

St Francis Weekly News for EPIPHANY 3rd January 2021



2021 GREETINGS!

**MAY YOU KNOW GOD'S LOVE WITH YOU
THIS NEW YEAR AND ALWAYS**

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN ST FRANCIS CHURCH?

IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT OUR SUNDAY SERVICES

Following on from the news that the number of infections around the area is increasing we have taken the decision not to open the church building for Sunday worship. This means we will live stream our Sunday Worship via our YouTube channel until further notice.

If you would like assistance in accessing YouTube or would like further information about how this will affect you, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Vicar:
The Revd Janet Wyer 07368 832294



Revd Winnie, Brother Eeyore and Piglet enjoyed a very quiet, but joyful Christmas and New Year. Piglet has now joined their bubble and is looking forward to getting involved in all the exciting things happening at St Francis in 2021 – Happy New Year you three!

A CHRISTMAS CATCH UP



JOY TO THE WORLD

Part of the Christmas festivities was a special film made by Fr Tracy to showcase and celebrate some of the amazing light displays on show around the Heartsease community, 'Joy to the World'



Joy to the World on the Heartsease

If you haven't seen it yet, please do have a look on the St Francis Church Heartsease YouTube channel or ask someone with Facebook to access it for you.

EPIPHANY!

The arrival of the Wise Men [popularly known as the three kings] in Bethlehem on their quest to worship the Christ Child heralds the beginning of the season of Epiphany.

Epiphany simply means 'revelation' and what is revealed in Epiphany is Jesus as the Son of God – the long promised Messiah of the people Israel.

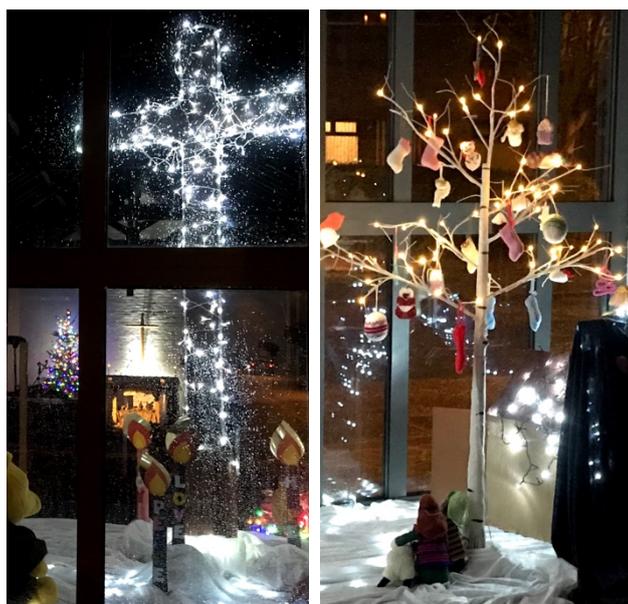
Although traditionally the Christmas decorations come down on 6th January [the twelfth day of Christmas] Epiphany is still an important part of 'Christ's Mass' and the season lasts until 2nd February!

So although the wider world thinks Christmas is over – we have plenty more time to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the light of the world, and his coming among us!

As we journey through Epiphany, we will celebrate all the different parts of this 'revealing of Jesus' so keep a look out in the window for what Revd Winnie, Brother Eeyore and Piglet will be finding out next...

HEARTSEASE COMMUNITY MONEY ADVICE CENTRE – NEXT DOOR@STFRANCIS...

HCMAC will be up and running early this new year – we are looking to recruit volunteers for various posts within the project. Please contact the centre manager, David Lechmere on 07765 739987



TIER FOUR RESTRICTIONS

At the moment we have taken the decision not to open St Francis Church for Sunday worship – although you may visit the church for quiet prayer time during the week

If you are unsure about what is happening with church, please do call Revd Janet [07368 832294] or Fr Tracy [07834 845623] to find out the latest information

We will continue to broadcast via the St Francis YouTube channel. Just search for 'St Francis Heartsease YouTube'!

PASTORAL CARE MATTERS

The New Year may prove to be particularly difficult for many, many people and some of us may find ourselves struggling with all sorts of issues and encountering all kinds of difficulties both practical and emotional. Please remember you are not alone, if you would like the opportunity to have a chat, or if you need some assistance of any kind please do not hesitate to get in touch with us. We are very happy to talk with you if that would be helpful.

