Following the Star…

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 117, 1982 Hymnal)

Two thousand years ago, three Magi traversed a considerable distance following a star which led them to the Christ child. And thus, in a way, began the history of this parish. For we too have sought Christ by following that star. Along the pathway we have experienced many joys, tribulations, sorrows and, yes, accomplishments. The star has remained ever constant and bright as it has led us down the annals of our history and ultimately, we trust, to the place “where our infant Redeemer is laid”. Here is the story of that journey.

From this early beginning a strong commitment to faith and the love of Christ characterized our congregation. Many times He has lent us his aid and guided us along the pathway He would have us follow as our faith has been put to the test.

One of the earlier evidences of this can be seen in the strong determination to rebuild the church when the first structure was suddenly destroyed by fire in 1903. Building commenced in 1904, and by February of 1905 the church had been replaced with the present structure, again with the assistance of our brothers and sisters throughout the Diocese. It was at this time that the official name of the parish became “The Church of the Epiphany”.

The present set of buildings was completed when the Education Building and covered walkway were added in the early 1960s.

Our sojourn began in 1888 when two women of this area had a vision of a Christian presence for this community organized around the Anglican tradition. Their interest ultimately led to the first service being held on the Feast of the Epiphany in 1889, hence the origin of the parish’s name. Subsequently, during the summer of that year, the cornerstone was laid for the Epiphany Chapel and the building was completed and dedicated in January 1897. All this was accomplished with donations from parishes and Advent offerings from children in the Diocese.
During the very early years, the mission was unable to support resident vicars and thus received clerical support from the Diocese and shared priests with other parishes in the area. Maintaining an adequate membership was always a concern, to the extent that consideration was given to closing the doors in 1926. Eventually, however, we were able to support resident vicars who lived in an adjoining vicarage (no longer owned by the parish). Each one, in his own way, contributed towards our attaining parish status. This was ultimately accomplished in 1972 through the vigorous leadership of our last vicar, Rev. Raymond Cole, a milestone indeed in our journey of following the star. Our first rector, Rev. Dennis Warner, joined us in September 1973 and remained with us until his passing in 2007.

From those early days to the present, Epiphany has witnessed growth in its congregation, Christian education, community and world outreach, diocesan support, and youth programs. The thread that has run so true through our one hundred twenty year history is the love of God as expressed by His son Jesus Christ and a strong faith present in all the generations that have come and gone. It is this love and faith that carry us into the future.

The star moves on,
and the journey continues...
Epiphany’s Vision

With Christ as our example, our vision is to live as a growing community of unconditional love empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Epiphany’s Mission

Our mission is to be a welcoming community of Christians who reach out to everyone as we share the gospel and live and grow in God’s love.

Epiphany’s Values

Community:
Our caring support of our church family and others in times of joy and in times of need

Christ’s guidance:
Our lives and worship are guided by Christ

Tradition:
Our local custom of worship and activities sharing in the familiarity of Episcopal liturgy and principles

Defined by the People of Epiphany - Winter/Spring 2008
The People of Epiphany

Parish Staff

Epiphany currently has an Interim Rector as well as a Deacon who are sharing the spiritual, pastoral and administrative responsibilities of the parish during this period of transition from a long-term rector to a new permanent rector.

We have an Organist / Choirmaster for our all-volunteer choir. A part-time Secretary assists the clergy in administrative duties, prepares the Sunday bulletin and monthly newsletter, and performs some of the bookkeeping. A Sexton is responsible for cleaning the parish buildings.

Congregation

The Church of the Epiphany currently has 229 active baptized members, including 154 communicants in good standing, with 48 of these under 16 years of age. The average Sunday attendance at the Church of the Epiphany is 64.

Vestry

Members are elected each year to serve on the nine-member Vestry. Current officers are the Rector’s Warden, People’s Warden, Accounting Warden and Vestry Secretary. The Vestry uses a committee structure with members serving as liaisons to committees for Stewardship, Worship, Outreach, Property, Finances, Christian Education, Discernment, and By-laws.

Lay Ministries

Epiphany has always been fortunate to have a very active lay ministry that includes the following:

Lay Readers / Chalice Bearers  Lay Eucharistic Visitors
Lectors  Church School Teachers
Ushers & Greeters  Acolytes
Choirs  Altar Guild
Prayer Warriors

The people of Epiphany are “prayer warriors”, firmly believing in the power of prayer. We have a very active prayer chain, sending our voices up to God in both supplication and celebration.

Stewards of Epiphany

Epiphany's annual budget averages approximately $200,000. While we often approve a deficit budget, we do so based on faith and have always been able to fund the deficit through a combination of increased giving and careful control of expenses. When necessary for major building repairs or renovations, various capital campaigns have been fully pledged and funded.

Financial pledges are usually received from 55-60 families and generally total $140,000 to $150,000, with an average pledge of approximately $2,400. The Vestry displays leadership by example by offering their pledges at the opening of the annual pledge campaign. Pledge themes have stressed proportional giving, and over the years the majority of the congregation has embraced this concept.

