



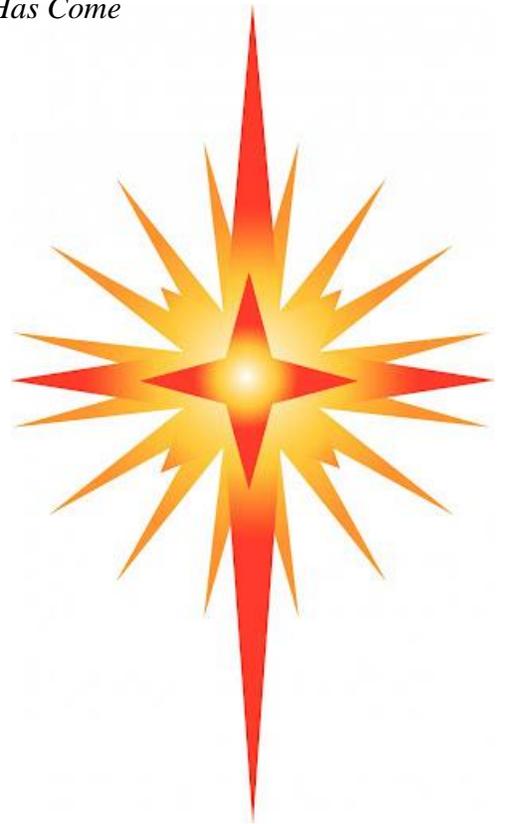
The God who promised never to leave us or forsake us HAS come to us in Jesus Christ: who binds up the broken-hearted, heals all our infirmities, and relieves our burden of sin. So, arise, shine; your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you—and may the peace of Christ, the shalom of God, be with you always!

### **Prayer for Illumination**

God, source of all light, by your Word you give light to the soul. Pour out on us the Spirit of wisdom and understanding that our hearts and minds may be opened. In Christ we pray. Amen.

### **First Scripture Reading:** *Isaiah 60:1-6—Arise Your Light Has Come*

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.  
<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth,  
and thick darkness the peoples;  
but the Lord will arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
<sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.  
<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around;  
they all gather together, they come to you;  
your sons shall come from far away,  
and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.  
<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.  
<sup>6</sup> A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
all those from Sheba shall come.  
They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.



### **Gospel Reading:** *Matthew 2:1-12—The Visit of the Magi*



<sup>1</sup> In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men<sup>1</sup> from the East came to Jerusalem, <sup>2</sup> 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.”

<sup>3</sup> When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: <sup>6</sup> ‘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.’”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. <sup>8</sup> 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.” <sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. <sup>11</sup> 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. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.



**Solo:** “*The Kings*,” arr. K. Lee Scott—Jean Graves, alto

### **The Pastoral Prayer and The Lord’s Prayer**

**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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**Hymn No. 66:** “*We Three Kings of Orient Are*”

### **Charge and Benediction**

**Postlude:** “*As With Gladness*”—arr. Robert J. Hughes



Beth and Kent Kochheiser  
*Guest Worship Leaders*

Heather MacPhail  
*Organist/Director of Music Ministries*

Jason Dennison  
*Videographer/Director of Technology*



**Wise Men (and Women) Seek Him Still!**

## The Epiphany: What Does It All Mean?

Scholars believe the early church celebrated the Nativity of Jesus, the Epiphany (the visitation of the Magi), the Theophany (baptism of Jesus) and the Wedding Feast of Cana (first miracle of Jesus) on January 6. They were all manifestations of God to humanity occurring in the early life of Jesus so there was a certain logic to this. As time went on, the Epiphany, Theophany and the Nativity were moved to separate dates and the twelve day period in between was labeled the “Christmas Season,” or the Twelve Days of Christmas as the famous jingle would have it. Thus, the Epiphany, or the ending of the traditional Christmas season also become known as **Little Christmas**.