If you live on the Heartsease we are also able to offer help if you or someone you know needs support with emergency basic food provision. Our contact details are as follows:

Revd Janet [07368 832294]

Father Tracy [07834 845623]

24/7 Answerphone: 01603 431259
[checked daily]

There is also someone available in church weekday mornings if you would refer to talk to someone face to face. Please be aware that over the Christmas period times the times are a little different:



USEFUL CONTACT NUMBERS

Childline: 0800 1111

Samaritans: 116 123

Domestic Violence Hotline: 0808 2000 247

[If you hear a neighbour in distress please do not hesitate to call this number or 999; you could save a life]

Mind: 0300 123 3393

Age UK: 0800 169 6565

Norfolk Assistance Scheme: **01603 223392**

THE CURATE'S CORNER

I remember as a child that the single best thing about Christmas was that we were given presents, and I suppose that must be true for most older people who were lucky enough to grow up in surroundings with enough kindness and money to be as lucky as I was.

Of course, from the point of view of the church, receiving presents might be seen to be the very last thing we associate with Christmas; celebrating the birth of our Lord and joy at the symbolism of his coming into our world in order to set all things right is seen to be much more important.

As we approach the feast of the Epiphany on January 6th, next Wednesday, we move towards the thought of the three 'wise men' or 'magi' visiting the infant Christ in a stable. Epiphany means 'showing', and this is the time in the story of the Christmas season when the baby Jesus is 'shown' to the world of the Gentiles – or 'non-Jews'. In our Book of Common Prayer, the Epiphany is also described as 'the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles', which is exactly what it is.

In the bible, this story only occurs in the gospel of Matthew, and whilst we would now often refer to the visitors as 'kings', Matthew calls them 'magi', a word imported into Greek from the old Persian term used to describe a Zoroastrian priest, known for expertise in astronomy and science, and hence 'wise'.

This story is bound up closely with the story of Herod's vicious and jealous anger at the birth of a rival king, and his murdering of all baby boys that might possibly have been the Christ, a terrible event that is commemorated in the church calendar on January 28th, the day of the 'Holy Innocents'.

Nowadays we tend to avoid that story and focus on the bringing of gifts to a stable – even though Matthew describes the place they visited as a house. This avoidance of Herod's psychotic violence is understandable, but takes away an important consideration from the birth story.

Jesus was accepted by some and defiantly rejected by many, a pattern which leads to his being nailed on a cross for simply showing what God is like. This pattern is foreshadowed at the time of his birth. A few ordinary people, the shepherds, are blessed by being given the insightful knowledge of

his identity, and even lowly farm animals are permitted to cast their eyes upon Him.

The wise men from the East make a special effort to travel a huge distance to find this great hope for the world prophesied in more than just the Hebrew scriptures. Our Lord is shown from the outset to be the saviour not just of the Jews, the chosen people, but of all people everywhere in the world, whoever they may be.

Herod's sickening reaction is another foreshadow of the way that the Christ's arrival would be hugely unwelcome amongst some. This remains the case today, in fact I feel very strongly that we are living, right at this moment, bang in the middle of a confrontation between those who would joyously accept and those who wish to reject the truth of the gospel message of peace and justice.

Going back to my memory of presents at Christmas. There are those who think that this aspect of Christmas should be discouraged. I encourage them to remember the Magi and their gifts. The giving of gifts is a kind of a sacramental act, a sign of something far deeper. It is an act of love, giving joy to both giver and receiver. And speaking of sacraments, that is what we do in church. We give and receive. We offer ourselves as a sacrifice of thanks and praise, and we receive the most holy sacrament of Christ's precious being as we participate in all that is best about being alive. Here we find the deepest meaning of the Christmas season. We remember that Christ came so that we may all become fully human.

Every blessing

Fr Tracy

A WORD FROM THE VICAR

The New Year dawned and rather than feeling exhilarated and happy at the thought of 2021, I have to confess to a certain grumpiness that no matter how I tried to shake off – just wouldn't disappear!

In the end, acknowledging the finer feelings of the family [I was very tired and emotional...] I took to my bed for the afternoon.

