

Welshpool & Bro Hafren Methodist Circuit

Home Worship Sheet, 3rd January - Epiphany

This short act of worship has been prepared and written for you by Rev Marian Jones.

Today, as we gather for worship, we are aware of those of you who, as yet, are not able to join the gathered community. You are the people of God where you are, and we join together to worship. From the earliest days of Methodist societies, John Wesley invited the Methodist people to renew their covenant relationship with God and the Covenant Service will be held in church today. This service shares with you the reflection on the Epiphany which will be used in that service in Welshpool Methodist Church.

Call to worship:

**Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will rise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.
Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.**

(Isaiah 60:1-3)

Hymn: The silent stars shine down on us

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press **Shift** and **Ctrl** together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn. Source: YouTube, sang at Trinity Gosforth.

- 1 The silent stars shine down on us
with bright but sightless eye,
unmindful of our little earth,
of us who live and die.
Are we but grains of stranded sand
beside a cosmic sea
that lie unvalued and unseen
in such immensity?**

2 Creator of all stars, you came
to grace our transient race.
In Christ you spoke a Word that broke
the silences of space.
Still through that Word you call our hearts
to know that we are known,
to trust we do not walk through time
unvalued and alone.

3 We see the star the wise men saw
and hope again is stirred.
We track the footprints left in time
by your incarnate Word.
We see them climb a lonely hill
where Love is left to die —
the Love that formed the farthest star
and hears the faintest cry.

4 O Christ, the bright and morning Star
whose radiance does not fade,
whose glory filled the universe
before the planets played:
come, heal our hearts of blinding doubt
till faith shall end in sight.
Shine down upon our darkened earth
and conquer sin's long night.

Herman G. Stuempfle, Jr (1923–2007)

**In the silence and stillness
let us open our hearts and lives to the God
who is with us always,
often unrecognised.**

Opening Prayer:

Loving God,
you have searched us and known us,
our blindness, our frailties,
our fears and our selfishness.

In sorrow we confess
that we have sinned against you
and disobeyed your command to love.
Forgive us,
for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ,
who became like us
that we might become like him.
Amen.

Declaration of God's forgiveness:

The true light that gives light to everyone
has come into the world.
To all who receive him,
he gives power to become children of God.

This is Christ's gracious word:

'Your sins are forgiven.'

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Prayer for today:

Ever-living God,
whose glory was revealed
in the Word made flesh,
may we, who have seen such splendour
in the coming of your Son,
be true witnesses to your self-giving love in the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

A reading from the Gospel according to St Matthew, Chapter 2: 1 - 12

To listen to this reading, by David Suchett from BibleGateway, in a new tab press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the reading.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 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.'

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 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. 'In Bethlehem in Judea,' they replied, 'for this is what the prophet has written:

**“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.”**

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 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.'

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. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 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. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Reflection:

I went out each evening, at about the same time, even in the rain . . . but I didn't see it! The astronomers said that the light, created by the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn, would be brightest on December 21st. A 'once in a lifetime' sight, and I missed it! There were those who speculated – could this have been the bright star that appeared in the

sky that led wise astronomers from Persia to Palestine? When we took teenagers from church youth clubs to an Outward Bound Centre on the North York Moors and did a night walk, they were uneasy with the darkness until their eyes adjusted and they became aware of the beauty of the night sky.

During Advent, we read the beginning of John's Gospel about the light shining in the darkness; Matthew tells how a bright light in the sky led the wise to the one John calls 'the Light of the World'. We know the end from the beginning; Matthew, the gospel writer, hints even now, at this child's future with the threat of evil and the shadow of death – 'the King of the Jews', an unwelcome challenge to the rulers; here, the light shines as a guide, later there will be darkness over all the earth at his death; visited by those from other nations, Matthew, at the end of the gospel, puts on the lips of Jesus the challenge to make disciples of all nations.

Here, the light guides those who are searching. Are there people who have shone light on your search for God?

The wise men stopped at the most obvious place to find a king and were redirected by Herod's advisers as he called on them to interpret scripture. Uncomfortable? Maybe, but an important stop on their journey. On a pilgrimage, the journey is as important as the destination: it can be a time when we discover more about ourselves, when we get to know those who are travelling with us, when we can take time to explore our feelings and emotions. Stopping places give us time to reflect, to wonder what we are searching for and whether we will recognise when we have found it . . . we need time to check that we're going in the right direction, to ensure that we haven't lost our way, to make sure that we truly want what we're searching for. The journey can take us to places we wouldn't choose; when we have to revise our expectations.

