

The background of the cover is a painting depicting the Three Kings on camels following the Star of Wonder. The scene is set in a vast, arid desert landscape with rolling hills and a clear night sky filled with stars. A bright, multi-pointed star shines in the upper right corner, casting a beam of light across the sky. The Three Kings are in the foreground, riding camels and wearing yellow and white robes. They are followed by a long caravan of camels and people winding through the desert. The overall mood is one of wonder and journey.

Star of Wonder

A Worship Service for Epiphany

LEADER'S GUIDE

Star of Wonder

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INDEX

Notes/Ordering Information	5
Newsletter/Bulletin Notices	6
Order of Service	7-11
Complete Script for Worship Leaders	12-21
Scripture Lessons	22-23
Children's Message	24-25
Sermon	26-28
Prayers	29-30
Music Guide	31-42

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ABOUT THE SERVICE

In Star of Wonder, a worship service for Epiphany, we see how God, who created the stars, used stars to reveal his plan of salvation in Jesus, the promised Child of Bethlehem. Hymns, Bible readings, a children's message and a sermon help us to capture the wonder of it all. Hymns include "As With Gladness Men of Old," "We Three Kings" and "What Child Is This."

The CD includes a .pdf of the entire service, text of the order of service, readings, prayers, sermon, a children's message, and hymns in .rtf (rich text format) and a PowerPoint document of the service with text (with a copyright release) for use on screens.

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NEWSLETTER/BULLETIN NOTICES

NEWSLETTER NOTICE

Epiphany means to reveal or make known. During this season of Epiphany we remember that Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem, was revealed as the Light of the World and the Savior of all nations. In our Epiphany worship we will see that God, who created the stars, used stars to reveal his unfolding plan of salvation in Jesus Christ.

BULLETIN NOTICE

In our Epiphany worship today we will see how God used the stars to make known his salvation in Christ. We too shine like stars as we point the way to Jesus with our loving actions and our words of witness!

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COMPLETE SCRIPT FOR WORSHIP LEADERS

- If desired, an **Environmental Projection** is shown on a screen or on the walls of your worship space to set the tone for the service before the service begins or throughout the service at various points:

https://www.shutterstock.com/image-illustration/three-kings-wise-men-christmas-star-506283613?src=4rHCAvZBf_9NnV8GOYOMDA-1-6

- The **Theme Verse** is spoken aloud by the pastor to begin the service or is read silently by the congregation before the start of the service:

*The star that they had seen when it rose went before them
until it came to rest over the place where the child was. Matthew 2:9*

- The **Opening Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Dix 77 77 77, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

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 by thee.

As they offered gifts most rare at thy cradle, 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 heav'nly King.

Holy Jesus, ev'ry 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 heav'nly country bright need they no created light;
Thou its light, its joy, its crown, thou its sun which goes not down;
There forever may we sing alleluias to our King.

- The **Invocation and Call to Worship** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

P God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. (*Genesis 1:16*)

C We praise the one who created all things.

P When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

C What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?

P Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings

C And crowned him with glory and honor. (*Psalms 8:3-5*)

P Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea ... behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?"

C For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." (*Matthew 2:1-2*)

- The **Confession and Absolution** is spoken responsively by the pastor and the congregation:

P Let us confess our sins to God our Creator.

C Almighty God, you have given us your Word to teach us of our salvation and to guide us according to your will, but we confess that we often turn from your Word and will to

follow our own desires and to listen to the temptations of the world around us. We live for ourselves and we do not love and serve others as you want us to do. Have mercy on us and forgive us.

☐ God has had mercy on us and sent his Son to be our Savior. Jesus suffered the penalty of death that we deserve and rose to give us eternal life. I announce to you that your sins are forgiven in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

☐ **I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

• The **Prayer of the Day** is spoken by the pastor:

☐ God and Creator of the stars, we give you thanks for all of your gifts. Today we praise you for the greatest gift, the gift of our Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose birth was heralded by a star. As that star led the wise men to find and worship your Son, we pray that our words and actions will be a shining witness to the good news of our Savior, so that others, like those wise men of old, will come to know and worship him as Lord. Hear our prayer in his name. Amen.

• The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Greensleeves 87 87 68 67, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

What child is this, who laid to rest,
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
Haste, haste to bring him laud,
The babe, the son of Mary!

• The **Children's Message** is delivered by the pastor or other worship leader:

Needed: a star ornament from the top of a Christmas tree, or another star ornament

☐ How many of you still have your Christmas tree up in your house? Has your family removed the decorations and taken down the tree, or did you decide to leave it up through Epiphany? Today in church we are celebrating Epiphany, the day when we remember the wise men who came to worship Jesus. Epiphany is a word that means to reveal something, or to make something known. At Epiphany, Jesus was made known as the King of all people, the King of Kings.

