

Epiphany Resource Kit



We know that Advent is a busy time for pastors. So, to make your Epiphany service planning a bit easier, inside we've provided an introduction to the season, suggested passages, and background information along with worship resources and lesson plans. Use these free resources as they are, or adjust them for your context!



COMPLIMENTS OF THE
MILLER SUMMER YOUTH INSTITUTE AT
PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



MILLER SUMMER YOUTH INSTITUTE EPIPHANY RESOURCE KIT

I. INTRODUCTION, SUGGESTED PASSAGES, AND BACKGROUND

Page 2

II. WORSHIP RESOURCES

Page 3

III. LESSON PLANS

Page 5

I. INTRODUCTION

CONGRATULATIONS! YOU DID IT!

Every year, Epiphany comes on January 6. And it means that you made it.

You have finished one of the most wonderful and most difficult times of the year for anyone in ministry. Even when things go smoothly, Advent, Christmas, and New Year's can be overwhelming. By the time you get to Epiphany, chances are you're exhausted, happy, and ready for a break.

No worries. SYI's got your back!

This kit has resources to give you a little boost as you plan for worship during the Sunday closest to Epiphany. You'll find prayers, Scripture passages, some general background, and even some aids for a children's sermon and lesson plans. Feel free to use as much, or as little, of this kit as is helpful. Adapt it, alter it, make it fit your context.

So much of the work you do in December goes unnoticed. Let us say thank you with this resource kit.

Happy Epiphany!

Miller SYI

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE

Old Testament

Isaiah 60:1-9
Psalm 67
Psalm 72

New Testament

Matthew 2:1-12
John 2:1-12
Mark 1:1-11
Ephesians 3:1-21

EPIPHANY BACKGROUND

To help you prepare for worship, we've gathered a few short paragraphs so you can get in the right frame of mind. Here's some background on Epiphany.

From The calendar of the Anglican Church Illustrated, 1851

"This Greek word signifies 'Manifestation,' and has been of old used for this day wherein the star did appear to manifest

Christ to the wise men. There are three manifestations of our Lord, commemorated jointly by the Church on the Feast of Epiphany, all of which, S. Chrysostom says, happened on the same day, though not in the same year. The first manifestation was of the star, the Gentile's guide to Christ; the second, the manifestation of the Trinity at His Baptism, Luke iii. 22; the third, the manifestation of His glory or divinity, at His first miracle, of turning water into wine, John ii, 11a. The Magi, or wise men, are believed to have been three in number and of the rank of kings or princes; the remainder of their lives, after the event recorded in the Gospel, was spent in the service of God; they are said to have been baptized by S. Thomas and to have themselves preached the Gospel."

From Memoirs of the Lutheran Liturgical Association, Volumes 1-4, 1901-1902

"We have already said that Epiphany, so far as name is concerned, was earlier in its origin than Christmas. It was less specifically devoted to Christ's birth, however, than to marking in general His manifestation to men. The baptism by John, and the appearance in the home at Cana of Galilee were themes in its celebration as well as the assuming of the flesh. Only after the fourth century was it coupled with the Visit of the Magi and the Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles."

From: The History, Principles and Practice of Symbolism in Christian Art, 1892

"Though white has ordinarily been used as the liturgical colour for Epiphany, violet has occasionally in some 'uses' been substituted, in allusion to that text in Isaiah where the Gentiles are walking in darkness until the Epiphany manifestation has shone upon their path."

II. WORSHIP RESOURCES

CALL TO WORSHIP

These Calls to Worship come from the Psalms we've suggested you consider for worship (67 and 72) and are taken from the NRSV.

A. From Psalm 72

Leader: Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,

People: **who alone does wondrous things.**

Leader: Blessed be his glorious name for ever;

People: **may his glory fill the whole earth.**

Leader: Amen and Amen.

All: **Let us Worship**

B. From Psalm 67

Leader: May God be gracious to us and bless us

People: **and make his face to shine upon us.**

Leader: Let the peoples praise you, O God;

People: **let all the peoples praise you.**

Leader: God, our God, has blessed us.

People: **Let all the ends of the earth revere him.**

Leader: Let us worship the Lord.

OPENING PRAYERS

These prayers come from a variety of prayer books representing a variety of historical denominations. Find the one that works best for you, and use it exactly as is, or adapt it as you see fit for your context.

A. From "A Liturgy or Order of Worship for the German Reformed Church in the United States," 1858

"O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thy only begotten Son to the Gentiles, mercifully grant that we who have now come to know Thee here by faith may be conducted to the full vision of Thy glory hereafter in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen."

B. From "An Order of Worship for the Reformed Church," 1884

"O God, the Fountain of all truth and grace, who hast called us out of darkness into marvellous light by the glorious gospel of Thy Son, grant unto us power we beseech Thee, to walk worthy of this vocation, with all lowliness and meekness, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace that we may have our fruit unto holiness and the end, everlasting life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

C. From "The Book of Common Prayer and Worship for Household Use," 1876

"O God, who madest thy Son to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and by him hast manifested unto all that eternal life which is with thee, grant that we, finding him as on this day, may rejoice with exceeding great joy and at his second appearing may be made like in all things unto him who was manifested to take away our sin, and in whom is no sin, the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen."

D. From "A book of Public Prayer compiled from the Authorized Formularies of Worship of the Presbyterian Church," 1857

"O God, who by the leading of a star didst manifest Thine only begotten Son to the Gentiles and guide them to the place where He lay: Mercifully grant that we, to whom Thou hast revealed Him more clearly by the light of Thy glorious Gospel, may make such progress in faith and holiness, and be so entirely led and governed by Thy Spirit, that we may be brought after this life into that blessed place where He now is, and there have the fruition of Thy glorious presence for ever and ever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

Litany of Confession adapted from "A Liturgy or Order of Worship for the German Reformed Church in the United States," 1858

O God the Father in heaven have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us.

O God the Son Redeemer of the world have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us.

O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us.

O holy blessed and glorious Trinity three persons and one God have mercy upon us.

Have mercy upon us.

Remember not, Lord our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers, neither take Thou vengeance of our sins. Spare us good Lord, spare Thy people whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us forever.

Spare us good Lord.

From all evil and harm, from the power of sin and from Thy wrath

Good Lord deliver us.

From all wickedness of heart, from pride, vanity and hypocrisy, from envy, hatred and malice and all uncharitableness

Good Lord deliver us.

In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death and in the day of judgment

Good Lord deliver us.

We sinners do beseech Thee to hear us.

O Lord Son of God we beseech Thee to hear us.

Amen

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Today is a special day for the Church. Christmas is over, but we're not quite done with our presents and our celebrations, so now I want to know a little bit about Christmas in your house.

If you still have a Christmas tree up in your house, raise one hand.

If you still have Christmas cookies, raise your other hand.

If you still have decorations out, close one eye.

If you are still playing with your presents, stick out your tongue.

Okay, hands down, eyes open, and tongues back in.

Have you ever thought about how funny it is that on Jesus' birthday, YOU get presents? Sometimes at Christmas we talk about Jesus as a gift from God to all of us. But today isn't Christmas. Today is a day called Epiphany.

On Epiphany, people brought Jesus presents. In particular, people that we call the "Wise Men" or "Magi." Sometimes we imagine that there were three of them, because they brought Jesus three presents. The presents they brought aren't probably the kinds of presents that you got for Christmas. They brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Can you say those three words? First, the easiest one. Gold. Now the toughest one, Frankincense. Now another easy one, Myrrh.

These gifts were very precious and valuable, and the Wise Men brought them to Jesus to show Jesus that they loved him and that he was important.

This week, think about what you can give to Jesus to show him that you love him.

Let's pray.

Jesus, we love you. Thank you for coming to us on Christmas. Teach us to show you how much we love you every day, just like the Wise Men did when they visited so long ago.

Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYERS, PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE, CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER

A. From A Presbyterian Prayerbook for Public Worship, 1895

“O God of our salvation, enable us to praise thee with fervent and joyful souls.

And to this end, enlighten our darkness, increase our faith, remove our estrangement from thee, give us more taste and feeling of thy love, and subdue our evil passions and affections, the foes of our peace and of thy praise.

Make us more holy and more heavenly. Bring us in faith and love nearer to thyself. Prepare us for that better world where the praises of thy people shall never be interrupted by sins or griefs or fears or discords, but shall be everlastingly perfect to our joy and thy glory.

We thank thee for the light of thy word, the rest of thy day, the comfort of thine ordinances, and we pray that by thy blessing on our use of them, our love and praise may more and more abound and that our whole lives may be devoted to thy service. Hear us O God and graciously accept us for the sake of Jesus Christ, thy Son, to whom with thee and with the Holy Spirit be all honor and blessing, world without end, Amen.”

B. From Manna: A Book of Daily Worship, 1892

“Gracious God, we thank Thee for all the blessings we have received from Thy bountiful hand, and also for the bitter experiences which Thou hast turned to sweetness. We adore Thy holy providence which observes the least things, numbering the hairs of our heads and watching over the raven and the sparrow. Trustful and grateful, we give ourselves up to Thy loving keeping and guidance, and would pray as Thy beloved son hath taught us, Thy will be done as in heaven so also on earth now and always. Amen.”

III. LESSON PLANS

BIBLE STUDY LESSON – EPIPHANY

This lesson is meant to give you a head start on your preparation for either a Bible study, small group, or Sunday School class. Feel free to do the lesson exactly as presented, or to adapt it to your own purposes.

This lesson is modular. There are three passages you can use. You may run out of time after one, or if you have a quieter group, you may need all three.

Introduction:

Some historians consider the celebration of Epiphany to be even older than Christmas, though the specifics of the celebration have changed through the years. There have been three events associated with Epiphany throughout history. In our time together today, we will look at each of these passages briefly and talk about why the three have been linked.

Passage 1: Magi Read Matthew 2:1-12

Discussion Questions:

- Sometimes we call these visitors to Christ the Magi, Wise Men, or Kings. Which word does your translation use? Which name do you prefer? Why?
- What do these visitors look like in your imagination?
- Do you have a nativity set? What do they look like in your nativity set?
- Notice that the passage lists three gifts. This is part of the reason we have traditionally thought that there were three visitors. Have you ever seen more than three depicted? Fewer? Do you think the assumption that there were three is accurate?

Why would we read this passage on Epiphany?

It's hard to pin down exactly who these visitors were. The title of “Wise Men” or “Magi” is used in other books of the Bible as well and often refers to a group of religious figures in Persia. Regardless of the visitors’ identity, Christians have historically interpreted this passage as the revelation of Jesus to people of all nations. Sometimes we even depict each of the Magi with different ethnic traits.

Passage 2: Baptism Read Mark 1:1-11

Discussion Questions:

- When was the last time you saw a baptism? Who was baptised? What happened?
- This story is a popular one in Christian art. Have you ever seen a picture of Jesus’ baptism? What did it look like?
- This description of John is pretty eccentric. Have you heard memorable preachers? Who were they?
- Mark tells us that many people came to John. Where did they come from?
- What happened when Jesus was baptized?

Why would we read this passage on Epiphany?

John drew crowds. As Mark describes this event, he points out that people came from all over the country to be baptized. John proclaimed that someone was coming who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus was baptized, the dove and the voice signified that Jesus was the One John had been anticipating. This is the first appearance of Jesus in Mark's Gospel, and it happens in public before a large crowd. This passage is connected to Epiphany because it tells us the story of Christ's first public appearance.

Passage 3: Wedding at Cana Read John 2:1-12

Discussion Questions:

- What is the strangest wedding mishap you've ever seen?
- Different cities, families, and groups often have unique wedding traditions. Are there any memorable traditions that you've witnessed?
- In this passage, who does Jesus talk to?
- Who saw this event?

Why would we read this passage on Epiphany?

This passage is sometimes considered the first miracle of Jesus' ministry. John places this story right after the calling of the disciples. Nonetheless, it's not the disciples who take direction from Jesus in this passage; it's the servants at the wedding. This event is a public miracle.

Passages 1-3 Together

Some traditions claim that these three events took place over several years, but on the same date. In reading these passages together, we get three accounts of people seeing Jesus for the first time. Whether a multitude gathered in worship, a gathering at a wedding, or a small group of pilgrims representing people of all nations, the celebration of Epiphany tells stories of people seeing Jesus for the first time. It reminds us that Jesus came to people like us, and people different from us.

Prayer

Lord, open our eyes today that we may see you at work in our lives and in the lives of the people around us. Amen.

YOUTH GROUP ACTIVITY

Game with Preparation

You will need:

Water in a tub or container
A full watering can
Random Craft Supplies

Challenge 1: Fill a basin, sink, or plastic swimming pool with water. Challenge youth to make a boat out of craft supplies (paper, popsicle sticks, paperclips, rubber bands, glue, twine, etc.), and see whose boat floats the best.

Challenge 2: If any boats float, see if they sink after being showered by a watering can.

