

# DAY 1

“We observed his star in the East”

(Mt 2:2)

*Raise us up and draw us to your perfect light*

## Readings

Psalm 139:1-10      Your right hand shall hold me fast  
2 Timothy 1:7-10    This grace... has now been revealed  
                                 through the appearing of our  
                                 Saviour Christ Jesus

## Reflection

In this fragile and uncertain world, we look for light. We look for the good within ourselves, but often we are so overwhelmed by our weakness that hope fails us. Our confidence rests in God, who in wisdom, enables us to hope for his mercy. We are surprised when it comes in human form: Christ is the light in our midst! God's gift to us is a 'spirit of power, and love'. We are drawn forward on the way to this perfect light by God's Holy Spirit, not by relying on our own strength and ability.

In the midst of darkness, the star from the East penetrates the depths of the darkness that separates us from one another. The star's light continues to shine and to change the face of history. Throughout the ages, by the lives of Christ's followers, the world has come to know the hope that is

inspired by the Holy Spirit. And the Risen One continues to shine, like a beacon guiding all into this perfect light and overcoming the darkness which separates us from one another.

The desire to overcome the darkness that separates us compels us to pray and work for Christian unity.

## Prayer

Creator of light,  
illumine our path by the light of  
Christ who moves before us and  
leads us.  
May he be a beacon for our  
pilgrimage.  
Enlighten us and dwell within us.  
Guide us to discover a manger in our  
hearts where a great light  
still shines.

We thank you for the gift of that unfading Star, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.  
Heal our divisions and draw us closer to the Light that we may find our unity in him.  
Amen.

## Hymn Verse

How brightly beams the  
Morning Star!  
What sudden radiance from afar  
Doth glad us with its shining,  
Brightness of God that breaks  
our night  
And fills the darken'd souls  
with light  
Who long for truth were pining!  
Thy Word, Jesu, only feeds us,

## Go and do

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Visit the website of [Embrace the Middle East](http://Embrace the Middle East) and see what actions you can take to be in solidarity with Christians of the Middle East.

**Local:** Organise a candle lit vigil with the churches in your area as an act of unity for this week. It doesn't have to be in person but each church could encourage members to put a candle in their window at an agreed day and time.

**Personal:** Take time this week to star gaze. Let your eyes settle on an unfading star and pause in reverence and prayer before the Creator of light. You don't have to go outside you can search for and visit an online planetarium.

## Questions

Reflecting on the past year:

**Global:** What could the role of the Church be in proclaiming the good news of the Gospel in a world where there is so much injustice?

**Local:** Where have you seen signs of hope in your community, especially during a time of pandemic?

**Personal:** How have you sought 'the light' in the midst of darkness?

Rightly leads us,  
Life bestowing;  
Praise, oh praise such love  
o'erflowing.

*Johann Schlegel, tr. Catherine Winkworth*

# DAY 2

“Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?”

(Mt 2:2)

*Humble leadership breaks down walls  
and builds up with love*

## Readings

Jeremiah 23:1-6 He shall reign as king and deal wisely

Philippians 2:5-11 Who... did not regard equality with  
God as something to be exploited

## Reflection – True Leadership

Jeremiah denounces the bad leadership of the kings of Israel who divided and scattered the people, a leadership that destroyed nations and drove their citizens into exile. In contrast, the Lord promises a shepherd-king who will ‘execute justice and righteousness in the land’ and gather the flock as one.

Only in Christ have we seen the example of a leader truly after God’s heart. In him we encounter a loving, humble servant who does not regard equality with God as something to be exploited. He comes to serve, rather than be served, and his followers are called to do the same.

Today, the Middle East is experiencing the loss of its people

to exile as ‘righteousness and justice’ are becoming scarce commodities, not only there but throughout the world. Yet leaders, both in the world and in the Church, have a responsibility to bring together rather than to scatter or divide. The more faithfully Christians emulate the servant leadership of Christ, the more division in both the world and the Church will be overcome. As we work for righteousness, justice and peace for all, we witness humbly to the shepherd-king, and draw others into his presence.

## Prayer

Just and righteous God,  
we confess before you that we often  
covet worldly models of leadership.

Help us to seek our Lord Jesus Christ not in the palaces of the powerful but in the humble manger.

