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## Service for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas, 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021

*A warm welcome to all who share in worship with us today.*

### CALL TO WORSHIP

A new year has begun. Let us leave behind all that is past and walk together into the future. Let us trust in the God of new beginnings, and worship the God of fresh hopes.

### HYMN: Worship the Lord

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

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| 1 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;<br>bow down before him, his glory proclaim;<br>gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,<br>kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.                | 3 Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness<br>of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine:<br>truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,<br>these are the offerings to lay on his shrine.         |
| 2 Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness:<br>high on his heart he will bear it for thee,<br>comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy<br>prayerfulness,<br>guiding thy steps as may best for thee be. | 4 These, though we bring them in trembling and<br>fearfulness,<br>he will accept for the name that is dear;<br>mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,<br>trust for our trembling and hope for our fear. |
| 5 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;<br>bow down before him, his glory proclaim;<br>gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,<br>kneel and adore him: the Lord is his name.                |  |

J S B Monsell

### PRAYERS of adoration & confession

*Let us pray*

Father God, full of wisdom and power, whose mighty arm stretches over all the earth:  
**we bow down in humble adoration.**

Holy Saviour, full of grace, lighting up our world:  
**we bow down in humble adoration.**

Spirit of the living God, full of the boundless riches available to us in Christ;  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three in one:  
**we bow down in humble adoration, open to your direction. Amen.**

Lord, just as the wise men set out into new territory in search of you, help us to step out of life's narrow tramlines. Forgive us for seeking you out only in areas we know and in which we are comfortable.

In their day, the wise men were outsiders, yet were guided by a star and spoken to in a dream; their steps directed for your purpose. Forgive us when we fail to see – or even dismiss – your leading from unexpected places and unlikely people.

Lord, forgive us. Widen our vision and expand our minds to search and discern you in all places and people, that we may be drawn closer to you.

**Amen.**

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;**

**thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.**

**And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

**Amen.**

#### SCRIPTURE READING: St Matthew 2: 1-12

**2** Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him.”

<sup>3</sup> When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; <sup>4</sup> and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. <sup>5</sup> They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet:

<sup>6</sup> ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who will govern my people Israel.’”

<sup>7</sup> Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; <sup>8</sup> and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.”

<sup>9</sup> When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. <sup>10</sup> When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; <sup>11</sup> and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh.

<sup>12</sup> And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

*Thanks be to God.*

HYMN: Wise men seeking Jesus

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 Wise men seeking Jesus,  
Travelled from afar,  
Guided on their journey  
By a beautiful star.

2 But if we desire him,  
He is close at hand;  
For our native country  
Is our Holy Land.

3 Prayerful souls may find him  
By our quiet lakes,  
Meet him on our hillsides  
When the morning breaks.

4 In our fertile cornfields  
While the sheaves are bound,  
In our busy markets  
Jesus may be found.

5 Every peaceful village  
In our land might be,  
Made by Jesus' presence  
Like sweet Bethany.

6 He is more than near us,  
If we love him well;  
For he seeketh ever  
In our hearts to dwell.

*James T East*

REFLECTION: *Mrs Christine Dixon*

It is only in Matthew's gospel that we read about the epiphany of the Magi. It is only Matthew who tells about the guiding star, the Magi's audience with Herod and then their visit to Bethlehem.

The Magi are astrologers: they study the stars and see a strange star in the sky. They have the insight to recognise that this star is a sign that something momentous is about to happen. They are convinced that this is something that demands their attention – something that must be explored. The only way to find answers is to follow it, so they set out on a journey.

Yet almost at the end of their journey, they choose to ignore the star and go to Herod's palace to seek the child there. Remember, they were learned scholars. They assumed that this is where they will find him. Surely, to them it would be common sense to find a king in a palace? That makes sense, doesn't it? They ask their question, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?"

King Herod, we are told, was frightened by the news of such a baby. Here were clever men seeking a king. He was worried. He would begin scheming. He went to his chief priests and teachers of the law for advice. "Where will the Messiah be born?", he asks them. They have the answer. They have studied the scriptures and they know. "The Messiah will be born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea." God's chosen one was to be born in Bethlehem, not in the palaces of Jerusalem. We know the appalling consequences this news will have for the families of Bethlehem.

The Magi get back on track when they are told by Herod, "Go and search for the child and return with news". They continue to follow the star until it stops over a house in

Bethlehem. They have not yet seen the child, but it is enough for them that the star God has sent has come to a halt. They know that this is the sign they have been waiting for. Here they find the child. Many of you will know that Broadway subscribes to *Roots on the Web*, an online resource which can be used as an outline when preparing worship. It is the first thing I turn to when asked to lead worship. There was a lovely comment about today's gospel reading. It read "The expectation of the Magi was like the moment when you hold a gift still in its wrapping paper. You don't know what it is, and the excitement is all in the anticipation". Or, as R S Thomas, a poet and retired priest in the Anglican Church of Wales, put it: "The meaning is in the waiting." I Googled the poem based on Psalm 130, and found this verse:

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits,  
and in his word I hope;  
more than those who watch for the morning,  
more than those who watch for the morning.