I admit that I am very blessed to have been able to do that. I well remember the days when caring for little people that the idea of a daylight snooze was an unattainable dream; and not so very long ago work commitments would have made it impossible.

But, with the reaching of a certain age such things become possible, and I know those around me

breathed a sigh of relief as I stomped up the stairs...

Three hours later, not having slept a wink – I decided I had better resurface.

Probably a mistake, I was still tired, but strangely enough the grumpiness had vanished.

In the quiet of my room, and hearing the sound of the family going about their new year business I had gained some perspective on how I was feeling.

Yes, I am tired, confused and more than a little concerned about what the future may bring – and yes, I have perhaps overdone things a little and yes, yes, yes there is a lot to be done; but that is down to me and not the fault of my nearest and dearest.

I also took the time to consider that the way I was feeling can be multiplied by however millions of people there are in the world...

2020 was a cataclysmic year of huge realisations and shock.

The realisation that the human race is not in control after all – and the shock of finding out that we are all a part of the human race. Just one in 7.594 billion...

No matter where we live, no matter what we look like – no matter who we love; we are all one.

One people with the same vulnerabilities and fears – the same hopes and dreams.

As I lay in my darkened room I realised I was thinking of those I love and care for and how I want the best for them.

Not wealth or the fleeting happiness of having the perfect lifestyle; but the deep seated contentedness of knowing true, deep and lasting love – and knowing that no matter what happens in life we are never alone.

I went up the stairs grumpy because I was fearful of what 2021 might bring – I came down them again content in the realisation that spending time with God and resting in his love can chase away our fears and anxieties – and actually make life better for those around us.

After all, when we are at peace with ourselves and with God – life is so much better for everyone!

All 7.594 billion of them.

We may not be able to reach out and make a difference to all of them, but one at a time, and little by little we can certainly make changes that matter!

A happy, blessed and peaceful New Year to you all; and may you know the comfort of being with God as you wrestle with the things that are on your heart as we turn to face all that 2021 will bring.

Revd Janet

FOR OUR PRAYERS

We pray for those who are in acute need of prayer at this time: Emily; Russell; Eleanor, Henry & Family; Huggy; Megan; Denise H; Christine; John P; Scott; Stephen C; Margaret T; David & Cynthia S; Maegan; Tom; Riley & his mum and family; Jeanette, David & Grace; Paula; Pete; Fr Brian; Hazel; Ben; Frazer.

We continue to pray for all those in our Church, friends and family who are managing long term health issues including Doreen; Rosemary; Sheila; John; Joy; Shirley.

We remember with love Janet Smith and all those who have died in recent days and pray for their family and friends.

A PRAYER FOR THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES

God of compassion,
be close to those who are ill, afraid or feeling isolated. In their loneliness, be their consolation; in their anxiety, be their hope;
in their darkness, be their light;
through him who suffered alone on the cross,
but reigns with you in glory,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**The Church of St Francis
Heartsease**

Heavenly Father

**We ask your blessing upon us.
Hold the Heartsease Community,
and all the world,
in your arms of love.
Be with us.
Give us your strength,
peace, and healing grace.
Watch over us,
protect us from harm;
and keep in safety
all those who care for the sick
and attend to our needs,
in Jesus name we pray.
Amen**

PRAYERS FOR EPIPHANY

O God,
who by the leading of a star
manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth:

mercifully grant that we,
who know you now by faith,
may at last behold your glory face to face;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Creator of the heavens,
who led the Magi by a star
to worship the Christ-child:
guide and sustain us,
that we may find our journey's end
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord God,
the bright splendour whom the nations seek:
may we who with the wise men have been drawn by
your light
discern the glory of your presence in your Son,
the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

READINGS FOR EPIPHANY

ISAIAH 60:1 - 6



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

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

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

Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice,
because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come.

