



ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF WANGARATTA  
PAROCHIAL DISTRICT OF WANGARATTA WEST & THE WARBYS

**Epiphany Sunday**  
**5<sup>th</sup> January 2025**  
**11.00am Ante Communion**



The Epiphany of Our Lord. 2018.  
Oil on canvas, 76 x 61 cm. Private collection, North Carolina USA  
Artist : Stephen B. Whatley. [www.stephenbwhatley.com](http://www.stephenbwhatley.com)

## GATHERING IN GOD'S NAME

### *Welcome and Greeting*

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe!

**From the rising of the sun to its setting  
your name is proclaimed in all the world.**

The Lord of glory is with us.

**Thanks be to God.**

### *Sentence*

They saw the child with Mary his Mother;  
and they knelt down and worshipped him.

*Matthew 2.11*

Opening Hymn: AHB 382 / TiS 454. Tune, Was Lebet.

- 1. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,  
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;  
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness  
bring, and adore him: the Lord is his name.**
- 2. Low at his feet lay your burden of carefulness,  
high on his heart he will bear it for you,  
comfort your sorrows, and answer your prayerfulness,  
guiding your steps in the way best for you.**
- 3. Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness  
of the poor wealth you would reckon to own:  
truth in its beauty and love in its tenderness,  
these are the offerings to bring to his throne.**
- 4. 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.**
- 5. Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness,  
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;  
gold of obedience and incense of lowliness  
bring, and adore him: the Lord is his name.**

John Samuel Bewley Monsell 1811–75 alt.

*Confession*

The grace of God has dawned upon the world  
with healing for all.

Though we have grieved him, yet he will heal us if we confess  
our sins in penitence and faith.

**Lord of grace and truth, we confess our unworthiness  
to stand in your presence as your children.  
forgive and heal us.**

**The Virgin Mary accepted your call to be the mother of  
Jesus. Forgive our disobedience to your will.  
forgive and heal us.**

**Your Son our Saviour was born in poverty in a manger.  
Forgive our greed and rejection of your ways.  
forgive and heal us.**

**The shepherds left their flocks to go to Bethlehem.  
Forgive our self-interest and lack of vision.  
forgive and heal us.**

**The wise men followed the star to find Jesus the King.  
Forgive our reluctance to seek you.  
forgive and heal us.**

*Words of Assurance*

May the God of all healing and forgiveness  
draw us to himself, and cleanse us from all our sins  
that we may behold the glory of his Son,  
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

THE GREETING OF PEACE

Our Saviour Christ is the Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government  
and of peace there shall be no end.

**May the peace of the Lord be with us always.**

*A sign of peace may be shared with each other.*

*The Gloria is said or sung*

**Glory to God in the highest,  
and peace to God's people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,  
almighty God and Father,  
we worship you, we give you thanks,  
we praise you for your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,  
Lord God, Lamb of God,  
you take away the sin of the world:  
have mercy on us;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:  
receive our prayer.**

**For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High  
Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father. Amen**

*The Collect*

Lord God of the nations,  
we have seen the star of your glory rising in splendour.  
The radiance of your incarnate Word  
pierces the darkness that covers the earth  
and signals the dawn of peace and justice.

**Make radiant the lives of your people  
with that same brightness,  
and beckon all the nations  
to walk as one in your light.**

**We ask this through Jesus Christ,  
your Word made flesh,  
who lives and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
in the splendour of eternal light,  
God for ever and ever. Amen.**

## THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

### **A reading from the prophecy of Isaiah [60. 1-6]**

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 arise upon you,  
and his glory will appear over you.  
Nations shall come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

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.

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.  
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.

Hear the word of the Lord,  
**thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM 72. 1-7, 10-14**

**Give the king your judgement, O God:  
and your righteousness to the son of a king,  
That he may judge your people rightly:  
and the poor of the land with equity.  
Let the mountains be laden with peace  
because of his righteousness:  
and the hills also with prosperity for his people.**

**May he give justice to the poor among the people:  
and rescue the children of the needy,  
and crush the oppressor.  
May he live while the sun endures:  
and while the moon gives light,  
throughout all generations.**

**May he come down like rain upon the new-mown fields:  
and as showers that water the earth.  
In his time shall righteousness flourish:  
and abundance of peace, till the moon shall be no more.**

**The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring tribute:  
the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.  
All kings shall fall down before him:  
and all nations do him service.**

**He will deliver the needy when they cry:  
and the poor that have no helper.  
He will pity the helpless and the needy:  
and save the lives of the poor.**

**He will redeem them from oppression and violence:  
and their blood shall be precious in his sight.**

**A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians [3. 1-12]**

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Hear the Word of the Lord,  
**thanks be to God.**

