



Sunday December 31, 2023
The Epiphany of the Lord

St. Paul's Anglican Church, Uxbridge



THE GATHERING OF THE COMMUNITY

Prelude

Welcome & Opening Greeting (Please remain seated.)

One: Today we welcome the magi into our Christmas story.

All: A story of wonder and light, of angels, shepherds, and virgin birth.

One: In the midst of darkness, they chose to follow the light.

All: Their story gives us hope that God still sends light for us to follow.

One: We come today knowing we too are on a journey.

All: May we be faithful followers of the light of God so that we too can be bearers of hope and justice for a dim and lonely world. (<https://www.gnjumc.org>)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. **And also with you.**

Processional Hymn

O Come, All Ye Faithful (vs. 1-4, 5b)

CP 118

Land Acknowledgement

Together we say

The Township of Uxbridge is situated on the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, Mississauga, and Chippewa (Anishinaabe) people. We acknowledge that these lands are covered under the Williams Treaties and are home to many Indigenous communities. We honour, recognize, and respect this nation and Indigenous Peoples as the traditional stewards of the lands and waters on which we now live, work, and play. (Township of Uxbridge)

Litany for Epiphany:

One: God of all time,

All: We praise and adore you for breaking into the [dimness] of this world with the glorious light of your presence.

One: A light which made your love for the world visible in the babe born in Bethlehem

All: Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour.

One: A light which guided those gift-bearing travellers from afar

All: To find and worship the Christ-child.

One: A light which leads us to you, now revealed in Jesus Christ.

All: We pray that you will accept our worship for it arises from hearts and minds
in awe over the enormity of your gift to us of pure love.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. (Moirá Laidlaw.)

Collect of the Day

Revealing God, as the seeking magi of old travelled great distances with questions about a star, and expended great effort to acknowledge the coming of Christ the King, so we acknowledge this great epiphany: Christ has come. Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. **Amen.**

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE WORD

First Reading:

A Christmas Interview with the Wise Men by Paul Berchtold.

Welcome, sages from foreign lands!

Why have you come with retinue?

Your caravan is numerous,

What do we owe your visit to?

Months ago we found in the sky,

A star our writings long foretold.

It led us to Jerusalem,

We thought it must the secret hold.

But Jerusalem, so crowded,

Was too busy in great uproar.

They took us to King Herod,

A palace rotten to the core.

We asked where on earth is he who

Is the newborn king of the Jews?

We saw his star, have come from East,

This only chance we dare not lose.

In Bethlehem, their priests told us,

When searching in the Holy Book.
Herod said, Come back and tell me,
You first go and have a look.

Back on the road, we saw the star.
Our hearts rejoiced exceedingly.
It led us to a house in town.
We followed it most willingly. (cheerfully)

We found the child, simple and poor,
No crowns, jewels, or costly rings.
His Mother Mary, welcomed us.
We then adored the King of kings.

We then offered our precious gifts,
Frank-incense, and myrrh, and gold.
We then knew a much richer find,
A love that can hardly be told.

We did not go back to Herod.
An angel warned us in a dream.
Herod had lied, saying he would,
Come to adore, so it would seem.

Thank you, wise men of the ages,
I see you're filled with peace and joy.
For peace on earth, first in our hearts.
Heavenly means we must employ.

Reader: Another inspired word.

People: Thanks be to God.

Gradual Alleluia

CP 405

*“Alleluia, alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia! Give praise to his name.”*

Holy Gospel Matthew 2:1-12

Reader: The Lord be with you

People: And also with you

Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew

People: Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory—this was during Herod’s kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, “Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a

star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him." When word of their inquiry got to Herod, he was terrified—and not Herod alone, but most of Jerusalem as well. Herod lost no time. He gathered all the high priests and religion scholars in the city together and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" They told him, "Bethlehem, Judah territory. The prophet Micah wrote it plainly: It's you, Bethlehem, in Judah's land, no longer bringing up the rear. From you will come the leader who will shepherd-rule my people, my Israel." Herod then arranged a secret meeting with the scholars from the East. Pretending to be as devout as they were, he got them to tell him exactly when the birth-announcement star appeared. Then he told them the prophecy about Bethlehem, and said, "Go find this child. Leave no stone unturned. As soon as you find him, send word and I'll join you at once in your worship." Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time! They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh. In a dream, they were warned not to report back to Herod. So they worked out another route, left the territory without being seen, and returned to their own country. *(The Message)*

Reader: The Gospel of Christ

People: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

Gradual Alleluia

CP 405

*"Alleluia, alleluia! Give thanks to the risen Lord.
Alleluia, alleluia! Give praise to his name."*

Reflection

Contemplative Pause

People: God we hear and receive your words of hope and encouragement and with thoughtful gladness we sing.

