

# Epiphanytide is for Mission!

A series of reflections, questions and prayers for the Epiphanytide season with a focus on mission.

## How to use this resource

Each Sunday in Epiphanytide is contained on its own page below. Each Sunday has a theme related to the season and the topic of mission. The theme is explored in a brief reflection and accompanied by 2 or 3 questions that are meant to draw out insight on the theme.

The questions (or just one) could be presented for silent reflection in prayer. Or participants could be invited to share with their neighbour or participants could be invited to write a sentence or two on a hand out (maybe part of the bulletin if you use one, or a special hand out of stars or post-its) and collected to gather feedback from the parish about their thoughts on mission.

The reflections could be read as is or edited as needed or used as inspiration for your own ideas. It could be presented during worship (maybe right before or after the collect, as part of a sermon time or right before the peace). Or the materials could be used during another weekly gathering or bible study.

It is all offered to help parishes think intentionally about our part in the work of God's Spirit for joy, healing, transformation and reconciliation within ourselves and our own communities.

**BONUS** Formats for intercessions that focus on Epiphanytide and mission have been included at the end. They have been adapted from the Church of England seasonal materials available online.

## Jan 4 - Epiphany! ☀️

The season after Christmas is called "Epiphany." The word epiphany is a sudden and striking realization. It's the moment when the penny drops and everything becomes clear in a new light. The epiphany for Christians is the revealing of God and God's mission for the world fully in Jesus ("Christ is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation, for in him were all things made, in heaven and on earth... God made all his fullness to dwell in him, to reconcile through him all creation to himself, everything on earth and everything in heaven, all gathered into peace by his death on the cross.") (Col 1:1, 20)

Through Epiphany we see that the good news, God's great work of love, is always greater and bigger and ever expanding. Not only would a baby be born, not only would a family grow, not only would shepherds gather, not only would Kings and nations pay homage, not only would some be called but Everything in all of creation is gathered together in this life of Jesus. The epiphany is that Jesus is for us, not just me, but all of us and the whole of creation together. God has a mission, to gather all things together in Jesus. We are part of that great work of love, through the faith of Christ and by the gift of the Holy Spirit. We live that mission together as a church in the world.

The Epiphany shows us how far that love of God grows and the actions and relationships it calls us to be part of where we are. It is a good season for us to reflect on the power of the Spirit at work in the world and our part, as followers of Jesus', in what God is doing in our lives and communities.

Our reading from Matthew tells us about the Magi, who were scholars, leaders and rulers from other lands who came to honour Jesus as a new King. It was the appearance of a new star in the heavens, a new light in the darkness, that had shown them what God was doing in creation. The desire of the Magi to seek Jesus shows us that his life is Good News for all people of every nation. The appearance of the star shows us that this life of Jesus is not only transforming the life of people and the earth but in deed the whole of creation and heaven itself. It's important to remember though, that as beautiful and radiant as Jesus' prophetic star is, it is not the only star in the sky. It did not appear in total darkness but gave new relationship and perspective to the light that was already shining. God's love is at work in the world, in every person and place there is a light. We are invited to be part of it, to bring our light and our relationship to Christ to bring new relationships and perspectives on the work that God is already doing.

Each Sunday through Epiphany (ending on Feb. 1 with the Presentation of the Lord) we'll spend some time meditating on our part in God's mission as a parish and reflecting on some practical questions to help us learn how our Christian community can act in mission, as part of the ever-expanding work of God's love in Jesus by the power of the Spirit.

### Suggested Questions:

- Where have you seen the light?
- How have you been the light for others?
- What gifts do you bring to God's mission?
- What would help your gifts shine?

### A Prayer:

God be gracious to us and bless us,  
and make your face shine upon us:

**Lord, have mercy.**

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

**Lord, have mercy.**

May your ways be known on the earth,  
your saving power among the nations:

**Christ, have mercy.**

[\(Church of England Epiphany resources\)](#)

# Jan 11 - Baptism of the Lord

This season of Epiphanytide is about discovering what it means to us that Jesus has been born. It's the "Ah Ha!" moment that warms our hearts and changes our lives as we learn about what God's love in Jesus means to us. What does it mean that God has become part of creation? What difference does it make that God lives and dies like we do? As the Spirit reveals to us in our own hearts how the faith of Christ is for the healing of our own lives, we also discover it draws us into a life that is so much larger than just us in this moment. We are made part of an Eternal Kingdom, through all times and places and people.

