

Call to worship

Lord Jesus, we gather at the start of a new year, we gather to worship you. May you journey with us always, especially through the dark and uncomfortable places, and into places filled with hope and new possibilities, into a place of light and love.

Amen.

Hymn: R&S 187 Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

Opening prayers:

Almighty God, king of creation, you are our Day Star in the murk of a winter's morn, and our guiding light at all times. We set our faltering feet upon the path of the New Year, raising our eyes in faith to the light of your love; lead us onwards with hope and strength.

God the Father, who calls us to set forth: We worship and adore you. Christ the Son who journeys with us: We worship and adore you. Holy Spirit who inspires us for the road ahead: We worship and adore you.

Lord, we are dwellers in darkness, and often content to stay there. We confess that we are not always seekers after signs, nor do we actively pursue your guiding light. We fail to raise our eyes from the murk of our existence to the intimations of the miraculous in which your world abounds. Forgive us for dwelling on the darkness of our lives; we lift our gaze to you, O Lord. Let your star blaze anew in our vision, that we may follow where you lead, our hope rekindled, our strength renewed.

Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

The festive lights are dimming and the shadows encroach again; we have kept them at bay with cheer, good company and food. But now they creep back, accusing us of all the darkness we have denied awhile. In the weak light of morning, in the dim days

stretching ahead, we feel bad about ourselves, diminished by despair at our shortcomings – our lethargy, our fears, our failure to live as we should. Yet you, Father, blaze into our darkness and dazzle us with hope. You, Son, reach out your hand and raise us up. And you, Holy Spirit, bind us in this active forgiveness that encourages, and inspires, and urges us onwards.
Amen.

Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

Anthem

Reflection

As we recall the journey of the wise men, it's good to explore the journeys we make as individuals and as church communities, and where they might lead us in the coming year.

The journey the magi made wouldn't have been an easy one. There were probably times when the way ahead seemed long and dark, perhaps never-ending, even hopeless. There are many experiences in life – such as loss, pain, or suffering, of any kind – that can make us feel like that. And in those times, it is good to have someone with us on our journey, someone to share the load, the burden of it all. The magi had each other. We may have friends and family, but knowing that Jesus walks with us is reassuring too. It can give us the strength to keep going. The wise men followed the star; its light encouraged them to keep journeying on. We follow Jesus; he does the same for us (and much more)!

We're going to hear something now of the journeys of several people who we have lost in the past year. People who knew them well will tell us a little of their memories.

Mary Bevin

Jim Brackley

Mo Chamanbaz

Deb Moriarty

Hymn MP 23

All things bright and beautiful
(This was one of Jim's favourite hymns)

Prayers

Dear loving God, we remember the wise men and their gifts.
As we think of **gold**, we thank you
for all that we have, for our possessions,
for the money in bank accounts and in our purses and wallets;
and we pray
for those who have gone into debt in order to celebrate Christmas,
for those whose income is insecure as a result of the Covid
pandemic,
and for those who cant afford adequately to heat their homes.
Lord of light: Bring hope into the darkness.

Dear loving God, we remember the wise men and their gifts.
As we think of **frankincense**, we thank you
for our church and for all places of worship,
for those who help us find peace in our hearts,
for those who enable us to know your holiness;
and we pray
for our churches and the churches of our community
that they may build upon all their advent and Christmas mission
activities,
for retreat houses and special places of peace,
and all who speak words of holiness into our society.
Lord of light: Bring hope into the darkness.

Dear loving God, we remember the wise men and their gifts.
As we think of **myrrh**, we thank you
for the death and resurrection of Jesus,
for those who care for the dying and the bereaved,
for those who offer counselling and support;
and we pray
for those who grieve lost time and lost opportunities,
for those who are suffering from Covid,
and for all who mourn loved ones at this time.

We pray especially today for the families and friends of Mary, Jim, Mo and Deb and we continue to pray for those who still feel the loss of Marilyn Raw, Daniel Kyerah and Corinne Dawson
Lord of light: Bring hope into the darkness.

May the wisdom of the wise men inspire us to continue to seek your light and love, and to offer you our gifts and resources that you may use us to build your kingdom.

In Jesus' name.

Amen

Lord's Prayer

Offertory prayer

Loving God as we celebrate today the many gifts you have given us and especially the gifts we have received from those we remember today we pray that our offerings here may be used to support the journey of your kingdom here, today. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Hymn R&S 184

As with gladness men of old

Dedication of chairs

Blessing