Stewardship is the return of a portion of that which God has given to us. Epiphany recognizes that treasure, while important, is only a part of that gift. The people of Epiphany also embrace the time and talent aspects of stewardship, contributing hundreds of hours both inside and outside the parish walls.
**Adults of Epiphany**

**WOE (Women of Epiphany)** holds many fundraisers throughout the year to help support the church. In addition, the women sponsor events throughout the year such as a Silver Tea for the Bishop’s visit, the Epiphany Tea, and the annual Women’s Dinner. They are always prepared to sponsor receptions for baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals.

**Merry Widows and Friends** is a lively group of women, and sometimes men, that meets on the first Wednesday of the month for lunch and bible study. They are a wonderful support to each other.

**Adult Fellowship** events have included house blessings, theme parties, picnics, moving companies, camping, etc., many of which include the entire family.

**Youth of Epiphany**

Epiphany feels strongly about providing wholesome, Christian-based programs for our children. Over the years, we have had **Girls’ Friendly Society, Logos, and various organized Youth Groups.** For nearly 30 years, we have had a very active **Junior Choir.** Being a small parish, the status of these programs fluctuates based on the numbers of available young people and volunteer leaders. This is an area that the people of the parish are extremely eager to energize!
Parish Life

Regular Worship Services

Sundays:
- 8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite I (no music)
- 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist Rite II (family service)
  
  Summer service:
- 9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist (alternating Rite I and Rite II)

Thursdays: 9:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist and Healing

Fridays: 7:00 p.m. Stations of the Cross
(during Lent)

Adult Study Groups meet on a weekday morning at the home of one of our parish families (Bible Study) and at the church on Sunday morning for those who work during the week (Christian book study).

For many years, Epiphany has been the home for Education for Ministry (EFM) classes for students from our own church and area parishes. Our hope is that this long-standing educational forum will be able to continue as we move forward with our new rector.

Vacation Bible School has long been a staple of our summers, with several churches in the Spring-Ford area banding together to present this annual program for our youth.

Christian Education

Christian education is an important part of our church life. Church School Classes for children from pre-school through high school are held during the first half of our 10:00 a.m. Sunday Service. There are approximately 20 children currently enrolled in this program.

Communications

Our website at www.EpiphanyStar.net introduces the parish and features various sermons, services, musical programs, events and pictures to keep members and friends connected with the life of the parish. The Epiphany Star is our monthly newsletter.

The Prayer Chain was recently updated to utilize automated email notification, although the phone call capability is still maintained.

The newest link in our communications is an Automated Telephone Chain which allows us to quickly deliver urgent news to all parish members.
Music at Epiphany

Epiphany has enjoyed a wonderful music program over the years. The Adult Choir, which is lead by our very talented organist and choirmaster, has remained steadfast in leading the congregation in musical worship. Classical and contemporary anthems are offered, at times accompanied by various talented musicians from the parish.

Two cantatas are presented each year: a Christmas collection of readings and anthems and the popular “Song of the Shadows” on Good Friday evening.

Our Junior Choir is an enthusiastic group of children who help lead the congregation in song as well as perform special anthems. They also have delighted the parish with occasional plays, pageants and musicals such as “Rockslinger”, a musical production about David and Goliath.
The Surrounding Community

About the Community

The Church of the Epiphany is located in the borough of Royersford, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania. The town is located on the northern bank of the Schuylkill River just 32 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

Royersford was originally the center of a local farming community, but grew into a small manufacturing center by the early twentieth century due, in part, to its proximity to the railroad and the river. With the construction of the 422 Expressway, the Royersford area has become an attractive and pleasant bedroom community.

Approximate Demographics of the Royersford Area (19468 zip code):

~ The total population of the area is approximately 22,000 with an average family size of 3.09.
~ The median household income is approximately $73,000.
~ The median value of owner-occupied single family homes is approximately $244,000.
~ Of total housing units, 70% are owner occupied.
~ Of people 25 years and older, 61% are high school graduates and 39% have college degrees.
~ The median age is 35 years with 11% age 65 or older and 9% under 5 years old.
~ Of people 15 years and older, 50% are married.

Serving the Community

The Spring-Ford Area School District serves Royersford as well as the nearby communities of Spring City, Oaks, Limerick, Collegeville, and Upper Providence. This district as well as nearby Owen J. Roberts School District are ranked in the top twenty best school districts of Southeastern Pennsylvania (Philadelphia Magazine).

Royersford is near Ursinus College in Collegeville; the outdoor splendor of French Creek State Park; the historical attractions of Valley Forge National Historic Park and Hopewell Village; the notable shopping centers of King of Prussia Plaza / Court and Philadelphia Premium Outlet Mall in Pottstown; and is less than one hour’s drive from the heart of the Pennsylvania Dutch Amish Country in Lancaster.

