

EPIPHANY CHILDREN'S SERVICE

The coming of the Wise Men

Background

Epiphany or Twelfth Night is usually seen nowadays as the day when Christmas decorations are taken down, but for Christians it is a very ancient festival. From the Fourth Century, it ranked with Easter and Pentecost as one of the three principal festivals of the Church.

The Wise Men are often thought of as Chaldean or Babylonian astrologers, but the word Magi, in St. Matthew's Gospel, is actually a Persian word and there is a tradition that they were buried in the city of Saveh, near modern Teheran; Marco Polo said he visited their tomb in 1272. He also mentioned the tradition, preserved by the Eastern churches, that the gift of myrrh denoted a healer.

Preparation

This is a suitable Sunday School activity and is most effective done with simple costumes. Each Wise Man needs at least one attendant who carries the gift on a tray or cushion and if possible others as well. The attendants cheaply, by making tabards out of crepe paper or cloth, each attendant or retinue wearing a different colour which matches the clothing of the Wise Man. A banner in the appropriate colour can also be carried. The words can be learnt by the children or else read by an adult. Place the crib with figures of Mary, Joseph and Jesus at the front.

Welcome

The Wise Men journeyed for many miles,
leaving behind all they held dear
and facing unknown dangers and hardships,
in faith that their journey would lead to a revelation,
and the opportunity to bestow their gifts
on one called to great things.
We too, as Christians,
are called to take a journey
and face unknown dangers.
We pray we too may have faith
that in our journeying
we will draw closer
to the revelation of God
in our Lord Jesus Christ,
and may offer our gifts
to be used in his service.

Hymn Brightest and best of the sons of the morning

First Reading Isaiah 60: 1 - 3

Hymn First verse only of:

As with gladness men of old
or We three kings from Orient are
or In the bleak midwinter
or other hymn with five verses

Second reading Matthew 2: 1 - 12

Hymn Second verse of hymn

While this is sung, the First Wise Man comes to the front with attendant(s). A crown or gold-coloured ornament is held up so everyone can see it, and then placed in or near the crib.

O Lord Jesus, we offer you our gifts and talents
the things we are good at,
the ways in which we can help others,
our joy and our laughter.
Help us to praise you in our sunlit days,
and every day to follow you,
the one who drew children to you. **Amen.**

Hymn *Third verse of the hymn*

*While this is sung, the Second Wise Man comes to the front with attendant(s).
A scented candle or some incense is lit and held up so everyone can see it, then
placed in or near the crib.*

O Lord Jesus, we offer you our hopes and dreams,
what we are and what we'd like to be.
Make us aware of your presence in our lives
and fill us with your grace
as the scent of this candle [incense] fills this holy place. **Amen.**

Hymn *Fourth verse of hymn is sung*

*While this is sung, the Third Wise Man comes to the front with attendant(s)
A suitable box or container is held up so everyone can see it,
then placed in or near the crib*

O Lord Jesus, we offer you our hurts and failures,
our tears and sadnesses,
the things we do wrong
and the things we can't do right.
Help us and heal us
as you have healed so many
in your life on earth and thereafter. **Amen.**

Hymn *Fifth verse of hymn is sung.*

*All the Wise Men and their attendants stand round the crib.
The leader goes to the front with a lighted candle
and says the following prayer:*

O Lord Jesus, we meet you here at the crib,
we marvel at your being born in weakness,
as we also have been born,
Give us the strength and the love
to follow you through all the seasons
of your earthly life,
that we may come at last
to the heavenly kingdom,
where all will be made perfect,
and we shall know as we are known. **Amen.**

Final hymn *Earth has many a noble city*

*The leader walks with the candle to the doorway, followed by the Wise Men and
their attendants and gives this blessing*

Blessing

May you be blessed in your times of joy and success,
May you be blessed in your times of dreaming and striving,
May you be blessed in your times of sadness and failure.
And may you feel the strength, love and support

of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
surrounding you and sustaining you
wherever you may go. **Amen.**

OR

As the wise men were led by the light of a star,
so may you be led by the light of the gospel,
and through your own lives
pass on the light of Christ to others.
And may the blessing of God almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you and all those whom you love,
today and in the days to come. **Amen.**