



# CHRISTIAN FORMATION EPIPHANY RESOURCES

## *The Season of Epiphany*

The season of Epiphany begins on January 6 and ends on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday. On Epiphany we remember the visit of the three kings (Magi, el Dia de los Tres Reyes, la fiesta de Reyes, or el Dia de los Reyes Magos) to the Holy Family in Bethlehem. This day brings an end to the Christmas season. It is sometimes called Twelfth Night.

The word “epiphany” comes from a Greek word which means “showing forth.” The season of Epiphany can last from four to nine weeks, depending on the date of Easter that year. In many cultures, this day is a very festive day, even replacing Christmas Day as the major gift-giving day.

The liturgical color for the season of Epiphany is green, symbolizing growth and living things. The theme for the season is one of mission, re-examining our baptismal promises, remembering Jesus’ ministry and his miracles. It is a time for rededicating ourselves to our own ministries.

Epiphany is a time in which we remember our baptisms, the vows and promises we make at every baptism we attend and a time to think about our own call to ministry. Joseph Russell, in *The Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education* describes Epiphany through the eyes of a child by saying, “What Jesus did and said helps us to know who God is and what he is doing for us.

The Lectionary readings for Year A put special emphasis on Matthew’s Gospel. The visit of the Magi in Matthew 1:1-3; 9-11, healing miracles, such as the leper and the paralytic in Matthew 8 and 9, and many parables help us understand Jesus’ ministry.

Our Gospel readings for Year B are focus on Mark; the readings for Year C are primarily from Luke. We have a number of good resources on both gospels in our diocesan resource library. Enter Mark or Luke in the keyword section of the search page at [www.epicenter.org](http://www.epicenter.org) (click on Christian Formation and then on Resource Library - electronic card catalogue).

Jesus called his friends to be with him and to help him in his work; Jesus came for all the people of the world; Jesus is like a light, helping us to see better; we are baptized into God’s family, the Church.” During the season, we also celebrate the Baptism of Jesus, World Mission Sunday, Transfiguration Day, Jesus’ presentation in the Temple to Simeon and Anna, Martin Luther King and Absalom Jones.

## *Epiphany at Home*

It is very easy to ignore this season. We are tired from Christmas, the decorations are down, the parties are over for the most part, diets have begun, start of year activities keep us from remembering our quiet times of study during Advent.

### **King's Cake**

A special Kings' Cake may be part of the festivities. The cake may contain three small crowns or a variety of small charms symbolizing events that might come during the coming year to the recipient of the charm. The cake might contain a small doll instead. The person finding the doll would host the Kings' Day party the next year. Or, they might receive a festive crown.

### **The Three Gifts**

What unusual gifts to bring a baby! What unusual people to come visit a baby!

The three magi or wisemen came from the East to Bethlehem to visit the new king. Their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh were symbolic of Jesus' kingship and life.

The gift of gold symbolized royalty.

The gift of frankincense symbolizes prayer

Myrrh is a symbol of suffering and death.

We are not sure of their names, in the hymn *We Three Kings*, they are named Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar. They heeded a dream in which an angel told them to return by another route and not to go back to Herod, as he had asked. When are times we need to return by another route? What are the gifts we bring? How far are we willing to go?

### **Recycling the Christmas Tree**

You might like to turn your Christmas tree into mulch to spread in your garden, or burn it in your fireplace or take it to the beach for a dunesaving project. You might like to take the church's tree and strip it of branches, cut in two pieces and make a cross out of it for the Flowering of the Cross at Easter.

### **House Blessings**

Epiphany is a great time for House Blessings. Invite your clergy person and friends to your home for blessings and a potluck dinner! You might like to take a branch of the tree and use it to sprinkle the doors of your home with holy water and use chalk to write house blessing prayers on the doorjamb. Sample liturgies can be found in *The Book of Occasional Services*, or in Edward Hays' excellent book *Prayers for the Domestic Church*. Another source of a good house blessing can be found in the program *Faith-full Families. To Dance with God* also has a good house-blessing ceremony. Contact Janie Stevens if you are interested in any of these programs.

### **Games**

Other ideas for celebrating this season in the home might include making a board game based on the travels of the Wisemen to Bethlehem. The game could be drawn on a poster board, crown, camel, star etc. could be the game pieces. As you travel over moor and mountain, field and fountain, what might you encounter on the way to Bethlehem?

# Epiphany at Church

After the excitement of the Epiphany party, what does the church do for the rest of this season? Careful teaching and preaching on the baptismal promises, on Jesus' miracles, learning to tell The Story (of our faith) and our own story as how we fit into The Story is a neverending and most important job. The psalmist laments that he cannot sing his song in a strange land - he doesn't remember his song/story. It has been so long since he has heard it that he has forgotten it. A good Epiphany promise would be to help people become more comfortable telling their story of faith in non-threatening ways, in ways that others can hear and see the good news in their lives.