They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

PSALM 72: 1 – 15



- 1 Give the king your judgements, O God, ♦
and your righteousness to the son of a king.
- 2 Then shall he judge your people righteously ♦
and your poor with justice.
- 3 May the mountains bring forth peace, ♦
and the little hills righteousness for the people.
- 4 May he defend the poor among the people, ♦
deliver the children of the needy and crush the oppressor.
- 5 May he live as long as the sun and moon
endure, ♦
from one generation to another.
- 6 May he come down like rain upon the mown
grass, ♦
like the showers that water the earth.
- 7 In his time shall righteousness flourish, ♦
and abundance of peace till the moon shall be no
more.
- 8 May his dominion extend from sea to sea ♦
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- 9 May his foes kneel before him ♦
and his enemies lick the dust.
- 10 The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay
tribute; ♦
the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring gifts.
- 11 All kings shall fall down before him; ♦
all nations shall do him service.

12 For he shall deliver the poor that cry out, ♦
the needy and those who have no helper.

13 He shall have pity on the weak and poor; ♦
he shall preserve the lives of the needy.

14 He shall redeem their lives from oppression and
violence, ♦
and dear shall their blood be in his sight.

15 Long may he live; unto him may be given gold
from Sheba; ♦
may prayer be made for him continually and
may they bless him all the day long

EPHESIANS 3:1 - 12



This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ.

In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power.

Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

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 for 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.

REFLECTION FOR EPIPHANY

Epiphany!

The glorious good news that is Jesus Christ is revealed to the Magi.

As we step into the Matthew’s story of the birth of Jesus, we find that the baby is not so little anymore; the Angels have returned to the heavens and the shepherds, those very first visitors to the place of his birth have long gone.

And Mary, Joseph and the not so baby Jesus have moved on too; they may not have gone so very far – but they, like time and the heavens, have not stood still.

They are probably no longer in that lowly place they shared with the animals, the place of Christ’s birth - but wherever they are in or around Bethlehem – their presence is still marked out by a celestial companion that shines the light of God’s love upon them; and shows the way to anyone who would care to seek them out

Today as we enter into Epiphany season and we begin our exploration into the glorious wonder of the Christ revealed - we start our journey by retracing the footsteps of the Magi, the wise folk who read the good news the universe declared, gathered together their gifts and stepped out in faith to find him.

How long they travelled we do not know, nor do we know their number.

Some say there were three, and that they were kings – that they were rich is in no doubt; that they were people of wisdom and social standing is beyond dispute.

But, we cannot know for sure who they were, we only know that they knew something wonderful had happened - and they set out to see the miracle for themselves.

As is the human way much has been written through the ages about those intrepid travellers – but they remain as enigmatic as ever.

They are a wonderful and tantalising glimpse into the mysterious ways of God; as tantalising and mysterious to us, as that star must have been to those wise, wise seekers of so long ago.

When it appeared how excited they must have been – nothing like it had ever been seen before.

It was as if – as if heaven itself had been ripped asunder to reveal a light so bright no human eye could look upon it, so intense and beautiful was its glorious rays.

This blazing heavenly body must surely herald something truly magnificent; a great and glorious happening

Something of worldwide, earth shattering proportions

Scholarly study and mathematical interpretation led them to conclude that the peculiar conjunction of so many planetary and celestial bodies could point to only one thing - a great and significant birth.

A king had been born

A king so kingly all earthly kings should bow in homage before him.

It was for the travellers a glimpse of a promise beyond their wildest dreams – and yet even though they knew this blazing heavenly light foretold the coming of something, someone significant – even they could not imagine who it was they would see when they reached their journey's end.

Who it was who would receive their gifts and smile upon them with love.

The journey to the one they sought was long and arduous, difficult – and dangerous.

And who would have imagined that the infant King would be found not in a Palace, surrounded by riches and powerful people but instead in a humble house held safe in the embrace of simple folk?

When at last they did find him, beneath the rays of that shining star, there was no doubt in their minds that this was the infant they had set out to see

This child of surprises was indeed the One they had journeyed far to find.

Here, enfleshed in humanity was everything they had hoped for.

So they bowed in homage, they offered their gifts - And they gazed upon him, that was enough.

And then they went home, enriched and strengthened, strong enough even to defy terrifying King Herod – because they had seen the One so many had longed for – the someone no one had ever expected to see.

It is wise folk indeed who hearing good news of Jesus, step out in faith to find him for themselves.

And having found him, give all that they have in love knowing that they have received far more than they have given.

The One we seek reveals himself to us and to the world in amazingly wondrous, mysterious and completely unexpected ways and places; and perhaps more importantly through people we least expect.

