

# I. January Programming Ideas for Worship

## Epiphany Celebration

Epiphany is an often overlooked Sunday in the Christian calendar. It has special significance as part of the birth story of Christ because it is the traditional date of the arrival of the wisemen. At the birth of Jesus, we see the whole of creation celebrating: the heavenly hosts from the spiritual world, the shepherds from the world of the poor and uneducated, and the magi or wisemen from the educated and wealthy class who also represent the gentile world and the world beyond Israel.

Also, it is important because the wisemen brought gifts of great value which provided the money for the holy family when they had to escape to Egypt to avoid the terrible massacre of the children dictated by Herod.

In addition to looking at the United Methodist Music and Worship Planner for ideas on lectionary readings and hymns, here are some additional suggestions that might work for your church.

1. A grand entry procession including the following persons

A Star bearer with a glowing star on top of a long pole

Three Wisemen following the star to the “Follow the Star Song”

which is included below (allow procession to enter with choir only singing first verse, then repeat first verse with words on the screen so that the congregation can have their eyes up to experience the procession)

Two or more acolytes walking down the aisle single file carrying the flames of the Holy Spirit

The choir processing down the aisle singly or in pairs

Prayer Team

Communion Stewards

Lay Readers

Pastor

Processional Hymn: “Follow the Star” lyrics by Marilyn E. Schultz  
Music p. 198 of the UMC Hymnal

Verse 1: Follow the star, the wisemen did.  
In faith they followed the star.  
Pressed on, stressed on, against the odds.  
In faith they followed the star.

Verse 2: Follow the star, as all saints have.  
With Hope they followed the Star.  
They kept the faith, so we can hope.

In faith to follow the Star.

Verse 3: We follow the Star, In Char-i-ty,  
Our Faith is in God's love.  
We hope to serve the Lord Our King,  
Sent down from God above.

Verse 4: We follow the Star with shows the way.  
The Star is light which guides-each-day.  
The light of the world is here to stay!  
The wisemen followed that Star.

Verse 5: Repeat Verse 1

2. Additional hymns might include:

“We Three Kings of Orient Are” *UMC Hymnal* p. 254

“A Star Shone Bright” *Of Faith We Sing* p. 3051

“Go Tell It on the Mountain” *UMC Hymnal* p. 251

3. Costumes for the wisemen add colorful and appropriate touch of drama

4. A dramatic enactment of the wisemen meeting with Herod and then proceeding to Bethlehem would be appropriate Matthew 2:1-12

5. Fellowship Time after the worship service could include some of these elements

A. Individual crowns for diners (available at craft, party or on-line store)

B. Rich and elaborate foods as meant for royalty (a pot luck buffet fit for royalty)

C. A short program by an herb specialist explaining the meaning of the frankincense, and myrrh – or in lieu of that, a rolled scroll that would have a brief history of the meaning of the gifts the wisemen brought

D. Singing of the “Twelve Days of Christmas”, with the words printed on a colorful song sheet with an explanation of the Christian meaning of the days (on line)

Evangelism Notes:

1. Hand out flyers at the Christmas Program announcing this as a special event for members to bring their friends and neighbors. It is a great way to follow up on the large numbers who attend at Christmas. You may decide to call it a “Twelfth Night” celebration rather than Epiphany because that has a festive ring to it. As long as you do not lose the importance of the actual day, it is permissible to give it a more “friendly title”.

2. Take pictures of the wisemen and send a news release to the local paper inviting people to the event.

3. Take pictures of the actual worship service and participants and make sure to send a follow up news release to let the town know what you are doing, and who is involved.

4. Remember to always make sure that those that attend this event are pointed to the next event, whether it be a Valentine's "remarriage" celebration, a sweetheart dance, a pancake supper on Shrove Tuesday, the Eve of Lent, or a special concert or program coming up.

## II. January Programming and Worship Ideas

### Drama for the presentation at the temple

Gospel of Luke 2: 22-39

Cast: Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus, Simeon and Anna, the prophetess  
King James Version of the Bible

Scenery: No scenery needed

The action is always best on a raised platform, such as the chancel area.

Costumes: Simple Bible costumes would be appropriate.

Staging: Mary/Joseph/Jesus enter from the Left (stage R ) while Simeon enters from the Right (stage L) to meet in the center. Anna enters from the right or down the center aisle. Anna and Simeon exit to the Left while Mary/Joseph/Jesus exit down the center aisle.

Reading: 1) The italicized script is for reference only – not to be read.  
2) The narrators are included so they can use microphones, so the text can be heard. Narrators should be out of sight or at the reader's podium.  
3) Simeon should have a headset microphone

More people are better: Although some churches may prefer to use less people than scripted, it is useful to use as many people as possible in each production, even if their parts are small for the sake of building a worship drama team. Yes, it is more work, but remember that organizing is part of connecting with each other.

Note on unusual capitalizations in the text: The King James Version has an abundance of unusually placed capitalizations. They are included here.

#### 1. *Purification at the Temple (Luke 2: 22-24)*

##### **Male Narrator 1:**

And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord. (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons.

#### 2. *Simeon Called to the Temple by Holy Spirit to See the Promised Christ Child (Luke 2:25-28)*

##### **Male Narrator 2:**

And , behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law, Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,

3. *Simeon Declaring That He May Now Depart in Peace now that he has seen the Christ Child, the consolation of Israel (Matthew 2:20-35)*

**Simeon:**

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

**Male Narrator 2:**

And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother,

**Simeon:**

Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

4. *Anna, the Prophetess, Praises God for the Christ Child (Luke 2:36-38)*

**Female Narrator:**

And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

5. *Mary, Joseph and Jesus leave to return to Nazareth (Luke 2:39)*

**Male Narrator 1:**

And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

## Additional Worship Elements:

1. A bulletin card with Simeon's declaration (which is often called the Nunc Dimittis) for personal prayer and reflection during the week ahead:

“Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” KJV (or a translation from a newer version)

Prayer: Lord, let me be a light this week that shines on the light of Jesus Christ to the world around me. Amen.

2. Revealing the Prophetess Anna as an inspiration for all women to see their role in Christ's holy kingdom.

3. Hymns and liturgy in the United Methodist Hymnal:

p. 225 *Canticle of Simeon*

p. 226 *My Master, See, the Time Has Come* –  
A hymn based on this scripture