The Faith Nurture Forum would like to thank Churches Together in Britain and Ireland for their Ecumenical worship service for the third Sunday of Epiphany, in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Weekly Worship, based on the Revised Common Lectionary, is for everyone – in any capacity – who is involved in creating and leading worship.

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.
Introduction

The story of the Magi visiting the Holy Family in Bethlehem is one very familiar to us. The Magi have sometimes been seen as a symbol of the world’s diversity – different religions and cultures – that comes to pay homage to the Christ-child. The story might therefore represent the unity of all created that God desires.

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2022 has been prepared by the churches of the Middle East, the history of which was, and still is, characterised by conflict and strife, tainted with blood and darkened by injustice and oppression. The Christians of the Middle East offer these resources conscious that the world shares many of the travails and much of the difficulties that it experiences, and yearns for a light to lead the way to the Saviour who is the light that overcomes darkness.

Serving the Gospel today requires a commitment to the human being, especially the poorest, the weakest and those marginalised. It requires from the churches transparency and accountability in dealing with the world, and with each other. This means churches need to cooperate to provide relief to the afflicted, to welcome the displaced, to relieve the burdened, and to build a just and honest society. This is a call for churches to work together so that young people can build a good future according to God’s heart, a future in which all human beings can experience life, peace, justice, and love.

*It is recommended that a crib, featuring the visit of the Magi to the Holy Family be placed in a prominent place as a visual focus for the worship service*  
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During this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Christians from many different traditions and confessions around the world gather to pray for the unity of the Church. This year’s materials and worship service have been prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches. The selection of scripture and liturgical texts is inspired by the visit of the Magi to the new-born King, as described in Matthew 2:1-12, particularly verse 2: “We saw his star in the East, and we came to worship him.”

Some suggested music can be found on pages 17-24 of the appendix. If Christians from the Middle East are present in the congregation, it would be desirable to invite them to lead the singing of some of these hymns and chants in their own languages. Since the use of digital resources for worship has grown in recent years, links to online video recordings of some of the music have also been included in the appendix. Depending on your local context, appropriate hymns and songs that highlight this year’s theme can be substituted.

Several items should be prepared for the part of the service entitled ‘Sharing Christ’s Light’. First, a piece of dark blue cloth to be strategically hung to evoke the night sky. Second, a large star which will be hung on the cloth. Third, small paper stars for the worshippers. Depending on the context, all of those present may be invited to take a star and hang it on the ‘sky’, as an offering to the heavenly king. Alternatively, representatives can be selected to do so on behalf of the various groups and communions participating in the worship.

Parts of the service assigned to a Reader may be shared among several different readers. Similarly, texts assigned to the Leader may be shared among clergy or leaders from the different traditions and communions participating in the worship. These leaders may pronounce the Sending and Blessing together.

L – Leader; R – Reader; C – Congregation

Opening
*The clergy and other participants enter in procession while a suitable hymn is sung.*

Call to Worship
L In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen

L Brothers and sisters, we are united today with fellow believers throughout the world as we gather to pray for the visible unity of the Church. We do this with worship resources prepared by the Middle East Council of Churches. Our theme is inspired by the visit of the Magi to the new-born King, as described in the
Gospel according to Saint Matthew: “We observed his star in the East, and have come to pay him homage.” Let us fix our eyes on the star that was seen in the East and allow it to lead us too.

Let us come into God’s presence in solidarity with all who are sick, suffering, marginalized, displaced and oppressed, knowing that our darkness can be dispelled by God’s light. As we pray today for the unity of the Church, may we all journey together to meet Jesus the Saviour, the light of the world.

Glory be to you Father Almighty, for you have revealed yourself through your creation and invite all people to gather in your presence. We have seen the star of Jesus in our lives and have come to worship him just as the Magi did. We offer him ourselves today and we ask for the presence of the Holy Spirit among us.

_C Unite us as we come to worship the king, all glorious above. Amen._

_Hymn “O Worship the King”_
Prayer of Praise and Confession

L  We glorify you, O Lord, creator of heaven and earth, for you have set the lights in the vault of the sky. You separated light from darkness and arranged signs to mark sacred times, and days and years. You studded the firmament with stars. How majestic are your works, the heavens declare your glory and the skies proclaim the work of your hands!

C  We glorify you, O Lord.

L  We praise you for you did not abandon us despite our rebellion but sent your Son to brighten our darkness and be our light and our salvation. In him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. And the light shines in the darkness.

C  We praise you, O Lord.

L  We worship you, O Lord, for you accompany us in the chaos of our life through the power of your Holy Spirit. You light up our paths and give us wisdom and faith in a world of untruth and doubt.

C  We worship you, O Lord.

L  We thank you, O Lord, for you send us into the world to witness to this light, in our various churches and diverse cultures, and to proclaim the Good News to Jesus, the one true King, offering ourselves to him.

C  We thank you, O Lord.

L  May all the peoples bow before you and worship you. We have often preferred darkness, but you have given us light. Therefore, we come to you confessing our sins and saying:

C  We confess that we have turned from your ways.
We have harmed your good creation through our greed.
We have polluted and poisoned the air, earth and waters, destroying habitats and species.

L  Lord have mercy
C  Christ have mercy (or a suitable Kyrie may be sung)
We have acted selfishly towards our brothers and sisters.
We have put our own needs and desires above our commitment to justice.
We have built walls between us and planted seeds of mistrust.