May we emulate him in his meekness and become servants to each other in obedience to you.

We pray in the name of Christ, who with you and the Holy Spirit reigns forever in glory.

Amen.

## Verse / Poem

It was the day of the strong men  
the day when truth retired, redundant  
because lies had more glitz,  
and justice disabled, mocked,  
in the name of a golden god  
cast from melted down lives.

And then came the pestilence

## Go and do

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Focus on a number of examples of where you consider good leadership to be evident. Try to identify the shared principles of leadership in these examples and consider how they can be encouraged in the work of creating unity.

**Local:** Invite a local leader to a gathering of the churches in your area to hear more about their work and to find out how you can best support and encourage them.

**Personal:** Find out about or refresh your memory on the [circle of concern](#) and [circle of influence](#) and consider how you can best exercise your personal leadership this week to help the cause of unity.

## Questions

**Global:** How have you seen the Church follow Jesus’ pattern of leading through service?

**Local:** What Christian leader (either local or national) do you admire for the ability to inspire unity and a concern for justice? What qualities enable that person to lead effectively?

**Personal:** When have you been inspired to take the lead in seeking justice or working towards unity?

and the day of the servant ubiquitous, anonymous, in nursing home and ICU, and the temple profligate with treasure in cylinders of breath.

# DAY 3

“When king Herod heard this he was disturbed,  
and all Jerusalem with him”

(Mt 2:3)

*The presence of Christ, turning the world upside down*

## Readings

Psalm 2:1-10

Why do the nations conspire...?

2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5

But the Lord is faithful, he will  
strengthen you

## Reflection

Christ's coming disturbs the ways of the world. He comes in humility, denouncing the evil of injustice and oppression that accompanies the ambition for power, wealth and status. Jesus calls for a change of heart and a transformation of life, which will bring liberation from all that dehumanises. This creates disturbance precisely because he rocks the boat of those who seek only their own interests and neglect the common good. But for those who work for peace and unity, Christ's coming brings the light of hope.

We are invited to commit ourselves to act constructively to make justice a reality, acknowledging where we have strayed from God's ways of justice and

peace. Then the answer to our prayer for Christian unity becomes visible as others recognise in us Christ's presence in the world. We can bring the light of hope to those living in the darkness of political unrest, social poverty, and structural discrimination. The Good News is that God is faithful, always strengthening and protecting us, inspiring us to work for the good of others, especially the victims of oppression, hatred, violence and pain.

## Prayer

Lord, you led us out of darkness to  
hope in Jesus.

Unite us in our commitment to  
establish your reign of love, justice  
and peace,

bringing light to those living  
in the darkness of despair and  
disillusionment.

Shine your light upon us and surround  
us with the warmth of your love.

Lift us up to you, so that our lives may  
glorify you,

Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

## Verse / Poem

In the school Nativity Play  
they cast the class bully as Herod.

Inspired.

No acting required.

Jesus, you ask  
which role shall I play  
in my world, your world, today.

## Go and do

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Covid-19 turned the world upside down and provided an opportunity to reimagine how things could be. Find out more about and get involved in the campaign to [crack the crises](#) and ensure this opportunity for transformation is not lost.

**Local:** Consider as churches together what situations of injustice or exclusion exist in your locality. Work with others in your community to challenge and change the systems that need turning upside-down.

**Personal:** Take time today to sit in stillness and discern what injustice most disturbs your conscience, spend time praying, researching and planning how you can take action about it (if you are not already involved in doing so).

## Questions

**Global:** Where have you seen the values of the Church disturbing society's values for the common good?

**Local:** Is your church or group of churches too comfortable in a discomfoting world? How could your church or group be disturbed into real action?

**Personal:** When have you been disturbed into doing what was right?

And you will me to seek first  
your holy inspiration  
that I might be just  
myself.

