Epiphany

Scripture: Matthew 2:1–12 NRSV

Gathering
Welcome

Epiphany is observed 12 days after Christmas, January 6. Epiphany means “to reveal” or “to make manifest.” In the Gospel of Matthew the story of the Magi traveling to find the infant King is told to illustrate the manifestation of God, revealed to all the world, not just the people of Israel.

Prayer for Peace

R ing a bell or chime three times slowly.  
L ight the peace candle.

Love that is all light,  
Love that is all being,  
Love that is all that was, is, and will be,  
We seek your face.

Entering the world as an infant,  
Walking this earth as a servant,  
Healing this world as a Savior.  
We seek your face.

G rant us peace, O Lord.  
G rant us peace.  
A men.

Spiritual Practice
Dwelling in the Word

I will read a scripture aloud. As you hear the scripture take note of words, images, or phrases that come to mind. Try not to focus on them. Simply let them rest with you. After a brief period of silence I will read the scripture a second time. As you hear it, listen again for how God’s Spirit is nudging you or catching your attention.
Read Matthew 2:10–11 NRSV.

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.

Pause and allow a brief period of silence. Read the scripture a second time:

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Read the following questions aloud and invite group members to share their responses and reflections:

• What images and thoughts came to mind while listening to this scripture?
• The Magi brought gifts. What gifts do you bring to this community and the world?

Close the sharing time with a brief prayer of gratitude for all that has been shared.

Sharing Around the Table
Matthew 2:1–12 NRSV

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.
Today we celebrate Epiphany, which is the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. The earliest Christians were Jews who encountered Jesus. After Jesus’ ascension, the apostles mainly taught Gentiles, or non-Jews, about the gospel. This story establishes Gentile wise men as being an appropriate audience to receive the message of Jesus, anticipating the missionary work that would happen later.

This reading sets up two ideas about kingship. Herod clings to power and is threatened by a rumor of a child King. He seeks the aid of priests, scribes, and wise men, but he also deceives them. Jesus’ kingship is manifest in the stars, prophesied in Hebrew scripture, and then divinely protected when the wise men are told in a dream not to return to Herod after meeting Jesus. (Alejandro Duarte, “Matthew,” in Daniel Patte (ed) *Global Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), p. 355.)

Ultimately, this scripture leads us to understand that encounters with Jesus—encounters with God—are available to all people, and not a select few. The world of Jesus is one in which an infant born into poverty is described as royalty and worthy of admiration by wise men. The message of Jesus, and the peaceable kingdom he later will describe, disrupts our expectations about power and value.

**Questions**

1. The wise men were sensitive to their environment and found a path that led to an encounter with God. How do we find our own paths to God today?
2. How can we imagine the encounter of Mary, Jesus, and the wise men? In rereading the passage and imagining that scene in our minds, what stands out? What do we hear, see, and smell?

**Sending**

**Generosity Statement**

“Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint” (Doctrine and Covenants 163:9). The offering basket is available if you would like to support ongoing small-group ministries as part of your generous response.

The offering prayer for Epiphany is adapted from A Disciple’s Generous Response:

Revealing God, May we always be generous. You have gifted each of us with boundless grace and unending love. May our response to that love and grace be humble service to others, and may generosity be part of our nature. Amen.

**Invitation to Next Meeting**

**Closing Hymn**

CCS 438, “We Three Kings of Orient Are”

**Closing Prayer**

**Optional Additions Depending on Group**

- Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper
- Thoughts for Children
Prayer for Peace

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Grant us peace.
Amen.
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**Communion Statement**

We come together to share in the Lord’s Supper “as a visible witness of loving Christian fellowship and shared remembrance of Jesus Christ’s death and resurrection” (Doctrine and Covenants 164:4a).

All committed followers of Christ are invited to partake, but no one should feel pressured to receive the emblems.

Let us celebrate the revelation of Christ in the world as we share in Communion as an expression of blessing, healing, peace, and community. In preparation let’s sing from Community of Christ Sings 520, “God Extends an Invitation.”


**Thoughts for Children**

Materials: pictures depicting the wise men or figures from a Nativity set. Star-shaped stickers or paper cut into star shapes, tape.

Say: What do you know about the story of the wise men? (Pause to listen to the children’s answers.)

Share pictures or figures of the wise men while discussing the story as follows.

The wise men believed the appearance of a new star meant a new king had been born!

When they saw the new star, they began following it. It led them to Bethlehem, to the place where baby Jesus was with his parents.

Stars are special! They symbolize light, which is God!

Until the star of Bethlehem appeared, people had been waiting for the light of God to come into the world.

Do you know someone who has been a light to you, just like the star was a light to the wise men? (Pause for responses.)

Is there someone who helps you to know Jesus? (Pause for responses.)

Are you a light for someone else? Do you show God’s love and light to your brothers and sisters, friends, or neighbors? (Pause for responses.)

I have two stars for each of you. One star is for you to stick on a person who has been a light to you, helping you see the light of God.

The other is for you to stick on yourself, as a reminder to always be a guiding light to those around you.

Hand out the stickers and thank the children for participating.