New Epiphanies
Sunday, January 1

Focus: To hear and celebrate the story of the visit of the Magi

The dictionary defines epiphany as “a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization.” The wise ones followed the star from its rising until it stopped. That was their epiphany, but epiphanies are not always so. On this last Sunday of Christmas, we stop with the wise ones to wonder what this birth has revealed.

Opening Prayer:

We praise you, Holy One, for stars in the heavens above and extraordinary wonders here on earth. We give thanks for the words you give us to dream of what could be. Amen.

Focus scripture: Matthew 2:1–12

Today we are celebrating the “Epiphany.” Explain that the word “epiphany” comes from a Greek word that means “to display” or “to appear.” On this day we hear the story of the Magi and the star they followed to Bethlehem.

To prepare for today’s story, invite your family to talk about their experiences of the wonder of seeing stars in a night sky.

- How does it feel to look up at the stars at night? Do some stand out more than others?

Explain that in today’s Bible reading a star plays an important part in the story. The Magi saw a star in the sky which symbolized for them the birth of a new ruler. For the Jews, the promise of a new ruler brought hope for peace and justice.
Read together Matthew 2:1–12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, magi[a] from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star in the east[b] and have come to pay him homage.”

3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him, 4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah[c] was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah, for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd[d] my people Israel.’ ”

7 Then Herod secretly called for the magi[e] and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. 8 Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.” 9 When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen in the east,[f] until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw that the star had stopped,[g] they were overwhelmed with joy. 11 On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

After reading, consider the following wondering questions:

- What did the magi want to know from King Herod?
- Who did Herod ask so he could answer their question?
- Why do you think Herod was so worried about this little child?
- Why do you think the Magi were so excited to find the child Jesus?
- What message did the Magi receive in a dream? Why was it important?
Optional Craft: Scented Star Card

1. Fold a piece of construction paper to create a card. Use the star pattern (or a star shape that you have drawn) to cut a shape out of sandpaper.
2. Glue the shape to the front of the card and print a message on the outside of the card such as, “You are Loved;” “Feliz Navidad;” “Jesus Is Born;” or create a design around the star on the front of the card.
3. Print a message of love on the inside to the person who will receive the card.
4. Rub a cinnamon stick over the sandpaper to release a cinnamon smell as a reminder of the frankincense and myrrh that the Magi gave to Jesus.
Optional Activity: Star Meditation

Silent meditation is a spiritual practice that is calming and promotes health. The star shape can be used as a tool to quiet the mind and body by consciously breathing in a slow meditative way while your eyes follow a pathway around the outside of the shape. Sit quietly and look at the picture of the “Meditation Star.” Spend several minutes of quiet time following the breathing pattern. You’re invited to meditate in this way for a few minutes every morning or evening during Epiphany so that it will become part of your spiritual practice and will become a habit if you ever need to calm your mind and body.

Closing Prayer:

God of all creation, We thank you for the light that led the Magi to Jesus. May the light of Jesus’ birth go with us, everywhere we go and in everything we do. Amen