# DAY 4

“And you, Bethlehem... are by no means least”

(Mt 2:6)

*Though small and suffering, we lack nothing*

## Readings

- Micah 5:2-5a, 7-8      From you shall come forth ... one who is to rule in Israel
- 1 Peter 2: 21-25      Now you have returned to the shepherd and guardian of your souls
- Luke 12:32-40      Do not be afraid, little flock

## Reflection

Today we consider why God chooses to act in and through seemingly insignificant places and people, and what God does with them. These are not new questions – in fact they are the favourite paradoxes of preachers in the Christmas and Epiphany seasons – yet they continue to challenge us. The prophet Micah speaks directly to Bethlehem and predicts its greatness as the home of the shepherd who will defend God's people. The First Letter of Peter tells people who have already begun to identify Jesus Christ with the Messiah that he is the shepherd who willingly suffers to save the flock. The Gospel of Luke reassures the 'little flock' of Christ's followers that they need have no fear, because God has promised them the Kingdom.

We receive these messages of

consolation, directed to particular people at a particular time, in the context of our own concerns and longing for consolation. They invite us to take part in God's transformation of inequality, violence and injustice, not to wait passively for these things to happen. They call on us to be politically aware; to be locally ready to make our churches little Bethlehems where Christ can be born in generosity and hospitality; to recognise ourselves as a 'little flock', unimportant perhaps in the world's eyes, but with a value and a vocation in the great mystery of salvation.

## Prayer

Good Shepherd,  
the fragmentation of your 'little flock'  
grieves the Holy Spirit.  
Forgive our weak efforts and slowness  
in the pursuit of your will.

Give us wise shepherds after your own heart  
who recognise the sin of division,  
and those who will lead the churches  
with righteousness and holiness,  
to unity in you.  
We ask you, Lord, to hear our prayer.  
Amen.

## Magnificat

Every Sunday night, back in the day,  
in Church,  
there we would be, my Dad and I,  
chanting:  
He hath put down the mighty from  
their seats,  
and exalted them of low degree.  
He hath filled the hungry with  
good things  
and the rich he hath sent empty away.  
(Well, in William Morgan's words,  
more starkly.)  
And then I learned  
that this wasn't about people, and

## Go and do

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Visit [Amos Trust](http://Amos Trust) to find out more about how to create peace with justice in the Middle East.

**Local:** Plan as churches together to pray for peace in the middle east on the 24th of every month. You can use [resources](#) from Christian Aid to aid your prayers.

**Personal:** Bring the fears that keep you in division from other traditions before the Good Shepherd in prayer. Meditate on the words of the Good Shepherd - 'do not be afraid, little flock.'

## Questions

**Global:** This material was being prepared as violence once more raged in Jerusalem and Gaza. How can the worldwide Christian community best support those Christians who share this contested place to be light in its darkness, transformers of fear, agents of peace?

**Local:** How might our local churches become Bethlehems – places where Christ can be born, welcomed and honoured?

**Personal:** When have you recognised the life of God growing in people and places to which you have previously paid little attention?

sustenance, and things, and capital,  
and nowt,  
that they were just symbols, spiritual  
things, nice.  
Is God that thick?

# DAY 5

“Ahead of them, went the star that they  
had seen at its rising”

(Mt 2:9)

*Guided by the one God*

## Readings

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills,  
from where will my help come?

Matthew 2:7-10

Ahead of them, went the star that they  
had seen at its rising

## Reflection

Again and again, the scriptures tell us how God walks with us. The path may not always be straight: sometimes we are led to retrace our steps, sometimes to return by a different route. But in all our journeying through life, we can be confident that God, who neither “sleeps nor slumbers”, is with us when we slip or fall.

Even in the greatest darkness, God’s light is with us. Most perfectly, in the fullness of time, God sends Jesus Christ, who is the guiding light for all nations, the glory of God in the world, the source of divine light and life.

The way ahead into unity with one another, into closer union with Christ, is not always clear. In our earnest attempts to build unity ourselves it

is all too easy to lose sight of this fundamental message of the scriptures: that God does not abandon his people even in their failures and divisiveness. This is God’s message of hope for the whole world. As the story of the Magi reminds us, God guides people of all kinds, by the light of the star, to where Christ, the light of the world, is to be found.

## Prayer

God our Guide,  
you sent the star to lead the Magi to  
your only begotten Son.  
Fill us with the confidence  
that you are walking with us.  
Open our eyes to your Spirit, and  
encourage us in our faith,

so that we may confess that  
Jesus is Lord,  
and worship him as the Magi  
did in Bethlehem.  
Amen

## Hymn Verse

Hope of my heart, strength of my soul,  
Guide Thou my footsteps and keep  
me whole;  
My grace and fortress, Thou wilt be,  
Oh, let Thy mighty hand ever lead me.