People – like us...

Today, as we enter into the story of the Magi, and remember the way they gathered together their gifts and set out to find Jesus, maybe we should remember that their story can be, is indeed, our story.

The One we seek is here, with us – now; and it is good to recall that our worship, our prayers and our very lives are the gifts we offer.

As we gaze upon him – he is looking back at us with such love.

Amazing love.

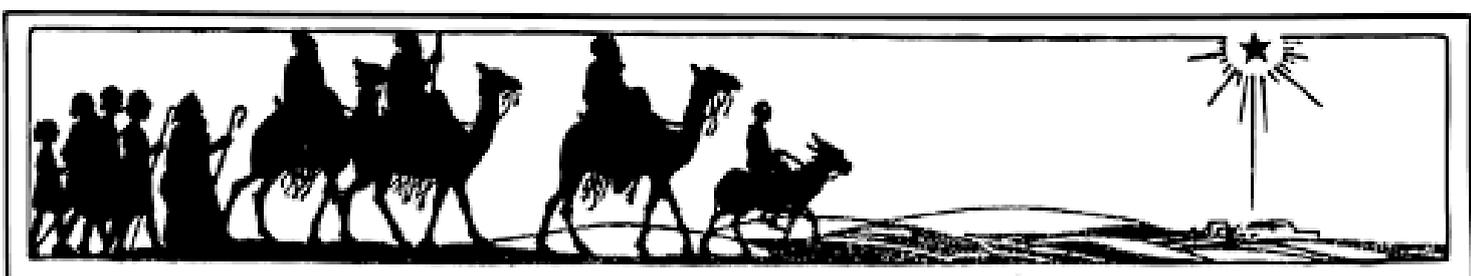
And in that amazing love we can do amazing things.

Something tells me that as we step into this new year; we will need all the strength we can find to be the people God calls us to be in 2021.

I know that we can find that strength in the love that Jesus offers us

May our hearts, our eyes and our lives forever shine out the light of that love so that others may see – and seek to find him and his strength for themselves. Amen.

The Revd Janet Wyer
Vicar.







Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem when Herod was king in Jerusalem. One day, wise men from eastern lands came to speak to Herod, asking 'Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have followed the Birth Star all the way here. We have come to worship him.'

Herod was frightened when he heard this and so was everyone else in Jerusalem.

He called a meeting of all the wise and religious scholars to find out where this Messiah was to be born. 'The prophet Micah wrote that it was to be Bethlehem,' they told him.

Herod met again with the wise men, in secret. He found out more about their learning and in turn told them to go and search for the newborn King in Bethlehem. Herod also asked the wise men to come back to him and tell him exactly where the baby was to be found, 'So that I too may worship him.'

So, the wise men set off again, following the same star, and it led them to Bethlehem, right to the Christ-child. When they entered the place where the child and his mother Mary were, their hearts were overwhelmed with joy.

The wise men knelt down before him and worshipped indeed. Then they offered their precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But when it was time for them to leave, the wise men went home by a different route, because God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod. **Matthew 2.1-12**

