Yesterday was Epiphany, when traditionally we focus on the wise men.  Matthew’s gospel, chapter 2, tells us the story.  They came from the east, following a star, which seemed to them to herald the birth of a king.  They had to ask Herod where the king would be born, and they probably didn’t know what kind of king to expect.  They gave generously in their time in searching, and in their gifts.  How did they know what to bring?  Gold was a symbol of kingship, frankincense was used in the Temple in Jerusalem, and myrrh was used to embalm a body.  How Mary and Joseph must have wondered about these strange visitors and their strange gifts.

The hymn says ‘As with gladness men of old, did the guiding star behold…’  It seems that they travelled looking upwards, in the hope of some heavenly revelation, something extraordinary.  But they had to look down at what they found, something ordinary, a baby in a manger.   What made the wise men glad?  The end of a long journey?  The sight of a baby?  Not very unusual.  But there was something about this baby that, as Matthew tells us, caused them to bow down and worship.  For them the baby signified the end, not just of their physical journey, but the end of their search for meaning and purpose in life.

Where will we find Jesus in 2019?  In looking up to the stars?  Or in looking down at the everyday things of life? Jesus is both Creator and King of the universe, and present with us in the practical details of our lives every day.

May the loving presence of Jesus make us glad this year, and spark our generosity in return.

Happy new year!

*Produced by Daphne and John Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*