

Epiphany

A Celebrate! Worship for Every Festival⁺
**With Options for a Service of Holy
Communion or for a Dinner Church**



Planning and Preparation Notes

The Silver Star, by Carl Sandburg (text below as part of the liturgy)

The inspirational source for our Epiphany Crosslights, this poem comes from Sandburg's 1957 collection, *The Sandburg Range*. It captures the human longing for moments when our lives intersect with the Divine.

Instructions and words for Dinner Church will be in italics.

Dinner Church

If you are doing this service as Dinner Church, consider setting up your space with tables around a large open space in the middle where musical groups and readers can lead from the midst of the community. If possible, hang a large, star-shaped light in the center of the space.

Select poems and songs that focus on the themes of the day: Christ's birth, the visiting Magi, light, joy, and the close of the Christmas Season. Include a variety of hymns, anthems, folk songs, and carols. This story that never wears out has been told and retold in many ways and in many cultures! It may be helpful to have a "Master of Ceremonies" to introduce some of the pieces and/or to provide a bulletin with notes about the selections.

For your dinner church menu, consider inviting families to bring in foods that reflect their heritage in order to celebrate the many traditions that are part of the body of Christ in your place. You can do the same with decorations, inviting people to set tables with their own Christmas dishes or Nativity sets from their travels, etc... Provide time after the service for people to explore other's tables and share stories of the treasures they've brought to share.

Liturgy

GATHERING

Entrance and Wassailing

The word "wassail" comes from the Anglo-Saxon, "Wes hail," meaning "be whole" – a greeting for "good health!" The wassailers traveled from house to house singing, with a wassail cup which their hosts were expected to fill.

Prelude

Try something joyful that is different from your ordinary pattern. Process in together from a gathering space or narthex (or even from outside, weather permitting), ringing bells or singing something familiar on the way. Have children lead the way with star wands.

If you're doing dinner church, have people fill their cups as they reach their seats. If you have handbells or chimes, consider a change ring to bring people together into worship.

Once everyone is in their places, set the tone with a traditional wassailing song like *Deck the Halls* or *The Boar's Head Carol* or a hymn about the journey of the Magi (ex: *As With Gladness Men of Old*, ELW 302).

Greeting and Welcome

P: Christ is with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany! The word “epiphany” means “manifestation” and comes from the Greek word for “reveal” or make known. Here in worship on Epiphany, we celebrate that Jesus is the manifestation or revealing or in-breaking of God’s light for all people of every time and place. That means people years ago and people in the future who haven’t even been born yet and all of us and everyone all over the world right now! God’s light, Jesus, is for everyone!

Because God’s light is for everyone, everyone is welcome in God’s house and family, and so are their gifts. Just as the magi showed their respect for Christ with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, we offer our gifts and talents to share God’s light with others. Whatever we bring—no matter how simple—God accepts and puts to good use.

Sharing our gifts with God and each other gives us lots of joy! So, I hope you’re ready to sing loud and share that joy today, and then to take the Light of Christ with you when you leave today to share it with the world around you throughout the week.

Prayer of the Day

O God, on this day you revealed your Son to the nations by the leading of a star. Lead us now by faith to know your presence in our lives, and bring us at last to the full vision of your glory, through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Song: Brightest and Best of the Stars (ELW 303)

If Dinner Church: serve the first course during this song.

WORD

The Star

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

¹Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

²For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the Lord will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

³Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

⁴Lift up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from far away,

and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

⁵Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

⁶A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

If Dinner Church, add an anthem/special music or two here while people eat the first part of their meal. Themes of light (particularly starlight), God's glory, and the wide inclusiveness of the good news for all people should be lifted up.

Poem, *The Silver Star* by Carl Sandberg

The silver of one star
Plays cross-lights against pine green
And the play of this silver
crosswise against the green
Is an old story...
thousands of years.

And sheep raisers on the hills by night
Watching the wooly four-footed ramblers,
Watching a single silver star –
Why does the story never wear out?

And a baby slung in a feed-box
Back in a barn in a Bethlehem slum,
A baby's first cry mixing with the crunch
Of a mule's teeth on Bethlehem Christmas corn,
Baby fists softer than snowflakes of Norway,

The vagabond Mother of Christ
And the vagabond men of wisdom,
All in a barn on a winter night,
And a baby there in swaddling clothes on hay –
Why does the story never wear out?

The sheen of it all
Is a star silver and a pine green
For the heart of a child asking a story,
The red and hungry, red and hankering heart

Percussion Finger Cymbals
Voice

Star is ris - ing

2
Perc. F.C.
Voice

Look! A star!

3
Perc. F.C.
Voice

Fol-low the star

4
Perc. F.C.
Voice

Fol-low the star, fol-low the star.

5
Perc. F.C.
Voice

Fol-low-ing yon-der star

6
Perc. F.C.
Voice

Gold myrrh fran - kin-cense

7
Perc. F.C.
Voice

Hush! The ba - by is slee - ping sh sh sh.

+ *“Celebrate! Worship for Every Festival” liturgies are part of the Nourishing Vocation with Children Project at St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN. This liturgy is based on the Epiphany Crosslights Service from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Portage, MI, originally created by Dr. Janet Hill, Director of Music. It has been updated and adapted to this context. This full attribution must be included, along with the logos below, on any reproduction or distribution of this material, along with the attributions below about the readings.*