**Gospel Hymn:** AHB 391 / TiS 459. Tune, St Bernard or McKee

- 1. In Christ there is no east or west,  
in him no south or north,  
but one great fellowship of love  
throughout the whole wide earth.**
- 2. In Christ shall true hearts everywhere  
their high communion find,  
his service is the golden cord  
close-binding humankind.**
- 3. Join hands, then, people of the faith,  
whate'er your race may be;  
who serves my Father as his child  
is surely kin to me.**
- 4. In Christ now meet both east and west,  
in him meet south and north,  
all Christlike souls are one in him  
throughout the whole wide earth.**

William Arthur Dunkerley  
(‘John Oxenham’) 1852–1941 alt.

The Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to Matthew [2. 1-12].  
**Glorify to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

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. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

For the Gospel of the Lord,  
**praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

*After the Gospel, the three figures of the Wise Men are placed in the Crib*

*Affirmation of Faith*

Let us together affirm the faith of the Church:

**We believe in one God, the Father, the almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again  
in accordance with the Scriptures;  
he ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.**

**We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.**



**We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*A time of reflection.*

## THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Today the Wise Men knelt before our Saviour.  
Let us also kneel to worship him with great joy,  
and to make our prayer to his heavenly Father.

Father, the wise men came from the east to worship your Son:  
grant to Christians everywhere a true spirit of adoration.

Lord; in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

Father, you are the King of Kings and Lord of Lords:  
grant an abundance of peace to your world.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

Father, the Holy Family shared the life of the people of Nazareth:  
protect in your mercy our neighbours and our families,  
together with the whole community of which we are part.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

Father, though you were rich, for our sake you became poor:  
show your love for the poor and powerless, and strengthen  
(... and all) those who suffer.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

Father, the wise men presented to your Son gold, incense, and  
myrrh: accept the gifts we bring, and the offering of our hearts at  
the beginning of this new year.

Lord, in your mercy

**Hear our prayer.**

Father, you are the King of Heaven, the hope of all who trust in  
you: give to N, N, N and all the faithful departed the wonders of  
your salvation.

Lord, in your mercy  
**Hear our prayer.**

Rejoicing in the fellowship of wise men, shepherds, and angels,  
and of the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph,  
we commend ourselves and all Christian people  
to your unfailing love.

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us  
to pray,

**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 for ever. Amen.**

Offertory Hymn: We Three Kings

1. **We three kings of Orient are;  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
following yonder star.**

*Oh, ... star of wonder, star of night,  
star with royal beauty bright,  
westward leading,  
still proceeding,  
guide us to thy perfect light.*

2. **Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,  
Gold I bring, to crown Him again,  
King forever, ceasing never, over us all to reign.**

*Oh, ... star of wonder, star of night, . . . .*

3. **Frank-incense to offer have I,  
Incense owns a Deity nigh,  
Pray'r and praising, all men raising,  
worship Him, God most High.**

*Oh,... star of wonder, star of night, . . . .*

4. **Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume  
breathes a life of gathering gloom;  
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,  
seal'd in the stone-cold tomb.  
*Oh, ...star of wonder, star of night, . . . .***
5. ***Glorious now behold Him arise,*  
**King and God and Sacrifice;  
Alleluia, Alleluia, earth to the heav'ns replies.  
*Oh, star of wonder, star of night, . . . .*****

John H. Hopkins

*Offertory Prayer*

Lord, accept your people's gifts,  
not gold, frankincense or myrrh,  
but hearts and voices raised in praise of Jesus Christ  
our light and our salvation. **Amen.**

THE SENDING OUT OF GOD'S PEOPLE

*Notices*

*Hymn The wise may bring their learning  
Tune. TYROL (Tyrolean melody) AHB 176*

1. **The wise may bring their learning,  
the rich may bring their wealth,  
and some may bring their greatness,  
and some their strength and health;  
we too would bring our treasures  
to offer to the king:  
how shall we greet our saviour,  
what presents shall we bring?**
2. **We'll bring the many duties we have to do each day,  
we'll try our best to please him,  
at home, at work, at play;  
and better are these treasures  
to offer to the king,  
than richest gifts without them -  
yet these we all may bring.**

**3. We'll bring him hearts that love him,  
we'll bring him thankful praise,  
and lives for ever striving  
to follow in his ways;  
and these shall be the treasures  
we offer to the king,  
the gifts that now and ever  
our grateful hearts may bring!**

Unknown

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Let us pray.

Eternal God and Father,

**by whose power we are created,  
and by whose love we are redeemed:  
Guide and strengthen us by your Spirit,  
that we may give ourselves to your service,  
and live this day in love to one another  
and to you;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*The Grace & The Dismissal*

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. **Amen.**

Christ is revealed to all creation.

