**Morning Praise @ Home 5 January 2025**

**Opening prayer**

Blessed are you, God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing; enable us by your power to be true to our calling and live holy and blameless lives before you all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. **Amen**

**Confession** Let us admit to God the sin which always confronts us.

**Lord God, we have sinned against you; we have done evil in your sight. We are sorry and**

**repent.** **Have mercy on us according to your love. Wash away our wrongdoing and cleanse us**

**from our sin.** **Renew a right spirit within us** **and restore us to the joy of your salvation,** **through**

**Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen** cf Psalm 51

**Absolution** May the Father of all mercies cleanse us from our sins, and restore us in his image

to the praise and glory of his name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

### Bible Reading Matthew 2: 1 – 12

### Reflection from Philip Revealing The Light

So it’s almost Epiphany. Twelfth Night, also known as Epiphany Eve, falls on the 5th January and is the end of the traditional Twelve Days of Christmas. Are your Christmas decorations still up? The tree, the twinkly lights and tinsel? It’s time to take them down if you haven’t. Maybe that makes you feel a little sad. Or maybe it’s a relief!

It is a special date for many Christians as it's when people celebrate how the light of a star led the Magi - also known as the Three Kings or the Wise Men - to visit the baby Jesus after he had been born. 'Epiphany' comes from the Greek word meaning **'to reveal'**, as it is when the baby Jesus was 'revealed' not just to the shepherds nearby, but to the wider world. When Jesus was revealed as The Light of the world – so we don’t need our Christmas lights up anymore!

The Magi, are often depicted in many a crib scene in the stable, alongside the shepherds and the lowing cattle. But actually, they were a bit late for that. They missed the birth. The stable would have just been an ordinary stable again by then.

The decision of Herod to kill all children under two years old indicates that it was some time after Jesus’s birth in that humble stable. Mary and Joseph must have left the stable in Bethlehem and travelled back home to a house in Nazareth, having travelled to take part in the census. The Magi would have met Jesus as a toddler by then.

This little toddler, though, was seen by King Herod as a threat to his authority, so he ordered the killing of the innocents. Jesus threatens the kings of this world. His presence exposes sin for what it is – and provides us with a way out of it.

This Epiphany, or revealing, is all about the Light – the light of the baby Jesus coming into the world, and then the world being drawn to that light.

*Isaiah 9:2 -* ***The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.***

This is ‘The Light of the World’ – a name Jesus uses for himself in John 8: 12.

This light brings truth, beauty and goodness to the world – and takes away our blindness.

When you open the curtains in the morning, especially on a bright, sunny day, the light fills the room, everything is different!

Light helps us avoid danger. Darkness stops us seeing important things. – ask any parent who has gently walked into a child’s darkened room and felt the pain as they stand on a Lego brick! Or any parent who has tried to get a teenager out of bed in the morning (or afternoon!) – at first with a gentle ‘Hello, it’s daytime!’ but after a while resorting to turning on the light – much to the teenager’s annoyance!

The light brings hope to our darkness. This Light also means ‘God is here’- He is with us.

Ruth Abbot and I are both studying at ***Emmanuel*** Theological College - Emmanuel means ‘God with us’.

So how do we react to this light? We can’t just bemoan the darkness in the world. The wars, the greed, the self-centred culture. We need to recognise our own failings. We need to ask Jesus for help. We look up to the light and trust Jesus to heal and to transform what’s wrong here. It’s a process that is underway, as God’s Kingdom has been revealed by Christ’s birth, but it is still only partially revealed, so we still have wars and disease. This world remains far from how it was meant to be.

The author of this gospel – Matthew, was a Jew. He talks of ‘Wise men from the East’ (scholars suggest Persia, or modern Iran). These non-Jews had travelled a very long way, to see and worship a small child. Matthew wanted to stress to us that Jesus is not just any light, he is The Light of the World.

Jesus brings hope to our divided, war-torn world. He is the only one who can bring nations together. Israel was meant to show other nations the way. That didn’t happen. Jesus was meant to be a light to the nations, drawing all to him, like moths to the light.

He sends us out to call others to him. To tell people that He is the Light in this darkness. It’s up to us to carry this light into the darkness – like that animated marching lightbulb in the chorus ‘This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine!’

Advent was about expectation, waiting for God’s light. God’s light through The Messiah, a small child born in a smelly stable.

Advent reminds us that no matter how dark it might seem, The Light has come, it will shine brighter and brighter. The darkness of the evil empires of this world we see today will not last. The darkness will not have the last word.

John 1:5 says ‘***The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it’***

Let us draw nearer to that light as we head into this new year of 2025. **Amen**

### Affirmation of faith

Do you believe and trust in God the Father, source of all being and life, the one for whom we exist?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Son, who took our human nature, died for us and rose again?

**We believe and trust in him.**

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the people of God and makes Christ known in the world?

**We believe and trust in him. This is the faith of the Church.**

**This is our faith. We believe and trust in one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Prayers of intercession**

Creator God, as we face the start of 2025 we pray for your world:

Father, let the star of your justice always shine in the hearts of those who are in authority.  Enable all nations to recognize the sanctity of each and every human life in their care so that all may experience an abundance of peace and security.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, you sent a star to guide the Wise Men to worship your Son Jesus:

Father, send your Holy Spirit to guide our Church as we begin a New Year in our Christian life together. Inspire John, our vicar, and our lay readers Ruth, Philip, Sue and John in all they do for our church here in Burton and Shotwick.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

The infant Christ received gifts of gold, incense and myrrh:

Father, accept the offering of our hearts and minds at the beginning of this year so that we will dedicate all that we have to you.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

Father God, Your Son shared the life of his home and family at Nazareth:

Father, we give thanks for his presence with us in our homes and in our lives.  Guide us in our relationships with family and neighbours, especially those in trouble or need and bless those who have guided and enriched our own lives. Protect in your love our neighbours, our families and this community of which we are a part here in Burton, Puddington, Shotwick and all areas of the Wirral.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

The Holy Family lived in exile and in the shadow of death:

Father, look in mercy on all who are poor and powerless, and all who suffer because of selfish greed for money, fame or power. Help us to remember the work of charities such as The Foodbank, Charles Thompson Mission and The Mango Tree.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, we pray for all those whom we love who suffer in body, mind or spirit:

Father, may their pain be eased and may they find the strength to endure. Comfort them with your presence and help them to hold on to the knowledge that Your Son understood the truth of human suffering.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful God, we pray for all who are coming to the end of their journey here on earth:

Father, we pray that they may enter into your presence and kingdom. We remember all those who have already died and live again with you in the fullness of life eternal. We especially remember before you Rev Geoffrey Parsons and Michael Redmond and we ask you to be near their families and friends in their bereavement.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God, as we begin a New Year, remind us of the things that are truly important and worthwhile: Father, help us to live in the goodness that comes from doing what you want us to do. Help us to put aside anxiety about the future and the past, so that we might live in peace with you now, one day at a time.

Lord of glory, **hear our prayer.**

Father, we rejoice in our fellowship with the shepherds, the angels, the magi, the Virgin Mary and Joseph.

In your unfailing love for us and for all people, hear and answer our prayers through your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Merciful Father, **accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen**

**The Lord’s Prayer** As our Saviour taught us, so we pray

***Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,******Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen***

**Closing prayer**

God give you grace to become the people He has called you to be, that you may live and work to his praise and glory, and the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us always. **Amen**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen**