

XPLORE EPIPHANY 6TH JANUARY 2008

PREPARATION

The first of the Epiphany sessions, preparation, was devised and led by Richard S. and Barry. They chose liquid worship, where the congregation choose what they want to do in the order they want. "We thought of picking up the New Year theme and inviting people to write down things they are ashamed of or want to get rid of and then shredding them. We also thought of inviting people to dedicate their New Year's resolutions on the altar. We'll probably look for one more activity."

Using an iPod they played a number of different instrumental versions of 'We Three Kings' during the liquid part (in different musical styles from jazz to traditional to reggae). They also used a filmed backdrop of a walk down a mountain ridge, a single shot which lasted 20 minutes in all.

THREE KINGS AND A NEW YEAR

On the first Sunday of the year, when we remember the coming of the wise men to see Jesus we thought it would be a good time to take stock.

We have set up three areas around the church for you to visit as you choose. Go to them in any order and stay as long as you like during this twenty-minute session.

The Three Kings offered fine gifts to the baby Jesus. We have suggested three Rs—Resources, Resolutions and Reconciliation—which you might like to offer today:

GOLD—RESOURCES

Gold can stand for all that is good in the material world. It can stand for our *resources*—both our wealth & possessions and our time & talents. Think about areas where you are blessed and imagine how you could make a difference to others if you used your resources wisely and unselfishly

What can you do *now* to make a difference in the world? Write or draw what you decided to do and say a prayer to God to help you with the strength you will need to make changes. Take your paper with you as a reminder of the commitment you have made.



FRANKINCENSE—RESOLUTIONS

Frankincense can stand for worship. One way to worship God is to live life according to our conscience and his will. Have you made any New Year Resolutions this year? If not, in what ways could you change your lifestyle so that it becomes closer to God's lifestyle?

If you would like to make resolutions and dedicate them to God, write them out or draw them and place them on the altar. As you do, say a prayer. You don't have to use 'religious' language—God prefers it when we speak from our own heart. Or, if you prefer, just keep a silence in your heart and listen for God's response. Then take your paper with you or leave it on the altar as you choose.



MYRRH—RECONCILIATION

Myrrh can stand for death. We all have parts of ourselves which it would be better to get rid of. It might be selfishness, greed, anger, envy, lust, and so on. It might be specific things we have said or done which we haven't said sorry for.

All these things get in the way of our relationships with God and with other people. We need to turn away from them in order to be *reconciled*. This is what Christians call repentance.

If there are things which you need to get rid of in order to be reconciled to others or to God, write or draw them on a piece of paper and then take them to the Myrrh zone. There you can put them in the shredder as a symbol of what you are turning your back on.



WORD

The Word Session was devised and led by Margaret & Val:

Margaret: Brief intro: exploring journey's through stories, music & pictures

Read the Message: Matthew 2: Val narrator
Margaret the speakers

Music & Pictures "A Spaceman Came Travelling"
Margaret starts PowerPoint show;
Val starts & stops CD

Margaret: Short talk reflections on the journey stories

What do you feel like before a journey?

Feedback, could include:

- Excited
- Anxious – have I got everything?
- Am I ready?
- Do I want to go?
- Do I know where I'm going?
- Do I know who I will see?

Have just heard the story of the 3 wise men "scholars", on a journey
3rd journey heard over the Christmas period;

1. Mary & Joseph: had to go to Bethlehem for the census;
Jesus was born in a stable
2. Shepherds, minding their sheep, on the fringes of society,
message from angels,
they responded & went to worship Jesus;
the 1st visitors written about in the New Testament
3. Wise men, the 3rd journey; followed a "star";
asked where Jesus was,
found the place & presented their gifts

How did they feel?

- Didn't know their destination e.g. where they were staying, where going
- Didn't know who they would be meeting
- Didn't know what would happen

But they all travelled; they went; they took a risk: an epic journey of faith

Where are we in our journey of faith?

Are we taking risks?

