

**The Epiphany.** The 12-day Christmas season starts on December 25<sup>th</sup> and ends the evening of January 5<sup>th</sup>, the eve of the Epiphany. Celebrated on January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Epiphany commemorates the visitation of Jesus Christ by the three Magi. This moment is recorded in Matthew 2:1-12. The Church has long observed the Epiphany, and different Christian traditions and cultures influenced by them celebrate the day with great fanfare. Perhaps you have heard the Epiphany referred to as Three Kings Day or Little Christmas. Here in America, many of us overlook the Epiphany and let it be swallowed up by Christmas and New Years Day. Perhaps it is time for us to change that.

**The Meaning.** So, why is the Epiphany important? Why should we detach the Epiphany from our Christmas celebrations? *Where do we begin?* Let's start with Scripture. We learn about the Epiphany in Matthew 2:1-12. Right away, Matthew tells us that the Magi made their way to Jerusalem in search of Jesus after he was born. Later in verses 9-11, we learn the miraculous Christmas star led the Magi to a house, not a manger. Scripture does not tell us how old Jesus was at the time of the visit, but context tells us Jesus could have been as old as two at the time of the visit. The liturgical calendar takes all of this into account and places the Epiphany well after Christmas Day.

More important than the timing of the Epiphany is its meaning and significance. The word means revelation, manifestation, or showing. When the Magi visit Jesus and worship him, Jesus is *revealed* or *manifested* or *shown* as the Messiah of both Israel and the rest of the world. Recall that the Magi are from the East, which means they are Gentiles, or non-Jews. Their visit is confirmation of what we see all throughout the Old Testament: Israel's promised Messiah will also be a saving light to the entire world. Isaiah puts it beautifully:

“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 60:3)

The Epiphany reminds us that Jesus Christ is truly the hope of the nations. In Jesus Christ, the hostilities that separate us from God and from one another are made null. In Jesus Christ, Jews and Gentiles come together and are made a new people! (Colossians 3:11) In Christ, there is true peace and it is available to all. This good news of the Epiphany amplifies the hope of Christmas and it affirms the hope of Easter: Christ comes for all and dies for all! Indeed, joy to the world!

**Being Shaped by the Epiphany.** Celebrating the Epiphany not only amplifies the Good News of Jesus, but it also shapes our love of God and one another in vital ways:

- It helps locate our very selves in the story of God's love. We are Christian—we can be counted as children of God—because Jesus is the light to the entire world, not just a few specific people. No matter our backgrounds, Jesus gives himself to us because of love.
- As the Epiphany draws us more deeply into the Good News of Jesus Christ, it challenges us to be peacemakers. Just as Christ takes away the walls of hostility between peoples, we are called to do the

same. (Matthew 5:9) In this light, many Christian traditions spend the weeks that follow the Epiphany to reflect on the ministry, teachings, and miracles of Jesus, observing the promised peace Jesus brought to all.

