

Chalking the Doors

How church schools celebrated Epiphany 2024 across our dioceses

Church schools and churches across our dioceses have marked Epiphany this year by observing a tradition called 'chalking the doors'. This brochure shows a selection of the celebrations.

The Feast of the Epiphany falls 12 days after Christmas (usually after the start of a school term). Bishops, Archdeacons and other clergy joined children, parents and teachers in celebrating the festival in schools and churches across both our dioceses.

Pupils learned how Christians across the world, but particularly in Eastern Europe, chalk their doors with the pattern : "20 † C † M † B † 24" on Epiphany. The numbers refer to the calendar year; the crosses stand for Christ; and the letters have a two-fold significance: C, M, and B are the initials for the traditional names of the Magi (Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar), but they are also an abbreviation of the Latin blessing *Christus mansionem benedicat*, which means, 'May Christ bless this house'.

In this tradition families, schools, churches and communities write 20 † C † M † B † 24 as big above the entrance (or every door if you like) and say the following words while writing each section:

The three Wise Men,
C Caspar,
M Melchior,
B and Balthasar followed the star of
God's Son who came among us
20 two thousand
24 and twenty-four years ago.
++ May Christ bless our school
++ and remain with us throughout the
new year, guiding us to find epiphany
in our relationships and our learning.

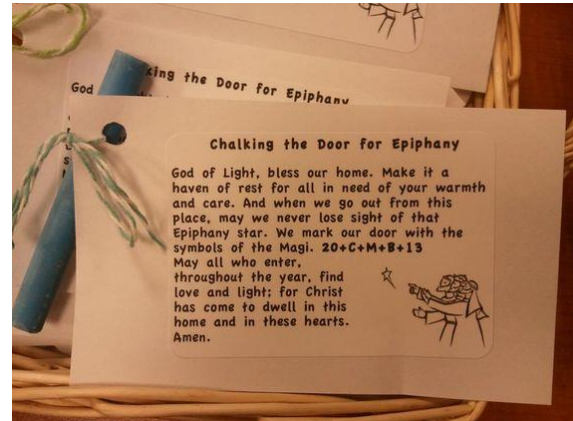
The Epiphany School in Bournemouth make chalking the doors an annual tradition and often have a special visitor to lead their school Epiphany day.



Pupils are each given a 'mini kit' with a piece of chalk and the instructions above so that they can 'chalk the doors' at home.

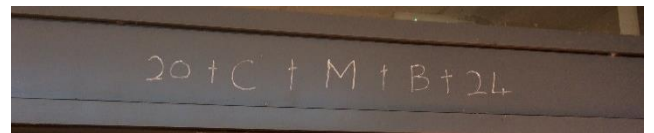
Headteacher Vanessa Webster said: 'Epiphany is dear to our hearts as it is our namesake and it was wonderful to have the honour of Archdeacon of Bournemouth Jean Burgess lead the celebrations. The children created chalkings, which were placed over doors across the school. In Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 children paid homage to the three kings by making crowns which they wore with pride.

It was a joyous occasion and one that we most definitely will continue as an Epiphany tradition. Sincere thanks goes to you all at the Diocese, particularly Richard and Jean, for making the children of Epiphany enjoy a very special 'Epiphany', which will be our worship focus for the next month.'



Archdeacon Jean was interviewed by a number of our Year 5 children. Questions included: 'What do you think is the most important message that Epiphany is sharing with us all and what does Epiphany personally mean to you?'

Children from **Wickham Primary School** also took the message of Epiphany home. Young Governors from Reception to Year 6 joined members of the St. Nicholas Church ministry team, Canon David Isaac and Revd. Jill Phipps, to chalk the front door of the school. Later, during class worships, all children chucked the door of their classroom and also chucked a blessing on paper to take home with them to ask for God's blessings for their own home and family.



The new Bishop of Winchester, the Right Reverend Philip Mounstephen thoroughly enjoyed his visit to **St Mary's Junior School, Old Basing** where he led worship and chalked the main front door of the school and several of the classroom doors as a sign of God's blessing. He explained to the children the significance of the letters and numerals in Christian liturgy.





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Meanwhile, the Bishop of Portsmouth, the Right Reverend Dr Jonathan Frost joined schoolchildren at **St John the Baptist Primary, Waltham Chase**, where he wrote the symbols above classroom doors.