Not a palace – perhaps, by this time, the holy family had a reasonable roof over their heads, definitely not a palace although, after a stable, it might have felt like it. Not an obvious place to look. A reminder that we can and do find God in unlikely places; that we can be caught unawares, that God can surprise us. Those moments that 'took my breath away . . .' Did you find God there?

These wise men offered their treasures, their symbolic offerings, gold for a king; incense for worship; myrrh, a sweet smelling spice that the women took to the tomb –

It was Christmas Eve and I was the on call chaplain at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. The Christmas Eve midnight service was the best attended in the hospital and I was having an afternoon in Oxford Street admiring the lights and pushing my way through the crowds. In the middle of Selfridge's, my pager went off. People moved quickly, leaving me alone – it was still the time of IRA threats – I asked to use a phone, rang the hospital and hurriedly made my way back there. That evening, we had three baby deaths. Thankfully, I'd prepared the chapel and my sermon early, just in case. When I read the sermon through, it wasn't right. What did the Christmas story say in that setting at that moment? I sat in my office, desperate for something relevant to say and picked up a book from the shelf. It dislodged a piece of paper that I'd put there months before, thinking that the words might be useful one day. This was the day! I'd typed Fred Kaan's 'Uneasy Carol' on that piece of paper. It contains the words:

**We come, uneasy at the thought of knowing
The child who suffers, all who die too soon:
You, present - Lord, in human likeness growing
From cradle of the night to cross at noon.
Then free us from traditions that diminish
The glory of your Christmas . . .**

Myrrh, a symbolic offering, and they knelt in homage.

How could they go back home the way they had come? They weren't the same people; they had been changed by the journey and the encounter with our God 'contracted to a span, incomprehensibly made man'.

'What can I give him, poor as I am?' We are invited to offer ourselves: all that we have and all that we are in the service of the one worthy of our worship, whose light continues to shine in our darkness.

Carol: Mary did you know:

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). Close the tab after the hymn.

**Mary, did you know
that your baby boy would one day walk on water?
Mary, did you know
that your baby boy would save our sons and daughters?
Did you know
that your baby boy has come to make you new?
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you.**

**Mary, did you know
that your baby boy would give sight to a blind man?
Mary, did you know
that your baby boy would calm the storm with his hand?
Did you know
that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
When you kiss your little baby you kiss the face of god.**

Oh, Mary, did you know?

**The blind will see,
the deaf will hear,
the dead will live again.
The lame will leap,
the dumb will speak
the praises of the lamb.**

**Mary, did you know
that your baby boy is lord of all creation?
Mary, did you know
that your baby boy would one day rule the nations?
Did you know
that your baby boy is heavens perfect lamb?
That sleeping child you're holding is the great I am.**

Greene Lee Rufus, Lowry Mark Alan

Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession:

Let us pray.

Father, it is our joy and delight

to offer you thanks and praise.

All your actions show wisdom and love.

Through your Word you spoke creation into existence

and made us in your image and likeness.

When we disobeyed you and drew away from you,

you did not leave us in darkness

but sent your Son, the Word made flesh,

to be the light of the world.

Emptying himself of all but love,

he was born of Mary,

shared our human nature and died on the cross.

Yet you have raised him from death to eternal life;

and through him you have sent your holy and life-giving Spirit

to make us your people, a people of light,

to reflect your glory in all the earth.

Loving God, hear us as we pray in the power of your Spirit

and the name of your Son:

We pray for your Church:

make us all one, that the world may believe.

**Inspire and lead all who govern and hold authority in the nations of
the world:**

establish justice and peace among all people.

Have compassion on all who suffer from any sickness, grief or trouble:

deliver them from their distress.

We praise you for all your saints who have entered your eternal glory:
bring us all to share in your heavenly kingdom.

We pray in silence for our own needs and for those of others . . .

Silence

Lord our God,
you have helped us by your grace
to make these prayers
which we offer in the name of
Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

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.

Hymn: In the bleak midwinter

To listen to the hymn in a new tab: press Shift and Ctrl together and click [here](#). the tab after the hymn.

- 1 In the bleak midwinter
frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron,
water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow,
snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter,
long ago.
- 2 Our God, heav'n cannot hold him,
nor the earth sustain;
heav'n and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign.
In the bleak midwinter
a stable-place sufficed
the Lord God almighty,
Jesus Christ.
- 3 Angels and archangels
may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim
thronged the air —
but only his mother,
in her maiden bliss,
worshipped the Belovèd
with a kiss.
- 4 What can I give him,
poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man
I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him —
give my heart.

Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830–1894)

The Blessing:

May he, who by his incarnation
gathered into one things earthly and heavenly,
fill our lives with his light and joy and peace;
and the blessing of God,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
remain with us always.

Amen.

