

**Epiphany:**

**The Feast of the Epiphany, which always falls on 6 January, marks the beginning of a season which recognizes Jesus to be the Son of God.**

The word 'epiphany' means 'manifestation' or 'appearance', and the Feast of the Epiphany marks the recognition of the newborn Jesus by the world. The season of joyful celebration that begins at Christmas now continues through the successive Sundays of Epiphany, and the festal cycle ends only with the Feast of the Presentation (Candlemas).

In the Western churches, the Epiphany became an occasion to celebrate one element in the story of Christ's birth, the visit of the far-travelled magi, understood as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Matthew's account speaks simply of 'wise men from the east'; later tradition fixed their number at three, made them kings and recalled their resonant names – Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar.

Later, the Church remembers the Baptism of Christ by John, when a voice from heaven declares Jesus to be God's beloved Son. Finally, on 2 February, the season of Epiphany ends with the Feast of the Presentation. Jesus is brought to the Temple by his parents according to the law of Israel. There, he is recognized by Simeon, who declares him to be 'a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of God's people Israel.' The traditional service for this feast includes a procession of candles, and so it is often known as Candlemas.

But the redemption he will bring must be won through suffering; the Incarnation is directed to the Passion; and Simeon's final words move our attention away from the celebration of Christmas and towards the mysteries of Easter.

In this perspective, Epiphanytide is an apt season to pray for the worldwide mission of the Church.

*Epiphany* Walter Brueggemann (b. 1933)

On Epiphany day,  
we are still the people walking.  
We are still people in the dark,  
and the darkness looms large around us,  
beset as we are by fear,  
anxiety,  
brutality,  
violence,  
loss —  
a dozen alienations that we cannot manage.

We are — we could be — people of your light.  
So we pray for the light of your glorious presence  
as we wait for your appearing;  
we pray for the light of your wondrous grace  
as we exhaust our coping capacity;  
we pray for your gift of newness that  
will override our weariness;  
we pray that we may see and know and hear and  
trust  
in your good rule.

That we may have energy, courage, and freedom to  
enact  
your rule through the demands of this day.  
We submit our day to you and to your rule,  
with deep joy and high hope.



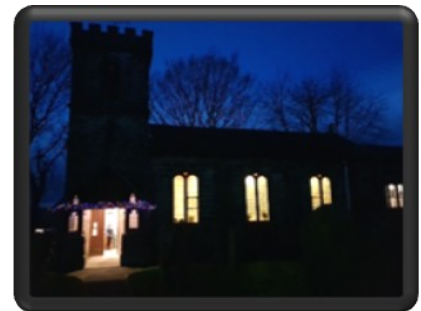
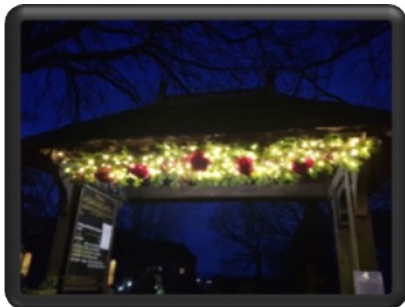
# Hello Friends

## Happy New Year to you all!



As expected, Christmas was once again a mixture of joy and exhaustion! I am paying the price now as I have developed an awful chest infection on top of my steadily worsening pain! However, the memories of lovely Christmas experiences remain, and the Christmas Eve afternoon carol service is no exception...

Although quite windy, the church yard looked very inviting with the beautifully decorated lychgate, the trees festooned with softly illuminated baubles and the porch cheerfully adorned with colourful twinkle lights. And what a moon!



I arrived early (unusual for me!) because I had two wreaths to deliver - one to my Nan and Granddad's grave and one to my beloved Dad. The wind had been so fierce in past days that Mum and I decided to postpone laying the wreaths until they had a fighting chance of remaining where they had been laid! Very kindly, Charlie came to my assistance with his trusty torch and helping hands, enabling me to lay the wreaths in the dark without mishap.



Because of the inclement weather, the decision was made to hold the service indoors, rather than the usual outdoor experience. I must admit, although I LOVE the outdoor service, it looked very cosy inside compared to the gusty churchyard, with the Christmas tree glowing and subdued lighting illuminating the congregation's expectant

faces. Dave was in position at the keyboard and Rev. Geoff Eze (my first time of



meeting him) was all set to lead worship, with Kath and Rev. Carrie able to sit back and enjoy the service.

I love a good carol service and by the look of it, so did everyone else! The church was full to bursting with people standing in the tower and everyone joined in wholeheartedly! Rev. Geoff finished off proceedings by playing his guitar and leading us in an enthusiastic rendition of "Jingle Bells", with Dave matching our enthusiasm on the keyboard, in his own unique way!



Thank you to everyone that was involved in the organisation of such a lovely service – the planners, the organisers, the IT and audio/visual experts, the readers, the bucket-shakers, the church, churchyard and lychgatennnnn decorators, the musicians, the refreshment-makers and last but not least, Rev. Geoff, who enthusiastically assisted Arnie with the bucket-shaking here!



Also, a huge shout out to the congregation – it was so lovely to see you all turn out on a damp and windy afternoon! I think I can speak for us all when I say that the service was a wonderful start to Christmas!

On a final note, a big thank you to Claire and the Stafford Arms for inviting us all for coffees and mince pies after the service – judging by the crowd of people standing outside, they were very welcome! The Stafford Arms always goes the extra mile when we have an event at church so many, many thanks for your generosity - it is much appreciated!



**Wishing you all a very happy, healthy and peaceful new year!**

**Esther x**