Name _____

ROOTS Activity Sheet

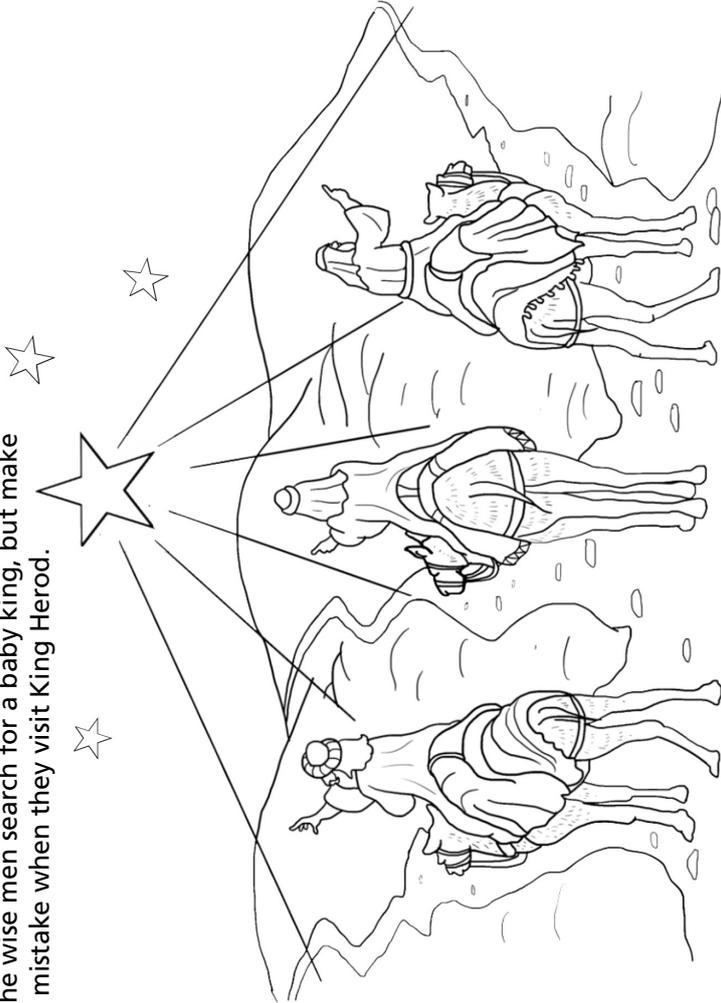
3-9 January 2021

Epiphany



Matthew 2.1-12

The wise men search for a baby king, but make a mistake when they visit King Herod.



The wise men need God's direction on their way to find baby Jesus.



Draw what helped the wise men to find Jesus.

Write

Can you find these hidden words?

Bethlehem

frankincense

gold

Herod

Mary

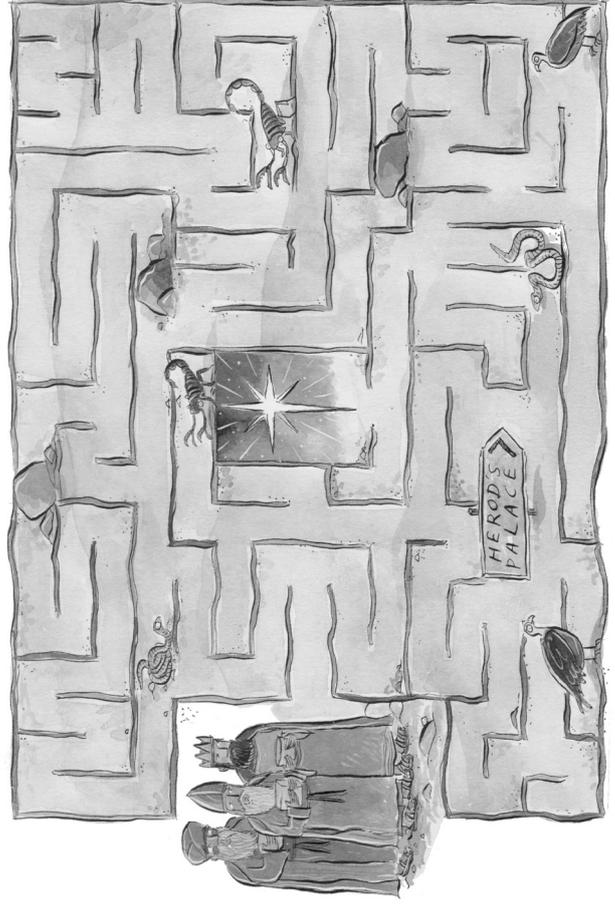
myrrh

search

star

worship

c	w	m	t	d	o	r	e	H	f	l	c
g	m	o	j	e	a	c	j	e	h	a	t
m	o	e	r	s	o	k	s	c	e	B	c
e	z	h	s	s	o	f	r	s	e	r	p
M	a	r	y	g	h	a	c	t	h	a	g
s	s	x	s	e	i	h	o	r	t	o	
m	d	y	s	s	w	l	p	j	r	s	l
n	y	e	y	e	e	y	s	c	y	u	d
n	m	p	o	h	z	n	a	u	m	n	u
e	s	n	e	c	n	i	k	n	a	r	f
i	c	m	i	w	n	d	n	o	p	y	c



Puzzle

Help the wise men to find their way to Jesus.