We begin to answer the questions about who Jesus is and what his life means to us as we listen in prayer to the stories of his life and begin to see that life of God's love living and at work in those around us. Baptism is a beginning for us, a moment when we say "yes" to discovering what life in Christ is.

The celebration of Jesus' baptism is an important "Ah Ha!" moment for those who witnessed Jesus' ministry and for us who know it in faith. The heavens open, the Spirit descends like a dove and a voice proclaims "This is my Son". What a spectacular moment. Most of us are not given the gift of such a clear sign of who Jesus is and what his life means to us. And even those disciples who did receive the gift of this miracle would still all question, doubt and abandon Jesus! Faith is not an easy task and is a life long journey, even when we have had the heavens open for us.

God knows this. Knows the frailty of our hearts and the thorns the world brings. This is why the most significant part of this story is not the heavens opening, but Jesus descending into the waters of baptism. Jesus chooses to be baptized, to be with us. Jesus shares more than life and breath by becoming part of creation, he also shares with us in a very special way his spirit and faith.

This is how God gives healing, forgiveness and belonging in baptism; by joining us in it. Jesus is immersed in the place where we bring our brokenness so that he might be our healing there. This is how God chooses to be with us, to join us together and to transform us from the inside out.

All of the blessings we receive from Jesus, who chose to be in the waters of baptism, we share with one another as well. In baptism we are united to the life of Christ and share in the ministry of Christ as part of his "eternal priesthood".

The promises of our baptismal covenant are a way for us to both follow Jesus in our own lives and to share that life with others. Each of us who were called to baptism and said "yes" there to new life in Christ, have a role as ministers of our faith.

As we renew our baptismal covenant, consider how each action we commit to doing with God's help is not just a part of our own life of faith, but is also a witness to others of the light we have received.

**A Prayer:** We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Let us renew our baptismal covenant.

Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?

**I will, with God's help.**

Will you persevere in resisting evil and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?

**I will, with God's help.**

Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?

**I will, with God's help.**

Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbour as yourself?

**I will, with God's help.**

Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

**I will, with God's help.**

Will you strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and respect, sustain and renew the life of the Earth?

**I will, with God's help.** (BAS Baptismal Covenant p.159)

## **Suggested Questions:**

- How does our Christian community proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?
- In which ways is God helping our community to fulfill one of the promises in particular right now?

## Jan 18 - Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 🙏

This season of Epiphanytide is about the light turning on. It is about coming to understand what difference it makes to us that this baby Jesus was born for us many generations ago in a place far way from this land. As we see the light of Epiphany shine outwards from Jesus we begin to see that God's mission is always greater and always growing. It is not held back at the moment of creation or a particular moment in history or to a particular person or people, but is always growing to include every life in every place.

Last week we celebrated the Baptism of Jesus and remembered our own baptisms in which we are united to Jesus in his life, death and resurrection. In our baptism we are made a part of the household of faith and take up a role in God's mission as part of the body of Christ. We sometimes make the mistake of saying "I was baptized Anglican" or "I was baptized Lutheran". The truth is we are baptized into the life of Christ. It is not a particular Christian tradition that we are made a part of but the whole universal body of the church in every time and place.

This Sunday marks the beginning of the week of prayer of Christian Unity. It always comes during this season of Epiphanytide as part of the teaching that God's mission is for everyone in everyplace. The work of God's Spirit in the world is ever expanding.

In today's readings we hear that we are "called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours" (1 Cor 1:2). We are not called to be saints all by ourselves, just where we are or with people just like us but together with everyone who in every place call on the name of Jesus. All who are baptized and all who call on Jesus, all who have our hope in Christ's Kingdom. In fact we cannot be saints all on our own. Living into the full stature of our life in Christ leads us to reach outwards to others more and more. When we encounter other Christians in community we are meeting another part of the family tree and people who are part of the same work of the Spirit that we are.

