



KAURIHOHORE / KAMO CO-OPERATING PARISH

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Sunday 11 January 2026 – Epiphany 1

Our Service today is led by
Rosalie Gwilliam, one of our Lay Preachers.

Welcome to our service this morning.

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.

Humility: we recognise we do not have all the answers but are prayerfully journeying together as we try to seek them.

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

Community time during the service is a good opportunity to ask for prayers for yourself or others.

**After the service you are invited to share in morning tea,
either in the kitchen or on the deck.**

If you, or someone you know, would appreciate a visit from one of our **Pastoral Network Team**, please speak to the service leader.

*You are invited to stand if you are able,
for the hymns and the offering prayer.*

*You are invited to share in reading aloud the responses in **Bold Type**.*

Welcome

Introduction

The Epiphany theme of light shining in the darkness contains a hidden message: the light of King Jesus is a light of justice for the oppressed, help for the poor, and righteousness and peace to brighten a world darkened by sin and war. News articles abound with the obvious message that darkness still covers the earth. Yet today's readings bear the good – and challenging – news that we are heirs to the promise in Christ Jesus and are called to bring light in times of darkness.

Call to worship

Light! Light! Light and more light.

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of God has risen upon you.

Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men came from the East, saying

Where is he who is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.

[Hymn HFTC 338: Brightest and best](#)

Prayer

Let us pray

God of justice and peace, abide in our hearts, that we may be people of your promise. Rain righteousness and hope in the dry places of sin and despair. Shower us with your glory and strength, that we too may be instruments of your grace – radiant beams of deliverance for the needy, justice for the oppressed, and caring love for the poor.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Psalm 72 Long live the King (*Sylvia Purdie*)

Praise to the King!

Long live the King!

Our King is full of grace and truth,

from him come springs of living water.

He brings peace and justice,

good news to the poor.

He lifts up the broken,

and takes down the proud.

He will out-shine the sun,

and outlive the moon.

And he shall reign for ever and ever

his kingdom will have no end.

From sea to sea,

from nation to nation.

From his fulness,

all people are blessed.

His is the name above all names,

King above all kings.

Blessed is the Lord

who does wonders!

To the end of time

his majesty fills the universe!

Hymn HFTC 197: Joy to the world

Prayer

Let us pray.

God of many races and faces, of the wise and the foolish, gladly we come to your light. You were ready for us, ages before we looked for you. You believed in us, long before we started to believe in you.

We thank you that we are counted among those who have seen your guiding star come to rest over Bethlehem, where we find your most penetrating yet gentle light. Here, in the company of Jesus our search ends and our journey begins.

Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, is the Lord of Bethlehem! Heaven and earth are full of your glory! Glory be to you most high! Amen

Readings

Isaiah 60: 1-6

Matthew 2: 1-12

The Magi (B D Prewer)

They are still arriving, some come to kneel, others to stare, drawn by his star.

They gather from the East, South, North and West, seeking a light to redeem night.

They come in sore weakness or in their strength, seeking the Word not before heard.

They offer their gifts, baring their souls: gold with their prayers, thorns with their jeers.

They leave with new dreams, or with new fears, in joy or shame, never the same

Reflection – Coming to Light

The apostle Paul once described our understanding of God as like seeing through dark or frosted glass. If someone was standing outside the window, we'd know they were there but we would have trouble working out who it was. It's the same as seeing in the dark. We can pick up the broad outline but we can't make out much detail. As we seek God, and seek to understand God's ways, we often feel as though we are entering a dark cloud of mystery, in which we can see some general shapes but the detail we crave is shrouded in the unknown.

The word Epiphany is a strange sounding word which comes from Greek and means appearance or revelation. It's used to speak of either an appearance of a divine being, or of the revelation of the basic nature of

something or some essential truth. That is how it gets its association with light. Something is suddenly illuminated and made clear. Something comes to light, becomes apparent to all who look. The Christian celebration of Epiphany then, is the celebration of the revelation of God's nature and purpose in the appearance of Christ. The story of the visit of the magi is traditionally associated with Epiphany because it speaks to us of the truth about who Jesus is, and will be coming to be light for the whole world. And it does it in a rather provocative way. To us, the statement probably seems innocent enough. 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 rise in the east and we have come to worship him. Innocent enough? Not to a proudly righteous Jew in the first century, its not. This would have the hackles up on the backs of their necks already.

