

Lectionary readings: Isaiah 60: 1-6; Psalm 72: 1-7, 10-14; Ephesians 3: 1-12; Matthew 2: 1-12

For reflection and prayer

- **Isaiah 60:** *'Arise ...! Let your light shine for all ... to see. For the glory of the Lord is shining upon you.'* (v1) God wants each one of us, God wants the church to light up the darkness of our world. We, who are aware that we have the light of God's presence in us, are being invited to let the light of God shine out of us for all to see, in order to bring hope and joy and peace and love to the corner of the world where we live - little 'pin-pricks' of light lighting up the darkness and spreading out in ever increasing circles. This is something that each one of us might like to reflect on this week - how can we let God's presence be seen through our lives?
- **Psalm 72:** Perhaps the paraphrase in 'Psalms Now' will help us to reflect on how we can shine with God's light where we are. *'O God of love, grant to Your children the grace to represent You effectively in our discordant world. Help us, O God, to become what You have appointed and empowered us to become. Where there is darkness, may we become the rays of Your sun that banish the gloom from lonely lives. Where there is drought, let us be like gentle showers that turn barren deserts into green meadows. Where there is ugliness and distortion, enable us to portray the beauty and order of Your will and purposes....'*
- **Ephesians 3:** Paul reminds us here that the Good News is for all. God wants the whole world lit up by His presence and He has chosen us to help Him in this task. We may look out on the world in which we live and

think it's a hopeless situation. But perhaps we, the church, are partly to blame for the state of our society and our world - we have failed to be what God is calling us to be. This is a new year and a new opportunity to open ourselves to God afresh and to ask Him to help us to become all that He created us to become by His grace and with His help. Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter, but he didn't allow that to stop him reaching out with God's love. Let's take time each day this week to spend time with God (even if it is only 5 minutes) breathing in His Spirit, opening ourselves up to His life and His love within us.

- **Matthew 2:** People from the East, foreigners, recognised Jesus as special, while Jews were going about their business unaware. God was in their midst, but they didn't recognise Him. How like us - going about our business every day, unaware of God's presence with us. Let's take the opportunity each day this week to recollect God's presence and ask Him to help us to see Him in the circumstances of our lives and in those around us. These men had a deep desire to continue their spiritual search. How great is our desire to seek God? In fact, we don't have to seek Him, for He lives within each one of us. The men went home changed people, and they went home by a different route. How willing are we to be changed by our encounter with God, and to live in a different way from before? Many things to reflect on in this story. Let's remember that God is far more willing to find us than we are to find Him. His arms are always stretched out in love to us, longing for us to respond to His invitation to allow Him to be part and parcel of our everyday experiences, not only so that we may be changed, but that the world might be changed through us.