful response, telling the Magi to report back to him, was driven by his desire to eliminate Jesus.

Herod represents the resistance of worldly powers against God's reign. While the Magi sought to worship, Herod sought to destroy. This contrast reminds us that not everyone welcomes Christ's coming. Even today, many reject the authority of Christ and resist his transforming power in their lives.

Herod's fear also reveals a profound truth about Christ's kingship. Jesus challenges the status quo. He does not come to rule by force or fear, but through love and humility. However, this divine rule disrupts earthly powers and calls for a new way of living. Let us examine our hearts. Do we welcome Christ as King, or do we resist his invitation to surrender?

The Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, where it stopped at the place where the child was. When they entered the barn and saw the child with Mary, they were overwhelmed with joy. They knelt down and worshiped baby Jesus, offering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

These gifts hold deep significance. Gold, a symbol of royalty, acknowledges Jesus as King. Frankincense, used in worship, recognizes his divinity. Myrrh, a burial spice, foreshadows his sacrificial death. Together, these gifts proclaim the identity and mission of Jesus as the King, the Messiah, and the Saviour of the world.

This moment of revelation reminds us of the joy and awe that come from encountering Christ. The Magi's worshipful response invites us to reflect on how we approach Jesus. Do we come before Jesus Christ with reverence and adoration? Do we bring him our best—our time, talents, and treasures?

The scene in Bethlehem also highlights the humility of Christ's arrival. The King of Kings was found not in a palace but in a barn. This humility invites us to look beyond appearances and to seek God in unexpected places. Are we open to finding Christ in the ordinary moments of our lives where we easily neglect?

After worshiping Jesus, the Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod. So they departed for their own country by another road. This detail symbolizes the transformative power of encountering Christ. Once we meet him, we cannot go back the same way. He changes our hearts, our paths, and our lives.

The Magi's return by another road also signifies the new direction that faith brings. When we truly encounter Jesus, our lives are re-oriented toward his purposes. We leave our old patterns behind and embrace a new journey shaped by grace, love, and obedience.

As we celebrate Epiphany, we are reminded that Christ's light shines for all people, guiding us to him. The Magi's journey is our journey. We are called to seek him, to worship him, and to be transformed by Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Just as the Magi brought their gifts to Jesus, we are invited to offer our lives in service and devotion to him.

The story of the Magi challenges us to be bearers of Christ's light in the world. As Isaiah proclaims, in **Isaiah 60:1, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you,"** we are called to reflect his light, sharing his love and grace with others.

The Magi's journey, their gifts, and their worship point us to the heart of Epiphany: the revelation of Christ as the Saviour of all. This revelation calls us not only to worship him but also to witness. Like the Magi, we are sent out to share the good news and to shine God's light in this world where people need the true light.

Like the Magi, let us go forth from this place transformed by our encounter with Christ. Let us seek him with all our hearts, worship him with all our lives, and share his light with a world in need. And, as we begin this new year, may we be reminded that our journey of faith is ongoing. Each day is an opportunity to draw closer to Christ, to live out his love, and to reflect his glory. May the revelation of the Christ be with you.

This is the message of the Lord for us today.

### **Praise song – BOP 173 We three kings**

#### **Communion At The Lord's Table**

Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Those who come to me will never be hungry, and those who believe in me will never be thirsty. No one who comes to me will I drive away. Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. As we join the Lord's Table, let us confess our faith with the Apostles' Creed.