How did the wise men know how to find the child Jesus? (*Let children answer.*) God used a special star in the sky to guide the wise men to find the Savior. That's why we often decorate our Christmas trees with stars, a reminder of the star of Bethlehem that led the wise men to Jesus.

We can be like stars too, and point the way to Jesus. We can shine for Jesus in our actions, in the kind things we do to help others. We can shine for Jesus with our words, as we tell our friends and neighbors about Jesus' love and how he died on the cross to take away our sins. Jesus' love will shine through our words and actions, so that others, like the wise men of old, will come to worship Jesus as their King. Let's pray:

Jesus, King of kings, help us to shine like stars and point the way to you. Amen.

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune Greensleeves 87 87 68 67, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

So bring him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come, peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high,
The virgin sings her lullaby;
Joy, joy, for Christ is born,
The babe, the son of Mary!

- The **Old Testament Lesson**, Numbers 24:17-19, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
 - Ⓟ I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth. Edom shall be dispossessed; Seir also, his enemies, shall be dispossessed. Israel is doing valiantly. And one from Jacob shall exercise dominion and destroy the survivors of cities!
- The **Epistle Lesson**, Revelation 22:16-17, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:
 - Ⓟ "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star." The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

- The **Gospel Lesson**, Matthew 2:1-15, is spoken by the pastor or other worship leader:

Ⓟ Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’”

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star had appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.” After listening to the king, they went on their way. And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, 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.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed to Egypt and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt I called my son.”

- The **Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune *Wo Gott Zum Haus LM*, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

The star proclaims the King is here; but, Herod, why this senseless fear?
For he who offers heav'nly birth seeks not the kingdoms of this earth.

The eastern sages saw from far and followed on his guiding star;
And, led by light, to light they trod and by their gifts confessed their God.

For this thy glad epiphany all glory, Jesus, be to thee,
Whom with the Father we adore, and Holy Spirit evermore.

- The **Sermon: “Star of Wonder”** is delivered by the pastor:

Ⓟ Do you like to go star-gazing? Not at the Hollywood stars, although you may enjoy doing that too—but at the stars in the night sky. We see the stars in the sky as tiny, sparkling, far-distant lights or, if we are away from city lights, as a vast glittering carpet of light that fills the sky.

Those tiny sparkling lights are not really so tiny at all. For the sake of comparing the stars in size, imagine that our earth was the size of a quarter. On that same scale of size, the nearest star, our sun, would be 9 feet across. You could fit a quarter-sized earth in your hand, but the sun most likely wouldn’t fit in your living room. But our sun is just a medium-sized star. The star Antares would be 6,984 feet across, or the width of five Empire State Buildings lined up end to end (Antares certainly would not fit in your living room!) The star Betelguese, on that same scale, would be 10,000 feet across, big enough to swallow our sun and Antares.

Yet all of these immense, flaming giants were created by God’s command, by his spoken Word. Genesis tells of their creation with nearly an offhand, “oh, by the way,” remark. “And God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars” (Genesis 1:16). The psalms give us a more up close and personal account of the stars’ creation: “[God] determines the number of stars; he gives to all of them their names” (Psalm 147:4). The God and Creator, who created the mighty stars and named them all, called those same stars into his service. He used the stars to announce and illustrate his purposes as the story of our salvation unfolded through history.

Through the patriarch Abraham, God promised to bless all people on earth. God would cause a great nation to arise from Abraham’s descendants, and through that family line all families of the earth would be blessed. Even though Abraham had no children, not even one, God said to him: “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them ... So shall your offspring be. And [Abraham] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:5-6). Out of the countless multitude of Abraham’s descendants, one particular shining star, the true Star of Wonder, would arise.

Abraham’s family line grew, as God promised, into a great nation. The Israelites, though once enslaved in Egypt, were set free by God and led on their way to the Promised Land. During their travel through the wilderness, God, speaking through the prophet Balaam, told his people of a rising star still to come. Even though the king of Moab hired Balaam to curse the people of Israel, God would not permit him to do that—instead of cursing Israel, Balaam blessed them. Balaam spoke of a star to rise out of Israel: “I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near: a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel” (Numbers 24:17). At some point in the future, a rising star, a scepter-wielding king, would arise in Israel and crush the enemies of God’s people.

