**Introduction for Mid-Winter and Epiphany**

**Welcoming God among us**

Come in the darkness of Mid-Winter and seek the light that has come into the world

**For God has come among us**

Come with the wise men and follow the star to the stable

**For God has come among us**

Come to the Jordan’s bank as Jesus is baptised for us

**For God has come among us**

Come let us eat and drink as at the wedding in Cana in this ancient time of festivity

**For God has come among us**

**What child is this, who laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?**

**Whom angels greet with anthems sweet, while shepherds watch are keeping?**

**Refrain:**

**This, this is Christ the King,**

**whom shepherds guard and angels sing; haste,**

**haste to bring him laud,**

**the babe, the son of Mary.**

**Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?**

**Good Christian, fear: for sinners here the silent Word is pleading. Refrain**

**So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh, come, peasant, king, to own him;**

**the King of kings salvation brings, let loving hearts enthrone him. Refrain**

**We go to find the wise men and the star**

**Reading: Isaiah 60: 1-9**

**We travel with the wise men to the stable**

(The wise men are placed at the crib in turn with the following words)

God of gold, we seek your glory:

the richness that transforms our drabness into colour,

and brightens our dullness with vibrant light;

your wonder and joy at the heart of all life

**Your Kingdom Come, your will be done on earth as in heaven**

God of incense, we offer you our prayer:

our spoken and unspeakable longings, our questioning of truth, our search for your mystery deep within

**Your Kingdom Come, your will be done on earth as in heaven**

God of myrrh, we cry out to you in our suffering:

the pain of all our rejections and bereavements,

our baffled despair at undeserved suffering, and

our rage at continuing injustice

**Your Kingdom Come, your will be done on earth as in heaven**

Child of Bethlehem, with the wise men we embrace you, God-with-us, in our wealth, in our yearning, and in our anger and loss.

**Your Kingdom Come, your will be done on earth as in heaven**

**Remembering the gift of water and Jesus Baptism**

(We gather round a bowl of water)

Our ancestors new that water was life and honoured the springs and rivers as sacred. In Baptism Jesus offers life renewed. Receive this water as a sign of that new life. May the water of life may in you be a spring of blessing for all creation.

**Blessed be God for ever**

(water is sprinkled in memory of Baptism)

**Remembering God revealed at the feast in Cana**

(wine is poured)

Our ancestors declared in the midst of winter a time to feast. At this time, we remember how Jesus blessed the feast at Cana by turning water into wine. So, we too will share in this time of festival in food and wine, song and story. And may God transform us also so that the best may be celebrated in us.

**Blessed be God forever**

**Why, impious Herod, shouldst thou fear  
Because the Christ is come so near?  
He who doth heavenly kingdoms grant  
Thine earthly realm can never want.**

**Lo, sages from the East are gone  
To where the star hath newly shone:  
Led on by light to Light they press,  
And by their gifts their God confess.**

**The Lamb of God is manifest**

**Again in Jordan’s water blest,  
And he who sin had never known  
By washing hath our sins undone.**

**Yet he that ruleth everything  
Can change the nature of the spring,  
And gives at Cana this for sign--  
The water reddens into wine.**

**Then glory, Lord, to thee we pay  
For thine Epiphany to-day;  
All glory through eternity  
To Father, Son, and Spirit be. Amen.**

**The Mid- Winter is celebrated in food and drink, song and story.**

**Traveling further**

**When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and the princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among all people,  
To make music in the heart.**

**Blessing**

And May the blessing of the God of life and death

In whom the seasons grow and fade in whom all of us are held in love

Our Father and Mother who made us

Our Brother Jesus who mends us

Our Sustainer the Spirit who moulds us

Be upon as at this time and in all times to come

Go in peace, God is with us **Blessed Be!**

**West Midlands Forest Church**

**As the light shines in the darkness**

**A celebration of Mid-Winter**

**and the season of Epiphany**