



Circuit Contact - Issue 37

Welcome to this week's Issue of the Circuit Bulletin. Worship this week has been prepared by the Rev Richard

WORSHIP

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

²For darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will appear over you.

³Nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

HYMN: Darkness Like A shroud STF 170
Arise Shine (Darkness Like A Shroud) - From The Gift - Lyric Video –



Prayer

In the darkness of chaos,
you spoke for light to dawn
and creation's glory could be seen;
in the light, all was good:
and the glory of God was discovered.

In the chaos caused by the darkness people brought into living,
you came - a light to all people,
drawing us to your simple presence;
in the light, we discover what is important:
and the glory of God was discovered.

In the promise of your never ending presence,
you journey with us, coming as chaos in our ordered lives,
revealing the light's direction,
and the love that caused its incarnation:
and the glory of God was discovered.

As people prefer the darkness, to hide away so our shortcomings, our judgements, our lack of compassion and failure to love can't be seen – but even the darkness is not dark for you. You bring us to the light, not to expose us but to show our potential to love as you have loved us.

Forgive us, and turn us to your light.



Silence is kept.

Bathed in God's light,
we discover we are loved,
we discover our worth,
we discover the hope for the world.
Thanks be to God – we begin again as children of light.

The Lord's Prayer

We pray the words of hope, of justice, of acceptance that Jesus gave us:

**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.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

**For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

READING: Matthew 2: 1 – 12

[Matthew 2:1-12 NRSV - The Visit of the Wise Men - In the time - Bible Gateway](#)

HYMN: What Child Is This?

[What Child Is This \(with lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

POEM: 'The journey of the Magi Revisited'

[The Journey of the Magi revisited - engageworship](#)



HYMN: In The Bleak Midwinter STF 204

[King's College Cambridge 2014 #6 In the Bleak Midwinter Gustav Holst - YouTube](#)

Reflection

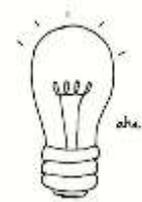


I always think there is something quite attractive about a clear night sky – looking up into the darkness and the twinkle of the stars shining overhead. When you are out of the town's street lights, you get a glimpse of the lights shining and a sense of the distance between these lights. Lights have always attracted – whether it is the insect to the car headlights, or the drawing of our eyes to a candle flame. Light draws you in. Many people spend time and money chasing the Northern Lights, and there is something comforting as you approach the lights of home from a dark country lane. Perhaps we cannot **know** light until we experience darkness?

Light dawns at those moments when you have realised something, discovered something, when something suddenly makes sense. It may be the time you fell in love, or the time you realised someone was not treating you very well; when the penny dropped in algebra, or you suddenly got the chord sequence of a certain piece of music; maybe the time you realised the joy of scoring a goal; the first time you held a new-born son or

daughter. It's as if something wakes us up inside and light dawns. Perhaps that is the awakening of God's presence within us?

I suppose we have all had those Epiphany moments – and in terms of our understanding of God, there is no greater Epiphany than realising the grace, the love, the joy, the hope of God – that whoever we are, whatever we may have done, whatever we think of ourselves, we are held in the loving embrace of God; this Epiphany story of travellers and an infant brings all of that together.



The story of the unnumbered wise men, magi, astrologers – whoever they were centres around discovering something of God which then causes a change – the effect of that encounter makes a difference. The story of the magi traveling to find the expected Messiah speaks on so many levels of how light has dawned – sometimes in the most unexpected ways, among the most unexpected people; it also speaks of the reaction of those who are naysayers, those who benefit from the present status quo.

From the outset of the Gospel – most likely written by a Jew for a Jewish audience, and clearly setting the lineage of Jesus within the Jewish traditions, the author tells of the first visitors to come to find the infant Jesus. Matthew doesn't have shepherds and angels on a hillside, and these visitors were not the great and good from their own people, but foreigners, and probably foreigners who belonged to a different religion. Instead of being aghast at such an intrusion, the hearers, readers, were surely meant to see the light dawn – this story was not just about the Jewish people, but for all people – their owned God was a God for all.

Even in those days, the expectation would be that God would be found among the rich and powerful, and in those elite corridors of power, God is searched for; but not only is God not found, but those rich and powerful had missed the signs these foreigners discovered. Among God's own people, God was not searched for. When the child is found, it is among the poor and lowly and ordinary – it tells us of where God's priorities lie – and it challenges us to wonder where we expect to find this God.

From the text, it is clearly not a stable nor a baby that is found – but a house and a child. The expectations of these visitors from the East was of some political leader – hence they call on King Herod on their way. What they discover is a child who will lead the people – whose power and sway were no less influential, and possibly more so, than the king. What if it is saying to us that power still lies within our hands – but we tend to give up our power too easily, or not use our influence and sway **for** the kingdom of God?

It also reminds us that any true encounter with God, inevitably sets us on a different route home – I like to think that “home” is the loving embrace of God. I like to think that these wise men realise this about God, and their Epiphany is that that “home” could be discovered in their own country - not just in this foreign place. We sometimes need to make those long, arduous journeys to discover the truth of God, even if those truths are also available where we started from; yet it also reminds us that there are always those who do not want God's justice, God's hope, God's love to be found among the poor, the lowly, the ordinary. That, I think, implies there is a responsibility we hold for God's kingdom to be made known – to bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour (see Luke 4:17-19)



Perhaps this new year should be the time we engage in the journey, that we search for the God discovered in Jesus who sets us on God's new path back home?



Prayers:

Let us pray:

In a world where people live with darkness rather than light, we pray for your presence to show us a different way.

For those who live with fear, because of war, violence, prejudice or illness:
bring light, bring hope.

For those whose life's journey has led them to flee and seek a better and safer life in a different country:

bring light, bring hope.

For those whose prejudices define their lives:
bring light, bring hope.

For those who are drained by life's experiences:
bring light, bring hope.

For those who are too fearful to seek your presence:
bring light, bring hope.

For those who are judgemental and dismissive of others:
bring light, bring hope.

For those whose jobs and security are under threat:
bring light, bring hope.

For those who struggle to care for and provide for their families:
bring light, bring hope.

For those who misuse their political power:
bring light, bring hope.

For those whose voices are too quiet and those who feel too inadequate:
bring light, bring hope.

Help us to be open to your presence, that we take to our hearts the new way you have given in Jesus.

Amen

HYMN: 'As With Gladness Men Of Old' STF 224

[As With Gladness, Men of Old \[with lyrics for congregations\] - YouTube](#)



Lighten our way, that we may find the route to your presence;
Lighten our darkness, that we may be filled with hope.
Lighten our hearts, that we may embrace the love you have revealed in Jesus.

Send us out to be your blessing to others, that they may be drawn to your light and your kingdom may come.

Amen