- *To believe?*
- *To listen to God?*
- *To do what we believe God is calling us to do?*
- *To worship our heavenly King?*

Val: Shares her testimony faith journey

If time: Isaiah 60: 1 – 6 reading

End: any questions or want to talk about anything we have said, we're around

PRAYER

Richard M. and Daphne were responsible for prayer:

Richard Welcome & Intro.

Welcome to our prayer & intercession time together today, entitled
“What star are you following”.

On arrival you should have all received a star, has everybody got one?

I will explain what these are for shortly.

We would like to start with a short reading based on Matthew 2 v 2.

Reading.

How ancient and lovely this news of a star,
A baby, a mother, the Kings from afar.
Come close now, Lord Jesus, we ask you to stay
And show us your face in your people today.

What star shall we follow then but one that leads here
To a baby born homeless and a family in fear?
What heav'n shall we long for but one that starts there
For all the world's children in your tender care?

We thank you, Lord Jesus, for your coming to earth;
For the lights in the darkness that shone at your birth,
For life in its fullness that you promise today,
And the hope in a baby asleep on the hay.

Intro. Cont/

This is the time of year when we celebrate and thank God for the birth of His Son.
The wise men followed the star which led them to Jesus and as we give thanks to God for the
gift of His Son this morning we want to think about the gifts that God has given to each and
everyone of us and how we can use those gifts to Honour Him, help others and show His love
in the world at the start of this New Year.

In a moment Daphnie will be leading us in our intercessions to help us to do just that.
For example, How can we break bread and not remember those who have no bread?

This is where your stars come in, perhaps some of you here have the gift of hospitality, “which
means entertaining the stranger”, you could have someone round for a meal, therefore, you
could write that on the back of your star.

So as Daphnie leads us through our intercessions , there will be a pause after each one to give
us time to reflect and write something on the back of our stars, we can then take these away
with us at the end of this session to remind ourselves throughout the coming year.

Daphnie.

How can we break bread and not remember those who have no bread? (Pause 30 secs.)

How can we meet together and not remember those who are separated from their families and friends? (Pause 30 secs.)

How can we shelter here and not remember whose only shelter is a refugee camp or cardboard box? (Pause 30 secs.)

How can we speak of peace and not remember those whose peace is shattered by constant fear and the rattle of guns? (Pause 30 secs.)

How can we sing our hymns and not remember those who cannot openly express their religious beliefs? (Pause 30 secs.)

How can we offer our gifts and not remember those who are caught up in the never ending cycle of poverty and debt? (Pause 30 secs.)

How can we pour wine and not remember those who are imprisoned by addiction to bottle, needle or pills? (Pause 30 secs.)

How can we celebrate and not remember those who suffer from depression, mental illness or grief? (Pause 30 secs.)

God of human experience,
Born in a stable in Bethlehem,
Spirit alive in us today,
Present in our community,
In our worship and in our reflecting,
May we look outwards to the suffering of our world,
remembering the hope of your salvation.

Amen.

Richard.

We now say the closing prayer together which can be found on your printed sheets.

Our Father, as we remember at this time the story of the wise men and the gifts they brought to the infant King, we pray that we in turn may use wisely the gifts you have given to each one of us in the coming year for His honour and praise.

Amen

PRAYER

Shirleyanne and Richard B. were responsible for praise, the final session.

Their service sheet follows:

XPLORE

PRAISE



Three

Three magi searching for the Christ child
Bearing gifts of [gold](#), frankincense, and myrrh
Three in one—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
On a lonely hill, three wooden crosses
Three men, two thieves and one of innocence
A nail for each hand and a nail for the feet, a total of three
Three days later, Christ rising from the grave
Faith, hope, and love—the way it had to be

Sandy Shirley

January 2008

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod’s kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, “Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signalled his birth. We’re on pilgrimage to worship him.”

Matthew Chapter 2

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.

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.

In Spain, on January 6th children celebrate the coming of the Magi. The Magi names are Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar.

The Day of the Three Magi is celebrated as Christmas in Spain. It’s the day children are given presents. On the night of the 5th, instead of stockings, children leave their shoes out stuffed with straw.

It’s not Santa coming in the middle of the night to leave presents. Instead it’s the Three Wise Men (Magi) bringing gifts for the children just like they gave the baby Jesus presents in honour of his birth. The straw in the children’s shoes is for the Wise Men’s camels to eat.

To celebrate the Epiphany in Spain, there are often flower parades featuring the three Magi.

Psalm 113

Hallelujah!

You who serve God, praise God!

Just to speak his name is praise!

Just remember God is a blessing—
now and tomorrow and always.

From east to west, from dawn to dusk,
keep lifting all your praises to God!

God is higher than anything and anyone,
outshining all you can see in the skies.

Who can compare with God, our God, so majestically enthroned,
surveying his magnificent heavens and earth?

He picks up the poor from out of the dirt,
rescues the wretched who've been thrown out with the trash,

He seats them among the honoured guests,
a place of honour among the brightest and best.

He gives childless couples a family,
gives them joy as the parents of children. Hallelujah!



Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time!

Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us
O'er the world's tempestuous sea;
Guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us,
For we have no help but Thee;
Yet possessing every blessing
If our God our Father be.

Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us;
All our weakness Thou dost know,
Thou didst tread this earth before us,
Thou didst feel its keenest woe;
Tempted, taunted, yet undaunted,
Through the desert Thou didst go.

Spirit of our God, descending,
Fill our hearts with heavenly joy,
Love with every passion blending,
Pleasure that can never cloy;
Thus provided, pardoned, guided,
Nothing can our peace destroy.



Journeys

During our lives we make many journeys and perhaps one of the most famous is that of the Magi travelling many miles because they wanted to glorify the baby Lord Jesus.

For some, Christmas is a time of worship, praising and glorifying God. Take a few moments at home to look up the following Bible verses. Consider how the persons mentioned rejoiced at Jesus' coming.

- **Luke 1:39-45**—Elizabeth and the unborn John the Baptist
- **Luke 1:46-49**—Mary the mother of Jesus
- **Luke 1:68-75**—Zechariah the father of John the Baptist
- **Luke 2:13-14**—God's angelic host of heaven
- **Luke 2:15-20**—The shepherds of Bethlehem
- **Luke 2:25-32**—Simeon, an old man of Jerusalem
- **Luke 2:36-38**—Anna the prophetess
- **Matthew 2:1-11**—The [three Magi](#), wise men of the East

Then, rejoice, praise and worship with them!

Will you come and follow me
If I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
And never be the same?
Will you let My love be shown,
Will you let My name be known,
Will you let My life be grown in you,
And you in Me?
Will you love the 'you' you hide
If I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
And never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
To reshape the world around,
Through My sight and touch and sound
In you and you in Me?
Lord, Your summons echoes true
When You but call my name.
Let me turn and follow You
And never be the same.
In Your company I'll go
Where Your love and footsteps show;
Thus I'll move and live and grow
In You and You in me.



Instructed by Herod they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves. They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time! They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome they knelt and worshipped him.

Matthew Chapter 2

Psalm 100

On your feet now—applaud God!
Bring a gift of laughter,
sing yourselves into his presence.

Know this: God is God, and God, God.
He made us; we didn't make him.
We're his people, his well tended sheep.

Enter with the password: "Thank you!"
Make yourselves at home, talking praise.

Thank him. Worship him.
For God is sheer beauty, all-generous in love,
loyal always and ever.



O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim;
With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
Kneel and adore Him; the Lord is His name.

Low at His feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
High on His heart He will bear it for thee,
Comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
Guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter His courts in the slenderness
Of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine;
Truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
These are the offerings to lay on His shrine.

These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
He will accept for the name that is dear;
Mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
Trust for our trembling, and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,
Bow down before Him, His glory proclaim;
With gold of obedience and incense of lowliness,
Kneel and adore Him: the Lord is His name.