The Magi respond with joy. They have insight and a new understanding of how God works in the world. Here they find the true king; a vulnerable child, not a ruthless man. Unlike Herod, who rules through intimidation and fear, this king will establish a kingdom through mercy, generosity, forgiveness and grace. Herod surrounds himself with powerful people, but Jesus will walk with friends and eat with sinners.

Several Christmases ago, as I listened to (our former Minister) Wilbert preach, he said that every Christian should be changed every time they hear the Christmas story. It doesn't matter how long you have been a Christian, there should still be a change in you. It is not enough to sit back in our seats and listen to the story again. The Magi were changed. The reading tells us that they did not go back to Herod. They took a different road home; a new road, but one where Jesus is now in their lives. Their lives are changed.

As we start 2021, let us pray that Jesus will make changes in us; that he will inspire us and guide us on a new journey. I think that the following mission prayer has such wonderful words to help us. Let us use this mission prayer to guide us on our journey. I believe it was written many years ago by the congregation at Broadway. Well, I know it was written prior to 2003, which was when I joined you. Many of you will remember it; some of you may have participated in its creation, but for others it may be the first time you have read or heard it. It speaks to all of us. Although we cannot all be together at the moment, it reminds us that we are a family and asks God to help us; indeed, to make changes in us. We cannot stay in one place. We need, as the prayer says, to deepen our commitment to God and use new opportunities he gives us...

Loving God, we thank you for the fellowship we share in Jesus' name here at Broadway United Reformed Church. We thank you for the support and encouragement, strength and inspiration, fun and friendship, which comes through being part of this family.

We thank you for the possibilities that stretch before us, the avenues of service waiting to be explored, the lives waiting to be touched by the good news of the gospel, and the gifts you have given us so that we might grasp these opportunities.

We pray, then, for one another – members and congregation – all who, in any way, are part of this fellowship. Deepen our commitment to you, to one another and to the world beyond.

Loving God, we commit ourselves afresh to Jesus Christ, and to his service within this church. Give us faith and courage, a spirit of adventure, holy vision and a willingness to follow where you would lead.

Take what we are, and direct what we shall be; for we ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

#### PRAYERS of intercession

*Let us pray*

Lord of all our journeys, we pray for those searching for warmth and safety, for those fleeing persecution and violence, for those in temporary accommodation because their homes have been flooded or damaged, remembering particularly those affected by Storm Bella and by the earthquake in Croatia.

Jesus child of the crib:

**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage and may they find security in you.**

Lord of all our ups and downs, we pray for those searching for peace of mind, for those struggling with depression, eating disorders, addictions...and for their families, for those facing the new year with sadness of heart, or little sense of purpose,~ for those who face it alone.

Jesus child of the crib:

**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage and may they find comfort in you.**

Lord of all wisdom, we pray for those searching for clarity and stability, for businesses adapting to new trade agreements., for farmers and fishermen, for teachers and students amid uncertain term times and new ways of learning, for those in industries unsure when they can re-open and struggling with new regulations, for scientists challenged by new variants of the Covid-19 virus, for those desperate to see their families again.

Jesus child of the crib:

**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage and may they find reassurance in you.**

Lord of love, we pray for those searching for work and for those whose work is exhausting , remembering especially those in the NHS and the emergency services; for carers and those administering the new vaccines and for those who will receive it; for those searching for ways to feed their families and pay their bills, and for those charities and organisations trying to help them.

Jesus child of the crib:

**bless them with the gifts of hope and courage and may they find strength in you.**

Lord of us all, we pray for those searching for faith amid anxiety and loss, for your church as she reaches out to those who are isolated, grieving, or battling with big questions, and we pray for one another as we seek to offer our time and resources to our communities and those most in need.

We pray for all the congregation here at Broadway, including those people we haven't seen for many months.

Jesus child of the crib:

**bless us all with the gifts of hope and courage and may we find peace in you.**

**Amen.**

HYMN: As with gladness

*If you would like to **sing** this hymn, click the icon on the webpage for organ accompaniment.*

1 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 God, may we  
evermore be led to thee.

2 As with joyful steps they sped,  
Saviour, to thy lowly bed,  
there to bend the knee before  
thee whom heav'n and earth adore;  
so may we with willing feet  
ever seek thy mercy seat.

3 As they offered gifts most rare  
at thy cradle plain and bare,  
so may we with holy joy,  
pure and free from sin's alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to thee, our heav'nly king.

4 Holy Jesus, ev'ry 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.

*W C Dix*

**BLESSING**

Lord, as we continue our journey with you this week, as we seek to live out our faith every day, be with us; surprise with your love and nudge us when you want us to see or do something new, for Jesus' sake.

**Amen.**