Our different traditions and different ways of understanding the life of Christ and what it calls us to can be incredible gifts that equip us for the life of Christ we share. Unfortunately far too often they can also be divisions that diminish our expression of the good news.

Now more than ever we are discovering that we can do far more to share the light of the Gospel by holding the candles of our different traditions closer together. There are many Christian communities that have come to share the same values of justice and inclusion that our understanding of the Spirit of Christ and the witness of Scripture have led us to, and we are discovering we can work together in big and small ways for the mission we share.

Many of our communities have different church buildings on the same street. Jesus is their Lord and ours. How can we be the saints together where we are?

### **Suggested Questions:**

- Who are our Ecumenical partners?
- How can we best work together for God's Mission where we are?

### **A Prayer:**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
by the action of the Holy Spirit in the one baptism,  
you have bestowed wonderful graces and multiple gifts upon us  
for the sake of building up your Body, the Church.  
Grant us now the willingness to fully appreciate the richness of their diversity,  
and use them fully to further the spread of the Gospel.  
In your name we pray.

**Amen.**

(from Canadian Council of Churches Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Resources <https://www.weekofprayer.ca>)

## Jan 25 - "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

It is incredible that the magi came to find Jesus. They came to pay homage to the King of a foreign land. Not as dignitaries or trade negotiators from neighbouring countries, but as people who recognized and were drawn by the cosmic and spiritual authority of this King. They didn't need to come. The new light could have remained an astronomical note. An observed curiosity. But it compelled them into action, to go see who had brought the change to heaven and earth that they had seen. They weren't told by an army of angels, the way the shepherds had been. They were moved together by their own motivation and inspired to seek out a relationship for themselves. And when they found this baby, they were overwhelmed with joy. What they had seen and hoped for had become tangible and real. They were overjoyed to be sharing breath with the King they had sought out. We belong together with God who has made us and God has made a home with us.

Fishing for people is such a strange metaphor to most people today. To modern ears it sounds like a marketing ploy. At best fishing for people could be about being alluring or appealing and at worst it is some kind of bait and switch. Fishing for people sounds like converting individuals and getting people to join our club, to get them into the boat. This is not what Jesus intended however. The important part of Jesus' metaphor is the nets. As Peter, Andrew, James and John are walking away from their nets which had gathered up fish, Jesus is telling them now he will make them gather up people. Later in Matthew's Gospel Jesus says "the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish." Fishing for people, all kinds of different people, is about knowing we belong together, that we are all of us gathered up into the life of God.

Like it or not, we are in this together, across our differences. Fishing for people is not about catching more or getting more in the net, we're all in it already. Fishing for people is about helping one another see that no matter what, we are in this together. It is an act of love, of relationship, of reconciliation and of humility as we love our neighbours knowing we are part of one another.

Like James and John, our nets might need mending from time to time. There may be people we are excluding, likely unintentionally. For those who feel excluded from our Christian communities, or like they don't belong in a church, it usually has little to do with programming. It's not because they're waiting for the right event or bible study topic (though those are important). It's usually about relationship. Is it a place where they are welcomed as and for who they are, where their voice can be heard and their life can be shared? Is our church a place where anyone can find friends in faith?

Belonging with people means being with them. Not everyone is extraverted and meeting people on their street or at the grocery store can be challenging for many of us. The truth is creating belonging is much more about listening than about telling. Learn what they are passionate about or concerned about. Listen to what they are looking forward to and are celebrating. Our baptismal covenant, our connection to the whole body of faith, calls us to respect the dignity of every human being. The gift of Epiphany, the realization that we all belong together in Christ, calls us to receive one another with joy.

### **A Prayer:**

Almighty God,

who called your Church to witness that you were in Christ reconciling the world to yourself:  
help us to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may be drawn to you;  
through him who was lifted up on the cross, and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

[\(Church of England Epiphany resources\)](#)

### **Suggested Questions:**

- How might we create a sense of belonging for others?
- Who are the secular and interfaith groups whose good work we can partner with in our neighbourhood?
- Where are the meeting places in our neighbourhood?

## Feb 1 - Presentation of the Lord

All of the candles in our places of prayer have exactly the same purpose. The Christ candle we light at Easter, the candles on the altar, the candles we receive at baptism, the candles we hold on Christmas Eve, all of them remind us of the light we receive in Christ. They all burn with the fire of that Epiphany star, the fire of the baptism Jesus brings, the flame of the Holy Spirit that rests on each disciple of Christ, God who is the light in our own darkness. The light of every candle in our worship is to call all these things into the spirit of our prayer. They are all radiant with the realization of who we are in Jesus; what we were made from, what we were made for, and how Jesus leads us. So the last day of Epiphanytide is when we bless those candles. We give thanks for being able to know ourselves in a new light.

God's work is the reconciliation of the world and making all things new, gathering everything into the Kingdom in Christ. Our mission is connected to that mission of God, but we are not asked to do the things we can't. We are called to do the things we can, as who we are, with what we have, knowing that our lives lived in love of our neighbour now is connected, directly, to that eternal Kingdom of love.

Simeon saw the Messiah and the hope and salvation he would bring to all people as he held an infant. Simeon saw with the eyes of his heart and of his faith the greater thing that would happen through the life of this child.

As we pray for peace throughout the world, for the people of the Earth to be one, for all people to live in God's healing mercy in the eternal Kingdom, we should know our small acts of love are connected to that great big act of love that God is working in the world. That means we don't need to do it all, we don't need to do the things we can't, but that we need to do the things we can. We need to trust that each of our actions that we do in Christ's name and for the sake of the Gospel, they matter and they make a difference. Our faith is never too small, our heart and mind and strength are never too small, if we are offering the whole of it into God's love.

### **A Prayer:**

Almighty God,  
who on the day of Pentecost  
sent your Holy Spirit to the disciples  
with the wind from heaven and in tongues of flame,  
filling them with joy and boldness to preach the gospel:  
send us out in the power of the same Spirit  
to witness to your truth and to draw all to the fire of your love;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.** ([Church of England Epiphany resources](#))

### **Suggested Questions:**

- What is one next step, small or big, our parish can take to move forward in it's part of God's mission?

# Intercessions

## **1 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 siblings 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 may 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.**

Jesus, Lord of the Church,  
you have called us into fellowship with everyone of 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.**

## **2 We pray for the coming of God's kingdom.**

You sent your Son to bring good news to the poor,  
sight to the blind,  
freedom to the captives  
and salvation to your people:  
anoint us with your Spirit;  
rouse us to work in Christ's name.  
By your Spirit  
**bring in your kingdom.**

Send us to bring help to the poor  
and freedom to the oppressed.  
By your Spirit  
**bring in your kingdom.**

Send us to tell the world  
the good news of your healing love.  
By your Spirit  
**bring in your kingdom.**

Send us to those who mourn,  
to bring joy and gladness instead of grief.  
By your Spirit  
**bring in your kingdom.**

Send us to proclaim that the time is here  
for you to save your people.  
By your Spirit  
**bring in your kingdom.**

Holy God, use us, unworthy as we are,  
to bring in your kingdom of mercy, justice, love and peace.  
Empower us by your Spirit and unite us in your Son,  
that all our joy and delight may be to serve you,  
now and for ever. **Amen.**



### 3. Jesus calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Washed clean by the waters of baptism,  
let us pray that we may live the life to which God has called us.

Lord Jesus, eternal Word,  
proclaimed as the Christ by John the forerunner,  
hear us as we pray for all who proclaim your word ...  
Lord of truth,  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, baptizing with the Spirit and with fire,  
strengthen us to withstand all the trials of our faith ...  
Lord of truth,  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, bringing forgiveness to all who repent,  
teach your Church dependence on your grace ...  
Lord of truth,  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, fulfilment of the promises of old,  
give hope to all who suffer or are ignored ...  
Lord of truth,  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, beloved Son of the Father,  
anoint us with the gifts of your Holy Spirit ...  
Lord of truth,  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus, bringer of hope,  
share with all the faithful the riches of eternal life ...  
Lord of truth,  
**hear our prayer.**

Lord Jesus Christ,  
in you all things are made new.  
Transform the poverty of our nature  
by the riches of your grace,  
and in the renewal of our lives  
make known your heavenly glory. **Amen.**