The word “epi-” in Greek has a variety of meanings including “near” or “over.” For example, the epicenter of an earthquake means the point on the earth over the center of the earthquake. The Greek “-phany” means manifestation. Roman Catholics regard January 6 as another manifestation of God through Jesus Christ near or around his birth and have labeled it the **Feast of the Epiphany**.

What is this Epiphany? The Epiphany celebrates the visit of the **Three Kings**, yet another name for the day. How does their visit demonstrate the divinity of Jesus? Matthew 2:11 states “they saw the child with Mary and they fell down and worshipped him.” The act of worship was for God alone. Their worship proclaimed the divinity of Jesus. It is worthwhile to stop for a second and remind everyone the Three Kings were not kings but magi, variously described as magicians, members of the learned class, or wise men. Matthew 2 describes them as wise men and does not specify their number or their names. These have come to us through tradition.

How long did it take the magi to find Jesus? Well, not right away. Modern Christians have been fooled by the Christmas mangers sold in stores. The statues of Jesus, Mary and Joseph are surrounded by angels ( Luke 2), adoring shepherds (Luke 2) and the Three Wise Men (Matthew 2). Unfortunately, this beautiful scene did not happen and comes to us as a conflation of the Nativity narratives of Matthew and Luke into one story. The visit of the Magi did not occur at the same time as the adoration of the shepherds. Travel was slow and tortuous in that era, so it took the Magi months if not years to arrive.

Some clues about the length of time are given in the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 2:11 says the wise men went into the house where Mary and the child were. This was obviously not the cave or stable where Jesus is thought to have been born as it is not likely the Holy Family stayed in the manger for a long period of time.

Matthew 2:16 recounts Herod ordering the death of all male children under the age of two “according to the time which he had ascertained from the Magi.” Given this passage it is reasonable to assume the Wise Men took up to two years to find Jesus. The fact they traveled a vast distance over a lengthy period of time only adds to the majesty of the Epiphany. These Wise Men were so certain of the importance of Jesus they traveled for up to two years to present Jesus with invaluable gifts and worship him.

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OH COME \*  
LET US \*  
\* *Adore* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*  
\* HIM

## Christmas Quiz

- Why were Joseph and Mary traveling so close to her due date?
  - to celebrate Hannakuh
  - to buy food during a famine
  - to register for taxes
  - to see a doctor
- Why was Jesus born in a stable?
  - Joseph couldn't afford a hotel
  - to ensure their donkey wasn't stolen
  - they enjoyed "roughing it"
  - there was no room in the inn
- Why did Mary and Joseph name their baby Jesus?
  - an angel told them to
  - it was an old family name
  - it was a popular name at the time
  - the priest picked it at his circumcision
- What does the name Emanuel mean?
  - "man-child" (literally "manly youth")
  - "led by the hand of the Lord"
  - "Jesus" in Hebrew
  - "God with us"
- Who told the shepherds where they could find the baby Jesus?
  - Mary & Joseph, when they saw them on the road
  - the wise men, who passed them in the field
  - a choir of angels
  - all of the above
- How did the wise men know where to find the Christ child?
  - they saw it in a dream
  - an angel told them
  - they followed a star
  - they followed the shepherds
- What gifts did the wise men bring to baby Jesus?
  - silver & gold
  - frankincense, gold, & myrrh
  - honey, dates, & unleavened bread
  - 2 turtle doves & a partridge in a pear tree
- Whom did the wise men tell Herod they were seeking?
  - the King of the Jews
  - the only begotten Son of God
  - the long awaited Messiah
  - the enlightened One
- Herod asked the wise men to let him know when they found baby so he could...
  - count the baby in the census
  - worship the child also
  - announce the birth in the tribune
  - all of the above
- What did Herod really plan to do when he found Jesus?
  - tax him
  - kidnap him
  - bow down to him
  - murder him
- Why did the wise men go home by a different way?
  - because of bad weather
  - they discovered a shortcut
  - God warned them to do so in a dream
  - they were following a star
- Where did God tell Joseph to take his family to escape Herod?
  - to Egypt
  - to Nazareth
  - to Jerusalem
  - to Rome