Go in the peace of Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**



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Together in Song. CCLI 637628.

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The wise men have always had enormous appeal. Everything about them has been elaborated in poetry and story. They have become kings; they have been depicted as representing youth, maturity and old age; they have been given the features of different races; they have been named. They function as our representatives; all of us Gentiles were not actually there.

That is the connection that runs through these three passages, and forms the theme for today. It is the theme of God's great self-revelation to the world.

In Isaiah, the scene is in darkness. The figure might be asleep, or might be prostrate with grief. Suddenly an incandescent light shines, illuminating the central figure and emphasizing the darkness all around. Behind the figure, the light gathers, brighter and brighter, forming into a clear, majestic shape, made of brilliance. Gradually other shapes come on to the stage, drawn by the light, shuffling out of the darkness. The whole stage erupts into a party, as the light spreads further and further. The one who was alone and in darkness is now surrounded by light and laughter. Bit by bit, through the happy sounds, the central character's voice is heard, singing a hymn. Gradually other voices pick it up, until the whole stage coalesces into one song, a song of praise to the Light.

This is how Isaiah sees God's revelation. It is to be a time of vindication for his people, but in their triumph they are generous. They are thrilled not only by the wealth and honour that recognition brings, but also by the fact that the nations can now share in their worship of God. The culmination of today's passage is the picture of community united to 'proclaim the praise of the LORD' (Isaiah 60:6).

This is how Ephesians sees it, too. The point of God's epiphany is that everyone should be drawn to him. Huge claims are made for Paul—and, by implication, for all Christians—in this passage. In Ephesians 3:2–3 it is said that the 'mystery' of God's inclusive call waits upon Paul's conversion and commission. To Paul and, it is rather grudgingly admitted, to 'the holy apostles and prophets', is entrusted the revelation that all can share in the gospel. The enormity of this claim is clear—God's original plan for his whole creation, thus far 'hidden ... in God', is now entrusted to the Church. The 'rulers and authorities in the heavenly places' (v. 10), who may have felt that they had rights over the Gentiles at least, are shown a community drawn from all races and owing allegiance only to God. Perhaps the church you attend Sunday by Sunday does not always remind you of 'the wisdom of God in its rich variety', but it should.

But again, as with the passage in Isaiah, the purpose of this self-gift of God to his people is not to elevate believers above others, but to enable worship. We can now approach God, knowing that we are called, loved, wanted.

*(Continued on page 13)*

What strange messengers God chooses for his gospel—the dark, mourning figure in Isaiah; the difficult, touchy apostle Paul, whose mission often lands him in prison; the infantile, squabbling Christian Church. And that brings us full circle to the wise men, again. If you actually read the passage in Matthew, trying to forget the preconceptions you bring to it, you will see that they are very odd figures. We don't know where they come from, just that it is 'the East'; we don't know how many of them there are, just how many presents they bring; we don't know their status, though they do have the confidence to call at Herod's palace. What they saw, in the end, cannot have been what they were expecting. They were tracking a king, so they looked for him in a palace, and brought presents that must have looked singularly out of place to Mary and the child Jesus. Not for them the direct visitation of the angels, with clear instructions on how to find the baby—that is reserved for the shepherds. The wise men follow the bright, enigmatic star, using their intelligence to calculate its path, making assumptions in their visit to Herod—and with what fatal consequences.

So the real story of the wise men seems to be about the challenge of God's coming. God's kingship is not what you might expect, and his revelation is blindly unpredictable. But at least the wise men do recognize their journey's end when they see it. We are told that they are 'overwhelmed with joy'. They leave their strange presents and go home satisfied. Let us hope that in that, at least, they are our representatives.

Williams, J. (2003). [\*Lectionary Reflections: Year C\*](#) (pp. 20–21). SPCK.

The gifts that the Magi brought were the sort of things that people in the ancient world would think of as appropriate presents to bring to kings, or even gods.

There is another way as well in which this story points ahead to the climax of the gospel. Jesus will finally come face to face with the representative of the world's greatest king—Pilate, Caesar's subordinate. Pilate will have rather different gifts to give him, though he, too, is warned by a dream not to do anything to him (27:19). His soldiers are the first Gentiles since the Magi to call Jesus 'king of the Jews' (27:29), but the crown they give him is made of thorns, and his throne is a cross. At that moment, instead of a bright star, there will be an unearthly darkness (27:45), out of which we shall hear a single Gentile voice: yes, he really was God's son (27:54).

Listen to the whole story, Matthew is saying. Think about what it meant for Jesus to be the true king of the Jews. And then—come to him, by whatever route you can, and with the best gifts you can find.

