

St Nicolas
Forest Hill with Shotover

Epiphany Carol Service

Epiphany celebrates the appearance of God's glory in the world through the birth of Jesus, our Emmanuel ('God with us'), and the revelation of the incarnation to the Gentiles, and indeed the whole of creation. It has been marked since the 3rd century with a Feast Day on the 6 January and celebrated in both East and West in a rich variety of ways. In the Western Church, the emphasis has been on the nativity itself and the acknowledgement of Christ's sovereignty over all through the visit of the Magi bringing their gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh. The revelation of his true nature is echoed by the words of the prophet Simeon, the Nunc Dimittis, at the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (2 February) that marks the end of the season of Epiphany.

The Greek word epiphany (ἐπιφάνεια) means literally 'sudden appearance' and refers above all to the 'manifestation' of a god. It is the moment and the means by which we see that Jesus is so much more than a good human being, a wise teacher and a moral example but in fact God made man, the Word become flesh. It is in this sense that Simeon declares him to be 'salvation' and 'a light to lighten the Gentiles' and that later Jesus calls himself 'the Light of the World', and so the symbolism of light pervades both this season and our service. Christ calls us out of darkness and into light, so that we may recognise the imprints of his divine fashioning in all creation. We pray that our eyes may be opened to see his glory: to have reverence for the whole of creation and respect for every person, for all are made in the image and likeness of God.

Welcome and notices

Organ voluntary

Introit sung by the Choir

The Fader of Heven by *Peter Maxwell Davies*

Bidding Prayer

My brothers and sisters, we are gathered to celebrate with joy the appearance of God's glory in the world through the birth of Jesus, who is Emmanuel, God with us; and to reflect upon the visit of the magi bringing homage to their King at his birth.

As we rejoice in this, the Word made flesh, who called us out of darkness into light, so we pray that his love and faithfulness may be known in all the world.

We pray for the unity and mission of Christ's Church, and for all who minister the gospel of Christ; we pray for the world, that we may have reverence for the natural order and respect for every person, made in the image and likeness of God; and we pray for those who stand in need, for the lonely, the fearful, the sick and the bereaved, and for all who have no-one to pray for them.

May God our Father take us and use us in his service; may he open our eyes to see his glory and equip us to bless his people, now and at all times.

Amen.

Believing the promises of God,
let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

**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 47: Brightest and best of the sons of the morning

Prayers of Penitence

The grace of God has dawned upon the world
through our Saviour Jesus Christ,
who sacrificed himself for us
to purify a people as his own.
Let us confess our sins.

Silence is kept.

God be gracious to us and bless us,
and make your face shine upon us:
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May your ways be known on the earth,
your saving power among the nations:
Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

You, Lord, have made known your salvation,
and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations:
Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

May God who loved the world so much
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour
forgive us our sins
and make us holy to serve him in the world,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Bible Reading: Matthew 1:18-25

The birth of Jesus

Carol sung by the Choir

O little one sweet *Trad. German harmonised by J S Bach*

Poem: At the Manger Mary Sings by WH Auden

Carol sung by the Choir

Lullay my liking *by Gustav Holst*

Bible Reading: Psalm 72:1-14

Carol sung by the Choir

The Infant King

Prayer

Heavenly Father,
who sent your Son to us as a vulnerable little baby,
be with us, your children, at this time of new beginnings:
love and protect us in our sorrows and our joys,
that in all things we may embrace your holy will
and rejoice in your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn: We three kings of Orient are

Bible Reading: Matthew 2:1-18

The wise men follow the star and the flight to Egypt.

Carol sung by the Choir

Vox in Rama *arr. Julia Stutfield*

Poem: Take only what is most important by Serhiy Zhadan

Carol sung by the Choir

The Coventry Carol

Bible Reading: Matthew 2:19-23

The return to Nazareth

Carol sung by the Choir

A babe is borne I wys *by F Bainton*

Prayer

O God, grant your peace and healing
to all who suffer in your broken world today:
and accept the gifts we have to offer,
not gold, frankincense, or myrrh,
but hearts and voices
raised in praise of Jesus Christ,
our Light and our Salvation.

Amen.

Hymn 51: As with gladness men of old

Intercessions

We pray that Christ may be seen
in the life of the Church.
You have called us into the family
of those who are the children of God.
May our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ
be strengthened by your grace.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a temple
where the Holy Spirit can dwell.
Give us clean hands and pure hearts
so that our lives will reflect your holiness.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be a light to the world,
so that those in darkness come to you.
May our lives shine as a witness
to the saving grace you have given for all.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be members of your body,
so that when one suffers, all suffer together.
We ask for your comfort and healing power
to bring hope to those in distress.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

You have called us to be the Bride,
where you, Lord, are the Bridegroom.
Prepare us for the wedding feast,
where we will be united with you for ever.
Jesus, Lord of the Church,
in your mercy hear us.

Jesus, Lord of the Church,
you have called us into fellowship with all your saints.
We unite our prayers with theirs
and ask for grace to serve you with joy
where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for all eternity.
Amen.

The Collect

O God,
who by the leading of a star
manifested your only Son
to the peoples of the earth:
mercifully grant that we,
who know you now by faith,
may at last behold your glory face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

The Dismissal

**Hymn 49: O worship the Lord
in the beauty of holiness**

The Blessing

May God the Father,
who led the wise men by the shining of a star
to find the Christ, the Light from light,
lead us also in our pilgrimage to find the Lord.

Amen.

May God, who has delivered us from the dominion of darkness,
give us a place with the saints in light
in the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Amen.

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in our hearts and fill our lives
with his joy and peace.

Amen.

And the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.

Amen.

Organ voluntary

Four Parishes Benefice

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