Lord, We Hear Your Word with Gladness (vs 1)

CP 447

*"Lord we hear your word with gladness: you have spoken – we rejoice:
Words of love and life and freedom – help us make their truth our choice!
Now in holy celebration for your Word we worship you;
Spoken, written, known in Jesus, ours today to prove anew."*

The Apostle's Creed

Let us confess the faith of our baptism, as we say,

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Confession and Absolution

Dear friends in Christ, God is steadfast in love and infinite in mercy; he welcomes sinners and invites them to his table. Let us confess our sins, confident in God's forgiveness.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and keep you in eternal life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Peace

May the peace of the risen Christ be with you! **And also with you!**

THE CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST

Offertory Hymn

The Virgin Mary Had a Baby Boy

CP 128

Prayer over the Gifts

God of Light. We take these gifts and present them with love [and appreciation]. We rejoice in our ability to share, but long to do more. Help us to be like the magi, and carefully plan the gifts we bring you. May we not be satisfied with what is enough. May these gifts be used so others may know the hope that is found in you. In His name, we pray. **Amen.** (<https://www.gnjumc.org>)

Communion

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

All: And also with you.

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to God.

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and faithful and hope-filled, in all things to give thanks and praise to our Loving God; the one who has created us and created all. In the beginning, you spoke light into being, you brought order to darkness that it might not overcome creation, and you created us in your image, called us good, and blessed us with abundant life. When we turned away, you gave us direction, and joined us in our journey. ...

You gave us gifts that we are blessed to give back to you in covenant-love: frankincense and myrrh to adorn your temple, gifts of speech and song to sing your praise, and persistent hope in your promises of faithfulness. You spoke these promises through your prophets who boldly called your people to move in new and changed ways, to seek justice and walk in your light, and to await the coming Messiah with faithful anticipation. And so, with your people in every nation, and the whole company of heaven, we praise your name and join in their unending hymn saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

You are holy, our God, and blessed, God-made-flesh, you humbled yourself in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, that in him, you might be God with us, for us. Just as you led the wise men by a star to the birthplace of Christ, so would Christ himself become a light, leading all people to you. Just as the magi offered their precious gifts to the child in the manger, so would Christ offer himself as the most precious gift of love to all. Just as the kings obeyed your warning to travel home by a different road, so Christ obediently walked the road to Calvary, that we might find our home in him. By Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, you created your church, saving us from sin and death, and entering into relationship with us anew by water and Spirit.

On the night he was born, Jesus brought new hope to the world and on the night before his betrayal, he promised that hope would be ours always. Taking bread, he thanked you, broke it and shared it with friends, even those who would betray and deny him, saying, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way he took the cup, also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

As we remember the boundless love of your acts in Jesus Christ, **We offer ourselves as gifts in gratitude, our lives as holy sacrifices, stars twinkling with the brilliance of**

Christ's light, as we proclaim the mystery of faith. Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Holy Spirit, come be with us here and now. Be upon these gifts of bread and wine. Make them the body and blood of Christ for us, that, nourished by them, we may go out and feed the world.

God, unite us in your Spirit with the infant king, with all your people in every nation, **that we might give generously of our gifts in ministry to the world, following where you lead, even when you take us in new directions. May we be relentless bearers of hope and makers of justice in a world that desperately needs both, until Christ comes in final victory, and we break bread together at the heavenly table.**

Through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we, your church, give you all glory and honor, almighty God, now and always. **Amen.** (<https://www.gnjumc.org>)

The Lord's Prayer

Our Parent, who is among us, blessed be your Creation.

May your reign be a reality here on earth.

May we become more interested in building your kin-dom here and now than in waiting for it to come down from above.

Let us share our bread with those who hunger.

Let us learn to forgive as well as to receive forgiveness.

Help us through the time of temptation, delivering us from all evil.

For ours are the eternal blessings that you pour upon the earth.

Amen. (J. Manny Santiago)

Breaking of the Bread

Celebrant: We break the bread of life, and that life is the light of the world.

All: **God here among us, light in the midst of us, bring us to light and life.**

Celebrant: The gifts of God for the people of God

All: **Thanks be to God**

Communion

During Communion

Wise Men, They Came to Look for Wisdom

CP 161

Prayer after Communion

God of all the nations of the earth, guide us with your light. Help us to recognize Christ as he comes to us in this eucharist and in our neighbours. May we welcome him with love, for he is Lord now and for ever. **Amen.** (<https://ascensionnl.ca>)

The Doxology

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the Church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.

Sending forth and blessing

As we leave this place to shine for all the world to see.

We go to spread the good news of light and love, righteousness and justice.

Go now and follow the star that will guide you on your journey this week, this [approaching] year, and forever.

As the Magi of old, we go out in trust and excitement, transformed in the presence of the child of light.

May the blessing of the God of light rest upon you and fill you with light.

Amen. (www.ministrymatters.com)

Announcements

Recessional Hymn

Joy to the World

CP 154

The Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the risen Lord

Thanks be to God!

Postlude