



Highcliffe and Bransgore Methodist Churches

**Sunday 3rd January 2021 Prepared by Rev'd
Phillip Dixon.**

This written worship sheet is for you to use as we gather to worship God, united by the power of the Holy Spirit in love for our Lord Jesus Christ whose birth we have just celebrated. Our physical gatherings at Highcliffe and Bransgore over the next two Sunday's (had they taken place) would have included the renewing of our covenantal relationship to God and to each other, as members of the family of Christ – the church. Please join us in making your commitment from your home using the words provided.

Opening words: We are in the season of Christmas and we joyfully proclaim:
The Word has become flesh;
He lives among us and we see His glory
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth. Amen

Hymn: We three kings

Sing/read/pray/proclaim.

We three kings of Orient are;
bearing gifts we traverse afar,
field and fountain, moor and mountain,
following yonder star.

*O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign.



Refrain

Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising, voices raising,
worshipping God on high.

Refrain

Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Refrain

Glorious now behold him arise;
King and God and sacrifice:
Alleluia, Alleluia,
sounds through the earth and skies.

*O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.*

John Henry Hopkins Jr.

Opening Prayer: Eternal God, by a star you led the Magi to the worship of your Son. Guide by your bright light the nations of the earth, that the whole earth may see your glory: may the people who are lost in darkness encounter the radiance of his glory, that he may be known, worshipped and obeyed to the ends of the earth, now and forever through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen** A combination of the two Collects for Epiphany or the preceding Sunday MWB page 528

Prayer of Confession:

The Lord has come, He brings to light the things hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of our hearts. Therefore before the glorious light of Christ, bowing down in worship, let us now confess our sins.

Heavenly Father, you have created a universe of light: forgive us for the times when we return to darkness. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world: cleanse and heal our blinded sight. Christ, have mercy. **Christ, have mercy.**

Holy Spirit, you give us light in our hearts: renew us in faith and love. Lord, have mercy. **Lord, have mercy.**

A time of quiet to ask forgiveness for ourselves and to listen to what God may be saying to us .

Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has come to us and offered us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, thank you for the forgiveness of our sins, open our eyes to Your truth, strengthen us to do Your will in this year ahead and grant us the true

and abundant joy of Your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Confession and Absolution based on prayers from Church of England Common Worship

Song: Arise shine (darkness like a shroud)

StF 170 Sing/read/pray/proclaim words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHG3YSONGJc&ab_channel=GrahamKendrick
[Music](#)

Darkness like a shroud covers the earth;
Evil like a cloud covers the people.
But the Lord will rise upon you,
And His glory will appear on you-
Nations will come to your light.

*Arise, shine, your light has come,
The glory of the Lord has risen on you!
Arise, shine, your light has come,
Jesus the Light of the world has come.*

Here among us now, Christ the light
Kindles brighter flames in our trembling hearts.

Living Word, our lamp, come guide our feet

As we walk as one in light and peace,
Till justice and truth shine like the sun.

*Arise, shine, your light has come,
The glory of the Lord has risen on you!
Arise, shine, your light has come,
Jesus the Light of the world has come.*

Your light has come,
The light has come
Your light has come,
The light has come.

Graham Kendrick (b1950)

Prayer: Loving Lord God, as we read Your Holy Word and the accompanying notes, we pray today that our hearts and minds will be open to hear what You are saying to us. May Your Word always be filled with fresh insight. **Amen**

Scripture Reading: Matthew 2: 1-12.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem ² and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

³ When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. ⁴ When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

⁶ "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

⁷ Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

⁹ After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. ¹¹ On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to go back to

Herod, they returned to their country by another route. NIV

A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.

Reflection: John Stott writes "it is especially remarkable that Matthew, the most Jewish of the four evangelists (gospel writers) nevertheless portrays near the beginning of his writing the visit of these mysterious Magi, representatives of the Gentile nations, and then at the gospel's end (chapter 28) the commission of the risen Lord to go and disciple the nations". Therefore, with Matthew's gospel, from the very beginning in Bethlehem to the end of Jesus' incarnated earthly ministry in Jerusalem we see divine connections. Isaiah prophesied "arise, shine; for your light has come...nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn" (Isaiah 60:1 and 3). The prophet Micah (as quoted in part by the priests and scribes of Herod's court) who prophesied God's purposes 700 years before the birth of Christ goes on to say: "and they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth; and he shall be the one of peace".

The journey undertaken by the Magi was one in which they did not know the length, the hardships or the destination - only the purpose, to worship God's Messiah. "In all of their sacred wisdom, in all of their vast learning, they had not yet found the wisdom their hearts were longing for. Why else would they have taken such an arduous journey if not for an aching need to satisfy a hunger that all of the worlds wisdom had not satisfied" Michael Card -author and songwriter.

When the Magi are brought to Herod in secret they are being drawn into a web of deceit and lies. Evil tries to conceal itself (and sometimes gets away with it) in an attempt to legitimise itself, passing itself off as “well meaning”. Perhaps Herod does such a good job of his deceit (as can often be the case) that it is only the dream (verse 12) that averts the Magi telling Herod the whereabouts of the baby Jesus.

This is a period of time unlike any other in the history of this world, filled with the work of God’s Spirit, dreams, babies, angels and the supernatural. Most significantly God comes to his people in human flesh in the most vulnerable way conceivable.

What of the “chief priests and scribes”, did any of them have the slightest interest to go the very short distance (9km) from Jerusalem to Bethlehem to see for themselves? When compared to the 1,150km estimated that the Magi travelled it must be abundantly clear that what separated them was not intelligence or knowledge but the desire of their hearts; one being open and eager and excited to encounter the living God the other serving a corrupt and cruel human master with their eye on the “organisation”, their next promotion or rank. The chief priests would have had an excellent knowledge of the scriptures when compared to the partial parts of scripture available to the Magi, probably left to them from the exile period.

“We have come to worship him”, “they were overjoyed” and “they bowed down and worshipped him” are to me the three most important elements of this passage. These men have set out into an unknown land, with no clear direction, following a

star that is leading them westward. This is the miraculous reconciling work of God and as Jesus is presented at the temple (Luke 2) recall the words of Simeon and Anna, through the power of the Holy Spirit, “my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all peoples, a light of revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory of your people Israel” and “the consolation of Israel...the redemption of Jerusalem”.

These are events that speak to us today, surely we must not put them away with the tinsel and baubles for another year but instead carry them with us into 2021 and into our lives, proclaiming this salvation event much as the Magi and the shepherds (from Luke2) “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen as it had been told them”. **Amen**

Officially the nations favourite Christmas Carol (BBC & Classic FM) O Holy Night
Sing/read /pray /proclaim the words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTFG_nvreol&ab_channel=KingsCollegeChoir

O Holy night! The stars are brightly shining
It is the night of our dear Saviour’s birth
Long lay the world in sin and error pining
'Til He appears and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn:

Fall on your knees; O hear the Angel voices!

O night divine, O night when Christ was born

O night, O Holy night, O night divine!

Led by the light of Faith serenely beaming
With glowing hearts by His cradle we stand

So led by light of a star sweetly gleaming

Here come the Wise Men from Orient
land
The King of kings lay thus in lowly manger
In all our trials born to be our friend
He knows our need, to our weakness is no
stranger
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend
Behold your King; before Him lowly bend

Truly He taught us to love one another;
His law is love and His Gospel is Peace
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our
brother
And in His name, all oppression shall
cease
Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus
raise we
Let all within us Praise His Holy name
Christ is the Lord; O praise His name
forever!

His power and glory evermore proclaim
His power and glory evermore proclaim
Placide Cappeau and Adolphe Adam, translated by John
Sullivan Dwight.

Additional scripture readings for Covenant Sunday:

Jeremiah 31:31-34, Romans 12:1-2,
Ephesians 4:12-16, Mark 14:23-25.

The Covenant Prayer:

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with
whom you will.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for you or laid aside
for you,
Exalted for you or brought low for you.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have
nothing.

I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things
to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine, and I am yours.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on
earth,
Let it be ratified in heaven. **Amen.**

Lord our God, you have helped us by your
sweet and good grace to say these prayers
and to make and truly mean these
commitments. You have promised that
when two or three agree in your name
you will grant what we ask. Answer now
our prayers according to our needs and
grant that we may truly serve and know
you in this life and that to come, we ask
this through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

A Family Prayer for safety and protection in the days ahead.

O Lord, I pray that as I come to you today
for refuge you will embrace
in thy loving arms and surround and
enclose with thy healing hands.

As you stand beside us as our protective
shade may we be rested in the shadow of
thy wings and experience the peace and
comfort which only you can give,
supported in the hollow of thy hands and
hidden in the depths and safety of thy
Holy sanctuary.

For we know that you constantly watch
over us and if we make you our refuge no
evil will conquer us, no danger will come
near us or our home because you order
your angels to watch over and protect us
wherever we go. We ask this in thy dear
name. **Amen.** Contributed by Philip Seager

A Prayer for the persecuted church:

As one Church, united under your Holy Headship, and knowing that we are all one family in Christ. We pray for those who suffer in Your name all over the world, our brothers and sisters, who share in that same great gift of salvation through Your Son, but who face injustice, oppression and even death because of their faith in You. We want to walk with them as they journey through the valley of darkness, and we pray knowing that You are the God of compassion, comfort, and justice; who always hears their prayers, never leaves them and will forever be their fortress and shield, whatever they face.

We pray that as we begin a new year You will grant them strength, courage, and protection from those who seek to harm them because they follow You; guidance and wisdom for when their path seems impossible to tread, and hope for a future where they have the freedom to worship You without fear. In the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen** Contributed by the Baptist Union of GB

Our Lord's Prayer (family prayer):

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.**

Song: Jesus shall reign StF 328 Sing/read or proclaim the words.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BE4DDB5whyk&ab_channel=KeithandKristynGetty

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run,
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To him shall endless prayer be made,
and praises throng to crown his head.
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
with every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
dwell on his love with sweetest song,
and infant voices shall proclaim
their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns:
the prisoners leap to lose their chains,
the weary find eternal rest,
and all who suffer want are blest.

Let every creature rise and bring
the highest honours to our King,
angels descend with songs again,
and earth repeat the loud amen.

Isaac Watts (1674-1748)

Benediction: Be as a light to the nations.
Honour the Lord; preach what you know
of the Lord Jesus Christ and fulfil all
righteousness.
May God strengthen you and bless you
with peace;
May Christ Jesus bring forth justice for you
and among you;
And may the Holy Spirit alight on you
and affirm you as God's beloved. We
rejoice in peace to love and serve the
Lord, **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

Contributed by Nathan Nettleton.

Phillip Dixon, January 2021. YouTube links are external resources and are provided to help you engage with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms resources are provided under license: CCLI 178182