When the time was right, God sent that promised king, that blessing to the nations, into the

world—his own Son, Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem. God used a star to announce the birth of his Son. Wise men who studied the stars, wise men who were perhaps familiar with the words of the prophet Balaam about a rising star and a scepter-wielding king in Israel, saw the special star and went to look for the child, the promised King of the Jews. They went to Jerusalem to find the new king, only to find there a very unhappy king, Herod, who was deeply concerned about this possible newborn threat to his throne. After consulting with the priests and the Word of God, the wise men set off again, once more led by that star, to find the new King. The star led them to Bethlehem, as Scriptures had foretold, and there they found the true King, the King of kings. They worshiped him and offered him rich gifts and returned to their home. The promised star, the promised King, had arisen in Bethlehem.

The words of the prophet Isaiah were fulfilled in the birth of that rising star, the Star of Wonder: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” (Isaiah 60:1-3). God, the Creator of the stars, took on human flesh and was born in Bethlehem. Jesus, the Son of God and Mary’s son, grew to teach and preach and heal. When the right time came, he was crucified for the sins of the world, for our sins. On a very dark day, when the light of our star, our sun, faded for a time into darkness, Jesus took onto himself the penalty of death that we deserved. But on the third day Jesus rose from the dead, proving to be exactly who he said he was, the Son of God, the descendant of Abraham, the blessing to the nations. By God’s grace, through faith in Jesus’ name, we have the blessings of forgiveness and eternal life.

The crucified and risen Lord, speaking to his apostle John, described himself as a star. Jesus said, “I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star” (Revelation 22:16). What we call the morning star is actually the planet Venus, which appears both as the evening star at sunset and as the “morning star” to signal the approaching sunrise. Jesus is the bright Morning Star. His arrival is a sign for us, a sign of approaching daylight. His birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension are the sign that we are living in what Scripture calls the last days, the time before our Lord Jesus will return in glory, glory that will outshine the rising sun.

Before his return on the Last Day, the mighty, created stars that for so long ruled the night “will fall from the sky” (Matthew 24:29). Jesus’ return will be the dawning of the new and eternal day when we will live in his presence forever. On that day, those who have fallen asleep in Christ will be raised from their graves, transformed and glorified. Those who are still living at his return will also be transformed, with heavenly glory that the apostle Paul compares to the glory of the stars: “There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory” (1 Corinthians 15:40-41). We will live forever in the presence of God, where our most familiar

Star of Wonder

A Worship Service for Epiphany

MUSIC GUIDE

Dix 77 77 77	32-33
Greensleeves 87 87 68 67	34-35
Wo Gott Zum Haus LM.....	36-37
Kings of Orient 88 446 and refrain.....	38-39
St. George's, Windsor 77 77 D.....	40-41
Contemporary Music Song Suggestions.....	42

Tune..... St. George's, Windsor 77 77 D

1

6

11

Creative Communications Sample

- The **Closing Hymn** is sung by the congregation to the tune St. George's, Windsor 77 77 D, or a selection from the contemporary music song suggestions list at the end of the music guide for this service can be sung instead:

Songs of thankfulness and praise,
Jesus, Lord to thee we raise,
Manifested by the star
To the sages from afar,
Branch of royal David's stem
In thy birth at Bethlehem:
Anthems be to thee addressed,
God in man made manifest.

Sun and moon shall darkened be,
Stars shall fall, the heav'ns shall flee;
Christ will then like lightning shine,
All will see his glorious sign;
All will then the trumpet hear,
All will see the Judge appear;
Thou by all wilt be confessed,
God in man made manifest.

Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
Present in thy holy Word—
Grace to imitate thee now
And be pure, as pure art thou;
That we might become like thee
At thy great epiphany
And may praise thee, ever blest,
God in man made manifest.

Star of Wonder

A Worship Service for Epiphany

CONTEMPORARY MUSIC SONG SUGGESTIONS

- The following song suggestions can be used for a more contemporary worship service in place of the more traditional hymns included in this kit. Rights to use these songs in the service must be purchased by your parish through CCLI or other copyright licensing agencies.

“God of Wonders” by Marc Byrd and Steve Hindalong

“Wonder of Wonders” by Jacob Sooter, Matt Maher, Meredith Andrew and Paul Mabury

“Countless Wonders” by Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash and Matt Armstrong

“Symphony” by Chris Tomlin, Jason Ingram, Louie Giglio, Matt Maher and Matt Redman

“We Have Seen the Star” by Bill Batstone

“Little Star” by Jancis Harvey

“Shining Star” by Rend Collective

“One Bright Star” by Robert Legg and Stella Vassiliou