

- [Ephesians 1:3-6,15-19a](#)
- [Matthew 2:1-12](#)
- [Psalm 84:1-8](#)

### **The Collect**

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,  
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid,  
star of the east, the horizon adorning, guide where our infant  
Redeemer is laid.

Hymn 118 verse 1&4

Happy New Year My friends!  
And Happy 12<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas

We sing and hear of the Magi today, this day before January 6<sup>th</sup>-  
the day of Epiphany. Leaning into the proximity of tomorrow's

feast day we celebrate fully this story in that greatest story told to us.

Let's pause for a moment,

As we turned the page on 2024, I don't know about you- but I kept seeing the invitation to create the "best of 2024 lists"- I saw the best books, the most read headlines, the events of the year. With each list, we were given the invitation to pause and remember.

Now their lists, often times, were to encourage you to purchase something that you might have missed, to invite you into an acquisition, addition into your lives.....

I invite you instead-

to remember the connections, the relationships, the conversations. In the final week of the year/ first week of the new year, I often take a moment to sift through my digital archive of photos from the past year to remember the images of the events. The flowers, the sticks, the people who visited, the places we visited, the food, the events of the year.... It's a journey of sorts and a bit of a gift to remember "that happened this year??"

Our annual journeys can be right in one place or take us physically traveling for work, for pleasure, for discernment, to visit family, to visit friends, to see those who are dying and those who are newly birthed. Of unexpected disasters and unexpected moments of grace.

Do you delight in the journey?

Growing up, car trips punctuated my life. We did not actually travel for vacation, we moved. Our car trips often were from one home to the next, packed to the gills with all our possessions, often my parents would pack us up and drive at night to decrease our distracting “HOW MUCH LONGER” and “I AM HUNGRY” wails.

Despite their intentional departure times, We would still awake as they attempted to stop for coffee and sneak a snack along the way. We would be reminded we were on a journey, go back to sleep, rest, the adventure would be there when we woke up...

Getting older, driving to and from family for vacations and holidays became it's own adventure. There was the year we surprised my mother for Thanksgiving driving from where my

sister and I lived outside of Atlanta all the way to Detroit, Michigan. We called at each state line speaking in code to my father on speaker phone letting him know where we were. We showed up with bows on our heads and singing some song made up song about Turkeys.

My mother was indeed surprised and amazed.

In our journeys, we had people who had certain roles.

One person always read EVERYSIGNOUTLOUD.. a horrible habit that I became known for on college team road trips.

One person was in charge of snacks

One person counted noses (were we all there? Who was still in the bathroom or discerning their snack?)

One person was in charge of navigating

One person was in charge of actually driving (All else served this person)

Remembering our responsibilities was important and essential as a family, group, team.

Simple and yet community.

The Magi that we hear of today, travelled a long distance to meet the young Jesus. I use each of these words carefully. While our

hymn sang of 'Three Kings'- the Greek is actually more expansive. Magi represents a less definite number- more than one and could be much more than two or three! While the noun is masculine, the plural is like other languages where if one male is present the whole group becomes masculine in grammar not excluding women but because grammar rules are grammar rules- the entire group becomes masculine in its grammatic identity....

This group of seekers following a star is a bit of an unknown mass who traveled for quite some time, following a star, they studied the skies not the prophets for this new beginning  
.....to seek this new King.

I wonder who was the navigator

Who read the signs

Who was in charge of the snacks?

Who reminded them to rest?

Who was the annoying one who made up songs along the way to keep them amused?

Who counted noses?

Who stayed behind and worried about their arrival and return?

Who KNEW that they had indeed arrived at their destination?

Who doubted the whole trip and still wasn't quite sure they were there?

Who did not want to go at all but felt they HAD to go?

Who forgot all the bad things but delighted in each moment as it arrived?

Who reminded them of all the bad things and still kept one foot going at a time?

Who remembered to tell the story and reconnect them to where they came from and where they were going?

Today is the 12<sup>th</sup> Day of Christmas, the final day of the season- the day where the final greens of the Christmas Season are taken down, if they are not already removed.

And we turn the page on a new season of the Church year.

With January 6, we begin our journey in the season after the Epiphany.

And the traditions of Epiphany are many, ways to mark this part of the journey.

In Spain the "three kings" are celebrated by giving of gifts on this day.

Many will bless the house with the chalking of the door frame, inviting God's blessing on this new year for all those who will travel through the threshold.

January 6<sup>th</sup>, Epiphany Day, begins the season of Mardi Gras, king cakes are baked and devoured as we celebrate the joy and delight in the celebration of hope in a world of brokenness.

Epiphany begins a season in the church year that emphasizes the birth of Christ and the punctuation of light in the darkness. The manifestation of God in our midst. In this season, we will hear of baptisms, calls to discipleship and new beginnings.

The Magi traveled to a distant and foreign land, they risked their lives because they believed that there was something more calling them through the desert, through the danger of life on this earth- principalities and authorities.

We too, live in a world where the wildness of life might seem overwhelming. Where the threat of violence and uncertainty can overwhelm us. And yet, we begin this season again- following like the shepherds and magi did- with hope, wonder and amazement.

Showing up just as we are, bringing what we have to share with Jesus.

On this journey in this new year

We remember where we have been and where we are going.

We remember that we must pause and rest in the midst of the travels that the year has brought and will bring.

We remember the names of those who have died and those who are just beginning.

We remember to break bread together

We remember we are not alone on this journey

We remember to read the signs (out loud or in your head)

We remember to visit with family (biological or chosen)

We remember that the journey is long and can be full of surprises

We remember, too, that our plans may change.

The magi returned to their homes, by a different route- changed, taking home with them an experience that welcomed them as they were and changed them completely.

This group of outsiders were invited into Jesus' home and welcomed fully by Mary and Joseph.



Matthew is the only gospel writer who includes the Magi and it is a reminder to us that all are invited to hear this story, even this group of outsiders who followed a star, not the prophets of old, to encounter Jesus.

Remember their moment of awe,  
Remember the moment Mary and Joseph opened the door and said welcome.

Remember these moments of light as we grow in faith this coming year and travel the road that will be by following in faith – finding the unexpected and experiencing welcome as we too

Open the door and say welcome

Stand and the door as the outsider seeking welcome.

Together we are family, together we follow the light, in this new year.

Together we bring our own unique gifts to glorify the Lord.

And together we will faithfully acknowledge the power, the life, and the hope of who God is in our world, even on the darkest of nights-

We too will follow the star of hope.

Amen.

