



Chet Valley Churches



**“WE SAW THE STAR IN THE EAST, AND
WE CAME TO WORSHIP HIM.”**

Service of the Word
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
23rd January 2022

Introduction & Greeting

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Let us come into God's presence in solidarity with all who are sick, suffering, marginalized, displaced and oppressed, knowing that our darkness can be dispelled by God's light. As we pray for the unity of the Church, may we journey together to meet Jesus the Saviour, the light of the world.

Glory be to you Father Almighty, for you have revealed yourself through your creation and invite all people to gather in your presence. We see the star of Jesus in our lives and come to worship him just as the Magi came. We offer him ourselves today and we ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

**Unite us as we come to worship the king, all glorious above.
Amen.**

Hymn: O Worship the King

**O worship the King, all glorious above,
O gratefully sing his power and his love;
Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days,
Pavilioned in splendour, and girded with praise.**

**O tell of his might, O sing of his grace,
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy, space,
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
And dark is his path on the wings of the storm.**

**The earth with its store of wonders untold,
Almighty, thy power hath founded of old;
Established it fast by a changeless decree,
And round it hath cast, like a mantle, the sea.**

**Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
And sweetly distils in the dew and the rain.**

**Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
In thee do we trust, nor find thee to fail;
Thy mercies how tender, how firm to the end,
Our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend.**

**O measureless might! Ineffable love!
While angels delight to worship thee above,
Thy humbler creation, though feeble their lays,
With true adoration shall sing to thy praise.**

Prayer of Praise and Confession

We glorify you, O Lord, creator of heaven and earth, for you have set the lights in the vault of the sky. You separated light from darkness and arranged signs to mark sacred times, and days and years. You studded the firmament with stars. How majestic are your works, the heavens declare your glory and the skies proclaim the work of your hands!

We glorify you, O Lord.

We praise you for you did not abandon us despite our rebellion but sent your Son to brighten our darkness and be our light and our salvation. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. And the light shines in the darkness.

We praise you, O Lord.

We worship you, O Lord, for you accompany us in the chaos of our life through the power of your Holy Spirit. You light up our paths and give us wisdom and faith in a world of untruth and doubt.

We worship you, O Lord.

We thank you, O Lord, for you send us into the world to witness to this light, in our various churches and diverse cultures, and to proclaim the Good News to Jesus, the one true King, offering ourselves to him.

We thank you, O Lord.

May all the peoples bow before you and worship you.

We have often preferred darkness, but you have given us light. Therefore, we come to you confessing our sins and saying:

We confess that we have turned from your ways. We have harmed your good creation through our greed. We have polluted and poisoned the air, earth and waters, destroying habitats and species.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

We have acted selfishly towards our brothers and sisters. We have put our own needs and desires above our commitment to justice. We have built walls between us and planted seeds of mistrust.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

We have divided people based on ethnicity and culture, discriminating instead of celebrating difference. We have waged war, claiming Jesus for our side.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Forgive all these thoughts and deeds, O Lord, as we come before you in repentance.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have sent in the fullness of time to redeem all people, we ask you to have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and transform us into his glorious image so we can shine as a beacon of hope in our troubled world.

Lord have mercy.

Christ have mercy.

Almighty God hears our prayers, has mercy on us and forgives our sins.

Thanks be to God, whom we praise with all our voices.

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a safe place, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.

**You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,**

all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air,
and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

**O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

Old Testament Reading: *Isaiah 9:2-7*

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. For all the boots of the tramping warriors and all the garments rolled in blood shall be burned as fuel for the fire.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

For the Word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

The Epistle: *Ephesians 5:8-14*

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, 'Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'

For the Word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

♪ **Hymn: As With Gladness Men of Old**

**As with gladness, men of old
Did the guiding star behold,
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to thee.**



**As with joyful steps they sped,
Saviour, to thy lowly bed,
There to bend the knee before
Thee whom heaven and earth adore;
So may we with willing feet
Ever seek thy mercy-seat.**

**As they offered gifts most rare
At thy cradle rude and bare,
So may we with holy joy,
Pure and free from sin's alloy,
All our costliest treasures bring,
Christ, to thee our heavenly King.**

**Holy Jesus, every day
Keep us in the narrow way,
And, when earthly things are past,
Bring our ransomed souls at last
Where they need no star to guide,
Where no clouds thy glory hide.**

**In the heavenly country bright
Need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown,
Thou its sun which goes not down;
There for ever may we sing
Alleluias to our King.**

📖 **Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have

come to pay him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.’ “

Then Herod secretly called the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

For the Word of the Lord, **thanks be to God.**

Reflection [Rev David]

The Christmas and Epiphany season run together to Candlemas—the presentation of Jesus in the Temple—on 2nd February. Yet for many, Christmas is distinctly long gone and some might even be counting off the days till the coming Christmas: 336, to save you doing the sums. But this period of Epiphany is vital to our understanding of who Jesus is. Epiphany can be translated as “making known” and that is what our readings during this period often try to do—make Jesus known. Today’s reading from Matthew’s gospel recounts the arrival of the Magi. The reading from Isaiah talks of people walking in darkness seeing a great light. The light of God comes into the world in darkness and obscurity.

