



## Circuit Contact

Welcome to our Circuit Worship for 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022  
prepared by Rev Julie

### Worship in the following locations:

Youtube Worship on the Trinity Church, Leek Channel from 10.30am

Endon Methodist Church - at 10am with Rev Eleanor Smith

Cheadle & Tean - at Cheadle Methodist Church - at 10.30am with Rev Julie Hassall  
and Messy Church at 5pm

Trinity Church, Leek - at 10.30am and Epiphany carols with St Edwards at 6.30pm  
with Rev Richard Pope

Rudyard Methodist Church - at 11am with Mrs Beryl Stew

Wetley Rocks Methodist Church - at 2.30pm with Mr Roger Cutts

Boundary Methodist Church - at 6pm with Rev Eleanor Smith

Waterhouses Methodist Church - at 6.30pm - Local Arrangement

### Endon Methodist Church Community Cafe



We have decided that because of the prevalence of Covid in the community we will not open the **Community Café** in January. We do hope that we can re-open on 7<sup>th</sup> February and look forward to meeting you there

### Happy New Year

The Circuit Leadership Team and staff would like to wish you all a very Happy New Year as we begin our journey into 2022.

# WORSHIP

## Call to Worship

To those excitedly searching the night sky, Christ comes,  
To those anxiously waiting in a dark place, Christ comes,  
To those who today are journeying, through joy or despair, Christ comes,  
Jesus, the Light of the World has come!

## Reading - Isaiah Chapter 60 (New International Version)

"Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of the LORD rises upon you.

<sup>2</sup> See, darkness covers the earth  
and thick darkness is over the peoples,  
but the LORD rises upon you  
and his glory appears over you.

<sup>3</sup> Nations will come to your light,  
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Hymn - [BRIGHTEST AND BEST OF THE SONS OF THE MORNING BY REGINALD  
HEBER - YouTube](#)

## Prayer

God of light and life,  
As the baubles and tinsel are packed away for another year,  
As the sparkling lights are extinguished and a new year rolls round,



Help us to give thanks for those who are still travelling to see the infant Jesus,  
For those who are still seeking a King, discerning meaning and purpose,  
And help us to remember today all those who have encouraged us to search for deeper  
understanding in our lives;

Family and friends

Teachers and mentors

Colleagues and companions....

As we worship, help us to expect you in the unexpected people and places, to look for you in the  
rising sun and the darkness of the night sky. Help us to be aware of you in joy and in sorrow.

Lift our eyes to glimpse your star, bringing hope and strength and peace. Amen.

Reading - [Ephesians 3:1-12 NIV - God's Marvellous Plan for the Gentiles - Bible Gateway](#)

Hymn - [There's A Wideness in God's Mercy ~ Nate Macy ~ lyric video - YouTube](#)

Reading - [Matthew 2:1-12 NIV - The Magi Visit the Messiah - After - Bible Gateway](#)

## Reflection



Today's lectionary draws us back to a story which has sparked the imagination of artists, poets, sculptors throughout the ages - the visit of the three kings to the infant Jesus. It is a story filled with wonder and mystery, a tale of exotic travellers and star filled night skies.

Yet I remember too the moment when this tale 'fell apart' for me - I was 15 and belonged to a youth fellowship where we were asked to recount (without looking at the text) what we knew of this story. It came as something of a blow afterwards to discover that they were not, as I had always imagined, kings - that according to Matthew's telling of the tale there were not three of them, and that by the time they reached their destination the baby in manger was probably nearing two years of age.

It was, as far as I can recall, the first time I was ever challenged to think about how much of my emotional energy is invested in the 'detail' of biblical narrative and how much I was able to step back and think about the bigger story! And it marked the beginning of a great and sometimes challenging journey of discernment.

Matthew writes an extensive account of how it came to be that this small band of travellers (assuming that all we know is that there was more than one of them!) set about searching for a King. His message? - that the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy would come in the shape of a Saviour 'for all' and not just for the Jews. Suddenly the whole concept of those who are 'chosen' is thrown up in the air.

Here, he says, is a world changing story of outsiders who recognise a King, and who come to worship him, bringing strange yet extraordinary gifts - and all at once the story of the baby of Bethlehem becomes all embracing, as his power and glory are seen by 'others'. It is a theme Paul picks up in the letter to the Ephesians....

*'This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus'*

It is a story of power, of struggle, of guiding light, and of wonder.

So, if I can stop myself worrying too much about how many of them there were, and how long it took them to get where they were going - what does this story teach me? Because over all my years of wrestling with Biblical text it feels as if what I have discovered most is that what matters is how the story changes me. What difference does this story make to my life?

How does it speak to the world in which I live, challenge my assumptions, encourage me in my own struggling? What does the writer of this story, and through him, God, want to teach me?

As you re-read this beautiful, yet slightly troubling narrative, with its barely concealed hints at trouble yet to come, what does God say to you? Spend a few moments now, just reading it again - read it slowly, then pause and read it again, noticing the words which jump out for you...and as you offer those words to God, asking for wisdom and guidance in interpreting, I share with you what came to me this year as I did the same;

*'Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. <sup>12</sup> And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.'*

I begin to reflect on two things:

- The inappropriateness of gold, frankincense and myrrh as gifts for a newborn baby (or even a toddler) has been the inspiration for many a cartoon! The suggestion that these visitors might have done better to bring nappies and a casserole for tired parents! I wonder if the significance of the gifts given was understood in that moment. Gold, the sign of a King, frankincense the acknowledging of a Deity, and myrrh, a sign of the sorrow yet to come? I wonder what they did with them.  
So often it seems to me that the challenge for the church of our day is to notice and to embrace the things and people which come to us as gift from God. Much of the time I suspect we are too occupied with the status quo to notice that God is speaking to us in new and challenging ways. Perhaps in our own way we too would prefer the comfortable gifts of 'people like us' rather than to be left holding the gifts we don't quite know what to do with!
- It seems that these travellers may have come some 900 miles to worship the King! It must have taken them a long time to get there and then presumably somewhat longer to get back since they felt compelled to go a different way. I see something of my own journey in theirs. Moments of great clarity and that rush of enthusiasm when I have glimpsed the star in the heavens and have been filled with the longing to search for the King - moments too of wandering around in desert places, trudging slowly, wondering if I may in fact be heading in the wrong direction altogether. And yet as they travelled, they must have shared food and fellowship, they must have told one another their stories and pondered on the significance of the journey they were making. I wonder if by the time they reached their destination they were the richer for having travelled slowly, taken the time to wonder and to pray along the way. Perhaps there is something in their travelling which might inform my own path this year!

What does this story say to you? How does the One whose glory rises upon you (for it does, you know!) speak to you today through this ancient text, a story of life! Amen.

Hymn - [Riding out across the desert - YouTube](#)

## Prayers

Spend a few moments in stillness, calling to mind your hopes and concerns for a new year. Offer to God as your gift whatever is on your heart, trusting that God holds your prayers in a gentle, healing light.

And remember too those alongside whom you journey;

- Those who might be inspired by our song of praise, or of compassion,
- All who struggle with fear, or lack of confidence,
- those who have lost direction in life, and all who are searching for love, for purpose, or for new life this year....

We pray for the coming of God's Kingdom in the words Jesus gave his friends...

...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.

Hymn - [As With Gladness, Men of Old \(Tune: Dix - 5v\) \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)

## Blessing

May the blessing of the God of new roads be with us,  
Star-maker, Christ of light and life, Spirit of adventure,  
Today and every day!  
Amen.

