

**St. James Episcopal Church \* Morning Prayer**

Worship Leader BC Franson

**Processional Hymn 131/132 "When Christ's appearing was made known"**

1 When Christ's appearing was made known,  
King Herod trembled for his throne;  
But he who offers heav'nly birth  
Seeks not the kingdoms of this earth.

2 The eastern sages saw from far  
And followed on his guiding star;  
By light their way to light they trod,  
And by their gifts confessed their God.

3 Within the Jordan's sacred flood  
The heav'nly Lamb in meekness stood  
That he, of whom no sin was known,  
Might cleanse his people from their own.

4 And oh, what a miracle divine,  
When water reddened into wine!  
He spoke the word, and forth it flowed  
In streams that nature ne'er bestowed.

5 For this his glad epiphany  
All glory unto Jesus be,  
Whom with the Father we adore,  
And Holy Ghost forevermore.

Opening Acclamation I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.

Confession Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor BCP 79

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen**

Absolution Prayer

BCP 80

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us all our sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen us in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

Lord, open our lips

**And our mouth shall proclaim your praise. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen**

Jubilate

BCP 82

**Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands; serve the Lord with gladness and come before his presence with a song. Know this: The Lord himself is God; he himself has made us, and we are his; we are his people and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving' go into his courts with praise; give thanks to him and call upon his Name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting' and his faithfulness endures from age to age.**

### Psalm 84

<sup>1</sup> How dear to me is your dwelling, O LORD of hosts! \*

My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

<sup>2</sup> The sparrow has found her a house

and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young; \*  
by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts,  
my King and my God.

<sup>3</sup> Happy are they who dwell in your house! \*

they will always be praising you.

<sup>4</sup> Happy are the people whose strength is in you! \*

whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.

<sup>5</sup> Those who go through the desolate valley will find it a place of springs, \*

for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.

<sup>6</sup> They will climb from height to height, \*

and the God of gods will reveal himself in Zion.

<sup>7</sup> LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer; \*

hearken, O God of Jacob.

<sup>8</sup> Behold our defender, O God; \*

and look upon the face of your Anointed.

<sup>9</sup> For one day in your courts is better than a thousand in my own room, \*

and to stand at the threshold of the house of my God  
than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.

<sup>10</sup> For the LORD God is both sun and shield; \*

he will give grace and glory;

<sup>11</sup> No good thing will the LORD withhold \*

from those who walk with integrity.

<sup>12</sup> O LORD of hosts, \*

happy are they who put their trust in you!

## The Lessons

### **First Lesson** Malachi 3:1-4

<sup>1</sup>See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. <sup>2</sup>But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; <sup>3</sup>he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the descendants of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, until they present offerings to the Lord in righteousness. <sup>4</sup>Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the Lord as in the days of old and as in former years.

### **Second Lesson:** Hebrews 2:14-18

<sup>14</sup>Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, <sup>15</sup>and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. <sup>16</sup>For it is clear that he did not come to help angels, but the descendants of Abraham. <sup>17</sup>Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup>Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

### **Gradual Hymn 490 "I want to walk as a child of the light"**

1 I want to walk as a child of the light.  
I want to follow Jesus.  
God set the stars to give light to the world.  
The star of my life is Jesus.

#### *Refrain:*

In him there is no darkness at all.  
The night and the day are both alike.  
The Lamb is the light of the city of God.  
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

2 I want to see the brightness of God.  
I want to look at Jesus.  
Clear sun of righteousness, shine on my path,  
and show me the way to the Father. [Refrain]

3 I'm looking for the coming of Christ.  
I want to be with Jesus.  
When we have run with patience the race,  
we shall know the joy of Jesus. [Refrain]

### **Third Lesson** Luke 2:22-40

<sup>22</sup>When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord<sup>23</sup>(as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord”), <sup>24</sup>and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, “a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

<sup>25</sup>Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. <sup>26</sup>It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. <sup>27</sup>Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, <sup>28</sup>Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,<sup>29</sup>“Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup>for my eyes have seen your salvation, <sup>31</sup>which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup>a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” <sup>33</sup>And the child’s father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. <sup>34</sup>Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, “This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed <sup>35</sup>so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.” <sup>36</sup>There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, <sup>37</sup>then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. <sup>38</sup>At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. <sup>39</sup>When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. <sup>40</sup>The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

### **Sermon**

God is the God of time. The readings appointed for this week in the lectionary each give a powerful reminder that God is not an aloof entity who stands above and outside of our world. We worship a God who has actually entered into human history. Even more perplexing and mysterious is the claim these readings make that God continues to enter our story. The season of Epiphany offers an extended meditation upon this remarkable theological claim.