Game With No Preparation

Write the following words on two pieces of paper or a board in front of the room. Feel free to add or subtract words as you see fit.

Donut	Smile	Elephant
Milkshake	Video Game	Badger
Diamond	Toenail	Armpit
Ninja	Blue Cheese	Cereal
Bacteria	Party	Nap time
Cannonball	Stapler	Tissue
Bulldozer	Castle	Pajamas
Mars	Chocolate	Pirates

Split into teams of 3-7. Give groups 3-7 minutes to prepare a skit based on Matthew 2:1-12 using as many of the listed words as they can. Each word used is worth 5 points. Every word not used is -3. The team with the most points wins.

Lesson

Read Matthew 2:1-12.

Opening Questions:

- Sometimes we call the visitors in this passage Magi, Wise Men, or Kings. Which word does your translation use? Which name do you prefer? Why?
- What do these visitors look like in your imagination?
- How many were there? The passage mentions three gifts, but how many do you think there were?

One story of the Magi:

Who were these Wise Men? Sometimes we call them Kings, sometimes Wise Men, sometimes Magi.

No one knows for sure exactly who they were. What we do know is that the Bible uses similar words in other places, like the book of Daniel. There was a group of officials in Babylon and Persia who were called similar names.

If this is the same group, we can look at other ancient sources to learn about them. One historian wrote about the Magi around 400 years before the birth of Christ. One story

in particular highlights the role the Magi filled in the ancient Persian army. According to legend, the Persian King Xerxes (from the book of Esther) was headed to Greece in an

attempt to conquer it. When his ships set sail, a storm arose that stopped them.

Unable to sail because of the storm, Xerxes turned to his sorcerers, the Magi. He charged them with stopping the storm. The Magi “endeavored to charm the winds by incantations, and moreover having offered sacrifices,” and, ultimately, the storm stopped on the fourth day.

Almost everyone was astounded at the power of the Magi to control the weather. A few skeptics noticed that it took them four days, and that storms rarely last more than a few days anyway. Perhaps, the skeptics claimed, the Magi had no real power at all other than patience and showmanship. Nonetheless, the rumors spread about the magical powers of these Wise Men.

This is the kind of story people told about the Magi before that first Epiphany. When this group arrived at Herod’s palace, people used the same name for them that was used for the ancient Persian sorcerer-soldiers. Herod was immediately afraid of their message. Whether or not the Magi in this passage fit the same description, in this story we find Jesus appearing to a group of people that no one expected.

Discussion Questions:

- How has God surprised you in the past?
- Have you ever felt like an outsider, someone unexpected?
- How can you be on the lookout for Jesus in unexpected places this week?

Prayer

Lord, open our eyes so that we can see you working in unexpected places this week. Amen.



MILLER SUMMER YOUTH INSTITUTE AT PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Since 1997, the Miller Summer Youth Institute at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary has drawn rising high school seniors from Washington, D.C., to San Francisco, Calif., Canby, Minn., to Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico, and everywhere in between. These scholars come from small parishes and big steeples, big cities and small towns, U.S. territories and Indian Nations and represent all walks of life and theological perspectives. They come to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary to ask deep questions about life and faith, to think critically about these issues, and to explore ministry from the pulpit and the pews. The goal of SYI is that all who come in contact with the program have the opportunity to discover more fully who God is calling them to be and what God is calling them to do. SYI also offers college credits through local Christian colleges.

Additionally, SYI is on the road and in local congregations! This includes retreats onsite at local churches, Sunday school classes taught by PTS faculty, and youth group led by SYI staff at your church. Interested in talking to SYI about bringing our curriculum to your congregation? Contact us using the form below.

Learn more:

www.pts.edu/SYI | syi@pts.edu | 412-924-1443

PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Rooted in the Reformed tradition and in relationship with Christ-followers from other traditions, Pittsburgh Seminary forms and equips people for ministries familiar and yet to unfold and communities present and yet to be gathered.

The Seminary offers degree and certificate programs, or take a class for personal enrichment. Our resource programs include Church Planting Initiative, Continuing Education, Kelso Museum of Near Eastern Archaeology, Metro-Urban Institute, Miller Summer Youth Institute, and World Mission Initiative.

Additionally, we encourage you to visit The Clifford E. Barbour Library, invite a faculty member or program director to your church or conference to preach and teach, and see our YouTube channel for video of recent events.

Learn more:

www.pts.edu | info@pts.edu | 412-362-5610