**Celebrating the Epiphany.** There are many different ways to celebrate as a family. Here are a few suggestions:

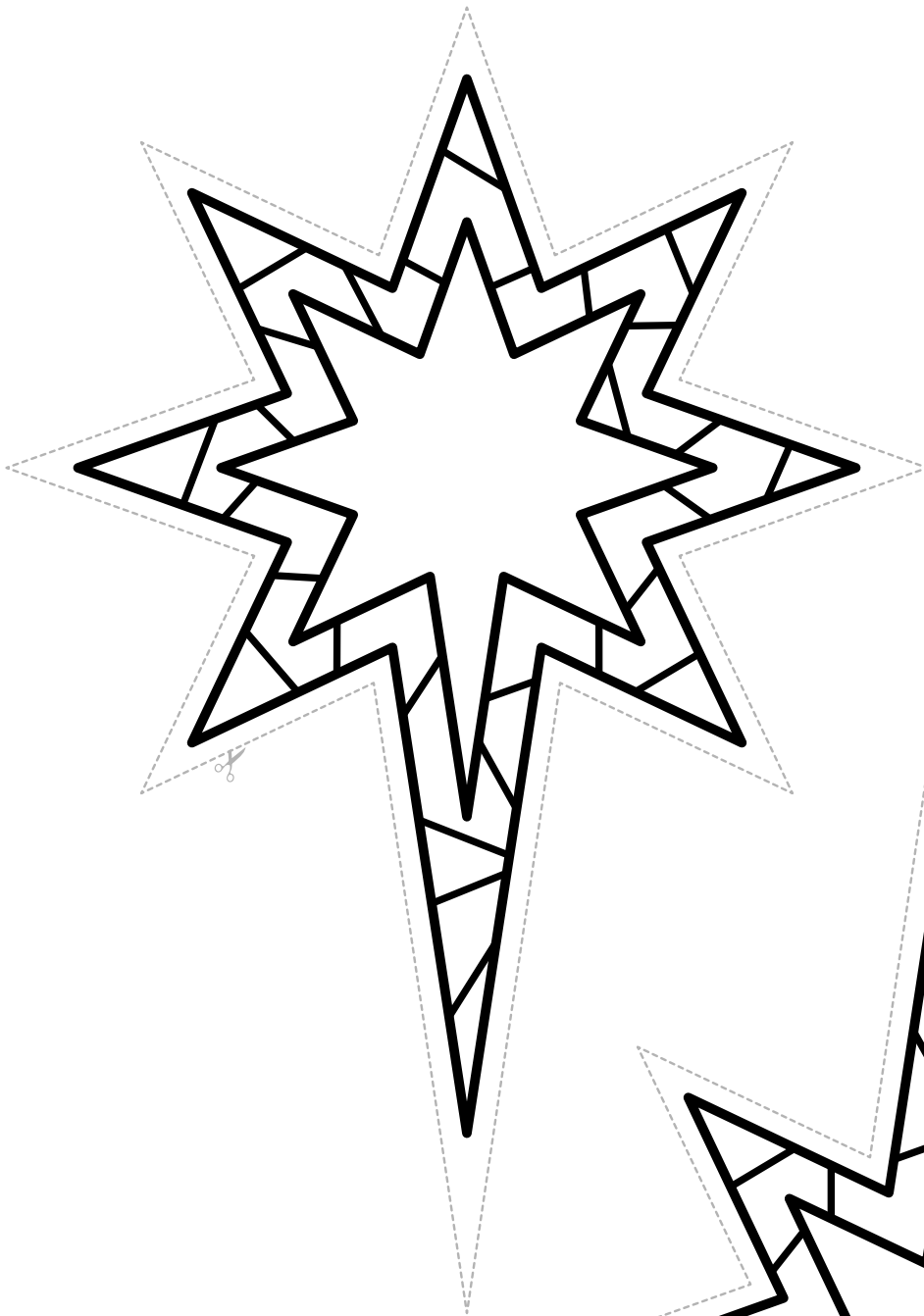
- As soon as you're able, gather your children and remind them that Christmas is a 12-day celebration. Tell them that the Magi are searching for Jesus during this time. If you have a Nativity set, consider repositioning the Magi so they are far away from the manger. Move the Magi closer to the manger each day so that they arrive at the manger on January 6. If you have already put away your Nativity set, consider bringing it back out. For next year, make it a point to keep the Magi apart from the Nativity scene as soon as you bring it out and then move them closer as the Epiphany approaches.
- Ask your household to prepare small, handmade gifts for one another, neighbors and friends. Exchange these small tokens of love on the Epiphany. Perhaps you can make the attached stars together as gifts.
- Read Matthew 2:1-12 together, or the equivalent in a children's bible. Before you read, prompt your children by saying: "Close your eyes and imagine you are one of the Magi. You've been traveling very far to find Jesus. Imagine the journey. (*silence*) Remember what you feel when you meet Herod. (*silence*) Remember what you feel when you see the star and finally meet Jesus." (*silence*). Read the passage and then ask your kids to share their responses. As a followup, encourage your kids to keep their eyes open for Jesus by telling them Jesus is always present, but often "hidden" in our ordinary experiences (both good and bad), in our relationships, and in the beauty around us.
- Make a King Cake! King Cake is often associated with Mardi Gras, but it is eaten anytime between Epiphany Day and Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday. There are many kinds of King Cakes. Common to all is a bean or trinket that is hidden in the cake. The hidden bean or trinket represents Christ. If you don't have the capacity to make one, buy one and hide a bean in it. If you want to make one, here are two web resources:
  - <https://thekennedyadventures.com/books-activities-crafts-celebrate-epiphany/>
  - <https://thekennedyadventures.com/king-cake-cupcakes-epiphany-mardi-gras/>
- As a family, ask the Holy Spirit how you all can live into the call to be peacemakers. Consider your practices of truth-telling, forgiveness and reconciliation as a family. Where can you all be more intentional with one another? Looking beyond your household, consider getting involved with the Park Ministry or the Global Ministry to support missions, praying regularly and intentionally for your neighbors, or learning about other cultures.
- The liturgical season that follows the Epiphany is referred to as the Epiphany season, and it ends on the eve of Ash Wednesday (also known as Mardi Gras or Fat Tuesday). Some refer to the season as Ordinary Time. As a family, consider reading through a Gospel together in order to meditate on the life, ministry and teachings of Jesus. A good resource for a schedule of readings is the Grace Pasadena Prayer Guide for Epiphany; it will be available as a PDF at our website starting January 6th.
- Use this Epiphany playlist as your soundtrack for the season:
  - <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/0pMiIT3KhlQZRPN0PmVSk4>
- If you want to celebrate the Epiphany but can't manage to on January 6th, don't stress about it. Many congregations observe the Epiphany on the Sunday that follows. Celebrate when you are able!

Whether you celebrate lavishly or simply, lean into the Good News of the Epiphany. As you do so, may you experience the presence and light of Jesus Christ in deeper and more tangible ways.

**With much love for you all,**

Tracy, Tanya, and Pastor Marc

[www.gracepasadena.org](http://www.gracepasadena.org)

**Materials:**

- Epiphany star print out
- markers/crayons/colored pencils
- scissors, tape/glue, glitter
- a stick/straw/dowel/popsicle stick

**Directions:**

- Print, color and cut out the two sides of the star. Print on cardstock if possible.
- Optional: Add any embellishments like ribbon or glitter
- Tape a stick (or a straw, dowel, popsicle stick, etc.) to the back side of one of your stars and glue the back sides of both stars together.

