

**Transformation – NOW!
EPIPHANY**

Opening Prayer

O Star-flinging God, whose light dances across eternity,
dazzle us into your presence this new year.

Open our hearts to the mystery of your love.

Awaken us to your presence, knit to the ordinary.

Reveal to us what is possible, but not yet present.

Heal us, that we might be healers.

Reconcile us to you and to ourselves,
that our living might be reconciling.

Stop us often, we pray
with news that is good, with hope that holds,
with truth that transforms with a Word, tailored to this trail we're on.

May the word of your grace guide our steps
like the sun by day and the north star by night,
as we travel into the gift of a new year.

Amen.

Glenn Mitchell

Hymn: Brightest and best of the sons of the morning
sung by St Martin's Voices

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;
low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would his favour secure:
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

Bible Reading: Matthew 2: 1-12

The Living Bible

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. At about that time some astrologers from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in far-off eastern lands and have come to worship him."

King Herod was deeply disturbed by their question, and all Jerusalem was filled with rumours. He called a meeting of the Jewish religious leaders. "Did the prophets tell us where the Messiah would be born?" he asked. "Yes, in Bethlehem," they said, "for this is what the prophet Micah wrote:

'O little town of Bethlehem, you are not just an unimportant Judean village, for a Governor shall rise from you to rule my people Israel.'"

Then Herod sent a private message to the astrologers, asking them to come to see him; at this meeting he found out from them the exact time when they first saw the star. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him too!"

After this interview the astrologers started out again. And look! The star appeared to them again, standing over Bethlehem. Their joy knew no bounds! Entering the house where the baby and Mary, his mother, were, they threw themselves down before him, worshipping. Then they opened their presents and gave him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But when they returned to their own land, they didn't go through Jerusalem to report to Herod, for God had warned them in a dream to go home another way.

Reflection: Emmanuel

Emmanuel.

God with us.

Through torn sky shepherds spy heaven singing
And through this wound, God falls into hay screaming
Only astrologers scan outer depths to follow this bright trajectory
Burning up in my atmospheres.
Cold vacuums resisting God's re-entry.

Christ.

In very nature God.

Stripped of all vestures of Deity

No glory, no majesty, no power, no knowledge.

Abandoned by heaven.

The almighty, become so small as to be born human.

Receives gifts

The first reminders

Suggestions of an identity.

The saviour of the world.

Born in a 2-bit village, in a cave under the family home.

Ostracised by his ancestors.

His mother shamed.
Ignored by the religious.
Recognised only by farm-hands and foreign astrologers.
We welcomed God in the same way we dispatched him.
Deserted by friends
Rejected by the godly
Abandoned by God
Helpless
Exposed to the elements
And only two people to recognise him: a thief and an occupying soldier
The underclass. The foreigner.
In birth Christ was offered three gifts.
Gold for a king
Frankincense for a God
And Myrrh for a mortal.
In birth Christ was offered three gifts
But in death all gifts were refused.
In death Christ becomes gift.
Where are we this Christmas?
Are we Magi, searching in strange places for signs of God?
Are we offering gifts, unaware of their deeper meanings?
Are we the establishment, trying to shut out what we fear?
We are all of these.
But we are called to become the faithful wanderer.
To become the body of Christ.
Freely accepting gifts.
Living and dying to become gift for others.

Jonny Baker

Hymn: Christ is the one who calls
sung by St Martin's Voices

Timothy Dudley Smith (b.1926)
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Christ is the one who calls,
the one who loved and came,
to whom by right it falls
to bear the highest Name:
and still today
our hearts are stirred
to hear his word
and walk his way.

Christ is the one who seeks,
to whom our souls are known.
The word of love he speaks
can wake a heart of stone;
for at that sound
the blind can see,
the slave is free,
the lost are found.

Christ is the one who died,
forsaken and betrayed;
who, mocked and crucified,
the price of pardon paid.
Our dying Lord,
what grief and loss,
what bitter cross,
our souls restored!

Christ is the one who rose
in glory from the grave,
to share his life with those
whom once he died to save
.He drew death's sting
and broke its chains,
who lives and reigns,
our risen King.

Christ is the one who sends,
his story to declare;
who calls his servants friends
and gives them news to share.
His truth proclaim
in all the earth,
his matchless worth
and saving Name.

Prayers

Let us pray to God, who is made manifest in Jesus Christ.

As the prophet Isaiah rang out, “Arise, shine; for your light has come”;
empower your Church, O God,
to ring out the Good News of the Light of your son Jesus,
which pierces even the deepest darkness.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

As a star rose high into the night-time sky
to draw the nations to the Christ-child;
send your blessing, O God, on this nation, and every nation,
and draw the whole world to your peace and truth.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

As John the Baptist guided throngs of people to the edge of the
wilderness and baptised Jesus in the River Jordan,
we pray that you would guide our country and our leaders
to the ways of justice and righteousness.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Like the Magi who travelled from afar
to bring gifts and celebrate the Saviour’s birth;
we pray for our communities,
and for those who celebrate their own birthday alone.

In a moment's silence we pray for those known to us.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

As Jesus climbed the mountaintop,
and proclaimed blessings on the people of the world;
we pray for the sick and suffering,
especially those injured as a result of wars,
such as Gaza, Israel and Ukraine;
we pray for all the medical staff trying to help,
without equipment or medicine.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

As Jesus called the disciples to leave their nets & boats, and follow him;
we pray for those we love and for those who have answered your call
to follow Jesus to your Heavenly Kingdom. Give them your peace.
Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lord Jesus, Light of the World,
hear our prayers, and make us reflections of your Light,
that the places of darkness in our world would be pierced by your Light,
and that all nations would be drawn to you and be overwhelmed with joy.
Amen.

*Written by Rick Morley
and adapted by Denise Smith*

Mary Sumner Prayer

All this day, O Lord,
let me touch as many lives as possible for thee;
and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken,
whether through the word I speak,
the prayer I breathe,
or the life I live.
Amen

Hymn: As with gladness men of old

sung by St Martin's Voices

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 be led to thee.

As with joyful steps they sped,
to that lowly manger-bed,
there to bend the knee before
him whom heaven and earth adore;
so may we with willing feet
ever seek thy mercy-seat.

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

Holy Jesu, 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 thy glory hide.

In the heavenly country bright
need they no created light;
thou its light, its joy, its crown,
thou its sun which goes not down;
there for ever may we sing
alleluias to our King.

William Chatterton Dix (1837-1898)

Closing prayer

Though the day grows dark, Lord,
may your light continue to shine.
Though my fears are overwhelming,
may your peace be more powerful still.
Though my days on occasions feel lonely,
may your presence continue to sustain me.
Though time hangs heavy,
may I appreciate each moment you give me.
Though I feel weak and vulnerable,
may your strength be sufficient for my needs.
Though I am anxious about loved ones,
may your love bring reassurance.
Though I grieve those I have lost,
may your eternal promises bring comfort.
Though the future feels bleak,
may trust in you bring hope.
Though all things seem to conspire against me,
may you turn even the bad to good.
Though all else fail, Lord,
assure me that you will not.
Amen.

Nick Fawcett

Material: as stated

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Prayers next month will be on 8th February 2024 – Peace