The liturgical cycle begins each year with Advent, that season leading up to the great feast of Christmas. If Advent is a time to express waiting, longing, and hope, Epiphany is a season to reflect on encounters with the divine: those hopes made reality. The past few Sundays have proclaimed the stories of Jesus’ baptism, beginning of ministry, and the crowd favorite, turning water into wine. Today is the celebration of the Presentation of our Lord. The passages from Malachi, Hebrews, and the Gospel of Luke each speak a deep truth about God’s presence in our world.

The prophetic book of Malachi speaks of God’s sudden arrival: “Thus says the Lord, ‘See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord who you seek will suddenly come

to his temple.” God’s appearance, according to Malachi, will be abrupt. In Luke’s account, Mary and Joseph have taken Jesus to the Temple in obedience to the purification laws. When they arrive, the righteous and devout Simeon greets the holy family and declares that he has now seen God’s salvation, who will be a light to all people. Simeon also adds that Jesus will be opposed and cause the falling and rising of many.

As if one strange Temple encounter was not enough, Luke continues the story with another. Immediately after Simeon blesses the holy family, the prophet Anna comes. Anna then spoke about Jesus “to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” In other words, the redemption that was hoped and longed for by those present was fulfilled in Jesus.

In the story, Anna and Simeon had been waiting a lifetime to encounter the Messiah. Simeon had been told by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he laid his eyes on God’s anointed. When Simeon encounters Jesus, he takes him in his arms and declares those words that are known as the *Nunc dimittis*: “Now you are dismissing your servant in peace.” The church took these words as early as the 4th century and incorporated them into evening and night prayers. They remain in Episcopal and Anglican prayerbooks around the world. God is the God of time, and God has chosen to enter into human time. The *Nunc dimittis* reminds us that *now* is the time of the Lord. *Now* is the time of salvation. *Now* is the time for peace.

In a world of increasing political turmoil, polarization, and anxiety, it can be difficult to see where God is present. Looking to the war zones across the globe, it certainly does not seem like the Prince of Peace reigns over this world. Browsing the vitriol on social media on either side of the political aisle does not look like it brings glory to God. The anxiety in young people is almost palpable, exacerbated by things like the climate change crisis, in addition to increasing stress around school, body image, and the economy.

But one of the pronounced lessons in the readings from today is that God does not make an appointment for God’s arrival in our lives. As Malachi says, the Lord will suddenly appear in the temple. Even Jesus’ own parents were amazed at what Simeon said about him. God appears unexpectedly. God appears in God’s own time frame. And God will appear again.

For many, to speak of the arrival of God on earth is to speak of Jesus’ triumphant return. Perhaps there will be a rapture or a descent on the clouds on a white horse. Biblical scholars and theologians have wrestled for many centuries over the who, what, when, and where of the second coming. But there is divine presence still among us, even amid the turmoil and anxieties of every present age. And that’s what the season of Epiphany is there to remind us: God’s kingdom is here in our midst.

The author of Hebrews makes clear that Jesus has fully entered into our world of time and space: “He had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect.” This is a theological claim that the church has proclaimed since the early councils: Jesus was fully human. Luke’s gospel teaches us that part of that humanity was his growth, as the King James translation phrases it, “And Jesus

increased in wisdom and stature.” When the church embraces the sudden and unexpected dimensions of God’s character, the church, like the Christ child, grows in wisdom and stature.

Many in The Episcopal Church will know the story of women’s ordination in our church. In 1974, eleven women presented themselves for ordination to the priesthood. The canons of the church had not yet been changed to explicitly allow women to be ordained as priests. Though a motion in 1973 had majority support, the way votes of diocesan delegations were counted meant that the motion failed. As General Convention happens every three years, this meant that it would be another three years before canon law could be amended to explicitly allow for women’s ordination to the priesthood.

By July 1974, eleven women who had already been ordained as deacons presented themselves for ordination to the priesthood at the Church of the Advocate in Philadelphia. Three retired bishops stepped up to ordain these women as priests. Despite threats of violence and all manner of discouragement, these women were truly prophetic—answering God’s call when the institution and structures around them sought to keep them from full participation in the life of the church.

Many critics at the time—and even today—could not understand why these women and bishops would not wait until the next General Convention. After all, what is three years of waiting compared to a lifetime of ministry? But for these women and bishops, the call of God was *now*. There are times for waiting. And there are times of immediate response to God. In answering God’s call, these women blazed the path for women across the country to embody God’s sacramental presence to those within and outside the church.