L  Lord have mercy
C  Christ have mercy
We have divided people based on ethnicity and culture, discriminating instead of celebrating difference. We have waged war, claiming Jesus for our side.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Forgive all these thoughts and deeds, O Lord, as we come before you in repentance.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy

Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom you have sent in the fullness of time to redeem all people, we ask you to have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and transform us into his glorious image so we can shine as a beacon of hope in our troubled world.

Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy

Almighty God hears our prayers, has mercy on us and forgives our sins.

Thanks be to God, whom we praise with all our voices.

Chant “Trisagion”
Holy God!
Holy Mighty!
Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!

Psalm 8 (responsively)

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a safe place, to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established;

What are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?
L Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honour.

C You have given them dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under their feet,

L all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

C O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

Chant “Tui Amoris Ignem”
Taizé chant. A version in Arabic can be found in the online additional resources.

Isaiah 9:2-7

Chant “Song of Light” (Saint Ephrem)

Ephesians 5:8-14

Gospel Acclamation (sung)

Matthew 2:1-12

Sermon
There are no specific sermon suggestions, but ideas can be taken from the introduction, or the Alternative Liturgy (available to download here https://ctbi.org.uk/resources-for-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2022/)

Moment of silence or hymn

Nicene Creed
(according to the tradition of the Eastern Churches)
We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.
Sharing Christ’s Light

A piece of dark blue cloth is hung to evoke the night sky, on which a large star is placed. Paper stars are made available for the worshippers, who are invited to come forward and add their stars to the cloth.

A star led the Magi to Christ. Today this star points to the presence of Christ, who has been revealed to us and whose light shines on us. As the Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, we gather under this star today, adding our own stars to the sky, uniting our own gifts and prayers for the visible unity of the Church. As we journey towards that goal, may our lives together give a luminous witness that leads others to know Christ.

Prayers

Prayers of Intercession

With faith and confidence, we come in prayer, before God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit:

The Magi came from the East to pay homage and offer special gifts from their cultures and countries.

We pray today for all Christian communities around the world in their diversity of worship and tradition: Lord we ask you to preserve these treasures, particularly in areas of the world where the presence and survival of the Church is threatened by violence and oppression.

C O, Lord, hear our prayer (spoken or sung)

The early years of the Lord’s life were marked by violence and massacres at the orders of the despot Herod.

We pray for children living in places in the world where violence continues and where its results are tangible.

Strengthen, O Lord, the bonds of unity and mutual love among our churches and help us to cooperate and witness to your holy Name.

Inspire us to work without ceasing in order to defend the oppressed and include the marginalized.

Encourage us to stand together in the face of tyranny and oppressive regimes as we seek your Kingdom among us.

C O, Lord, hear our prayer
After the visit of the Magi, the holy family experienced migration through the wilderness and became refugees in the land of Egypt.

We pray for all the refugees and uprooted people in this world:
Equip us, Lord, to show hospitality to those driven from their homes, and grant us the spirit of welcome to those looking for a safe haven.

The birth of Jesus was good news for all, gathering people from different nations and religions in worship of the holy child.
We pray for our efforts to seek harmony and dialogue with other religions:
Lord, give us humility and patience to walk with others with respect on their journey.

The Magi returned to their home by a different way.
We pray for our churches in this changing world:
Lord, help us to find new and creative ways to follow you and to witness to you so that the world may believe.

When the Magi saw the holy child, they rejoiced with great joy.
Heavenly Father, fix our eyes on him so we do not lose our way.
Unite us in the Lord Jesus, who is the way, the truth, and the life, and who has taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father in heaven...

Sending and Blessing (Based on Ephesians 5 and 6)
Go now and live as children of light.
For the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.
Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness.
Let us wake from sleep and Christ will shine upon us.
Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Parting Hymn
Alternative Material

The resources for each day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are available to download or order from the CTBI website: [https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2022/](https://ctbi.org.uk/week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2022/) and can be used to help you explore the themes as part of your worship, in prayer settings or home group/bible studies.

Each year Christian Aid provides the *Go and Do* action points for each of the daily reflections – linking into the important work of Christian Aid in the relief of poverty and advocacy of justice.

Musical suggestions

Our [online music resource](https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk) from Trinity College Glasgow.

- Suggested playlist of songs for Epiphany from CH4 [https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/epiphany](https://music.churchofscotland.org.uk/inspire-me/playlist/epiphany)

Music and texts for the WPCU service are found on pages 17-24 of the downloadable service booklet here: [https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/WPCU_2022_Booklet_EN.pdf](https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/WPCU_2022_Booklet_EN.pdf)

- CH4 127 – “O worship the King, all glorious above”

- “Song of Light (Saint Ephrem) – Nouhro Dnah l’Zadiqé: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6tOmVcKS4s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6tOmVcKS4s)

- Tui amoris ignem – Taizé chant

- Trisagion – in English and Greek [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ6of7ViJ5w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oJ6of7ViJ5w) in Syriac [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLBEzIUt2EA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLBEzIUt2EA) in Armenian [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPM-BKYVpNE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPM-BKYVpNE)
Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord’s Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of ‘holy chaos’.
- While singing in our congregations is still restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.
• How inclusive was the worship?
  Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different “Spiritual Styles”?

• How was the balance between passive and active participation?

• How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?
  What helped this? What hindered this?

• How cohesive was the worship?
  Did it function well as a whole?
  How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?

• How balanced was the worship?
  What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?

• How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?
  Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/community?
  How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?
  How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?

• What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

**Useful links**

Up to date information for churches around COVID-19 can be found [here](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)