*Barney E Warren, 1893*

## Questions

**Global:** As a global community we continue to face many challenges. How do we seek God’s guidance in our response to those challenges?

**Local:** How is God guiding your Christian community at this time? Where are you being called to act?

**Personal:** Reflect on a time when you have felt or seen God’s guidance? What was that like?

## Go and do

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Start (or continue) a conversation around your Christian community about how you are responding to the challenges of climate justice. As churches take part in global prayer and action for climate justice:

<https://www.prayandact4climate.org>

**Local:** Plan a Climate Sunday service between the churches in your locality. Visit [climatesunday.org](http://climatesunday.org) for resources and inspiration.

**Personal:** Seek out a community to be part of to support you in your action responding to global challenges. For example if you like craft you could turn your skills into activism in community with the [craftivist-collective.com](http://craftivist-collective.com)

# DAY 6

“They saw the child with Mary his mother,  
and they knelt down and paid him homage”

(Mt 2:11)

*Gathered in worship around the One Lord*

## Readings

Psalm 84	How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
Mt 28:16-20	When they saw him, they worshipped him

## Reflection

When the Magi from their far-away countries arrived at Bethlehem and saw the child with his mother, they worshipped him. In the presence of this revelation of God among us, eyes were cast down and knees bent. Similarly, when the disciples saw the risen Christ on the mountain in Galilee, they were amazed and troubled. Yet they worshipped him.

Do we see? Are we amazed? Are we truly worshipping? How many times do we remain blind to God's presence? How can we worship in truth if we do not really see first? In our narrow vision, too often we see only our

tangled disagreements, forgetting that God's saving grace is to all, and that we share in the one Spirit who draws us into unity. Often in our pride we follow human laws and traditions, disregarding the love we are called to share as one people justified by Christ's blood.

As communities enlivened by the Holy Spirit, we are called to walk together towards the Christ-Child, offering homage as one people. The Spirit of compassion guides us to each other and only by following this guide will we be able to “worship in spirit and truth”.

## Prayer

Compassionate God,  
in your mercy, remove the scales from  
our eyes  
and lead us to repent and to  
worship you.  
In the midst of our sorrow and despite  
the depth of our sin,  
give us the capacity to love you with all  
our hearts.  
As we journey together with one heart  
and mind,  
may we glorify you in the  
Spirit's fellowship,  
and witness to those around us.  
Amen.

## Hymn Verse

Finish, then, Thy new creation;  
Pure and spotless let us be;

## Questions

**Global:** What are you doing as part of your own pattern of worship to pray for the worldwide church?

**Local:** Within your worship as a local Christian community what are the barriers you face to greater unity and how might they be overcome?

**Personal:** Can you remember a time when you were able to worship “in spirit and in truth”? What was it like?

Let us see Thy great salvation  
Perfectly restored in Thee;  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in Heav'n we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.

*Charles Wesley, 1747*

## Go and do

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Use the [ecumenical prayer cycle](#) to pray with communities across the global church.

**Local:** Partner with churches in your area to participate in a biblical dialogue to learn with a church community across the world. Visit [Just Scripture](#) to find out more.

**Personal:** Find and join an online service from a church of a different tradition. Join in this act of worship and reflect on what riches God has shown you through this different experience of worship together.

# DAY 7

“Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered  
him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh”

(Mt 2:11)

## *The search for unity*

### *Readings*

Hosea 6:1-6      For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice  
Matthew 6. 19-21      For where your treasure is, there your  
heart will be also

### *Reflection*

The prophet Hosea is known for his cry for justice and love to override religious ritual and regulations. We are called to make a treasure of our expression of love and our work for justice and to let that be the offering that we place before the manger. We know that God does not want our riches or burnt offerings, but rather that God's power works through our poverty: “I have no silver or gold”. The Lord desires our loving hearts, filled with mercy, truly penitent and desiring change.

Let us then prepare the gift of a heart full of love. Kneeling in worship requires hearts that are contrite for the sin that divides us and obedient to the One we serve. This obedience revives, heals and reconciles everything that is broken or wounded in us, around us,

and among us as Christians.