In a comment on the Matthew passage, Barbara Mosse tells us that here we are in the realm of kings and courts—not a shepherd in sight—but that this Jesus will not be like any other king the world has so far known nor will he be found in the places one would expect a king to be found. There are surprises in store for everybody here. The Magi visit the capital only to be

told that the one whom they seek isn't there. Equally the Magi themselves aren't people whom the citizens of Jerusalem would expect to be visiting. Right from the beginning of Jesus' life the expectations of how God acts in the world is turned on its head and the views of the people are challenged.

That is still the case today, and has been ever since yet we often, neither understand it or even appreciate it.

Discerning the work of God's Holy Spirit moving over the face of creation requires both humility and courage. Humility in acknowledging that we don't know everything and therefore have played our part in creating barriers and division; and courage in knowing when and where lines of truth need to be drawn.

Like the Magi let us fix our eyes on the star that was seen in the East and allow it to lead us too.

Nicene Creed *(according to the tradition of the Eastern Churches)*

**We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God, begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven and is seated
at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge
the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son
is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.**

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

**We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

♪ Hymn: *God is Working His Purpose Out*

**God is working his purpose out,
As year succeeds to year,
God is working his purpose out,
And the time is drawing near;
Nearer and nearer draws the time,
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.**



**From utmost east to utmost west,
Wherever souls have trod,
By the mouth of many messengers
Goes forth the voice of God,
'Give ear to me, ye continents,
Ye isles, give ear to me,
That the earth may be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.'**

**What can we do to work God's work,
To prosper and increase
The brotherhood of all mankind,
The reign of the Prince of peace?
What can we do to hasten the time,
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea?**

**March we forth in the strength of God,
With the banner of the Christ unfurled,
That the light of the glorious gospel of truth
May shine throughout the world;
Fight we the fight with sorrow and sin,
To set their captives free,
That the earth may be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.**

**All we can do is nothing worth
Unless God blesses the deed;
Vainly we hope for the harvest-tide
'Til God gives life to the seed;
Yet nearer and nearer draws the time,
The time that shall surely be,
When the earth shall be filled
With the glory of God
As the waters cover the sea.**

Prayers of Intercession

With faith and confidence, we come in prayer, before God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit: the Magi came from the East to pay homage and offer special gifts from their cultures and countries. We pray today for all Christian communities around the world in their diversity of worship and tradition: Lord we ask you to preserve these treasures, particularly in areas of the world where the presence and survival of the Church is threatened by violence and oppression.

O, Lord, hear our prayer.

The early years of the Lord's life were marked by violence and massacres at the orders of the despot Herod. We pray for children living in places in the world where violence continues and where its results are tangible. Strengthen, O Lord, the bonds of unity and mutual love among our churches and help us to cooperate and witness to your holy Name. Inspire us to work without ceasing in order to defend the oppressed and include the marginalized. Encourage us to stand together in the face of tyranny and oppressive regimes as we seek your Kingdom among us.

O, Lord, hear our prayer

After the visit of the Magi, the holy family experienced migration through the wilderness and became refugees in the land of Egypt. We pray for all the refugees and uprooted people in this world: equip us, Lord, to show hospitality to those driven from their homes, and grant us the spirit of welcome to those looking for a safe haven.

O, Lord, hear our prayer.

The birth of Jesus was good news for all, gathering people from different nations and religions in worship of the holy child. We pray for our efforts to seek harmony and dialogue with other religions: Lord, give us humility and patience to walk with others with respect on their journey.

O, Lord, hear our prayer.

The Magi returned to their home by a different way. We pray for our churches in this changing world: Lord, help us to find new and creative ways to follow you and to witness to you so that the world may believe.

O, Lord, hear our prayer.

When the Magi saw the holy child, they rejoiced with great joy. Heavenly Father, fix our eyes on him so we do not lose our way. Unite us in the Lord Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who has taught us to pray, saying:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

“Lord,
teach us to
pray...”



🎵 Hymn: Christ is Made the Sure Foundation

Christ is made the sure foundation,
Christ the head and cornerstone;
Chosen of the Lord, and precious,
Binding all the church in one,
Holy Zion's help for ever,
And her confidence alone.

All that dedicated city,
Dearly loved of God on high,
In exultant jubilation
Pours perpetual melody;
God the One in Three adoring
In glad hymns eternally.



To this temple, where we call thee,
Come, O Lord of Hosts, today!
With thy wonted loving-kindness,
Hear thy servants as they pray,
And your fullest benediction,
Shed within its walls always.

Sending and Blessing

Go now and live as children of light.
**For the fruit of the light is found
in all that is good and right and true.**

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.
Let us wake from sleep and Christ will shine upon us.

Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith,
from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Grace be with all who have
an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.
Amen. Thanks be to God.

(Elements of our liturgy are based on resources prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches)