

# Quispamsis United Church

January 7, 2024 - Epiphany Sunday

**Liturgical Colour:** White

**Presider:** Rev Ian Manson

**Music:** Stephen Alexander

**Reader:** Cindy Millican

**Centering Reflection:** *We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond.*

— Gwendolyn Brooks

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## GATHERING TOGETHER

**Opening Music** (Break Forth, O Beauteous Heavenly Light – arr. Cindy Berry) & **Time of Prayer and Candle Lighting**

**Welcome and Lighting of the Christ Candle**

**Lighting of Affirm Candle & Acknowledgment of Territories**

**Celebrations**

**Introit:**

The light of Christ has come into the world,  
The light of Christ has come into the world. (2x)

**Call to Worship (Responsive):**

Arise, shine, for light and love have come to brighten our days.

**Darkness and despair abound, but the radiance of God's presence burns away the shadows.**

The light inspires hope and courage, and heralds the start of a new dawn.

**Let us arise, shine, and celebrate the Spirit's gifts of life and faith.**

**Prayer of Approach (Unison)**

**Radiant One, you offer light and life to the world, and we give thanks. By the guidance of a star, you led the Magi to the place where Jesus lay. In this time and place, may the ways of Mary, Joseph and the Magi be our own, so that we too might courageously follow the light you offer, and embrace your gifts anew. Amen**

**Opening Hymn:**

We Three Kings

Versus 1, 2 & 5

**We three kings of Orient are,  
Bearing gifts we traverse afar,  
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,  
Following yonder star.**

*Refrain:*

**O star of wonder, star of night,  
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 for ever, ceasing never,  
Over us all to reign. R**

**Glorious now behold him arise,  
King and God, and Sacrifice,  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Earth to the heavens replies. R**

**Prayer of Confession (Unison)**

**God of mercy and loving-kindness,**

**you sent Christ among us to be the light of the world  
and reveal your love to all people.**

**Yet our shortcomings hide the brightness of your light  
that should shine through us.**

**Forgive us for focusing our energies on too many trivial matters,  
for ignoring cries for justice,  
and for harming the earth you love.**

**In your mercy, cleanse us and make us new.**

*(Silent Contemplation)*

**Words of Assurance**

**Time for All Ages**

**Sung Introduction to Scripture: Open Your Ears, O Faithful People**  
**Open your ears O faithful people,**  
**Open your ears and hear God's word.**  
**Open your hearts O faithful people,**  
**God now speaks to you.**

VU 272 (Vs 1)

**Readings:** Matthew 2: 1-23

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.

Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, 'Out of Egypt I have called my son.'

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah:

'A voice was heard in Ramah,  
wailing and loud lamentation,

Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.'

When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, 'Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child's life are dead.' Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee. There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, 'He will be called a Nazorean.'

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**Message** "Ready or Not"

### **RESPONDING TO GOD'S WORD**

**Hymn:**

Will You Come and See the Light

VU 96

**Will you come and see the light from the stable door?**

**It is shining newly bright, though it shone before.**

**It will be your guiding star,**

**it will show you who you are;**

**will you hide, or decide to meet the light?**

**Will you step into the light that can free the slave?**

**It will stand for what is right, it will heal and save.**

**By the pyramids of greed**

**there's a longing to be freed;**

**will you hide, or decide to meet the light?**

**Will you tell about the light in the prison cell?**

**Though it's shackled out of sight, it is shining well.**

**When the truth is cut and bruised,**

**and the innocent abused,**

**will you hide, or decide to meet the light?**

**Will you join the hope, alight in the young girl's eyes,  
of the mighty put to flight by a baby's cries?  
When the lowest and the least  
are the foremost at the feast,  
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?**

**Will you travel by the light of the babe new born?  
In the candle lit at night there's a gleam of dawn,  
and the darkness all about  
is too dim to put it out:  
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?**

### **Life and Work of the Church**

### **Sharing of Gifts and Talents**

**Offertory Dedication Hymn: Lord, You Give the Great Commission VU 512 (Vs 3)**  
**With gratitude and humble trust we bring our best to you,  
Not just to serve your cause, but share your love with neighbours too.  
O God who gave yourself to us in Jesus Christ your son,  
help us to give ourselves each day until life's work is done.**

### **Prayer of Dedication (Unison)**

**God of majesty and mystery, we bring our gifts to you, grateful that you are always with us. We do not know what the year ahead will hold, but your love shines like a star to guide us. Bless these gifts that they may keep the light of Christ shining through the church to embrace the world you love. Amen.**

### **Prayers of the People and Lord's Prayer**

### **SENDING FORTH**

**Closing Hymn: As With Gladness Men of Old VU 81**  
**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 Lord, may we  
evermore your splendour see.**

As with joyful steps they sped,  
to that lowly manger bed,  
there to bend the knee before  
Christ, whom heaven and earth adore;  
so may we with eager pace  
ever seek your throne of grace.

As they offered gifts most rare  
at that manger crude and bare,  
so may we with holy joy,  
pure and free from sin's alloy,  
all our costliest treasures bring,  
Christ, to you, our heavenly King.

Holy Jesus, every 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 your glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright  
none shall need created light;  
you its light, its joy, its crown,  
you its sun which goes not down;  
there for ever may we sing  
hallelujah to our King.

**Commissioning (Responsive):**

The season of Epiphany celebrates God's light breaking into the world.

As we go forth, may the light of God lead us,  
may the light of Christ embrace us,  
And may the light of the Holy Spirit enliven us.

**Benediction**

**Choral Closing**

Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song

VU 641 (Vs 1)

**Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.**

**I'll tell everybody about you wherever I go.**

**For our life and our peace and our love is yourself.**

**Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.**

**Closing Music**

Fugue from Voluntary in A minor - John James