The church does not always get everything right. But the church can only grow when individuals and leaders respond to their encounters with God. Sometimes that growth is painful. Often, that growth is met with resistance. Jesus’ growth in wisdom shows his humanity; our growth in the church reflects God’s presence with us. Within the story of scripture and of church history is a message of God moving into the messy reality of human space and time. Epiphany is a season to reflect on these encounters with God, past and present. Encounter with the divine sparks movement. In our world today, there is plenty of room to move for justice, peace, and proclamation of the gospel. As we move in response to our encounters with the divine, may we in turn embody God’s presence to each other.

Amen.

**Michael Toy** is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Religious Studies at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington studying digital religion in New Zealand.

The Apostles Creed

BCP 96

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dies, and was buried. He descended to the dead, On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen**

Peace

**Announcements**

Offertory **WLP 812 “ Here I am Lord!”**

# Here I Am, Lord

## Verses



1. I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my  
2. I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my  
3. I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the



peo - ple cry. All who dwell in dark and sin  
peo - ple's pain. I have wept for love of them.  
poor and lame. I will set a feast for them.



My hand will save. I who made the  
They turn a - way. I will break their  
My hand will save. Fin - est bread I

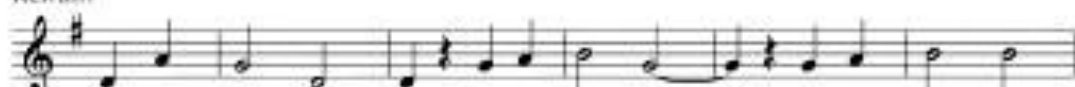


stars of night, I will make their dark - ness bright.  
hearts of stone, Give them hearts for love a - lone.  
will pro - vide Till their hearts be sat - is - fied.



Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?  
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?  
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?

## Refrain



Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you



call - ing in the night. I will go, Lord, if you



lead me. I will hold your peo - ple in my heart.



## The Prayers

The Lord's Prayer

BCP 97

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Suffrage B

BCP98

Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance;

**Govern and uphold them, now and always.**

Day by day we bless you;

**We praise your Name for ever.**

Lord, keep us from all sin today;

**Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy.**

Lord, show us your love and mercy;

**For we put our trust in you.**

In you, Lord, is our hope.

**And we shall never hope in vain.**

### The Collect of the Day

**Almighty and everliving God, we humbly beseech thee that, as thy only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented unto thee with pure and clean hearts by the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

### The Prayers of the People, Form III 387

Father, we pray for your holy Catholic Church;

*That we all may be one.*

Grant that every member of the Church may truly and humbly serve you;

*That your Name may be glorified by all people.*

We pray for all bishops, priests, and deacons;

*That they may be faithful ministers of your Word and Sacraments.*

We pray for all who govern and hold authority in the nations of the world;

*That there may be justice and peace on the earth.*

Give us grace to do your will in all that we undertake;

*That our works may find favor in your sight.*

Have compassion on those who suffer from any grief or trouble;

*That they may be delivered from their distress.*

Give to the departed eternal rest.

*Let light perpetual shine upon them.*

We praise you for your saints who have entered into joy;

*May we also come to share in your heavenly kingdom.*

Let us pray for our own needs and those of others.

Silence

The General Thanksgiving

101

**Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for your creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.**

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom

**Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. Amen**

**Recessional Hymnal WLP 800 "Precious Lord, take my hand"**

# Precious Lord, Take My Hand

G D7 G Gaug C<sup>6</sup> C

1. Pre - cious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me  
 2. When my way grows drear, pre - cious Lord, lin - ger  
 3. When the dark - ness ap - pears and the night draws

C<sup>6</sup>dim<sup>7</sup> G/D D7 Em A<sup>9</sup> D A D

stand; I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;  
 near, when my life is al - most gone,  
 near, and the day is past and gone;

G D7/A G G7 C<sup>6</sup> C

through the storm, through the night, lead me on to the  
 hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I  
 at the riv - er I stand, guide my feet, hold my

C<sup>6</sup>dim<sup>7</sup> G/D Em A<sup>7</sup>/E<sup>6</sup> G/D D7 G

light, take my hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.  
 fall; take my hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.  
 hand; take my hand, pre - cious Lord, lead me home.

Thomas A. Dorsey composed this hymn in a time of grieving for the loss of his wife and son. It has been a source of comfort and hope for countless others who have suffered significant loss.

Text: Thomas A. Dorsey, 1899-1993, 10/02.  
 Tune: PRECIOUS LORD, irregular, sharp and flat by Thomas A. Dorsey, 1899-1993, from the tune MATHILDA by an anonymous composer in  
 The Sacred Harp and Tune Book, 1830.  
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Blessing

Go in Peace to love and service the Lord – Alehulia

Thanks be to God – Alehulia, Alehulia, Alehulia