

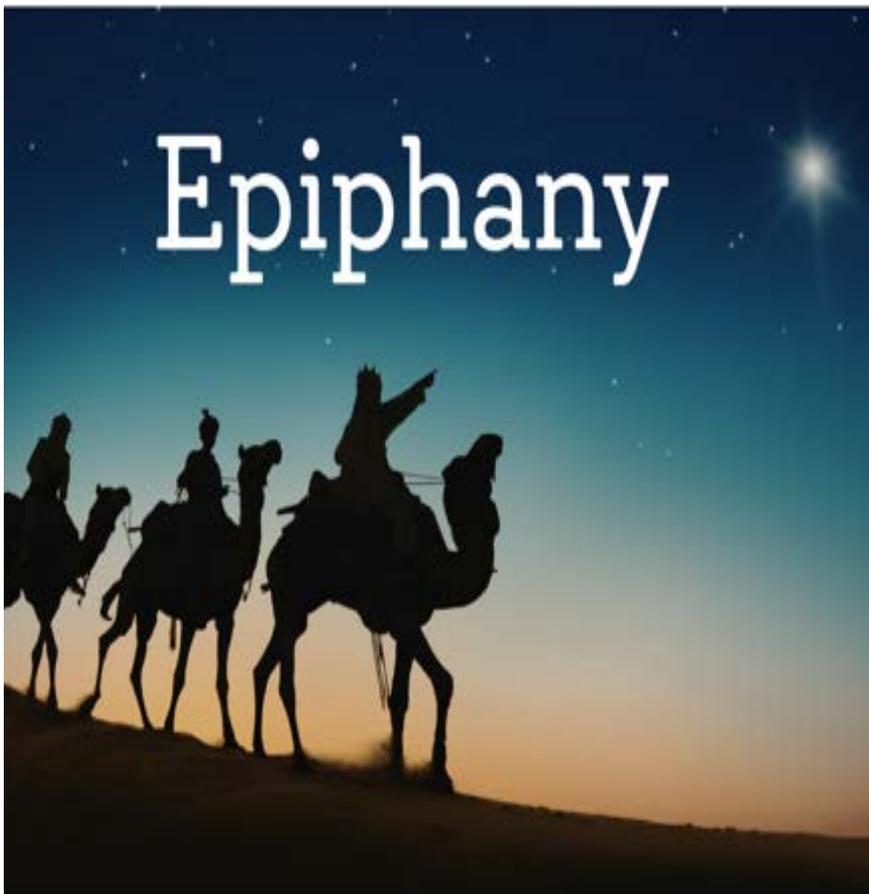


The Builder

First Christian Church
Midland

January 4, 2025

Volume 71 Issue 1



Epiphany

WEEK AT A GLANCE

SUN
JAN
4

10AM SUNDAY SCHOOL
11AM WORSHIP

WED
JAN
7

7AM MEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST
9:30AM FOOD PANTRY

THUR
JAN
8

11:30AM DISCIPLE WOMENS
LUNCHEON & BIBLE STUDY

SUN
JAN
11

10AM SUNDAY SCHOOL
11AM WORSHIP
4:30PM KIDS GROW & YOUTH GROW
KICK OFF

In this Issue:

Pastors' Articles
Recent & Upcoming Events

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Senior Minister

Epiphany: When the World Comes to Bethlehem

Epiphany is a season of holy surprise. It is the moment

when what has been hidden is suddenly revealed, when God's light breaks beyond familiar boundaries and shines where we did not expect it. Few stories capture that sense of revelation more powerfully than the visit of the Magi—those mysterious travelers from the East who follow a star to a small house in Bethlehem. This story, read each year at Epiphany, is found only in the Gospel of Matthew. That alone should catch our attention as we prepare, in 2026, to spend an entire year walking carefully through Matthew's telling of the life of Jesus.

Matthew's Gospel is deeply rooted in the soil of Israel's Scriptures. Again and again, Matthew points to the Law and the Prophets, showing how Jesus fulfills what God promised long ago. Jesus is presented as the new Moses, the true teacher of God's will, the one who embodies righteousness from the inside out. For a Gospel so steeped in Jewish tradition, the appearance of Gentile Magi at the very beginning is startling. Outsiders, astrologers from a distant land, are among the first to recognize and worship Israel's Messiah.

Meanwhile, those who should have been most prepared—the powerful leaders in Jerusalem—are anything but receptive. King Herod is “frightened, and all Jerusalem with him.” The religious experts know the Scriptures well enough to quote the prophecy about Bethlehem, yet they do not make the short journey to see what God might be doing. Instead of joy, there is fear. Instead of devoted

gifts, there is violence, as soldiers are eventually sent to snuff out this fragile new life.

This contrast is not accidental. From its opening chapters, Matthew is already teaching us how to read the rest of the Gospel. The good news of Jesus will draw near to the unexpected and unsettle the comfortable. God's kingdom will not be contained by borders, bloodlines, or religious credentials. Gentiles will come from far away to bow in worship, while some insiders will keep their distance, protecting their power rather than opening their hearts.

Epiphany, then, is not merely about the Magi themselves. They appear briefly, offer their gifts, and vanish into the sands of history, returning home by another road. The story does not linger on their future. Instead, it points forward. The light that guided them will continue to shine, drawing others in—fishermen and tax collectors, the sick and the poor, the faithful and the faltering. By the time we reach the final chapter of Matthew, the risen Jesus stands on a mountain and speaks words that echo the journey of the Magi: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

What begins with the nations coming to Jesus ends with Jesus sending his followers out to the nations. Epiphany at the cradle becomes mission at the cross and resurrection. This is why Matthew is such a fitting Gospel for us to dwell in over the coming year. It invites us to see the whole life of Christ, his teaching, miracles, confrontations, sacrifice, and his victory, as part of God's great plan to bless the world.

As we begin this year-long journey through Matthew, Epiphany asks us some personal questions as well. The Magi are remembered for their gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh—

symbols of kingship, worship, and sacrifice. Their gifts were costly, intentional, and offered in humility. So we might ask: what gifts do we bring to Christ this Christmas season? What do we lay before him in worship?

But Epiphany also stretches that question forward into the year ahead. As we study Matthew together, as we listen again to Jesus' words and watch his life unfold, what gifts will we bring to him in 2026? Our time? Our attention? Our obedience? Our compassion for those beyond

our usual circles? Our willingness to follow "by another road" when God's call disrupts our familiar ways?

Epiphany reminds us that the light has come for all, and that encountering Christ always leads somewhere. May this coming year in Matthew help us recognize that light more clearly, follow it more faithfully, and offer our lives as gifts to the One who was revealed for the world.

See you at the Table,



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10AM SUNDAY SCHOOL
11AM WORSHIP

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