Unity is the gift offered to us by Christ. We grow in communion as we share the graces our different traditions have received, acknowledging that the source of all our gifts is the Lord.

### *Prayer*

God,  
through your prophets  
you have called us to do justice,  
to love mercy,  
and to walk humbly with you.  
In Christ,  
you have shown us what that  
looks like.  
Through your Holy Spirit  
you continually enable us  
to hear your words,

to follow Christ's example,  
and to live as his disciples.  
So, as we gather at the manger,  
heal our wounds,  
reconcile our divisions  
and hold us together in your love.  
Amen

### *Hymn Verse*

Vainly we offer each ample oblation;  
vainly with gifts would his  
favour secure;  
richer by far is the heart's adoration;  
dearer to God are the prayers of  
the poor.  
Brightest and best of the sons of  
the morning,  
dawn on our darkness, and lend us  
your aid;  
star of the east, the horizon adorning,  
guide where our infant Redeemer  
is laid.

*Reginald Heber 1783-1826*

### *Questions*

**Global:** Climate justice is being recognised as an expression of social justice with which churches can act together on a global scale. Why is this the case?

**Local:** Sometimes we talk of Christian Unity being advanced more easily when local churches work together on a specific project, often one involving an expression of social justice. How have you experienced this in your local area?

**Personal:** How do you consider the importance of church as a place for offering worship and as a place from which to call for social justice?

### *Go and do*

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Take time today to campaign for global justice. Visit the websites of [CTBI agency partners](#) to take part in their current campaign actions for social justice.

**Local:** Identify projects in your local area that need more support, and work together as churches to assist them.

**Personal:** Consider an issue of social justice that you've not been involved with previously and take time to find out more and take action.

# DAY 8

They left for their own country by another road”  
(Mt 2:12)

*Beyond the familiar routes of separation  
to God's new paths*

## Readings

Psalm 16

You show me the path of life

Matthew 11:25-30

Because you have hidden these things  
from the wise and the intelligent, and  
have revealed them to infants

## Reflection

We do not know what the wise men thought – they who were experts in astronomy and navigation – when they were warned to return by another road. They may well have been very confused, but the same light that illumined their journey showed them that there was another road, another possibility. They were called to change direction.

We often find ourselves bound by our familiar ways of doing things and of seeing the world. When these ways or ‘roads’ are closed, we wonder how to proceed and continue the journey. We have to trust that the everlasting One who gave us the light, can always find a way forward when our ways

and paths are blocked. A fresh start is always possible when we are willing and open to the work of the Spirit.

As churches we look to the past and find illumination, and we look to the future in search of new ways so that we can continue to shine the light of the Gospel as we journey by another way, together.

## Prayer

Gracious God,  
when we only know one way  
and we think we must return to it,  
when we think that all roads  
are blocked,  
and we fall into despair,  
we always find you there,

creating a new unexpected path  
before us.

If we search our maps and find  
no route,  
nonetheless we always find you,  
who lead us by a yet more  
excellent way,  
trusting that you will always lead us  
back to you  
and forward in unity together. Amen.

## Meditative Response

Journeying on parallel paths  
or often in opposite directions  
We are called by ‘another way’  
to become pilgrim companions  
the people of The Way  
Compasses and maps orientated  
route finding and navigating together  
our backpacks not burdensome

## Go and do

(see [www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/goanddo))

**Global:** Find out how communities from all over the world joined in pilgrimage for climate justice in 2021. Plan as churches together to continue the journey to a better future for the planet and for us all. Find out more at:

[christianaid.org.uk/campaigns](http://christianaid.org.uk/campaigns).

**Local:** Organise a local pilgrimage between the churches in your area, for example, you could walk to each of the church buildings or find your nearest pilgrim route.

**Personal:** Journey familiar routes by another way, for example walk 50% more slowly on your errands today, what do you notice? How do you see things differently?

## Questions

**Global:** What other ways of journeying together could we explore that would lead us into a better future?

**Local:** What do we take for granted about our daily rhythms? What blessing might someone of another tradition receive from the worship in your church? How might the worship of your church be perceived by someone of another tradition?

**Personal:** How does it feel when your familiar ways or traditions are challenged?

our boots crunching on,  
rediscovering ancient paths,  
walking humbly together with  
our God.