## Storytelling

We all love stories. They tell us who we are and whose we are. We tell stories for those new to our group so that they can know who we are and who they will become. We tell stories to help us remember, to help us grow, to be comforted. The Resource Libraries have a number of books on storytelling, how to tell one's story of faith, how to help others do this.

## Candles

The first Sunday after Epiphany is also known as The Baptism of Our Lord. On this day we remember Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan by John. We remember the words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Many churches schedule baptisms on this day. One theme in Epiphany is that of light and you might like to make baptismal candles for those who will be baptized during the coming year. Wonderful candle-making supplies can be purchased at craft stores or from [HearthSong](#).

Glass votive holders can be painted with stained glass paints as well. You might enjoy making one candle for yourself to remember your baptism during the coming year and one for someone who will be baptized as well.

## Millenium Development Goals

What is your congregation doing to focus on Millenium Development Goals? Many churches will be using Lent as a time to spend a bit of time discerning how to live into these goals.

As you begin your planning, you might want to consider the following resources coming to us with our great thanks to Sharon Pearson, Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut, Christian Formation.

### Books

*What Can One Person Do? Faith to Heal a Broken World*,  
Sabina Alkire, Edmund Newell, Ann Barham,  
Chloe Breyer and Ian Douglas, editors.

*Primary School Kit on the United Nations*,  
*Intermediate School Kit on the United Nations*,  
*or Secondary School Kit on the United Nations*.  
David Barrs and Maura Julfkins.

*What One Congregation Can Do: A Guide to Developing a  
MDGs Ministry in Your Congregation*, Jay R.  
Lawlor.

*Eradicating Global Poverty: A Christian Study Guide on the  
Millennium Development Goals*, by Lallie B. Lloyd.

### Websites of interest

United Nations Development Programme: MDGs  
[www.undp.org/mdg](http://www.undp.org/mdg)

Episcopalians for Global Reconciliation  
[www.e4gr.orgmdggoal.html](http://www.e4gr.orgmdggoal.html)

The ONE Campaign [www.one.org](http://www.one.org)

MDG Goolkit [www.mdgtoolkt.undg.org](http://www.mdgtoolkt.undg.org)

United Nations Cyber School Bus - for children a  
[cyberschoolbus.un.org/mdgs/index.html](http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/mdgs/index.html)

Nikelodeon's initiative for children  
[www.nick2015.com](http://www.nick2015.com)

### Video Resources

*Silent Killer: The Unfinished Campaign Against Hunger*.

KCTS TV 2005 [www.kcts.org](http://www.kcts.org)

*Girl in the Care*. HBO 2005 [www.hbo.com](http://www.hbo.com)

# *Special Days in the Season of Epiphany*

## **The Baptism of our Lord - January 8, 2006**

On this day, we remember the baptism of Jesus by John. It is one of the designated baptismal days in the church calendar.

## **The Confession of St. Peter the Apostle – January 18**

We remember this apostle, the Rock, the man who tried to walk on water, who was present at the Transfiguration, who spoke boldly at the first Pentecost, a man who reminds us of ourselves as we struggle, stumble, speak rashly or act impetuously.

## **The Conversion of St. Paul the Apostle – January 25**

Saul witnessed the stoning of Stephen, the first Christian Martyr, and was on his way to Damascus to lead in further persecution of the Christians when his dramatic conversion took place. From that day onward, after a name change, Paul became totally devoted to Christ and the conversion of the Gentiles.

## **The Presentation of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Temple - February 2**

Known by several names, Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin, Candlemas, Meeting of Christ with Simeon, the Presentation this feast day reminds us of the Jewish law in which the firstborn son had to be dedicated to the Lord in memory of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt when the Egyptian firstborn males were killed and the children of Israelites were not.

## **World Mission Sunday - Last Sunday of Epiphany**

Another area of emphasis during Epiphany is that of mission. We hear stories of Jesus' ministry, of his teaching, and of the people who followed him. World Mission Sunday is the last Sunday of Epiphany. We have a wonderful set of resources available for your use. "Treasure Kids" is a colorful magazine that focuses on different areas of the world and the Episcopal mission work occurring in that place. .

## *Library Resources*

*Old Befana*, Tomie dePaola  
*Bright Star, Bright Star, What Do You See?*  
Cassandre Maxwell  
*The New Star*, Mike Carroll  
*The Fourth Wise Man*, Henry van Dyke  
*The Book of Occasional Services*, Church Publishing  
*Faith-Full Families*, Kristine Goodrich  
*Offering the Gospel to Children*, Gretchen Wolff Pritchard  
*We Three Kings*, Tomie dePaola  
*The Fir Tree*, Hans Christian Anderson  
*The Tale of Three Trees*, Angela Hunt  
*To Dance with God*, Gertrude Mueller Nelson  
*The Prayer Book Guide to Christian Education*,  
Joseph Russell

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