Wright, T. (2004). *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15* (pp. 9–12). Society for PCK.

The ancient world, innocent of streetlights, never forgot the night sky. Many people, particularly in the countries to the east of Palestine, had developed the study of the stars and the planets to a fine art, giving each one very particular meanings. They believed, after all, that the whole world was of a piece; everything was interconnected, and when something important was happening on earth you could expect to see it reflected in the heavens. Alternatively, a remarkable event among the stars and planets must mean, they thought, a remarkable event on earth.

Scholars have laboured to discover what Matthew's 'star' might have been. Halley's Comet appeared in 12–11 BC, but that would be very early for this story. Or it could have been some kind of supernova. More likely is the fact that the planets Jupiter and Saturn were in conjunction with each other three times in 7 BC. Since Jupiter was the 'royal' or kingly planet, and Saturn was sometimes thought to represent the Jews, the conclusion was obvious: a new king of the Jews was about to be born. We cannot be certain if this was why the 'wise and learned men' came from the East. But, even if it wasn't, nothing is more likely than that thoughtful astronomers or astrologers (the two went together in the ancient world), noticing strange events in the heavens, would search out their earthly counterparts. If, as it appears, they were also wealthy, they would have no major difficulty in making the journey.

Matthew is not telling us all this simply to satisfy astronomical curiosity. Nor is he offering us the kind of cosy, picture-book story we have created for ourselves out of it, with strange but gentle oriental kings bringing gifts to a child in a stable. (Matthew says nothing about a stable; as far as we know from his **gospel**, Mary and Joseph were simply living in Bethlehem at the time, only moving to Nazareth later (2:23). Nor does he say the visitors were themselves royal.) The overtones of his story are quite different.

What he tells us is political dynamite. Jesus, Matthew is saying, is the true king of the Jews, and old Herod is the false one, a usurper, an impostor. As we shall see, this Herod died soon after Jesus' birth; but his sons ruled on, and one of them, Herod Antipas, plays a significant role in the developing story of Jesus himself. The house of Herod did not take kindly to the idea of anyone else claiming to be 'king of the Jews'.

The arrival of the 'Magi' (that's the word Matthew uses for them; it can refer to 'magicians', or 'astrologers', or experts in interpreting dreams, portents and other strange happenings) introduces us to something which Matthew wants us to be clear about from the start. If Jesus is in some sense king of the Jews, that doesn't mean that his rule is limited to the Jewish people. At the heart of many prophecies about the coming king, the **Messiah**, there were predictions that his rule would bring God's justice and peace to the whole world (e.g. Psalm 72; Isaiah 11:1–10). Matthew will end his gospel with Jesus commissioning his followers to go out and make **disciples** from every nation; this, it seems, is the way that the prophecies of the Messiah's worldwide rule are going to come true. There are hints of the same thing at various points in the gospel (e.g. 8:11), though Jesus himself did not deliberately seek out **Gentiles** during his ministry (see 10:5–6). But here, even when Jesus is an apparently unknown baby, there is a sign of what is to come.

In the western churches, the Epiphany ('manifestation') became an occasion to celebrate one element in the story of Christ's birth, the visit of the far-travelled magi, understood as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Matthew's account speaks simply of "wise men from the east"; later tradition fixed their number at three, made them kings, and recalled their resonant names – Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.

In this perspective, Epiphany-tide is an apt season to pray for the worldwide mission of the Church. The feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, appropriately falls in the Epiphany season.

In the eastern churches, the Epiphany is, rather, the celebration of Christ's baptism at the hands of John, when the heavens were opened, and a voice from heaven declared Jesus to be God's beloved son. The miracle of Cana in Galilee, where Jesus "first manifested his glory", follows immediately:

**Manifest at Jordan's stream,  
Prophet, Priest, and King supreme;  
And at Cana wedding-guest  
In thy Godhead manifest**

*(Christopher Wordsworth)*

*The arrangement of the first Sundays of Epiphany deliberately draws out these aspects.*

The season of joyful celebration which begins at Christmas now continues through the successive Sundays of Epiphany, and the festal cycle ends only with the Feast of the Presentation, or Candlemas.

The child who has been manifested to the Magi at his birth is now recognised by Simeon and Anna, when he comes to be presented in the Temple according to the Law of Israel. He is both "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and "the glory of God's people Israel."

But the redemption he will bring must be won through suffering; the Incarnation is directed to the Passion; and Simeon's final words move our attention away from the celebration of Christmas and towards the mysteries of Easter.

### **A Prayer for the Parish**

Guide us always and everywhere, Lord,  
by your light from on high,  
that we may discern with clear minds  
and treasure with deep affection  
the mystery you have given us to share.  
We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord.