

# Jesus Came for All

## An Intergenerational Church Service for Epiphany

We often consider Christmas to be done and dusted soon after Christmas Day. However, the purists amongst us will know that the Wise Men, or Magi, weren't actually there on the day of Jesus birth, but sometime after that. The church calendar observes the arrive of the Wise Men on January 6th, the 12th day after Christmas Day. It is sometimes called Three Kings' Day, and in some traditions celebrated as Little Christmas.

This Intergenerational Church Service is based around the story of the Wise Men as told in Matthew 2:1-12. The focus is on God's love being for all. This is a suggested outline. Adjust this to reflect the traditions and structure of your own church.

### Top Tips

- A good intergenerational service is no longer than an hour
- Include different ages in the components of the service (e.g. Bible reading, candle lighting, greeting at the door, prayers).
- Give people time to prepare in advance. This is particularly important for any Bible readings.
- Variety is your friend—alternate times of sitting with standing, times of listening with speaking, times of listening to one person with group work

### You will need:

- Have pens (biros) and felt pens available in the pews or scattered around in containers, depending on how your space is configured.
- Decorate your main gathering space with big bright stars.
- Have a trail of stars leading from the front door of the church into the main gathering space, spreading out in different directions once in there.
- Hide stars around the church, enough for one each and big enough to hold in your hand

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## Introduction:

What follows are some ideas that you could include into the normal shape of your service. In your opening you might like to include some words along these lines:

We have gathered together to meet with each other and to meet with God. It doesn't matter how young or how old we are. God is present here with us all this morning. We are glad you are here. So don't worry if your little ones wriggle or make noise. This morning let us help each other to worship God as a family, the family of God. Check to make sure that those around you are included and that everyone understands what is happening as the service proceeds.

## Begin with the normal elements of your service

Plan to include different generations in these elements. This might include:

- A call to worship – make sure the wording includes an invitation to all ages
- Prayer –in language that all can understand
- Worship songs, at least 2 – choose at least one song that the children and the young people know. This doesn't have to be a 'kiddie song'.
- Offering
- Birthdays and notices

## Star Hunt

Having already hidden stars around the church before the service (under chairs, on window ledges.... ) get the children to find as many of the stars as they can. Make sure everyone in church has at least one star each. Ask them to hold on to them for later in the service.

Ask: How did it feel as you came in this morning to follow a trail of stars? What do you think the wise men felt like? Have a look around at the stars decorating the church. Which star do you think the wise men might have followed and why? Which star would you follow? Why did God put the star in the sky? Thank God together for the star that led to Jesus.

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### Story with 'feely' bags

You will need: six plates or trays, six 'feely' bags containing: cardboard star shapes, fur fabric, play sand and/or small pebbles, cardboard crown, large card star, small unusually shaped gifts

Before the session, put the items in 'feely' bags. Say that you have brought some items to help understand today's Bible story. As you tell the story, pause to allow someone to reach inside the appropriate bag and tell you what they can feel.

A long time ago, some wise men were looking at something in the sky. Can you guess what they were looking at? (Feel inside the bag of star shapes.)

They were looking at the stars in the sky. One day, a new star appeared in the sky. It was brighter than all the other stars. The wise men knew that this star meant that a new king had been born. They decided to follow the star to try to find him. They set off on the long journey riding on big animals. Can you guess what animals they rode? (Feel the fur fabric.)

Maybe camels or horses? The wise men and their animals went on and on, over soft sand, rough hills and rocky land. (Feel the sand and/ or pebbles.)

The star led the wise men to a town called Jerusalem. They went to the palace there and saw the king. (Feel the crown.)

'Where is the new king?' they asked. The king didn't know anything about a special child and wasn't pleased to hear about another king. So the wise men continued to follow the star until at last the star stopped. It was over the house where Jesus and his mother and father were staying in a little town called Bethlehem. (Feel the large star.)

The wise men hurried into the house and there they saw Jesus. They knew that he was the special new king they were looking for. Do you know what gifts they brought him? (Feel the small gifts.)

They gave their gifts of rich gold and spicy perfumes of frankincense and myrrh to the little boy. The wise men were very pleased to see the new king. They knelt down and worshipped God and thanked him for his gift of Jesus.

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Empty the contents of the bags on to the plates or trays. Remind the congregation of what each one represents and pause for a moment remembering that part of the story.

Ask: Would you have liked to be one of the wise men going to see Jesus? What would you have said to Jesus when you saw him?

### Myth Buster Quiz:

In small groups read the Bible: Matthew 2:1-12 (CEV) in order to help you answer the Myth Buster quiz. Check the answers together by referring to the passage. Optional, have a small prize for the team with the most correct.

Which of these statements about the wise men are in the Bible, and which are not? Check Matthew 2:1-12.

In the Bible? Not in the Bible?

1. There were three wise men.
2. They came from the East.
3. They rode on camels.
4. They were called Melchior, Balthazar and Casper.
5. They followed a star.
6. They were actually kings.
7. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.
8. They went home a different way because of King Herod.

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### Talk:

The wise men were also called 'Magi', a name for magicians and astrologers, not kings. They came from the East, possibly Babylon which is in modern day Iraq. No one knows how many wise men were travelling at that time, but people assume there were three because of the number of gifts.

Among the many Herods in the Bible, this one was called Herod the Great, who was made King of Judea by the Romans in 40 BC. He was not popular because he made people pay high taxes.

The important thing to remember about the wise men, though, was that they were not from Israel. Their journey following the star showed that the good news of Jesus was not just for the people of Israel; it was for all people everywhere. Herod was cross because he thought a new king of the Jews had been born. What he didn't realise was that a new king of the world had been born – God for all people everywhere. The second half of the New Testament is full of stories about the spread of the good news of Jesus around the world, and God wants everybody to have the opportunity to know him.

It doesn't matter where you are in the world, what colour you are, what type of food you eat or who you are, God wants to be with everyone. He loves us all no matter what our circumstances or how much money we have. Thank God that he comes for all people everywhere.

The wise men had travelled many miles because God used a star to show them that his good news was for all people everywhere.

The gifts the wise men brought were symbols of the good news of Jesus. Gold showed that Jesus was the ultimate king, frankincense showed that he was the ultimate God, and myrrh showed that he was going to make the ultimate sacrifice so that we could be friends with God. The wise men followed the ultimate satnav – the star – to show that God's good news was not just for the people of Israel, but for everyone.

Jesus came for all people. This is seen throughout his life by the way he engaged with people from all different backgrounds – Jews and foreigners, men and women, rich and poor, healthy and sick. In fact, his birth provides us with a clear picture of this as well. Both local shepherds and wise men from afar came to visit him. Shepherds in those days were very poor, uneducated and rough people, whereas the wise men were highly educated and, from the gifts they brought to Jesus, we can tell that they weren't short of money.



## Jesus Came for All

Today we've explored the idea that Jesus comes to all people. The church, sometimes known as 'the body of Christ', is Jesus' representative here on earth. Ask, 'What can we, our church, do to demonstrate that Jesus comes to all people?' Finish with a prayer thanking God that he comes for all people everywhere.

### Creative Prayer:

Stars appear in the sky over each and every country, serving as a reminder that God is there for all people everywhere, and that one star in particular called men from another country to see the arrival of God's good news, Jesus.

Using the stars from the opening activity, ask the congregation to write on them Peter's words from Acts 10:35 (NCV): 'In every country God accepts anyone who worships him and does what is right' on one side. On the other side encourage them to quietly and prayerfully write names or draw pictures, to represent different prayers they might have for their family and friends.

**Close the service as you would normally do, with a prayer, song, blessing, cuppa tea...**

NB Most of these ideas came from Scripture Union UK's Lightlive website  
<https://content.scriptureunion.org.uk/light-free-resources>

For more resources like this check out our Breakthrough website  
[www.sunzbreakthrough.org.nz](http://www.sunzbreakthrough.org.nz)

And our Children and Families NZ blogspot  
<http://childrenandfamiliesnz.blogspot.com/>

Plus from our friends at Strandz, the Anglican Children and Families peeps  
<https://www.strandz.org.nz/epiphany.html>



Romans 8:38-39

I am sure that nothing can separate us from  
God's love—not life or death, not angels or  
spirits, not the present or the future, and  
not powers above or powers below.

Nothing in all creation can separate us from  
God's love for us in Christ  
Jesus our Lord!

Meri Kirihimete  
Merry Christmas

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