#### **The Apostles' Creed (BOP 539)**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.  
Amen.**

*(Great Prayer of Thanksgiving:)* ***(Please say BOLD print together)***

L: The Lord be with you. **P: And also, with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts. **P: We lift them to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **P: It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

L: It is our right and our joyful duty that we should give thanks to you, eternal God, for you are from everlasting. You alone created heaven and earth and all creatures in them. In your Son Jesus Christ, the Word became flesh, giving us a vision of your glory, that all people might be brought out of darkness into your marvellous light. Blessed are you, God of grace, for by your mercy you have given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and that does not fade away. Mighty God, heavenly Sovereign, we praise you. With angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we worship and adore you **as we lift our hearts in joyful praise:**

**(Sanctus) Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might, Heaven and earth are full of Your glory, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

L: Holy and merciful God, you gave your Son for the life of the world, who, being truly and eternal God, took flesh and became human for us and for our salvation. Not as we ought but as we are able, we offer you thanks for his incarnation, for his life on earth, for his sufferings and death upon the cross, for his resurrection from the dead, for his glorious return to your right hand until he comes again in glory. O Lord and heavenly Father, through the intercession of our great High Priest and Advocate, we come before your divine majesty to claim the eternal sacrifice of your Son, to make the memorial he commanded us to make, and to celebrate with the gifts he gave to us. Therefore, **we recall the mystery of our faith:**

**P: Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.**

L: By your Word and Holy Spirit, O God, sanctify these your own gifts of bread and wine, that the bread which we break may be to us a communion in the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing which we bless may be a communion in the blood of Christ. In union with Christ and the whole church in heaven and on earth, we present ourselves to you, O God, to be a living and holy sacrifice. Through Christ, by Christ, with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours, almighty God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Breaking of the BREAD and Pouring the WINE**

*(The minister breaks bread in the presence of the people, saying:)*

The Lord Jesus, on the night before he died, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it and said, "This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

*(The minister may pour wine into the cup, lifting it while saying:)*

In the same way, he took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do it in remembrance of me."

*(Distribution of the elements)*

Every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

*(Take some time for personal prayer)*

### **Prayer after Communion:**

Loving God, we give you thanks for praise for this holy meal, shared in the Holy Spirit with your Son Jesus Christ. Empower us and strengthen us to be your faithful people bearing witness to your light and love in this world where we live. Guide us as we continue our journey of faith, seeking to glorify you in all that we do.

Gracious and loving God, on this first Sunday of a new year and this holy day of Epiphany, we come before you with hearts filled with gratitude and awe. We thank you for the revelation of your Son. Jesus is Light of the world and the Saviour of all people and the King of Kings. Like the Magi, guide our hearts, so we may follow their example of perseverance, humility, and devotion. Just like they offered their gifts to the Christ child, give us willing hearts to offer you the very best of ourselves to you.

On this first Sunday of new beginning, we re-commit ourselves to living as your chosen people, holy and beloved. Help us clothe ourselves with love for you and for your people.

We pray for each person in our church community. Remember them, consider their personal situations. If they are suffering from physical pains, heal them. If they need peace in their hearts, in their relationships, embrace them. Restore the brokenness. Let their hearts be plunged in your love, and let them be fully immersed in your love. This new year will bring joys and sorrows. With your faithfulness, hold our hands and walk with us always.

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, my Rock, and my Redeemer. In Jesus' holy name, we pray. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering:**

The season of Epiphany begins January 6, the day celebrating the journey of the Magi to greet Christ, the new-born king. They brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. Our gifts are not like what Magi brought, little uncommon in today's life, but what we offer today and throughout the year may honour Jesus as Lord of our lives and Saviour of the world. As we give our offerings, let us glorify him. (*BOP #79, Praise God from whom all blessings flow.*)

**Offering prayer:**

God of majesty and mystery, we bring our gifts to you, grateful that you are with us in good times and hard times. We do not know what this year will bring us. But we are certain that you are faithful. Your love shines like a star to guide us in our joys and challenges. Bless these gifts that they may keep the light of Christ shining through the church to offer the world truth and wisdom, healing and hope in Jesus name. Amen.

**Song for the Journey – BOP 474 The love of God comes close**

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world where God called us to be. Jesus is our King. Jesus is the Light of the world. Jesus is the only Saviour. In Jesus Christ, we are called to become new. Let us leave our old self behind and embrace the new life he offers, living as his faithful witnesses in our surrounding.

**Benediction:** May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, our Father, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.