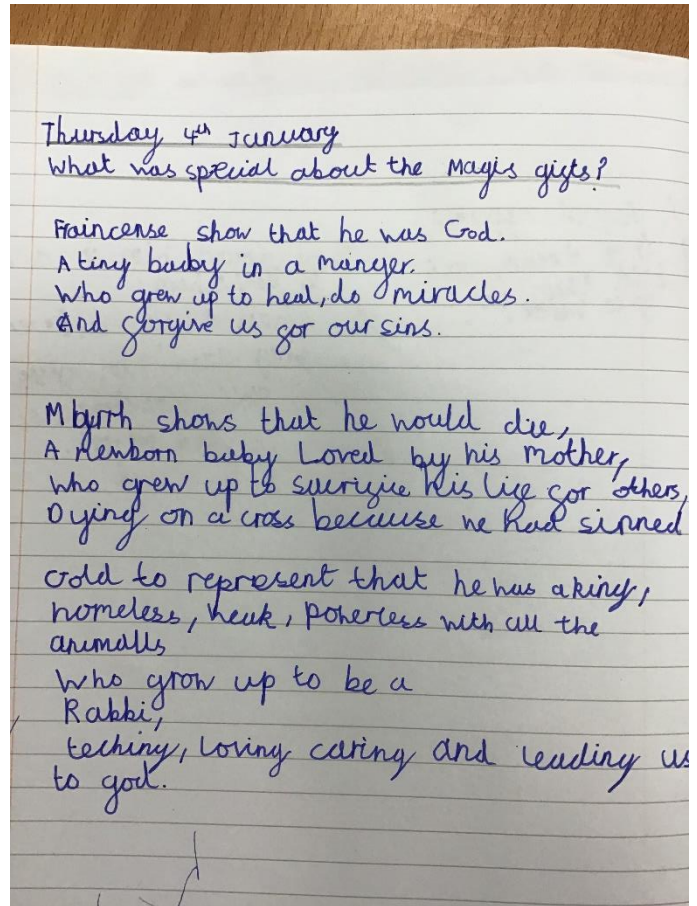
The chalking of doors at **Burton Primary School** was enhanced by a welcome to the new Vicar, the Reverend Kathy Hicken, on her first day in the parish. The school's Spirituality Champions wrote wonderful prayers to welcome her, and Canon Gary Philbrick, Assistant Archdeacon, led the singing of 'Angels came, Doo-doo-doo-doo-doo', to the tune of 'Baby Shark'!



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Chalking the door at **St Matthew's Primary, Blackmoor** (below) . Children later led a service on Epiphany at St Peter's Church in the village.



The Archdeacon of Winchester, Reverend Richard Brand, discussed Epiphany with children at **Binsted Primary School**. He told children that in the visiting of the Magi in the Christmas story, we can see the significance of Christ's birth for the whole world. The three kings in their long journey from far off lands, symbolise the 'epiphany' moment for all mankind – the difference that Jesus' birth makes for those near and far. The three magi are often depicted with various ethnicities and differing ages to represent that Jesus came for all.

Archdeacon Richard said a prayer of blessing for the school while Epiphany markings were made around the doorway to symbolise God's blessing on the building and all who enter it. The classes then went around the school, marking the other external doorways themselves. Headteacher Sharron Morton said: 'It was a lovely way to start the new year at school with children, staff and parents, and Richard was very impressed that the children could answer all his questions including the names of the wise men! We have given each child a piece of chalk in case they would like to do something similar at home.'





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Canon Roly Riem, Canon Chancellor and Vice-Dean at Winchester Cathedral, joined children at **St Bede Primary** for worship, then visited each class to talk with pupils about their learning, about the door sign they had made and to share a blessing for the year ahead.

An Epiphany prayer written by two Year 5 children at **Twyford Primary School**:

Dear Lord,

Today we reflect on a New Year and Epiphany.

We are reminded that a long journey starts with small steps and that sometimes a gift isn't always an object; but love.

No matter rich or poor, far or near, where you come from or who you are, we are all loved.

Amen

We hope that Chalking the Doors will become an annual custom for our church schools, bringing the message of Epiphany to life for children and adults alike. Readings, worship Power Points and other resources ready for use are on our websites.