

Worship on the Web



CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS

Season of Epiphany

The Epiphany, or revelation, of the baby Jesus as the Son of God come into the world, is traditionally celebrated on the 6 January.

The meaning of Epiphany

Christians remember at this time the ways in which God was revealed to the world in Jesus, in particular the gospel account of three men from the East who, after observing an unusual star, followed it to the stable where Jesus lay and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These were gifts traditionally given to kings and this act revealed Jesus to be the promised Son of God, King of Kings (Matthew 2:1 to 2:12).

In the weeks following Epiphany other passages where Jesus is revealed may be examined, for example, his baptism in the river Jordan (Matthew 3:13 to 3:17; Mark 1:11) and transfiguration (Mark 9:2 to 9:8).

The origins of Epiphany

Epiphany as a feast has its roots in the East. In the fourth century, the eastern date for the winter solstice was 6 January and as with western Christmas celebrations would have been held in place of existing pagan festivities.

Originally, two main events were celebrated during Epiphany: the birth of Jesus, witnessed by the three men from the east, and the baptism of Jesus.

As eastern and western celebrations eventually became united, Christmas became the main festival commemorating the birth of Jesus. Epiphany as adopted by the West is associated with the revelation to the men from the East. In the East it remains a festival commemorating the baptism of Jesus.

Christingle

The Christingle Service is a service of candle lights and can be held during Advent, Christmas or Epiphany.

The meaning of Christingle

The word 'Christingle' refers to the candle used in the Christingle service.

The Christingle is an orange, decorated with a red ribbon, sweets and nuts, in which is placed a small candle. The orange represents the world, the ribbon Christ's blood, shed for all creation. The sweets and nuts skewered on four cocktail sticks facing out to the four corners of the earth represent the fruits of the earth. The candle in the centre of the orange represents the light of Christ to the world.

The origins of Christingle

Christingle has its origins in a children's service held on Christmas eve 1747 in Marienborn, Germany. Bishop John de Wattville who was conducting the informal service gave each child a lighted candle, tied with a red ribbon, in memory of the Christ's coming which he said had kindled 'a flame in each heart which keeps burning to His joy, and our happiness'.

In 1968 the Church of England Children's Society adopted this service as a way of raising funds during the season of Advent. For more information about Christingle services visit their website www.the-childrens-society.org.uk