The Rev. Dennis H. Warner, Epiphany’s first rector, was one of the founding members of the Spring-Ford Pastor’s Association, which still serves the greater Spring-Ford community (Spring City and Royersford) with shared religious and social programs, such as:
Services shared by various denominations during the Lenten season
Interdenominational Vacation Bible School
Project Outreach, a vital program in the community providing a very active food pantry and assistance for those in need of social and financial services. We support this program financially and with weekly food donations and volunteers.

Epiphany established the **Episcopal Nursery School** in the early 1960s. This Christian pre-school, which continues to serve the families of the community 40 years later, provides 3 and 4-year olds with a positive experience in broadening their horizons while preparing them for kindergarten.

Our monthly collection of “**Nickels for Nourishment**” extends our mission against hunger by providing funds to support various hunger relief programs, particularly Project Outreach mentioned above. Members of our parish also participate in the **Crop Walk for Hunger** every fall. Proceeds go to both national and local organizations.

Epiphany sponsored the first Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous groups in the Royersford area. AA, Al-Anon, and NA groups continue to use our facilities for their meetings.

Our rector held **weekly services at Graterford Prison** for over 25 years, during which he provided instruction, counseling and an EFM class for inmates. Our church family continues to support these inmates through prayer.

Following our **Maundy Thursday service**, children of the parish are invited to bring their friends for a sleep-over in the Undercroft. The children take turns keeping vigil throughout the night and share in short lessons and videos on Christ and Christianity. Our annual **Lenten Cantata**, held on Good Friday, continues to draw people from all over the area, as we tell the story of Jesus’ arrival in Jerusalem through His crucifixion.

The parish recently initiated “**Backpack Sunday**” to help needy children in the area get ready for school in September. We hope to make this an annual event.
Serving the Diocese

The Diocese of Pennsylvania is the fifth-largest diocese numerically, with over 50,000 baptized members and more than 150 congregations in a five-county area. Although it is the smallest diocese geographically, clergy salary ranges are in the highest 15% nationally and it has one of the best clergy retirement plans in the Episcopal Church. Epiphany pays its annual assessment and pledge in financial support of the diocese.

At our Annual Meeting in January, Epiphany elects members to represent our parish at the Annual Diocesan Convention. We also elect representatives to participate at the quarterly meetings of the Valley Forge Deanery, allowing our parish to keep up-to-date on the workings of our Deanery. It is worth mentioning that over the years the Deanery clergy and parishes have demonstrated wonderful support to Epiphany, and we to them.

Epiphany is proud to have a long history of sponsoring candidates for the clergy. During mission days, Epiphany sponsored Daniel Conklin for the priesthood. Susann Fox was sponsored by Epiphany during her training to the diaconate, and her ordination was celebrated at The Church of the Epiphany in 1988. In the early 1990s, Epiphany was again called to support a candidate for the Priesthood. The Rev. Mike (Marlene) Haines served her practical training at Epiphany and the congregation contributed to her seminary education.

Serving the Nation and the World

The Women of Epiphany knit hats, scarves, and mittens, and collect items for ditty bags that are given to The Seaman’s Church Institute for merchant mariners. Our gifts on Blanket Sunday provide for the purchase and shipment of blankets worldwide and in the US in response to disasters such as earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, or famine. Episcopal Community Service (ECS) donations are collected to address the needs of low-income families in southeastern Pennsylvania. The people of Epiphany financially support Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD), the international relief agency.

We have been blessed to have a Companion Diocese in Guatemala. One of our members has traveled to Guatemala twice over the last few years, taking Spanish prayer books and school supplies and awarding scholarships so the children will be able to buy books for their classes. Epiphany prays on a rotational basis each Sunday for the individual parishes and clergy as well as the Diocese of Guatemala.

Children of our companion Diocese of Guatemala
Epiphany Welcomes the Future…

~~~Parish Goals~~~

The people of Epiphany have defined the following parish goals for the next five years:

~ Continue to grow spiritually and enrich our knowledge about living the Christian life.

~ Increase membership and improve stewardship.

~ Emphasize meeting the needs of our youth.

~ Expand outreach programs not only to the fast-growing local community but to the nation and the world.

~ Continue to consider the possibility of relocation in order to build a larger facility that allows for growth.

~~~Important Qualities of the New Rector~~~

In addition to the official survey, the congregation more informally identified the important personal qualities they are seeking in the new rector:

~ A good listener who is approachable and keeps confidences.

~ An enthusiastic and friendly person with a good sense of humor.

~ A leader who spiritually stimulates biblical and liturgical relevance in our lives through both traditional and novel approaches.

~ A person full of compassion for people who are in the midst of joy, personal problems, and illness.

~ A person who eagerly and easily interacts with our children.

Ingathered from the people of Epiphany - Spring 2008

Ever journeying onward, guided by a star …
Light of light that shineth  Ere the worlds began,
Draw thou near, and lighten Ev’ry heart of man. Amen
(Hymn 49, 1940 Hymnal)