Who came to Jerusalem? Magi? The description of people as Magi could have a number of slightly different meanings, but none of them would endear them to a devout Jew. At its most innocent it referred to a possessor and user of supernatural knowledge and ability. The wise man, whose special knowledge comes from reading the stars or from other mystical means of divination inaccessible to ordinary people. The use of any form of divination, astrological or otherwise had long been forbidden to the Israelites, as a thing abhorrent to the Lord. This more specific meaning of the word magi referred to the priest of the distinctive religions of Babylon. They were speakers of the sacred words at the pagan sacrifices. At worst, the term referred to a magician or sorcerer or even an deceiver. Magi were people whose activities were completely condemned and prohibited throughout the scriptures and were an anathema to the people of Israel.

But Matthew openly writes that Magi from the East came to Jerusalem. Magi from where? From the East. Probably from modern day Iraq or somewhere close by. Not exactly a popular Jewish holiday destination. They probably wouldn't have aroused quite the fear that a modern- day Iraqi arriving at Jerusalem asking for directions to the local maternity hospital would, but they still wouldn't have been especially welcome in the first century.

God's love respects none of our boundaries. Not only is it suspicious of strangers who come seeking God's anointed one, when, as the story makes clear, the local religious experts have got no idea that he has arrived. The story goes on to make it clear that these suspicious

strangers have got a pretty good idea who Jesus is, and how he should be honoured. The gifts that they bring are both a fulfilment of the words of the prophet Isaiah, about the gifts to be brought from foreign places to honour God's chosen king, but they are also rich symbols about who he is and what lies ahead of him. Gold is always the gift for kings.

Frankincense is the gift offered to God, a fragrant marker of the presence of God in our midst. And myrrh is a spice that is added to the oil used for anointing priests, and it is also used as a pain killer and an embalming spice. So, Matthew's description of their gift giving is a clear announcement: this is God's anointed one, the messiah. This is the supreme ruler of the world, God with us., and, also God's suffering servant who will face pain and death in bringing the light of God's love into the world.

Luke's story of the shepherds tells us that the good news is more likely to be recognised by the poor and outcast than the respectable and religious. Matthew wants to make sure that we know that the good news has broken the bounds of Israel too. Now suspicious pagans are just as likely as religious Jews to recognise the light and come to worship. Your social, religious, and ethnic pedigrees no longer give you the inside running with God. And if you hold power in this world, and continue to exercise it in ways that lack justice, humility and compassion for the outsiders, then look out. No wonder Heron was thrown into a spin.

God never promised that the good news wouldn't cause trouble, and when the lights begin to go on and people begin to comprehend who this baby is, and what his arrival is going to mean for the world, all hell can break loose. But Jesus died to get that light and that promise of God's all-inclusive love through to you and me. God loves you and will stop at nothing to get that message to sink in and begin lighting up your life. And now, as people who constantly affirm that Jesus Christ is light of the world, the challenge to us is to become bearers of that light too. God is calling us to become an epiphany, to become a revelation of God's love and transforming power in the world. It is this message, and this challenge – this epiphany – that we gather to celebrate this morning.

[**Hymn HFTC 506: God whose almighty word**](#)

Offering

Receive these gifts, glorious God, as if they were those same precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh first offered to you child, Jesus Christ. Shine through these gifts, that they may become lights if hope and joy in a world dark with despair and sorrow. Shine through us, that we may be beacons of justice and love in all that we say, and in all that we do. Amen

Community time

Prayer of intercession

Let us long for, and ask for, the light of God in Christ Jesus to drive back the darkness of human error, misery and evil.

Let us pray

Where people are lost and jaded in contemporary consumerism; where addiction to alcohol, other drugs, and gambling is causing ruin, we pray for the hope of epiphany.

Where dictators rule without mercy or wisdom, where democracies are manipulated by the rich and powerful, we pray for the justice of epiphany. Where youth, having no faith in the future, contemplate suicide, where the long term unemployed exist without hope, we pray for the light of epiphany.

Where the church dodges its evangelical mission, where the church evades its social and political responsibility, we pray for the truth of epiphany.

Where the terminally ill face death fearfully, where people without purpose face life cynically, we pray for the love of epiphany.

Most holy friend, to you all souls are precious, take from our eyes the scales of prejudice or indifference, that we may increasingly share your compassion for the neglected and abused people, and do all we can to make your love real to them. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn HFTC 65: O come all ye faithful

Benediction

See and be radiant, for you are light of the world.

Rejoice, for Christ has come and is shining still!

Be Christ's glory, children of God, shining with love and hope!

May love, peace and joy be with us always.

Sung amen

Acknowledgements:

Abington worship annual. 2011

Bruce Prewer liturgies. bruceprewer.com/DocA/09EEEpiph.htm
<https://southyarrabaptist.church/coming-to-light>

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